

BLACKFRIARS

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EDITORIAL

'CONTKOVERSY too often assumes a very harsh and bitter tone; clever things are said, and hard hits are made. All this is, no doubt, very interesting to some of the readers, but I do riot think much good comes of it. If your object is to convince people, you are not likely to do so by treating them as enemies, to be put down, or as children to be scolded. The way to come to some understanding with those who differ from you in opinion is to treat them as friends and reasonable beings, and to take it lor granted that they are willing to give fair consideration to the matter at issue, if only you can put it before them in an intelligent and intelligible manner.' Though fifty years and more have passed since Canon Bagshawe wrote these pregnant words in the preface to his classical work *The Credentials of the Catholic Church*, there is little reason to suppose them less apposite now than then; yet the conditions under which we present our credentials to-day have definitely changed for the better. We are no longer in a state of mere armed defence, as though in a beleaguered city; whatever may have been the need in the past, there is no further need for so jealous a guarding of our treasure for fear of its despoiling; notwithstanding our concern and our determination to keep the treasure intact, it is safe to throw open and smooth where we can the approach to the treasure-house. It is to this end that BLACKFRIARS interests itself and, we trust, its readers in the vexed question of Reunion.

Amongst a large proportion of those outside our Church bigotry is dead and replaced by a sincere and sometimes uneasy questioning. The danger is that we ourselves may keep bigotry alive in our ranks. Some of us seem scarcely as yet to have realized how the situation has changed. Ancient divergences on points of revealed doctrine which first separated the Protestants from the one fold of Peter

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later developed to a large extent into inherited prejudices and gradually brought into being antithetic conventions of thought and outlook upon all points. It is these befogging conventions on both sides, more than the solid and immutable truths of Faith on ours, that form the principal bar to conversion or reunion. As far as those outside the Church are concerned, movements as diverse as ritualism and modernism, as well as a hundred influences of a more secular nature, have served to break down these conventions in a notable degree. Urged by the higher and Christ-like motive of fraternal charity, it behoves us to see to it that our own side of this barrier, where it exists, be removed forthwith. It is not a question of compromise on points of infallible doctrine, though it is a question of sympathetic discussion; the somewhat bitter pill of papal authority, turning-point of all controversy and essential to the cure of disunion, need not be rendered more bitter by the intransigence of those not gifted with the charisma of personal infallibility.

A great lead has been given us in this matter by the more recent Popes and by some of the greatest Princes of the Church, as may be seen clearly in two articles in the present issue. Pope Leo XIII, whose lot it was to pronounce on the burning question of Anglican Orders, was magnificent in his courtesy towards and sympathy with the prelates and members of the Church of England. But, for an example nearer home, our own Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster, whose jubilee we have recently celebrated with great joy and thanksgiving, stands out pre-eminently as a model of that line and courageous charity of which we speak. Like tempered steel, he has known how to give where unessentials were concerned without giving way in things essential. **BLACKFRIARS** takes this opportunity of offering to His Eminence the expression of its profound reverence and appreciation, not only because of the paternal regard which he has ever shown to the English Dominicans, but even more because he has exhibited in his own priestly and episcopal life the ideals of service, charity and truth in the cause of which, however inadequately, **BLACKFRIARS** itself strives.

EDITOR.