

A CHURCH RENASCENT. By David Watmough. (S.P.C.K.; 8s. 6d.)

'*La France se guérit par la tête*' is an adage which finds abundant proof in the spate of literature from France depicting the great missionary apostolate which is forging ahead to reclaim the lapsed and convert the masses to Christianity. In the latest book on the subject, this time in English, by an Anglican, we are given a good summary of the recent books written on the modern apostolate in France. We in England have much to learn from these methods of the 'Eldest Daughter of the Church'. But there is always the temptation to dissipate a deal of energy and time in the study of the new methods and the over-eager desire to adopt some of them. We in England have two strongholds which, if only we would concentrate more upon them, would produce a greater harvest of souls. I refer to our schools and parochial visitation. To by-pass these two excellent forms of apostolate, or to underestimate them, in our desire to try out newer forms of the apostolate, would, to my mind, be mere escapism. None would admit this more readily than the French Catholics themselves. 'Hold fast to that which thou hast.'

But the tone and content of Mr Watmough's book reveal once more the Anglican mentality that the Established Church is the Catholic Church in this country and that represented by 'Rome' is an alien, or as Bishop Henson put it, 'a rump church'. Our French brethren are clear-sighted and logical, but they do not see in an objective way that England is not only geographically isolated from the Continent, but that for four hundred years she has been cut off from the current of Western Christendom. The net result has been that the average non-Catholic English Christian is an individualist in matters pertaining to religious authority and the submission which this entails. Mr Watmough can be disingenuous to the point of giving a very wrong impression: his remark that 'the British Roman Catholic Community... although theologically, of course, it is supposed to be at one with the French Church... etc.', is a case in point.

What good can possibly accrue so long as such grave misunderstandings continue between Anglicans and the French Catholics? Palliatives are not remedies, and such things as the alleged facilities 'for Anglicans to say mass' in the Abbey of Bec, only deepen the misunderstanding already existing. The rubble must be cleared away, and the foundations solidly laid before we can look for any real and lasting Christian union. Otherwise, our future brethren are going to have new and more subtle heresies and schisms to grapple with. There can be no use in baulking the main issues. The difficulties which separate us from our brethren of the Anglican Communion are radical, and these must be met before there can be any useful discussion of the application of the experience of French Catholics to the situation of the Church of England.

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