DIVERSITY IN WORSHIP

"THERE is no reason in the world," wrote Augustus Welby Pugin, "why noble cities, combining all possible convenience of drainage, water-courses, and conveyance of gas, may not be erected in the most consistent and yet Christian character."[1] There is, in this engaging statement, an implication which Pugin, alas, did not see. "Our domestic architecture," he had said very truly, "should have a peculiar expression illustrative of our manners and habits"; but these latter he chose unfortunately to regard as identical with those of earlier ages, despite the fact that the earlier ages were in no position to convey gas. "We are such men as our fathers were, and therefore should build as they built"; so his argument is summarized. Hence his campaign to revive an architectural form which centuries earlier was already played out; a campaign whose success resulted in that torrential and continuous downpour of brussels sprouts from which we are only now beginning to emerge. "The point," Mr. Trappes-Lomax tells us, "was not whether St. Peter's might be tolerable in Rome, and Notre Dame in Paris; it was whether the Church in England was to be English or Italianate."[2] The first tragedy was that Pugin identified Gothic with English; the second, that in the general struggle between English and Italianate parties, while in architecture Italy came out, in the event, defeated, in the sphere of worship she so largely carried the day.

"Our domestic architecture should have a peculiar expression." So, of course, in any healthy state of society, should everything else, including, pre-eminently, worship. Sanctity, always in essence identical, wherever it be found, is nevertheless, in this obvious sense, relative. No two personalities are exactly alike: each race has its peculiar characteristics, each age its peculiar ethos; and the accidents of birth, upbringing and environment combine with these to make every

---

[1] M. Trappes-Lomax, *Pugin*, pp. 191-2.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 228.

personality unique. The Englishman differs from the Arab primarily because he is of a different race; the Englishman of to-day differs from an Englishman of the time of Chaucer primarily because he is of a different age. But on the other hand, the individuals of a given race in a given age possess many characteristics in common, and it is these which should and normally do find expression in manners, outlook, productions; it is these, to difference ourselves nearer, as Sir Thomas Browne would say, and draw into a lesser circle, it is these which help to differentiate sanctity, for the saint will always (whether consciously or subconsciously) be affected by them, whether it be by way of assimilation or of reaction. It is these, also, which should differentiate the manner and formalities of worship; for worship is the offering to God of the man, the personality; formalized perhaps, where public worship is concerned, yet surely not artificial in the sense of unreal. An Italian, who expresses himself normally through the medium of superlatives and incessant gesticulation, will find the unadorned reticence of an Englishman chilly and unreal; the Englishman will find the Italian's outpourings unreal and embarrassing. A classical age will shrink from the vulgarity of romanticism; the romantic will stifle in the rarefied atmosphere of classic refinement. The prayers of St. Alphonsus, the hymns of Father Faber, would be equally incongruous on the lips of St. Thomas More or Bossuet, to say nothing of St. Peter or Boethius. And one does not expect the etiquette of the Court of St. James to be identical with that of the Court of the Emperor of China.

Unity in essentials does not mean uniformity in accidentals. "In My Father's house there are many mansions." It is part of that catholicity which is one of the marks of the Church of Christ that its truths should be expressible, its pattern of life realizable, in a multiplicity of forms. Nor is this a question merely of what is possible or permissible. The difference of outlook between the Greek and the Latin Fathers, for example, illuminating as it does two different aspects of the truth, is necessary for the perfection of Christian society. The Latin mind will necessarily tend to emphasize the rational, the juridical, the organized; the Greek, on

the contrary, will concentrate on the intuitive, the spontaneous, the organic. Both aspects are necessary, humanly speaking, if over-emphasis is to be avoided. Science can tell us many things about the sun, but not everything; and if left to itself there is the danger that it will in fact "kill the sun for us," as Lawrence said, "making it a ball of gas, with spots." We need equally the poet and the painter. No single race or culture can reflect in its entirety the revelation of God; only in the co-operation of all nations can the fulness of the Body of Christ in this respect be achieved.

"The title *Ecclesia Gentium,*" writes Dr. Pinsk, "contains a double assertion. It asserts in the first place that the Church brings something to the nations: the Gospel, salvation. But it asserts further that the Church, inasmuch as she builds on these nations, also receives something from them." "To *every* nation will the Church bring the grace and salvation of Our Lord, and from *every* nation will she inherit."[3] It is surely surprising, in the light of these statements, that their author should go on to develop the apparently contradictory thesis that Roman-Hellenistic culture is the one human medium of Christianity, so that whoever would accept, and endeavour to live, the latter must also accept and endeavour to live the former. "Just as all men, if they wish to come to the fulness of the life of God are referred to this human nature of Jesus, no matter whether they are man or woman, so are all nations, no matter to what race they belong, referred to this one Church, which is not a 'spiritual' creation soaring above all worlds, but which represents the spirit of Christ in the concrete, incarnate forms of a definite historical culture —the Roman-Hellenistic—and makes these forms, in view of their content, binding for all men. This means, in plain words, that no race and no national stock can out of its own natural instinct replace these forms by others . . . though they may not tend by nature to mould their religious life in such forms."[4] There is surely in this contention a direct

[3] Johannes Pinsk, *Christianity and Race,* pp. 14, 19.

[4] Dr. Pinsk writes: "It is quite wrong, therefore, to say that the chief form of the Christian mediation of life in the Church is the 'universally human' form of sacrifice: on the contrary, it is rather the

denial of the fundamental principle of Christian teaching that grace does not destroy but perfects nature. This form of culture must be adopted by races for whom it is unnatural, contra-natural; the Eastern mind must be forced to think in Western terms; the Chinese must learn to honour Our Lady through the medium of the art of saint-Sulpice.

What is essential in Christian worship is the sacrifice of the Mass; and the Mass, as the historical evolution of its ceremonies and prayers sufficiently shows, is patient in accidentals of indefinite variation. The idea of sacrifice in general is common to the whole race of man; its outward forms vary; and while the substance of the Christian sacrifice must necessarily remain always the same (and its universal acceptance presents no difficulty, since cultural differences are here in no way involved), the accidentals, the ceremonies or music or surrounding prayers, can and ought to vary.

This question of variation is of fundamental importance in the problems of the reunion of Christendom. "Maritain, Massis and Moenius are correct and speaking in the interests of union when they say that Europe is not the Faith, nor Western culture the Roman Church."[5] Oriental Christianity can never be the same as the Christianity of the West, and we shall be impeding the spread of the Gospel if we try and make it so. The English way of worship is not the Italian way of worship, and we shall impede the work of union if we try and make it so. In the Middle Ages England was estranged from the Papacy by the presence of Italian priests and prelates; in modern times it has been estranged by the presence of Italian practices. There is, as Pugin saw so clearly, an English tradition of piety and worship; it is that to which we must cling if there is to be such a thing as a healthy English Catholicism; in the days of the revival it was in this respect the Italian party whose influence pre-

form of the Mystery, as it *formally* existed in the Hellenistic cults, brought to a perfect development." This is surely to confuse history with theology: it is true that the Mass, as we know it, has so developed; untrue that the essential sacrifice is incompatible with any other external form.

[5] Karl Pfleger, *Wrestlers with Christ*, p. 291

dominated. Hence the uncongenial character of so many of the externals of worship in this country, and the consequent difficulties in the way of reunion, for we cannot expect the average man to distinguish between the accidental and the essential, or to be ready, in Tyrrell's phrase, to "swallow the sentiment for the sake of dogma."

"There is no church," wrote Sir Thomas Browne, "whose every part so squares unto my conscience, whose articles, constitutions, and customs, seem so consonant unto reason, and, as it were, framed to my particular devotion, as this whereof I hold my belief—the church of England." To make what is framed to one's particular devotion the criterion of religion's truth would be of course to start at the wrong end, to make the human the measure of the divine; to choose a religion because of its congruity with one's particular predilections or characteristics, or indeed with those of a race or nation, would be to make religion void. There can never be question of trying to force the revelation of God into consonance with human ideas. But given the revelation and the principles it involves, a relationship of *de iure* congruity is established from which practical conclusions may in fact be drawn. If the supernatural is the sanctification of the human, and the human, not in the abstract, but in the concrete, then it implies the sanctification of the proper characteristics of the various races and nations. It implies the utilizing, in the service of God, of precisely those customs which are framed to their particular devotion. It would, then, be mistaken to suppose that by working to make Catholic worship in England more English we should be in any sense trying to make religion palatable at the expense of truth. We should be helping to throw open a door—a door, it is true, leading only to the antechambers of the Church—which now in some degree is closed. It is easy for us to say that those outside the Church should come in, not for the sake of accidentals, but for the sake of essentials, and if necessary in spite of accidentals. True, but that will not excuse us from responsibility if the approaches, the *preambula,* are made unduly difficult. To give Catholicism an alien shroud is to give it the appearance precisely of un-catholicity, of a

particularity in space and time and an exclusiveness which deny divinity. And, to repeat, it is a question of more than mere policy. "In My Father's house there are many mansions." The rebirth of a specifically English manner of Catholic worship would add a new enrichment to the many-voiced harmony of mankind's homage to God.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

"INTEGRATIONISTS" OF THE MIDDLE AGES

"IT is not good for man to be alone: man is 'alone' when he is away from the turmoil of the world; thus monks and holy men build for themselves solitudes. *It is not good,* says the Lord, for such a man, a contemplative, *to be alone,* without a companion; it is best that he become active; *let us make him a help like unto himself,* that is, a people subject to him, who will minister to his temporal, as he to their spiritual needs."

The contemplative life resembles Paradise before the creation of Eve! Or, to modernize the thought as well as its phrasing: man is meant to express himself in the art of government.

The quotation comes from notes which were taken by students from a lecture on Genesis, delivered in the Paris schools round about the year 1190. The students would apply it to themselves. For the present they were "contemplatives," if not solitaries; their business, in theory at least, was contemplation which centred in the study of Scripture; and they were all potential bishops. Their lecturer passed dramatically to action from contemplation. From being a master of theology at Paris he was raised to the cardinalate, then to the archbishopric of Canterbury, and "expressed himself" in *Magna Carta.*

The career of Stephen Langton, as Professor Powicke describes it to us,[1] was magnificent in its unity. Contempla-

[1] F. M. Powicke, *Stephen Langton* (Oxford, 1928), and "Stephen Langton" in *Christian Life in the Middle Ages and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1935).