

## CORRESPONDENCE

### BARON VON HÜGEL

#### *To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS*

SIR,—It has happened to me to read, one after the other, in your issues for March and April respectively, Father Henry St. John's interesting and sympathetic study of the late Lord Halifax's *pietas Anglicana*, and Father Aelfric Manson's review of M. Nédoncelle's recent book about Baron Friedrich von Hügel, and am venturing to send you a few observations suggested by their perusal to an Anglican reader.

Beside their fervent devotion to their common Lord, these two saintly Christian men had indeed very little in common; but they were alike in this, that, in the case of each, his obvious attachment to his own communion was apt to surprise members of the other's, who wondered whether he would not be more at home, spiritually, with them than with "his own people" (to use a phrase which von Hügel would often use in speaking of his fellow Roman Catholics).

The late Lord Halifax I did not know and only once met; but the friendship of Friedrich von Hügel was one of the greatest gifts that life has brought me, and I should like to be allowed to offer some comments on Fr. Manson's notice of M. Nédoncelle's study of his life and thought. I have no quarrel with his insistence on the importance, for the understanding of the Baron's theological position, of observing the chronology of his intellectual development. I agree he came in later life to set a much higher value on the theology of what he loved to call "the golden middle age"—especially on that of St. Thomas, which he knew best—than was usual among those with whom in his earlier years he was associated in a revolt against the trammels of a tradition which appealed to the great Schoolmen, but was content to remain (herein very unlike them) out of touch with the whole movement of contemporary thought and with all the enrichment which philosophy has owed to the thinkers of the last three centuries outside the Schools of the Catholic Church.

It is also true that the republication, in 1930, of his little treatise of 1893 on the Petrine claims, as though it represented his mature judgment, was quite unjustified in view of his later opinions concerning the authenticity of certain Scriptural texts upon which he had been therein content to rely. But, on the one hand, I do not believe that his rejection of these texts as authentic seriously affected his adhesion to the claim which they were used to support. He was, I think, con-

vinced to the end that our earliest records warrant the belief that St. Peter occupied among our Lord's disciples a peculiar position in which could be seen the germ of the Papacy no less than that of the episcopate in the apostolic college of the twelve. I even recollect his using language about the "Roman claims" being possibly already indicated in St. Mark's Gospel which I understood to mean (though he did not follow up the subject) that he thought it quite conceivable that the evangelist already had in his mind, when emphasizing the primacy of St. Peter, the Roman Church as its inheritor.

On the other hand, I very much doubt whether he would have expressed his faith in the authority of the Roman See in the words put into his mouth by Fr. Manson when he says that von Hügel "never doubted that the voice of God had that one single utterance in the world." Beyond doubt he held that in the Roman Church Christianity (and therefore religion) was presented in its fullest and richest form, affording opportunities for the spiritual life which no other religious fellowship could offer; so that to entertain the thought of abandoning it for any other communion was for himself inconceivable. He was full of *pietas Romana*. One remembers his dismay when George Tyrrell for awhile played with the idea of returning to Anglicanism. It was with humorous exaggeration that Tyrrell said he knew von Hügel would rather see him an atheist than an Anglican; but certainly the Baron could only envisage such a change of confession as a definitely *downward* step. Yet he "would not cross the room" to make a proselyte to Roman Catholicism, any more than he would repel from it anyone who genuinely found any other religious room too strait for him. No one can appreciate von Hügel's theology aright who does not realize the importance in it of the conception of a graded series of revelations, each embodied in a religious organization, which he found in—or rather read into—Cardinal de Lugo, but which, though it may not have been entitled to appeal to that divine's authority, may none the less have been a valuable contribution to religious thought.

I am, Sir, Yours etc.,

CLEMENT C. J. WEBB.

Fr. Aelfric Manson, O.P., replies:

Professor Webb finds a common bond between von Hügel and Lord Halifax in the fact that, apparently, some Anglicans felt that von Hügel would have been more spiritually at home as an Anglican, and some Catholics felt that Lord Halifax would have been more spiritually at home in the Church. A curious link indeed! For, in reality, von Hügel was very much at home in the Catholic Church and became more so as the years went by. His spiritual fellowship was with the Catholic Saints and his