

Much thought, effort and self-sacrificing love needs to be directed today towards the setting up of a relationship which will result in more effective communication in the family, between teacher and taught in our schools, and between preacher and hearer in our churches; a relationship of person with person and mind with mind, which will issue in a vital and fruitful contact. We hope to make from time to time in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* some contribution to this thought and effort.



THE ENGLISH SPIRIT*

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IF we were to consider the connection between spirituality and art in view of our modern situation we might easily conclude that there is little to tie them together. The world is full of obviously good Christians, devout living, earnest and regular at prayer; while the churches in which they pray are cluttered with hideous objects of piety and resound to the most dismal hymns. Bad sculpture and painting and bad music are associated with devout Christian folk. But it is impossible for man to see his own age in true perspective; we can only guess at what is growing or declining in our own life-times. But when we look back in history patterns begin to stand out before us in clearer outlines. And if we look back at our own English scene we can see examples of spiritual revival and decline and can examine the various arts that accompanied these phases. Thus in the age of Dunstan there was a great revival in the Christian spirit of the country, and in fact this can be detected in its contemporary art. We may not know much of the music of the time in this island, though the tenth century was a peak period in general for the chant. But if we examine the drawings of the monks we find a new life and liveliness in the illustrations of their manuscripts. Professor Wormauld has given us in his *English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* one very interesting comparison of a Psalter copied at Canterbury from an original Utrecht MS about the year 1000. The Canterbury artist has copied the illustrations figure by figure, hill by hill, tree by tree. And yet in copying the monk has introduced an

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entirely new spirit, far more linear and far more lively than the original. The human figures move with a vigorous, graceful and rhythmic vitality which makes them dance across the page. The trees take on an almost Chinese airiness. There is certainly music in this monk's drawing, and he drew under the inspiration of the spiritual revival under St Dunstan. The Utrecht manuscript from which he copied appears metallic, heavy and we might say Germanic in comparison. In the sphere of literary art we can find similar examples in that pioneer essay of Professor Chambers, *The Continuity of English Prose*. St Wulfstan, who carried the Anglo-Saxon spirit far into the Norman period, preserved and handed on a virile English literary style, to be continued by the English mystical writers of the fourteenth century and crowned by the powerful and cultured prose of St Thomas More. The style seems to have been more perfect in the hands of the more saintly of the English literary men and women.

We may conclude then that some link may possibly unite the art of a period with the religious spirit of that period, so that a paper on the English Spirit may not necessarily be out of place in the study of 'Music and English Life'. The Christian spirit in this country has an importance for the English music of today as well as vice-versa. But when we begin the quest for the English spirit we are met with many difficulties.

First of all, to attribute any special type of spirit or spirituality to a particular race or nation may easily degenerate into conjecture and generalization. The Christian religion is universal, apt for every sort of human being, from the aboriginal primitives squatting in their mud huts to the over-cultured professor sitting at his desk surrounded by the massive volumes of his private library. The spirit remains the same—there is one spirit, the spirit of Christ. Nevertheless each person differs as star from star, and each is his own personification of Christ. So as race differs from race, nation from nation in characteristics as well as social habits, it is possible that the one spirit is manifested differently among different types of peoples. One man differs from another partly by reason of his home background, or his work or craft, and his spirit will be modified by these circumstances. Modifications among peoples and races derive equally from their geographical backgrounds. A race that has lived for centuries in the jungle, in the interior of a vast continent, displays very different habits and

ways of looking at things from a race that lives within the Arctic Circle like the Eskimos, or on the prairie as the Red Indians. The geographical background of the English spirit must therefore be taken into account.

Here we meet another difficulty. England is an island surrounded by many smaller islands. But the English, if we understand the 'Anglo-Saxon' by that term, did not begin their life surrounded by the alternately gentle or cruel seas of the North or of the Atlantic. The English, too, as we view them across the centuries, are not composed of the single Saxon race. In assessing the English spirit we have to consider not only their Teutonic, continental, background, but also their Celtic, insular setting. Later too there were the Roman and Norman blood infusions. And all these different elements go to form, on the natural plane, the English spirit both of the middle ages and of modern times; and it is this spirit, I imagine, that we are anxious to detect and describe.

We may therefore sketch briefly the characteristics of these four main influences upon the English character. First in the field we find the Celtic people fashioned by the sea that surrounded them, and the gentle streams and rivers that were their source of life, the woods and mountains of the islands, an atmosphere which seems to have been always relaxing, tending to produce a carefree and unambitious frame of mind among its inhabitants. In their religion then we find water playing a prominent part, as they worshipped the spirits of the rivers and streams. A survival or at least revival of this cult is still to be found in the well dressing among the Derbyshire hills. The cult of swimming and aquatic sports may perhaps still reflect this instinctive attraction to the living waters, which St Patrick was not slow to use in his preaching of baptism. Again, the mountains provided solid and unchanging refuge for these primitive people, who showed their recognition of the eternity of these refuges with their cult of the great stones which still stand all over the British Isles to attract the sightseer. We may here quote from Jacquetta Hawkes' *A Land*, which could be a text-book for studying this natural background to the English spirit:

Life has grown from the rock and still rests upon it; because men have left it far behind, they are able consciously to turn back to it. . . . The Church, itself founded on the rock of Peter, for centuries fought unsuccessfully against the worship of 'sticks

and stones'. Such pagan notions have left memories in the circles and monoliths that still jut through the heather on our moorlands or stand naked above the turf of our downs. I believe that they linger, too, however faintly, in our churchyards—for who, even at the height of its popularity, ever willingly used cast-iron for a tombstone? It is true that these stones were never simply themselves but stood for dead men, were symbols of fertility, or were primarily architectural forms.

(p. 100.)

We may add that the sturdy symbols of security that we find rising from every village, town or city in the form of the stone structures of church or cathedral carry on the same spirit, however modified by the heavy Norman architrave, continuing within the compass of the life-giving rock that is Christ the worship of the stones of the early Celts.

Another feature of these men, fashioned by the wild Atlantic storms, the mystery of the dense woods, and the animals that they loved as well as hunted, was their poetic gift. They loved music and poetry, feasts and gaily coloured dress. Their bards were in many ways their priests, and the life of the people was carried on from age to age by their long sagas. St Patrick was fascinated by the tales of the ancient pagan heroes; so much so that he began to have scruples about wasting time on light reading. But an angel came to encourage him: 'Patrick, not one third part of their tales can those men tell thee, by reason of forgetfulness or loss of memory. But let what they tell thee be written down on poets' staves and in the language of men of learning that they be for a delight to men of the times to come.' The natural joys that make up such a large part of human life have never been excluded from the genuine English heritage of the spirit, as witnessed by the greatest of the Island's saints, St Thomas More. And the fascination of the marvellous in the hagiographical details about the men of God has not yet died out.

One other point of importance may be noted in the natural background of the Celts; and here again we may turn to Jacquetta Hawkes. She tells of the Neolithic peoples of these islands who worshipped the peaceful conservative Mother Goddess of the earth. The women of that society were its foundation and contributed a conservative influence that prevented their menfolk from warfare. But this was before the various invaders, Celtic and

others, who tended to supersede 'the bountiful Mother Earth with her gods who gave peace and who blessed agriculture with plentiful increase, by male war gods and the supremacy of the chase and other predatory activities. Yet the Irish worshipped Brigit the Mother Goddess and the island became our Lady's dowry with an outstanding devotion to the Mother of God, which has not been entirely overthrown by a succession of English queens.'

One or two other points of the Celtic spirit should be mentioned here. Living as they did in islands where the prevailing wind is southwest, carrying cloud and mist from the ocean across its green fields and dark woods leaving these vapours betimes to cloak the valleys in a white shroud, they turned to the sun to find another source of their life. To encourage this universal god to smile on them they lit their bonfires at the equinoxes and midsummer day. And they committed their dead to the fiery care of this god of life in their funeral pyres. To quote Jacquetta Hawkes for the last time: 'I like to think I can recall that the burning took place at night, for we are all attracted by the notion of a cave of light in the darkness, of faces illumined and gigantic shadows, and of the black waves of the forest reaching up, hardly touched by the glare.' (p. 164.) So Patrick himself was attracted by their spring bonfires and through his blessing they have entered the universal liturgy of the Church in the Easter night fire at the church door. The English still show their delight at the life-and-death struggle of the leaping flames striking at the enveloping darkness around. The fifth of November has changed the context of the rite but preserved the spirit.

Another point about these Celtic inhabitants of the islands, discovered somewhat later in Christian times, was their enthusiasm for the monastic life, not the well-marshalled and precise life of the Benedictine Order but of an amorphous conglomeration of men, half hermit, half cenobite, often living alone on a small island or among the woods, as well as in monasteries comprising hundreds of monks. In the isolation of wood or island in particular the monk made friends with the native around him. The deer and the boar came to speak with him; the stalwart oak and the driving storm were his friends. And so the love of animals and the love of nature continued to play their part in the English spirit for many centuries.

Now we must turn to the Anglo-Saxons, without however

going into much detail. Of Teutonic origin they brought with them something of the atmosphere of the continent, particularly perhaps the feeling for those dense forests so intensely darker and more forbidding than those of Britain. Their religion was a woody one. Tacitus says of them: "They consider it unworthy of the divine Majesty to enclose their gods in temples or to represent them in the likeness of men. They consecrate to them woods and groves, and by the name of "gods" designate that mystery which alone they venerate with believing awe" (quoted by Otto Karrer, who considers that their religion was a lofty and intellectual one). Their religion then had already something of that *al fresco* character that we find today in many Englishmen who prefer to take to the road on a bicycle or to the hills on foot Sunday by Sunday rather than enter the constricted confines of a church or chapel. Those early invaders of the Celtic Briton worshipped the 'Heaven-father' rather than the Earth-Mother. The 'bright sky god' was called *Tiu* by the Anglo-Saxons, which is the same as *Zeus-pater* or *Ju-piter*. But they localized their gods particularly in great trees, and we may recall how the holy English missionary to Germany, St Boniface, dramatically felled the great tree, and with it overthrew the religion of that race. He was following the advice of St Gregory the Great who wrote to Abbot Mellitus: 'Destroy the English idols but preserve the sanctuaries to be consecrated as churches.' The tree, however, was also baptized and the English found their trees in their churches in innumerable bosses of the 'green man' with foliage sprouting from his mouth, ears and nostrils, or in the beautiful leaves of all the English trees as in the capitals of Southwell Cathedral. Most of all they found their sacred tree in the Cross, in the rood-screens and in the sagas such as the *Dream of Holy Rood*.

Lo! I will tell	the dearest of dreams
That I dreamed in the midnight	when mortal men
Were sunk in slumber.	Me-seemed I saw
A wondrous Tree	towering in air,
Most shining of crosses	compassed with light.
Brightly that beacon	was gilded with gold;
Jewels adorned it	fair at the foot,
Five on the shoulder-beam,	blazing in splendour.
Through all creation	the angels of God
Beheld it shining—	no cross of shame!

Then the Tree spoke to the dreamer:

Then the young Warrior,	God, the All-Wielder,
Put off His raiment,	steadfast and strong;
With lordly mood	in the sight of many
He mounted the Cross	to redeem mankind.
When the Hero clasped me	I trembled in terror . . .

(Early English Christian Poetry, p. 93.)

This veneration for the Sacred Tree continued for centuries until it became debased by the 'Hearts of Oak' and the 'Royal Oak', and the sentimental respect for that particular tree as a symbol of British stamina and 'guts'. The warrior and the hero are still worshipped in the British Oak, but the divinity has largely been drained away in its sap and it stands in the centre of the English countryside mostly as the blasted oak.

One other feature of the Anglo-Saxon character may be mentioned—he was an inveterate traveller. He loved to be on the move, discovering new countries, admiring new landscapes, seeking adventure in unknown territories. In this he was cousin to the Celt in his coracle, sailing round the gleaming coves and beaching on the rocky islets of the North. But he was more accustomed to walking for miles across stretches of open country, over the waves of English downland, or plunging into the deeps of the forest. And the English Christians continued this—the Cistercian abbots had to travel once every year down to the Mother House on the Continent. St Wulfstan loved to travel his diocese year in and year out. And Margery Kempe was one of a host of simple folk who were possessed of a passion for pilgrimages, to Santiago, Rome and the Holy Land as well as to Walsingham and other hallowed spots in their own land. The voyage to heaven, the way, the adventure of being on a journey towards the place of paradise was always a part of man's instinctive religion, but it finds a place of special importance in the English spirit, and has been the making of a great number of energetic missionaries from St Boniface onwards. Walter Hilton in his *Scale of Perfection* translates this journeying into spiritual terms, and Bunyan later develops the same theme in his long allegory. Today we find the same passion for pilgrimage, though the dangers on the way to Lourdes have infinitely diminished, and the desire for a more comfortable method of conveyance to the land of promise reaches its climax

in the aeroplane pilgrimage. But the English have shown the same spirit on the natural plane as the red portions of the world's map testify, now steadily dwindling. They have contributed a large percentage of explorers and mountaineers and the Englishman still makes an excellent missionary, though in these spheres the Celt still holds supremacy, as witness not only the close link between Ireland and America, but also the virile missionary orders and societies which draw their most successful apostles from the Irish.

It should be realized, however, that the spirit of adventure through travel never arises from a distaste for home. However far he travels the Englishman preserves a devotion to his own hearth that appears almost foolish. He may sing 'Goodbye, Piccadilly, farewell, Leicester Square', but he will call the meeting of a couple of tracks in the Sahara 'Knightsbridge' to bring his own land nearer to him. This in itself is an excellent trait, for in the spiritual ascent the soul does not leave the whole of human nature behind; it is the *man* who journeys to heaven, not only his soul, and the Englishman instinctively recognizes that the only profitable journey is one with a beginning as well as an end, and where the end is also the beginning.

We must turn now to the Roman invasion, which has left its mark on the English character as it has left its mark on the English countryside with the roadways for the English traveller cut indomitably up hill and down dale without deviating to left or right, but marching straight on to the 'end of the road'. In the English spirit this is perhaps most clearly seen in the enthusiastic reception given to Italian monasticism in this country. The roving, eccentric Celtic monks, imbued with poetry more than with discipline, were gradually pushed into the hills on the further isles by the orderly members of the Monastic Order inaugurated by St Benedict. There is no need to mention all the great monastic figures like St Bede the Venerable or St Aelred; but it is worth noting that the main literature of the spirit in earlier times in this country is composed of rules and regulations. The Celts of course had their rules and they were far harder and more uncompromising for 'brother ass' than the gentlemanly English type of discipline.

But Roman Christianity, brought to Kent by the monk Augustine from the Papal monk Gregory, was most perfectly crystallized

in the Rule of St Benedict, and the Benedictine monasticism, first established at Canterbury, was destined to supplant the other northern and poetic type. Or rather, it would be truer to say that the clear and practical Italian rule was eventually accepted by men who in the north had been prepared by those Celtic rules for the life of Christian discipline and in the south had sufficient tenacity of their old traditions and insular character to mould the rule of life to their English way. This is evident from the subsequent charters and regulations which appeared from time to time up to the epoch of the Reformation. For example, St Ethelwold, Abbot of Abingdon (†984) and later Bishop of Winchester, wrote his *Regularis Concordia Anglica Nationis* (Migne PL 137) for his work of restoration of monastic and therefore of Christian life in England. He combined with St Dunstan in reviving monasticism and in conforming it to the monastic life universal on the Continent. And in so doing he modelled himself on the work of St Benedict of Aniane and his *Concordia regularum* of a century and a half before. This rule linked the life and prayer of the monks very closely to that of the King and so to the national life. Its influence on the English spirit may be sensed in the following quotation:

The pealing of bells is to be prolonged in the national fashion on Christmas day and certain other feasts; processions are assumed as taking place . . . in the streets that lay between the monastic church and one of the town churches, and (a practice still more peculiar to England) it is assumed that the people will assist at the chief Mass on Sundays and feasts [i.e. in the abbey church]. Equally peculiar to the *Concordia* is the exhortation to daily Communion (David Knowles, *The Monastic Orders in England* i, 44).

The music of the parish church bells still holds the average Englishman and contrasts vividly with the spasmodic clangings that announce the time of Mass or the noonday prayer on the continent. While the enthusiasm of processions, preferably now conducted by the brass band, is retained not only by the Salvation Army but by local practices such as the Whit processions of Manchester.

It should be remembered that the *Carta Caritatis* (1119), although establishing the monastic reform of Citeaux and proper to the whole of Europe, was drawn up by the Englishman St

Stephen Harding (†1134) and constituted a way of life which was to influence England more, perhaps, than any other country. By the end of the twelfth century seventy-five monasteries were scattered over the face of England, and their style, which combined in wholesome simplicity the cultus of God with the culture of the soil, appealed to the English character, so largely at that time composed of peasant sense. Another type of Christian life under strict rule attracted the English in large numbers, namely, that of the hermit or anchorite. So Aelred had already written his *Institutiones Inclusarum* (Migne PL 195) some fifty years or more before the celebrated *Ancren Riwle* was composed for the assistance of certain anchoresses at the beginning of the thirteenth century. This work is not purely a rule, for the greater part of it is made up of picturesque and homely treatises on the virtues suitable to any reader, but it reveals the place the rules and regulations played in the spirituality of those days. From the date of this manual onwards we find an increasing number of '*Summae*' directing the clergy and the laity how to live. Much of this literature was imported from abroad and shows how closely English life remained in touch with the universal life of the Church. But it shows how the average Englishman liked to have things 'taped', as he calls it today. He flourishes in an atmosphere of law and order and has a weakness for casuistical manuals which tell him exactly 'where he gets off' and 'where he gets on'. Even today his law-abiding character is marked with astonishment by the visitor from abroad, and it has perhaps played a part in his facility in scientific and mathematical activities as well as in his appreciation of such orderly and mathematical music as that of Johann Sebastian Bach.

In passing we should note the popularity in the later middle ages of the manuals concerned with rules and methods of following the Mass. The vernacular was absent from the liturgy, but these rules made it possible for the ordinary Englishman to participate closely in the Action of the Mass. Nicholas Lore's *The Blessed Sacrament* (1421), John Myrc's *Festival*, Lydgate's *Vertue of the Mass* (1540), and Langford's *Meditations of Ghostly Exercise in Time of Mass* show that right up to the outbreak of religious strife in the sixteenth century the people's eyes were trained on the liturgical action and real presence of our Lord in the Eucharist. Above all, the *Layfolk's Mass Book*, although written originally in

French, was translated into English verse early in the thirteenth century and made it possible to memorize the paraphrases and prayers that follow every step in the Mass. It was the popular Mass book until the Reformation.

To follow my original plan of tracing the four main influences in the formation of the English spirit I should here return to the Norman invasion, and trace the primitive sources of this French stream which poured into the English rivers. But space does not permit any detailed examination of this influence, and besides, the spirit of the island was already well formed by the eleventh century so that this invasion has less significance than those of the Celts, Anglo-Saxons and Romans. Of course the influence was greatest in the arts—poetry, architecture and presumably the more cultured music were in the main French for a long period. But the life, as indeed the speech of the English folk, was modified but not supplanted by the influx of new blood.

I would prefer now to turn to some specifically English characteristics as personified in the lives of some of the outstanding saints of the island. St Bede the Venerable, for instance, represents the acceptance of the Italian rule of life by a typical English character, for he was brought up from childhood in the monastery at Jarrow, newly established directly under the Rule of St Benedict by Benet Biscop, who went to Rome first before establishing his monastery, though he tempered the Monte Cassino regime to the different natures of his northern subjects (cf. Knowles 22-3). Bede himself was essentially an historian, and a placid non-partisan historian too, so that his spiritual teaching is nothing if not traditional, founded with great care on the Scriptures and on the Fathers, 'whose work he so perfectly possessed that generally speaking he has rather chosen to use their words than his own' (Challoner, *Britannia sancta*, i, 328, London 1745). What is of particular moment in the spirituality of St Bede is the balance he preserves between historical, literal, accuracy and his intense devotion to the allegorical sense of Scripture, without which he felt that the words of the Bible would be mere straw, for it is so often sheer historical fact which is of interest but not of life to the present-day reader (cf. *Allegorica Expositio in Samuelem*, Migne PL 91). The Venerable Bede was a poet and the author of many hymns; and in all this he sets the standard for the authentic type of English holiness, poetic and intuitive, yet securely grounded

in the tradition and rule of Christ continued by the Church. The English mystical writers of the later middle ages were often of a poetic turn of mind, but they took for granted the traditional life of the Church in England. St Bede's veneration for the Eucharist is typical of the devotion which remained the mainspring of the English spirit till the Reformation. 'With much satisfaction', wrote Bede's disciple Cuthbert to a friend apropos of the saint's death, 'I read the letters of your devout erudition by which I found (what I greatly desired) that Masses and holy prayer are diligently performed by your community for Bede the beloved of God our father and master.' So Bede fulfils his life in Christ surrounded by the rites of the Church and followed in memory and according to his express wish with numerous Eucharistic sacrifices; and one of his last acts was to translate the greater part of the Gospel of St John into English. Thus did he set up a standard of holiness, seeking the spiritual within the literal, the soul within the body, the Presence of sacrificial love within the bread and wine.

Men of outstanding spirit like Dunstan, Aelfric, and Wulfstan joined with Bede in their care for the English tongue, anxious that the folk of the land should understand the Scriptures; they were, too, men of erudition and accuracy in their researches into tradition, and, as always with the English, they were men of intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

St Wulfstan of Worcester stands out particularly because he was one of the only English bishops to survive the Conquest. So strong was his position and so revered was he by his flock that William the Conqueror felt it wiser to leave him in charge of Worcester for thirty years until his death in 1095. Some of his characteristics are of note in regard to the English spirit: he was devoted to the Divine Office and the Mass—even on his episcopal journeys never missing these services; he preached constantly on peace, he received and absolved sinners from all over the country; and he showed a genius for human friendship which has become a mark of English holiness. He was a man of affairs trusted by the Conqueror, and broadminded in his acceptance of the good things of Normran culture; but he was also a lover of solitude and prayer.

Finally, one of the most charming of our true Englishmen is to be found in Aelréd the Abbot of Rievaulx. He was a great student of the Scriptures and tradition, continuing thus the con-

servative tendency of his fellow countrymen. He was, also, a great lover of God and man, and his principle treatises are *Speculum Caritatis* and *De Amicitia*. The latter work is one of the few books which deals entirely with the true friendship between Christians who also love God. He shows in his life and in his writing that faithfulness to the discipline of rule and law need not crush the gentleness and humanity which characterized so much of the life of the inhabitants of Britain since the days they worshipped the conserving Mother Goddess of the Earth.

In the *Speculum Caritatis*, written at the instigation of St Bernard, St Aelred deals with charity as the essence of true contemplation, called by him 'the Sabbath'—for it is the divine rest. He is insistent on the unimportance of sense and feeling which he sees abused sometimes in church decoration and chant. All these things must be subordinated to the will of God. In this work or in that on friendship we may detect a true Christian humanism in which the love of man for man, the achievements of his crafts and learning, all that is best in purely human achievement is caught up and perfected by the supernatural. There is an absence of any outstanding mortification and asceticism. His attitude to his own monks is redolent of this spirit: 'I found no one in that multitude whom I did not love and by whom I was not confident that I was loved. . . . I felt my spirit transfused into all and the affection of all passing over into me.' (Migne PL 195, 691.)

But his stress on the unimportance of the senses suggests the touch of neoplatonism which he derived from St Augustine—neoplatonism of course modified by the firm belief in the Word made Flesh. This view St Aelred reveals more explicitly in his *De Anima*. And in this he has handed on to us a tendency which has led easily to a rather angelic form of 'other worldliness'—perhaps the other St Augustine was inspired with the spirit of prophecy when he said of the English, '*Non Angli sed Angeli*', for it was their angelism which made them so ready to turn Puritan. This Platonic attitude is found over and over again throughout the centuries. Several of the English mystical writers, particularly the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, were fascinated by the Christian neo-platonic works falsely ascribed to Denis the Areopagite. Later on the Cambridge Platonists showed the stuff of the English mind, and the normal Englishman today when he becomes religious turns easily to the mystical attitude for his

weltanschauung. Perhaps this accounts, in part at least, for his indifference to the bad art and architecture, the bad music of his Sunday worship, and his suspicion of the liturgy in which the senses are ennobled rather than rejected. Yet this inclination towards the neoplatonic has seldom been carried to excess, perhaps owing to the relaxing nature of the climate which eschews all extremes. At least the Englishman has always shown a certain respect for the body, and St Aelred sums this up in his typically English insistence on a daily cold bath.

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And here I must leave you with my task only just begun. Perhaps however what I have said may provide a background for a beginning of the study of the English spirit. I have here attempted only to uncover some of the roots that converge to support and nourish the British Oak.



OBEDIENCE AND COMMUNITY*

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

I SHOULD like you to look upon this paper as the basis of a symposium. What I want to do is to put forward certain fundamental principles which lie at the very heart of our Dominican vocation, and to draw from them one or two seminal ideas, ideas which like seeds will grow and fructify in the mind, and so produce fruit in the way we live our day-to-day Dominican life. I want to do this moreover with a special eye on your office as superiors. Superiors hold a key place in community life. They are fathers and mothers of the family, and like good fathers and mothers their chief function is to foster and develop the family spirit, which is the chief educative factor in the religious community, as it is in the secular home. And since this is a symposium I think the important part of it will be the *discussion*, which I hope will arise from the seminal thoughts which I propose to scatter among you; not merely the discussion which will take place more or less formally, in this meeting, but afterwards over the dinner table, between groups; and between two also, in walks round the grounds. And that not merely today or this week, but recurrently

*A paper read to Superiors of the Dominican Third Order nuns.