

LAXTON WEEK-END

TWENTY-NINE Catholics, most of them lay and many belonging to what is called the modern generation, spent the second week-end of September at a Dance and Phillipson mansion—elegant and comfortable, says De Quincey, who stayed there, but not splendid—square and Ionic, set in a park of rough Northamptonshire turf and beech clumps and encircled by woods of oak. Their purpose, more easily recognized than described, was to form contacts; to discuss the widening of Catholicism in themselves and their society, of Catholicism considered more as a habit of life than a system of revealed principles and organized procedure; and to prepare, if possible, for some form of group action.

The first general meeting started with the statement of two principles: first, the continuity between supernatural religion and the rest of life; secondly, the Catholic significance of every human action. 'Spirituality' is not a special occupation, remote from other human interests: the sacred and the profane imply a distinction but not an antithesis: there is such a thing as religious worldliness, which is not a comfortable but a difficult ideal: Catholicism is not a spasmodic treble, or for that matter a treble at all, but covers the whole human movement of living—all these are merely chapter headings, indications of an emphasis, not scientifically stated conclusions.

But while Catholicism is as wide as life, organized Catholicism denotes a special kind of life. From this life springs a special kind of activity called Catholic Action, in which all who attended the Laxton week-end take part in varying degrees. But the meeting was specifically concerned, not with Catholic Action, but with the activity of Catholics¹ and with the chances and need of collaboration here. It was not unaware of the danger of anti-clericalism, but any criticism of proper ecclesiastical authority was at once recognized as both futile and unnecessary, quite apart from the complete loyalty and obedience to be taken for granted in all who attended.

¹ Cf. 'Catholics and the National Consciousness' in BLACKFRIARS, June, 1934.

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Later discussions centred round the Cinema, *The Colosseum*, the establishment of centres to carry on and develop the work started at Laxton. The leader of the discussion on the Cinema was interested in it not as an instrument of explicitly Catholic instruction or propaganda, but as a tremendous influence which still requires to be turned into a civilizing influence. *The Colosseum* has already won for itself a considerable place in periodical publication: its character as a lay Catholic review without archaeological preoccupations or dreams of a glorious future made it inevitably the centre of another general discussion. Some possible relations between contributors to *The Colosseum*, BLACKFRIARS, *The Catholic Herald*, and the book publications of Sheed and Ward were examined, and views were expressed without prejudice by members of the four parties concerned.

It is too early yet to indicate the practical schemes that were started, but this incomplete and bald account gives some idea of the intention of the week-end, which throughout was dominated by a profound unanimity of feeling. The following list of the names of those who attended commits no one: interest is not necessarily sympathy, nor sympathy the promise of active support. Hugh Berry, Richard Birley, Tom Burns, T. Charles-Edwards, O. Crosthwaite-Eyre, Michael Derrick, Thomas Gilby, Eric Gill, René Hague, Denis Hickling, Edmund Howard, Bernard Kelly, J. R. Kirwan, Arthur Littledale, David Mathew, Gervase Mathew, John-Baptist Reeves, R. C. Richards, G. Rinvulcri, Henry St. John, Robert Speaight, Denis Tegetmeier, Christopher Thomas, Ælwin Tindal-Atkinson, Gerald Vann, E. Vernor Miles, Bernard Wall, Evelyn Waugh, and R. O. J. Wynne.

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