

versal rural-monasticism without the celibacy : such a state of affairs is impossible. There will always be towns, and probably a good deal of mechanisation ; and there will always be exceptional groups and individuals who have no love of nature or understanding of the deeper issues of religion. But unless a Christian rural-religious society becomes once more the *norm* of Western civilisation there is little hope for the future. It is, surely, a matter of common sense that man cannot be happy or integrated apart from the earth and from God, since he originates from them and is akin to them.

The future, as always, is unpredictable. No one can hope to know what the upshot of this war will be ; but among many possibilities one is that industrial civilisation may be in progress of slowly smashing itself up out of its own contradictions, and that after a new dark age a new medievalism may arise, finer than the old and purged of much of its ignorance—a second spring in which man will find himself anew in a rough, simple, but integrated life. Sin and neurosis will not pass away : they are our heritage ; but the latter will no longer be, as to-day, widespread and malignant. Or it may be that the war will end conventionally in a stalemate or a defeat for one or other party, and the industrial world, purged of certain excesses, will drag itself on for a time. But it cannot endure. The neurotic tensions generated by the modern apostasy from the earth and from God, and fostered by a false abstracted view of life, must destroy the individual and society. Neurosis, mass neurosis, and increasingly malignant neurosis, is the inevitable result of our industrial civilisation.

ROBERT HAMILTON.

A MODEL STUDY-CIRCLE

IN the winter of 1920-21 there was founded in Vienna the Association known as *Logos*. It was an Association or club of members of the University who sought to solve their problems and difficulties by discussion and research. There were under-graduates and graduates, scholars and professors, men and women of the learned professions : historians, scientists, doctors, lawyer, metaphysicians, linguists, social-philosophers and economists. Those were days of hardship and misery in Austria. The dismemberment of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, the breakdown of a world built five centuries before, the reversal of age-old traditions, poverty and unemployment, anti-religious movements and modern materialistic-

rationalistic trends of thought, brought new social and individual needs and innumerable personal problems, and led a few people to gather together for discussion. They soon realised that only faith could provide a firm basis for their proceedings and that authoritative guidance on theological matters was essential. They, therefore, approached the Jesuit Fathers in Vienna and asked for the appointment of a Father to act as spiritual adviser at their meetings. This request was granted, and after a year's intensive work by some twenty laymen of different learned professions of science and arts and after many experiments a certain definite method was tested and accepted and proved to be perfectly workable. This method became the basis of the organisation of the *Logos* circles. Ever increasing public interest and a growing membership made it necessary to organise the Association formally and establish more circles. There followed nearly seventeen years of successful work, until the day when Austria was invaded by the Germans. The Nazis at once seized the premises and library of *Logos* and dissolved the Association.

The aim of *Logos* was the re-education of Catholic laymen on the basis of solid knowledge and deeper insight into the truths of the Catholic faith; to make up for deficiencies in religious instruction, and to adjust religious knowledge to the standard of secular education and learning; to re-open the approach to Catholicism to wider intellectual sections in a philosophical, rational and intellectual way; to provide a Catholic basis for the secular problems of science, arts and public life. In short, its object was to penetrate intellectual life with the *Logos spermatikos*.

The organisation of *Logos* was democratic, and its activities were divided by the college terms of the University into two Semesters, one from autumn to Lent, and one from Lent to summer, with two months' summer holidays. A General Meeting was held in each Semester. It was opened with Holy Mass said by the spiritual adviser and attended by all members, and its purpose was to discuss and criticise all the activities of the Association, to elect the Chairman and the managing Executive Committee, to settle financial matters, and to grant admission to new members. The Executive Committee was presided over by the Chairman, and was composed of the spiritual advisers of each Circle, the librarian, secretary, treasurer and the chairmen of the Circles, and the chairmen of the professional groups. It met monthly or fortnightly, and was the managing body which was responsible for arranging the programmes of the lectures in the different Circles. A Circle was, if possible, to be limited to

twenty members, and when this number was exceeded a new Circle was to be established. The Circles were formed of men and women of different professions, and so far as possible all professions were to be represented in each. Each Circle was autonomous and elected its own chairman and secretary. There were finally four or five Circles, each of which met once a week on its own day at 7.0 p.m. Members of all the Circles belonging to the same profession formed a professional group, whose task was to prepare and provide the lectures. Members had to submit their lectures, before they were delivered in the Circles, to their professional group, which was responsible for criticising, and, if necessary, correcting it, and for fixing the questions for discussion, but dealt only with the secular aspects of the lectures. There were a metaphysical group, an historical group, a jurisprudential group (including politics, sociology and economics) a scientific group, a medical group (which included psychology), and a literary group. The professional groups held their meetings as often as was needed, once a month, or three or four times a semester.

Every Catholic of a certain standard of education (graduate or undergraduate) could become a member of *Logos*, and membership was granted on the suggestion of the Executive Committee at the General Meeting. The suggestion for membership could only be made if the applicant had attended the regular meetings as an applicant for two semesters (or, in exceptional cases, one), had joined in the discussions and had himself contributed at least one lecture. Political opinion, nationality or race did not play any part. Practically any well-educated or learned person was admitted as a guest without regard to his creed. In every Circle a list was circulated showing those present, divided into three columns according as they were members, applicants, or guests. To invite anybody to join was prohibited. Before every General Meeting the names which had appeared in the "applicants" column at the meetings of the last two semesters were taken into consideration. The decisive factors for admission were the degree of education, the interest in the work shown by regular attendance and participation in the discussions, and the general standard of the applicant. The strict principle was: Quality not quantity.

The working of *Logos* can best be understood from a description of the Circle meetings. As has been said, each Circle met weekly at 7.0 p.m. on its own day. The chairman opened the Circle, and the spiritual adviser sat in front of him. Every Circle had its secretary, whose duty it was to keep short Minutes of the main points

of the lecture, of its problems and questions, and of the solutions arrived at by discussion. These Minutes were essential for the work of the professional groups in preparing lectures and questions for discussion. The secretary was also responsible for circulating a list of persons present. Every Circle Meeting began with the reading of the Holy Gospel. At the beginning of a semester, each Circle chose either one of the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles or an Epistle for its reading during that semester (one Circle once chose, as an exception, to read the Gospel for the following Sunday). A member of the Circle read a few verses or a chapter. Questions could then be asked, and this part of the proceedings, which was not to last more than half an hour or, at the most, forty minutes, was concluded with a short discussion and exegesis by the spiritual adviser. This reading was always regarded as an essential part of the Meeting and was never omitted. It afforded opportunity for some religious instruction, especially in the dogmatic field, and gave guidance to members for their own reading of the Holy Bible. But besides this, it was essential as a preparation of the community for the work that was to follow it. They came to the Meetings from their own every-day work, from university office, hospital, or Law Courts, from every kind of occupation. The reading of the Holy Gospel—during which smoking was prohibited—created a peaceful, clean and calm atmosphere which seemed to clear the air of the dust of daily work and life and fulfil the promise, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. xviii, 20).

After the Gospel had been read, a lecture was regularly given by one of the members. Its subject was taken from the lecturer's own professional work or occupation, and it explained in detail the sober facts from which some religious ideological problem or difficulty arose. The lecture, therefore, did not propose any solution or suggestion of a solution, but ended with an open problem, or a question or questions, which might be in the dogmatic or moral field. These questions were put to the Circle to be solved or decided by discussion. The lecture should not take more than twenty-five or thirty minutes. Lecturers were normally members of *Logos*; but guests were exceptionally invited to lecture, and sometimes were such well-known persons as Ignatius Seipel, F. Przywara, F. Lindworsky, F. Lippert, Romano Guardini, and Hendryk de Man. These lectures dealt with various problems in public and private life, and were the outcome of social or individual difficulties which had become apparent in the course of the professional or scholarly activities of

the members. Each lecture was prepared as regards its secular contents by the professional group, which, as has been explained above, also formulated the questions for discussion. The purpose of the lecturer was not to perform a brilliant rhetorical feat, but simply to explain clearly and soberly the professional matter from which the ideological difficulty had arisen. With two or three, or even more, questions the lecture came to an end, and the discussion followed.

The discussion took the greater part of the time of every Meeting—between an hour and a half and two hours, and sometimes even longer. Its basic principles were, No vanity, no self-consciousness, but complete frankness and a sincere aiming at truth. If no satisfactory solution or answers could be reached, the discussion was to be postponed and continued at another Meeting until general agreement in accordance with dogma and law, moral, divine or ecclesiastical, was achieved. The results were recorded, briefly in a few sentences, in the Minutes by the secretary. The value of the Minutes to the professional groups has already been mentioned. In order to get a true team spirit and common work, and to encourage the younger members to come out of their shells, the older members and scholars would withhold their opinion at the beginning of a discussion. It was always underlined as a principle that there should be no teachers or pupils, but that everybody should give and take in the common work. Attendance at the Meetings was obligatory, and members were expected to furnish an explanation of absence.

The importance of the work thus done is shown by the subjects on which lectures were given. For example, the jurisprudential group considered problems of matrimonial and criminal law, questions of agricultural reform and of the relation of man to the soil (peasantry problems), unemployment, the right to work, medieval and modern class society, property in Roman law and the social function of property, housing policy and its bearing on family life, ethical elements in Marxism and the psychology of Marxism. The medical group dealt with such questions as euthanasia, craniotomy, painless birth, birth control, and with pastoral problems in hospitals and the obligations of Catholic doctors and nurses; with problems of eugenics, and many psychological questions associated with the names of Freud, Adler, Jung and Wundt. The historical group considered various conceptions of history: German idealism (Hegel) and Historical Theology (Augustine, Dante, Calderon, and of the moderns, F. Thomas Michels, O.S.B., Theodor Haecker). Other subjects were the Holy Roman Empire; classic and Christian

heroism (the German and Catholic conceptions); the conception of liberty, equality and fraternity as held by the French Revolution, liberal democracy, St. Paul, the Fathers and Scholastics; nationalism, the nation and the State, and the right place of the nation in the objective order of values. The metaphysicians' group discussed Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, modern phenomenology, Husserl and Max Scheler, Theodor Haecker, Simmel, Othmar Spann (who several times comes as a guest to *Logos*) and the philosophic questions raised by psycho-analysis. Certain definite fundamental problems again and again became apparent in different forms in these lectures and discussions: the problem of the freedom of the will the psychophysical problem, the problem of suffering, the problem of sacrifice, the problem of law and charity, and all the various problems falling under the common denominator of individual and community.

It is interesting to note that a general change of thought which occurred universally became obvious in the activities of *Logos*. When the Association started in the early twenties, it had to deal with the nineteenth-century school of thought, that is to say with materialism and individualism in its forms of rationalist liberalism, pragmatism, and Marxist socialism. In their problems and questions the members of *Logos* had to face and fight individualism and rationalism. But even as early as about 1927-28 it was becoming increasingly clear that these were no longer the actual menace. The real foe was now irrationalism and collectivism, and it seemed necessary to defend and emphasize the position of the moral spiritual personality. A most interesting change of front took place, and the activities of *Logos* clearly reflected the big changes of thought (Othmar Spann) which obviously foreshadowed the events to come.

Logos started with some twenty to twenty-five members. In the last years of its existence it had four or five Circles, each with twenty-five to thirty members and each working regularly and meeting weekly. It was successful in that an ever increasing number of its members were working in intellectual professions everywhere, in offices, Law Courts, hospitals and schools, and were gradually beginning to permeate intellectual life with Catholic thought. Moreover *Logos* became for many people—whether non-believers, non-Catholics, or lukewarm Catholics—an approach to the Church, and in this way it became in many cases the instrument of grace. An attempt is now being made to continue the Circles in London, and anybody who may be interested could be put in touch by writing to the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

W. C. BREITENFELD.