

BLACKFRIARS

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P R E A M B L E

WHEN the Editor asked me to write a brief introduction to the present number, he reminded me that I had written a kind of 'send off' to the very first number over twenty years ago. What I wrote then can scarcely be worth re-reading now. Yet one sentence, I remember, amused Father Bede Jarrett, who quoted it in his first editorial when we changed places—he for the editor's chair, I for the *cathedra pestilentiae*, just about eight years ago. By way of disarming the critic who might deprecate a new review as an intruder into a world, already overcrowded with magazines and journals of every description, I wrote: 'One does not intrude on to a battlefield.' The metaphor sounds ironical at the present moment, when, writing in London amid the roar of the barrage guns and with the *blitzkrieg* in full blast, it would seem that, quite literally, the battlefield has intruded itself upon me.

And from that we may read a grim parable. To see familiar buildings we have known from childhood standing one day and in ruins the next is a terrible reminder of the incurable folly of men who refuse to be warned in time. For if we read the published utterances of the Popes, working backwards from *Summi Pontificatus* of Pius XII to *Inscrutabili* of Leo XIII, we shall find repeated again and again the prophecy that our epoch is rushing wildly along the straight road to destruction. The reasons given are disobedience to authority; the obstinacy of mind that will not brook any authority, however lawful; contempt for the authority of the Church which in God's name rules mankind and defends lawful rulers. If we are on the edge of this final calamity of which the Popes have

so insistently spoken, it is because of contempt of law, especially in those whose office it is to administer the law as rulers of the people.

The evil is most glaringly visible in the anti-Christian tyranny against which we are engaged in a life and death struggle. But there is a danger that we may fly into the opposite extreme and grasp at a false liberty which may turn out to be a more deadly slavery. A Cabinet Minister, recently speaking at the Children's Hour on the wireless, drew an accurate picture of the Nazi regime, and then by way of contrast he said: '*We believe in liberty—the right to do what we like, think what we like, say what we like.*' Stated thus, without qualification, it was hardly good advice to put before children, who will not take long to find out that, try as they will, they cannot do, think and say what they like. If they become soldiers, men of business, politicians, fathers or mothers of a family, women of fashion, whatever they are, they will not be able to do always as they like. Liberty is not the faculty of blindly following instinct or every whim and fancy. Liberty is a man's right to choose the means that will lead him to fulfil the purpose for which God made him. And the more he subjects himself to the necessity of doing good, the greater is his liberty. God can do no wrong and no one has more liberty than God. Among God's creatures the most perfect liberty is the liberty of the angels and the blessed, who are immune from error and sin. On earth the noblest liberty is the freedom of the saints, who are delivered from the slavery of sin. *Consequens est quod libertas a peccato sit vera libertas quae conjungitur servituti justitiae* (II^a II^{ae} 183.4): 'It follows that freedom from sin is true freedom which is united to the servitude of justice.' Our Lord built the Church on his own royal obedience—obedient to the death of the Cross. This number of **BLACKFRIARS** is an attempt to recall men to that obedience and consequently to the freedom of the children of God.

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