

BOOK REVIEWS

THE ROAD TO REUNION. By a Man in the Ranks. (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1931; 1/-.)

The anonymous author of this pamphlet belongs to that Anglo-Catholic group which looks to Rome as the only possible centre of Reunion. He pleads for an unprejudiced consideration of the 'Roman Claims,' and is evidently prepared himself to go a long way towards accepting them. His interpretation of the Vatican decrees, however, is inadequate; they claim more authority for the Pope than is implied by the parallel of the Royal Assent in English Law. It would be a juster parallel to suggest that they claim in addition the right of issuing Proclamations which have the force of law. This must be faced and not glossed over; the Pope is above General Councils, and can make infallible decisions apart from a General Council, though the extent to which he is bound to consult the mind of the Church before making such decisions is open to discussion.

The author looks hopefully to a corporate Reunion which 'while admitting the primacy and authority of the Holy See will not prejudice the validity of our own Sacramental life nor our claim to recognition as an ancient and historic Church.' Again Anglo-Catholics must face and not gloss over the situation. Western Christendom could never recognise Anglicans as members of an ancient and historic Church in the same sense as Eastern Uniats are recognised. The Uniats have an unbroken hierarchy, valid order and a Catholic Rite. Anglicanism traces descent from an intruded hierarchy and worships with a Liturgy which is the product of heretical minds. Moreover, Anglican Ordinations, even had they never been condemned, and even if the reversal of Leo XIII's Bull were possible, would always remain suspect when judged by Catholic standards, because they are conferred by forms which were deliberately changed in order to imply a change in the conception of what was being conferred. If ever the Church of England or a section of it were brought by the Anglo-Catholic Movement to seek union as a corporate entity with the Holy See, any action that Rome might take would necessarily involve the expression of (at least) doubt concerning the validity of Anglican sacramental life, and the implication that such a corporate entity came, as individual converts must come, prepared to receive for the first time the authentic rites of the Church.

H. St. J.