

form of 'plague'. Perhaps disease has shifted from the body to the mind. In past times certain diseases were considered, quite wrongly, of course, to be a disgrace. Sufferers tried to hide them. Consequently they spread. Once they were forced to come into the open and be treated, some sort of control over the disease itself was gained. In fact, in some cases the disease is well on the way to being eliminated, or has disappeared altogether. Would it not therefore be an act of charity to try to check the spread of this diseased mental condition by some such methods? Neurotics are more than normally concerned with the opinion of others. Particularly they avoid anyone who appears to have discovered their abnormal condition. If the symptoms were sufficiently well known as to be (safely!) recognized, and if it were the practice to approach them on this delicate subject (instead of pretending it did not exist), might not these people—in desperation, as it were—find themselves forced to take treatment, or try to cure themselves (which goes a long way towards a cure, in this case) and thus in time the disease would become less prevalent?

Meanwhile, please, what must one do here and now, when having to deal with such a sufferer? Should we aim at charity so heroic as to risk, not life, but sanity? Would such an offering be what is required, as sacrifice, for the conquering of the evils which have brought about this state of affairs? Is the foregoing suggestion merely a 'natural' solution, while we who aim at Christian perfection should be willing to forego self-protection, and act super-naturally?

There are several of us who will be truly grateful for an authoritative answer to this problem.

Yours sincerely,

G.H.

'The Apostle as Poet'

TO THE EDITOR, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT,

One cannot help but feel that Mr Shayer has missed the point of the article on 'The Apostle as Poet'. It is not my wish to attempt to defend Fr Pepler. He is more qualified than I to answer the charges made. While not seeking to arbitrate, perhaps I may be allowed a word on what seems to me a point of some importance. The problem that lies at the heart of all apostolic activity can be

stated in a general way as being one of adaptation: to incarnate eternal truth here and now.

“Those who deal with doctrine must express themselves in such ways, both in word and writing, that our contemporaries shall understand and listen.” (Pius XII.)

Cardinal Suhard, in his Pastoral ‘Rise or Decline of the Church’, having stressed that the apostolate must be fully supernatural, goes on to say that it must also be adapted—‘Adaptation does not mean accommodation, or systematically substituting the “new” for the “old”, still less mutilation of the Church’s message, but solely an integral and intelligent “Incarnation” of that message in the actual state of things we have to change. The situation is not always and everywhere the same; and it is this which explains and justifies the fact that the methods of the apostolate change with the times. This fact is so important that it dictates the whole attitude we have to adopt today and the line we have to follow. The first duty which is laid upon us before anything is done is “to sit down and count”, so as to study the conditions which govern the re-Christianization of the world at this present time.’

“The Christian does not choose his method”, he goes on to say; “it is imposed on him by the environment of which he is part, and it is the action of the leaven. . . . His efforts will thus not be directed merely to recruiting others and making the unbeliever “come to him”, but also, and above all, to identifying himself with them in order to save them as they are.’

In his 1949 Pastoral on ‘The Priest in the Modern World’, he has a section on this duty of adaptation. “To be a priest of the twentieth century, therefore, does not demand a slavish imitation of methods that were once valuable, nor in introducing new forms as a matter of principle. It means translating the message into contemporary terms. In a word, the priest must adapt himself. It would be a sad mistake (though it is sometimes made) to imagine that this adaptation consists in *imitating* (italics his) slavishly contemporary manners. It does not follow that because a priest uses the latest refinements of technical invention or is up-to-date in the latest publications, that he will have the attention of his people. No doubt, today more than ever, he has the duty of being in the *avant garde* of thought and culture. But if this knowledge does not proceed from, and is not accompanied by, a deeper understanding, which makes him one with the trials and the hopes

of his fellow-men *from within*, (italics his) they will never recognize him as one of themselves. But while guarding against a too literal conception of adaptation, we should not fall into an opposite and more serious error: arguing from the fact that because the priest must be all things to all men, that he must remain apart from human particularities. This would be the negation of the principle of St Paul: "With the Jews I lived like a Jew, to win the Jews. . . . With the scrupulous, I behaved myself like one who is scrupulous, to win the scrupulous."

Surely Mr Shayer does not question this? The whole problem is more complex than he would have us believe, however. There is no blue-print for success. Each must make the necessary adjustments, and we all begin raw. Cardinal Mercier wrote that there were two fundamental sciences for the priest to acquire: he must know the *message* of Christ which he is to give to the people; he must know the *people* who are to receive Christ's message. Yet in a letter to Cardinal Gibbons he confessed, despite his close study of the matter, that he was 'without experience, and more accustomed to discussing ideas and directing an élite than to handling crowds. I knew the world just well enough to realize that I did not know it at all.'

One would have to ignore all the experiments made in recent years and blessed by the Church, indeed, one would have to restrict the idea of the apostolate itself, if one subscribed to some of the views Mr Shayer puts forward.

It would appear that a suspicion of latent anti-intellectualism is involved, though why it should be thought so is not clear.

Is it considered shocking to indicate that even a theologian may not know everything? Theologians are much too sensible people to be hurt by such an evident fact, and it is a fact that a theologian too must be constantly re-learning if he is to be understood and listened to. It was in this context, and it could scarcely be called esoteric, that I read Fr Pepler's article. The tendency to overlook the people in one's concern for the message is actual and needs thought.

We are grateful to God for such men as Damien de Veuster and Fr Ricci and Fr Lebbe, each of whom in such different circumstances showed us the possibilities and gave us a fuller understanding of the apostolate. Damian on Molokai or Charles de Foucauld in Morocco or the Oblates among the Eskimoes may

not appear in the index of a verse anthology, but if Fr Pepler or anyone else wanted to say they are poets I for one would not mind. They all had in common a spark of the divine. They saw Christ afresh and fell captive. 'Poet' seems an apt description for such a one.

ADRIAN DOWLING, O.P.



REVIEWS

THE CALL OF THE CLOISTER: RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND KINDRED BODIES IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION. By Peter F. Anson. (S.P.C.K.; 42s.)

This is a most complete and comprehensive survey of the growth of religious life in the Church of England, and from it, in the Anglican Communion at large. Almost from the Reformation itself there seem to have been yearnings, notably those of John Evelyn and others in the seventeenth century, for a partial restoration of what had been so completely destroyed by Henry VIII, and it is noteworthy that a very un-Protestant aspiration after the ideal of celibacy played no small part in these yearnings. But Nicholas Ferrar's community at Little Gidding remained an isolated instance of anything accomplished in this direction until the establishment of Sisterhoods by Dr Pusey and other early Tractarian leaders in the middle of the nineteenth century.

During the hundred-odd years since these beginnings, numerous communities of men and women have been founded; some now famous, whose life and work continues to exercise a notable influence on the Anglican Communion as a whole, others, now defunct, sometimes with elements in their story that are bizarre and extravagant, as was the experiment of the famous Father Ignatius of Llanthony; and others again, smaller and humble in their accomplishment, little known to the world outside, yet integrated into the widespread religious system that in modern times has grown from the Elizabethan settlement.

Three things will probably surprise Catholics hitherto unacquainted with the complete story here related. The first is the amazing extent to which religious life has developed in the Anglican Communion during the course of a century. The second is its reality and seriousness, and the high aspirations of its asceticism; for the most part we are accustomed to think vaguely of Anglican monks and nuns as people occupied in