

BLACKFRIARS

CORRESPONDENCE

THE LAYMAN AND SOCIETY

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

SIR,—Will you permit me a small correction of Monsieur Gilson's observation in your last issue, viz. that "*Ad Lucem* has nothing to do with the so-called *Laicate* of Dr. Zacharias" (*cf.* my article "The Layman and Society" of last December)?

While this is so actually, nobody could have made this statement last September (when my article was written): a complete change in the constitution of *Ad Lucem* was in fact only made December last and confirmed by a General Meeting held in March of this year—since when a number of the early members of *Ad Lucem* have had to give up their membership in it.

I hasten to add that this separation was made in perfect friendliness and loyalty on both sides, but also in full recognition that *Ad Lucem*, as now re-constituted, represents but one of several alternatives, all of which it had tried to embrace during the first years of its existence.

I can therefore not admit that my reference to *Ad Lucem* was, at the time, as "completely mistaken" a one as Prof. Gilson tries to make out, though I am grateful to him for having relieved me of the necessity of explaining to your readers that the position of *Ad Lucem* no longer corresponds to the idea of a *laicate*, as adumbrated at St. Gallen last August.

I am, sir,

Yours, etc.,

H. C. E. ZACHARIAS.

Foyer St. Justin,
Fribourg (Switzerland).

REUNION

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

SIR,—Were Fr. Farrell content to dissent from some particular interpretation of present tendencies within Anglicanism or from some particular "approach to reunion," it would be unpardonable to prolong what threatens to become a tedious and interminable duologue. But his reflections on reunion are not restricted to criticism of some suggested *means* to reunion, nor even of such tentative formulas as "uniat principle" or "reunion without absorption." He objects to reunion *tout court*—the very word and the idea it conveys—and represents it as something to which the Roman Church is indifferent if not hostile. The impli-

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cations of this are serious; and the prepossessions on which this singular position are based demand scrutiny.

Admittedly, what has never been united cannot be reunited; and if non-Catholic Christians neither are nor ever have been (whether through Baptism or otherwise) members of the One Church of Christ it would be nonsense to seek their reunion. We should be right to pray only for the conversion of England—as we might for the conversion of the Congo—and regard our Christian fellow-countrymen as so many Mumbo-Jumbo worshippers. But if Baptism has made them members of that One Church, from whose communion they have become divided by adherence to “denominations” themselves split off from her, what possible objection can there be to their *reunion*, and how can any Christian do otherwise than desire and pray for it and explore every means for its accomplishment?

But Fr. Farrell writes: “Insistence that Baptism alone unites the baptized to the Church tends to confirm many non-Catholics in their error that by Baptism they are united not only to the invisible Church but also to the visible church of which they are a part.”

It is indeed an error that Baptism unites anybody to the *invisible* Church, if only because there is no such thing. As Leo XIII has pronounced (in *Satis Cognitum*): “Those who imagine that there is a hidden and invisible Church are in grievous and pernicious error.” And Fr. Farrell has reminded us: “There can be but one Church—the Catholic Church.”

On the other hand, it is elementary Catholic doctrine that Baptism unites the baptized to, and imparts membership of, this one and only, unquestionably visible, Church. This is taught expressly by (for instance) the Councils of Florence (*Decretum pro Armenis*) and Trent (Sess. XIV, cap. 2), the Code of Canon Law (Canon 87) and St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa*, III, lxxiii, 6; lxxvii, 2, etc.) This truth governs all the Church’s legislation, formularies and pronouncements which regard non-Catholic Christians.

She regards them, not as strangers who have never belonged to her, but as her own children who have been torn from her. They are “separated *brethren*,” “amputated *members*” (Leo XIII). Her technical name for them is *schismatici*—a word with harsh associations, but which means precisely those who have been cut off *from* Catholic unity, and is inapplicable to those who have never possessed it. The *Forma Reconciliandi Conversum* is in this respect instructive. The Church “receives” converts who have never been baptized by baptizing them without more ado—which would be quite insufficient if Baptism does not make them members of the visible Church. Children

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(*impuberes*) who have been baptized, though by non-Catholics and though brought up as non-Catholics, are to be admitted to the Sacraments without being "received into the Church" at all—unthinkable unless Baptism has already made them members. Baptized adult converts, on the other hand, being considered capable of deliberate adhesion to non-Catholic tenets and denominations, are to be "reconciled" by being "restored" (*restitutio*) to the Holy Sacraments of the Church and to the communion and unity of the faithful." They are absolved (at least conditionally) from excommunication, which would be farcical if they had never possessed the Church's communion. What is this *reconciliatio* but *reunion*? And what inherent objection can there be to *corporate* reunion (for which there is ample historical precedent) should God in His mercy show us ways and means?

Our Lord prayed that *all* who should believe in Him might be one. And the Body of which He is the Head prays for it too. The *adunare* and the *Domine Jesu Christe qui dixisti* in the Roman Mass repeat Christ's prayer after the Last Supper. The meaning of these prayers is manifest from the parallel phrases in the votive Mass *Ad Tollendum Schisma*—called *Pro Unione Ecclesiae* in the Dominican Missal—of whose meaning there can be no doubt (e.g., "Quaesumus super populum christianum tuae unionis gratiam clementer infunde ut, divisione rejecta, vero Pastori Ecclesiae tuae se uniens, tibi digne valeat famulari." "Sic in tua Ecclesia unitatis quaesumus operetur effectum"). Moreover, the prayer *Domine Jesu Christe qui dixisti* from the Roman Missal was approved and indulged by Benedict XV for use during the Octave of Unity—an effort for reunion, originated by Anglicans, which has had the utmost encouragement from the Holy See, and in which Pius XI, in common with a growing number of Catholics, Orthodox and Anglicans, personally participates.

Nobody in his senses supposes that the obstacles to reunion in this country are, humanly speaking, likely to be soon overcome. It is urged only that every effort should be made to overcome them. As Leo XIII in his Apostolic Letter to the English people said: "Difficulties there may be for us to face, but they are not of a nature which should delay our apostolic zeal or stay your energy. No doubt the many changes that have come about, and time itself, have caused the existing divisions to take deeper root. But is that a reason to give up all hope of remedy, reconciliation and peace? By no means if God is with us. For we must not judge of such great issues from a human standpoint only, but rather must we look to the power and mercy of God."

I am, sir,

Yours, etc.,

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.