

Blackfriars from 1924 to 1934

Fergus Kerr OP

In a letter to Fr Bede Jarrett, dated 17 July 1925, Basil Blackwell refers to the financial instability of *Blackfriars*, this journal, which he had published since 1922: ‘The policy of safety, no doubt, is to cease publication at the end of this volume’ — volume VI.¹

On his father’s death, in 1924, Basil Blackwell, then aged thirty five, took over the bookshop in Oxford. At this distance, it looks as if he decided to focus on building up the bookshop, rather than the publishing house he had founded in 1921. Not until the 1950s did his become a significant name in academic publishing, with such books as Elizabeth Anscombe’s *Intention*, a classic as it turned out, never out of print. By then, Blackwell’s was the leading academic bookshop in the United Kingdom.

According to the letter asking Bernard Delany to resume the editorship, Fr Bede says that Basil Blackwell had come to regard *Blackfriars* as ‘little more than respectable’, whereas he expected it to be ‘fresh, daring and sane’ when he took on the job of publishing it.

April 1924

Edwin Essex became editor in November 1924, when Bernard Delany graduated and moved from Oxford. He could not have had much impact on the contents of the journal until early 1925. Indeed, he can have been responsible for at most six issues before he was replaced. Looking through some months *before* he took over, however, one sees little in them that is ‘fresh, daring and sane’.

Consider, for example, the April 1924 number. Bernard Delany had stopped writing editorials regularly. The issue opens with a review article by O. Bennigsen of a book by Francis McCullagh, *The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity*. McCullagh, an Irish journalist, reports on the previous six years of ‘unspeakable outrages’ committed against Christians in Communist Russia. Numerous ‘excursionists’ from the West, including a Methodist bishop, had brought back ‘glowing accounts of the Marxian Eden’. The truth needed to be told. McCullagh, Bennigsen thinks, is perhaps too severe in his condemnation of the Russian Church and the Patriarch: ‘Many believe that the latter’s surrender was due not to cowardice, but to the desire of saving the Church’. The purpose of the

482

article is, however, to retail McCullagh's account of the treatment meted out to Catholic clergy. One Monsignor Budkiewicz, for example, was stripped naked and shot through the back of the head: 'the bullet, coming out in the centre of the face, had rendered it unrecognizable'.

McCullagh was a well known war correspondent, with books about his adventures during the Russo-Japanese war (1906), and the Italians in Tripoli (1911), and with *Red Mexico* (1928) and *In Franco's Spain* (1937) to come. From the book under review onwards he becomes a specialist in reporting atrocities wreaked on Catholics, clergy and laity.

O. Bennigsen was Countess Olga Bennigsen. She and her husband, Count George, did a good deal in the 1930s to keep the British public informed about events in Russia. She had a hand in translating Nicholas Berdyaev, the Orthodox religious thinker. In short, this White Russian aristocrat must have been commissioned by Bernard Delany to communicate the truth about the murder of Catholic priests in her homeland (Lenin had been dying since 1922; the situation still seemed quite fluid; Stalin did not get control until 1928).

In contrast with Countess Olga Bennigsen's article, the rest of the April 1924 issue is pretty lightweight, even frivolous. In order of appearance we have: one more *jeu d'esprit* by Ronald Knox (religion as a 'gland' which some have from birth, which may be surgically removed or implanted); an account of Dr Johnson's all but forgotten first book (a translation of the seventeenth-century Portuguese Jesuit Jerome Lobo's narrative of his travels in Abyssinia); an article about Angelo Poliziano, the fifteenth-century Italian scholar; a report of a newly written Nativity play performed in the Town Hall, Dalkey, County Dublin; a harsh review of *Citizenship* by Sir W.H. Hadow ('an indigestible feast of abstractions'); a poem by Edwin Essex (the future Editor; his literary qualification for the post was his verses); a two-page meditation on 'Variety', by Eleanor Downing, not quite a prose-poem ('Think of the millions upon millions of snowflakes scattered from the clouds in a single hour, each a perfect work of art' etc.); the reproduction of a woodcut of the Crucifixion, by Gabriel Pippet, facing three short poems on the subject by E. Hamilton Moore; an account of the letters of Peter Dominic Dupouey (*sic*); and two more poems, one by Eleanor Downing, the other by Vivienne Dayrell, each occupying two pages.

The Catholic twist is obvious in each of these items; but it cannot be said that the issue as a whole, or any of these individual contributions, is memorable or requiring and deserving serious intellectual engagement. The emphasis, anyway, is on quirky figures in history and edifying verse.

Vivienne Dayrell Browning had been received into the Catholic Church in Hampstead by Bede Jarrett. In 1924 she was working for Basil

Blackwell. Her book, *The Little Wings: Poems and Essays*, with an introduction by G.K. Chesterton, was among the first published under the B.H. Blackwell imprint, in 1921. She was to marry Graham Greene in 1927 and shorten her name to Vivien.²

E. Hamilton Moore, author of *English Miracle Plays and Moralities* (1907), was also a poet, much more prolific than Dayrell. One book, entitled *Fifteen Roses: being our Lady's Rosary in verse*, with illustrations by Gabriel Pippet, was to be published by Blackwell, in 1926: 250 copies printed at the Shakespeare Head Press, one hundred on handmade paper.

In comparison with these very minor English Catholic poets, Lieutenant Charles Marie Dominique Pierre Dupouey was something of a cult figure in post-War France. Killed in action in 1915, his letters to his wife, recording how he had recovered his Catholic faith in the trenches, were published in 1922, with a preface by André Gide: moving if (by modern standards) somewhat stilted and exalted reflections, worth reading as an example of a certain kind of 'conversion' literature left by young men facing death in the Great War.

The six poems are all very 'religious', and, again by modern standards, sentimental and even kitschy: 'O hold my hand when I descend the Deep/ And share the darkness that Thou didst design' (Dayrell, 'The Body Speaks'); 'A little rose-leaf warm and near,/ A thing to mother at the heart,/ To shield and cherish in the arms:/ Gray elfin eyes that brave and clear/ Look into yours with artless art,/ And a red mouth that clings and warms' (Downing, 'The Child'); etc. Dayrell is a good deal more powerful than Downing.

For the rest, one cannot help thinking, the contents are dilettantish: recondite erudition (Lobo, Poliziano), flippancy (Knox), and pietism of a rather 'French' literary kind (Dupouey).

On the whole, it seems not unjust to say, the April 1924 issue offers *belles lettres* for the leisured Catholic's coffee table rather than anything intellectually stimulating, let alone 'daring'. Few subscribers can have gone back to re-read any of the items at their leisure.

April 1924 carries six book reviews: *Christian Monism* by Eric Wasmann SJ; a 'charming' biography of Coventry Patmore's daughter (a religious of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus); a scholarly edition, by Ronald Knox and Shane Leslie, of the miracles attributed to the intercession of King Henry VI of England (Cambridge University Press)³; a new edition of Sir Tobie Matthew's translation of Saint Augustine's *Confessions*; 400 pages of contemporary criticism of Dr Johnson ('heavy as lead', the reviewer decides); and finally *Sanctions* by Ronald Knox (his 'best piece of work', so Bernard Delany concludes: conversations about religion set in a remote country house in the Highlands of Scotland, with

comic Anglican clergy, a psycho-analyst, dotty Catholic priests, etc.).

The only serious book on this list is *Christian Monism*: a long forgotten exposition of the Catholic doctrine of sanctification as 'divinization'. The author, Erich Wasmann SJ (1859–1931), was better known as a major figure on the entomological scene, with books about instinct and intelligence in animals, such as *The Ants and their Guests* (1913), most of them translated into English. He also published a brief study of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) as a 'natural scientist' (*Naturforscherin*) — decades before she was recognized as one of the most remarkable theologians of the Middle Ages.

Apart from Wasmann's book, the review section confirms one's sense of being drawn into a rather quaint, introverted and complacent English Catholic subculture — as the articles as a whole suggest, apart from the opening glimpse of the horrors of Bolshevism.

May 1924

May 1924 opens with a long, highly appreciative report by Bede Jarrett of the first night of Shaw's *Saint Joan*: 'an event of consequence not only in society circles, but in artistic circles as well' — an interesting way of putting it, suggesting that he wanted to situate *Blackfriars* in the wider world of London metropolitan culture, beyond the intra-Catholic fold. The highly successful staging of the story of Joan of Arc, in a play written by the leading dramatist of the day, could not but open the way to raising central theological issues, though Jarrett does so with characteristic discretion, preferring to be oblique and tentative rather than upfront or at all tendentious. No doubt he had in mind 'the Catholic dining population', in need of 'arguments they can employ after the soup'.

We get more verses by Dayrell and Hamilton Moore; a translation of thoughts on the Resurrection by the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solov'yov; a study of George Psalmanazar, a notorious forger of his own exotic identity (brought forcibly to Europe from Formosa by the Jesuits, so he claimed); an amazingly fierce attack on the religion of the Jains ('the super-vegetarians'), rooted no doubt in 1920s middle-class English Catholic delight in gastronomy, rather than serious interest in non-Christian religion — but also 'Catholicism and Economics', the first of a series of essays by Christopher Dawson (1889–1970).

In 1924 Dawson was in his mid thirties, yet to begin teaching at the then University College of Exeter, with his first major books still to appear, *The Age of the Gods* (1928) and *The Making of Europe* (1932). Far ahead in the future lay *Religion and Culture* (Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh, 1947–48). A 'metahistorian', as he would call himself, Dawson was to become something like the

English Catholic equivalent of Arnold Toynbee, in his own much more modest way seeking to bring out the fundamental forces in European history that might yet save a disintegrating civilization. As little read as Eric Gill by young Catholics today, Christopher Dawson was also a major figure in the composition of English Catholicism in the first half of the twentieth century.

In June 1924 we have Hilaire Belloc, already of course a 'name', a controversial figure, courting opposition, widely known beyond the English Catholic community, as well as the second instalment of Dawson.

There is also a favourable review, signed J.C. (Joseph Clayton no doubt), praising an exposition of the ideas of the Labour Party by Philip Snowden (by this time Chancellor of the Exchequer in the first Labour Government; a post which he retained until 1931).

In July 1924 Denis Gwynn reports on the results of the French general election ('Will France go anti-clerical again?'): as the Great War begins to recede, there is a perceptible move in *Blackfriars* towards considering what is happening on the Continent — France, Italy, Spain, Germany ...

This number includes a study of George MacDonald (1824–1905), the Scottish writer whose fairy tales would eventually allow some to class him along with Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and suchlike, many years later.

There is also an angry, though controlled and carefully documented critique by Bede Jarrett of a book about Tomas de Torquemada OP and the Spanish Inquisition: no whitewash, but dealing with assertions grounded more in anti-Catholic prejudice than historical study.

May 1924, a strong number, is rather an exception. In August and September 1924, we revert to belles-lettristic articles, while the books under review are narrowly 'churchy' in scope. In sum, well before Edwin Essex took over as editor, *Blackfriars* was failing to be as adventurous as Bede Jarrett hoped at its foundation.

Dispute with de la Taille

October 1924 is a good read. We have Denis Gwynn again, always excellent, on the recurrent anti-Catholicism in French politics. We have an intervention by Vincent McNabb OP in the debate about the eucharistic doctrine of Maurice de la Taille SJ. We have Martin D'Arcy SJ, strongly recommending Jacques Maritain as a much better guide to the philosophy of art than Clive Bell (Bloomsbury aestheticism). And finally we have Eric Gill: 'Art and Love'.

Maurice de la Taille (1872–1933) completed his great book *Mysterium Fidei* in 1915 when he was serving as a military chaplain; it appeared in 1921, and immediately gave rise to furious debate. Thomists never liked

this 'strange and repulsive doctrine', as McNabb calls it. The error, he thinks, to put it very summarily, was that, while de la Taille held the Last Supper, the Cross and the Mass to be one and the same sacrifice because they are three *parts* of the same sacrifice, they are rightly to be understood, McNabb insists, as three *modes* of one and the same sacrifice.

McNabb charges de la Taille with misapplying passages in Thomas Aquinas. De la Taille replies in the December issue. Formally polite, the exchanges do not conceal the passion and the anxiety that deep issues are at stake. At bottom, the question was, of course, immensely important: Catholics had long been accused of regarding the sacrifice of the Mass as additional to the sacrifice of Calvary.

Neither McNabb nor de la Taille pays any attention to what non-Catholics might think. Nowadays it would be difficult to find a single Catholic theologian who could explain what the controversy was all about. The whole debate at the time, the most contentious inside Catholic theology until about 1940, is now largely forgotten. By far the thorniest theological problem tackled in *Blackfriars*, the journal had not the space nor the readership to treat it properly. There is neither enough explanation to brief the non-specialist about what is at stake nor the continuity of exchange which the professional theological journals engaged in. De la Taille's refutation, in the December 1924 number, of McNabb's critique, must have seemed pretty conclusive to the average reader — though not, of course, to the Thomist.

For all the frenzied exchanges in the 'twenties and 'thirties, de la Taille's *Mysterium fidei* was bypassed in the developments in eucharistic theology in the 'fifties and 'sixties which flowered at the Second Vatican Council, affecting the reforms of the liturgy and present-day understanding of the Mass. In retrospect, it has been suggested, de la Taille's focus on the Last Supper helped to retrieve the meal element in the eucharist. With all its jargon and hair-splitting sophistication, one might think, the debate eventually wearied theologians of the stunningly esoteric post-Tridentine debates about bloody and unbloody sacrifice, immolation and mactation, whether transubstantiation brings about change in Christ's body, etc. Over 200 years of argument about the Mass, once at the centre of Catholic theology, are now almost completely forgotten. (Outbreaks of amnesia often save Catholic theology from absurdity.)

Eric Gill

Eric Gill is on form. Work is art and art is love — love for God that is to say. 'All the works of men were works of art' — 'until the modern commercial state overwhelmed us'. Work as art is *worship*. We have to get

back 'those customs which make every act a religious act and a ritual act, and every moment a step towards God'. In particular, we need to celebrate 'the physical union of lovers' as a 'God-appointed act'. 'All creation is female to God, and the soul of man is the essentially female thing'.

Gill's essays were reprinted in his book *Art Nonsense* which George Bennigsen, in July 1930, reviews at some length. Opinion on the merits of Gill's work, sculpture and carving, is 'widely divergent' — 'While some admire it unreservedly, others dislike it as intensely'. Bennigsen is concerned about 'an over-emphasis on sex'. He is a bit coy, never quite stating his alarm at the amount of nudity in Gill's work. His images of the Madonna, the Crucifixion, and so on, do not have the religious quality of Orthodox icons. At the theoretical level, as he puts it, Gill 'expounds ideas which have already been expressed by the notorious Dukhobor leader Peter Berighin' — 'The practical application of these theories is giving sufficient trouble to the Canadian Police ...'. The Doukhobors ('Spirit-fighters'), a heretical offshoot of Russian Orthodoxy, then as now mostly in western Canada, allegedly prefer not to wear clothes.

December 1924

December 1924 opens with a ferocious critique, by John Baptist Reeves OP, of the Everyman's Library edition of the Paston Letters: 1,088 documents dating from 1422 to 1509, first published as a whole in 1904.⁴ Reeves (1888–1976) had just failed to satisfy the examiners of his B.Litt. dissertation at Oxford. While he came to the Order with a first in Classics at London University, he had no academic success thereafter. His demolition of the editing of this cheap popular version of the Letters seems driven by the zeal of a thwarted scholar to display his unappreciated capacity to marshal erudition.

We then have an account (illustrated) of new stained glass windows in St Peter's Morningside Edinburgh.

There is little that could be described as intellectually challenging in this issue. It is saved by a savage attack by Reginald Ginns OP on what the Turks were doing in Asia Minor: 'The De-Christianising of Asia Minor'. The Treaty of Lausanne, signed in July 1923, agreed that the Orthodox Greeks in Anatolia were to be exchanged for the Muslim Turks in Greek Macedonia.⁵

In sum: several months before Edwin Essex became Editor, *Blackfriars* was like one of the many 'little magazines' of the day: something of a miscellany, predominantly literary, sometimes a little precious, seldom at all demanding or provocative intellectually, publishing little that would count as theology however loosely defined.

Edwin Essex's issues

February 1925 is the first number over which Edwin Essex can have exerted much control. We have Joseph Clayton once again, in characteristic style, discussing the 'fact' of 'the class war' — a contentious topic (even today: recent papal social teaching denies there is any such thing).

The March 1925 issue opens with some eighteen pages, an unusually long stretch of text, reprinting, in the English of the time, rules for interpreting Scripture from *The Love of the Soul* by Gregory Martin (died 1582), one of the chief translators of the Douai-Reims Bible (the only one in use by Catholics in 1925). This is followed by 'Winter Walking', by John Gray; the first of several articles that Aidan Elrington OP will contribute over the years on the new subject of psychology; and a study of Angelica Kauffmann (1741–1807), one of the very few notable women painters in Western art history.

John Gray (1866–1934), in his youth a friend of Oscar Wilde, sometimes said to be the hero of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, converted to Catholicism, was ordained priest in 1901, and spent the rest of his life in Edinburgh, first at St Patrick's in the Cowgate, finally in St Peter's Morningside. He contributed a good deal to *Blackfriars* over the years, verses, reflections and then his one and only novel (see below).

April 1925 offers an essay on Frederic Hervey, Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry; Elrington again on psychology; an essay on how biblical scholars need to understand the decrees of the Biblical Commission; and a brief history of the idea of a 'Holy Year'.

May 1925 carries an essay on the poet Ronsard, an article by Clayton on Cobbett, and a story by Edwin Essex, exercising his editorial privilege to introduce fiction ('A Question of Vocation': Marmaduke discovers that marriage to Zania is his true vocation. etc.) — which perhaps confirms one's sense that *Blackfriars* was becoming increasingly a literary review.

On the other hand, May 1925 also includes another even more powerful article by Reginald Ginns: 'Lord Balfour and Palestine'. Here Ginns insists strongly on the 'terrible results' of British policies: 'black hatred is in the heart of the Arabs of Palestine, the Moslem world is stirred to anger by this and other Allied policies in the Near East'. He concludes as follows: 'The future holds terrible possibilities, and we have long been of the opinion that the Zionist experiment in the Holy Land will do more harm to the Jews than to anyone else. Of course it will not be the wealthy Zionists who will suffer: it will be the poor Jews of the ghettos of Northern Europe. Except for this attempt to seize on Palestine regardless of the rights of the existing population, many thousands of these would have found refuge in that country, just as happened even during the last

few decades of Turkish rule’.

In the August 1925 number we have Ginns again, this time delighting in the decrease of British political and commercial supremacy in the Middle and Far East.

In the same issue we have Francis McCullagh reporting on the instability in the Pacific, writing from on board an American battleship in Honolulu harbour, with a whole paragraph outlining what the American navy needs to do to make Pearl Harbour safe, and predicting that there would be an American-Japanese war in twenty years (it came in 1942).

Frankly, at this distance, the style of the journal does not seem all that different in the months before and in the months during which Edwin Essex was editor.

Bernard Delany returns

Nor is there much sign of any dramatic change in the content or orientation of *Blackfriars* when Edwin Essex was replaced as editor by Bernard Delany.

In the 1926 volume, for example, we have Denis Gwynn, this time with two articles on events in France, ‘The French Hierarchy and the Franc’, and ‘The Action Française Condemnation’. Catholics, who had demonstrated great patriotism during the War, did not see why they should contribute to the voluntary fund to stabilise the franc while the government in Paris was still exerting pressure on many Church institutions. The bishops, as Clayton explains, were very divided on the question. He quotes the a pastoral letter by the Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux, keen to support the government: France has to be protected against ‘international speculators’, such as ‘the powers of the Jews, the Freemasons and the Protestants’. *Action Française*, which propagated such views, was a brilliantly successful movement among Catholics against the anti-clericalism of the secular state and in favour of restoring the monarchy — in effect, an anti-democratic movement out to undo the work of the 1789 Revolution. Many Catholics had great difficulty in understanding why they should reconcile themselves with the French state, though the movement was denounced by the Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux, and soon proscribed by Pope Pius XI.

The 1926 volume carries six poems by John Gray; a short essay by David Jones, ‘Beauty in Catholic churches’ (‘Not until civilization turns about on her tracks can the visible Church of God be clothed in beauty’; ‘To have a church in suburbia aping the restraint and dignity, and the solemn abandon, of the age of Faith is far more hateful than having tip-up plush seats and electric altar lights as favoured in the States’)⁶; one self-contained piece by Eric Gill, ‘A Grammar of

Industry', as well as the four-part essay 'The Church and Art' — one of his most important statements, something of a landmark in the development of theological aesthetics.

In the 1927–32 volumes Denis Gwynn keeps readers up to date with events in France; Prohibition in the United States of America is denounced as 'simply a recurrence of the Manichaeian heresy'; a highly complimentary biography of Benito Mussolini is greeted with acclaim ('the Fascist regime appeals to ideals of discipline and patriotism as few national movements have done' etc.) — but in August 1927 a leading article is given over to expounding the ideas of Luigi Sturzo (1871–1959), very sympathetically, hoping that his anti-fascist ideas will live on though the *Partito Popolare* had been overtaken by the success of Mussolini.⁷

In October 1927 Henry Bugeja OP, while deploring Mussolini's militant atheism, gives him the benefit of the doubt: Italy is such a 'ramshackle structure, politically, that *fascismo* may be the only solution' — 'Time alone can tell'.⁸

The most frequently published authors in 1928 are Denis Gwynn (Irish as well as French politics); Vincent McNabb (half a dozen poems, including one four-line poem dedicated to Savonarola: 'We whom shades and earth content/ Go hence mire to mire:/ Thou with heaven-lit hopes unspent/Wentest fire to fire'); and eleven gossipy reminiscences of Beardsley, Pater, Swinburne and others signed by Alexander Michaelson — the pen name of Marc André Raffalovich (1864–1934).⁹

In January 1929, in 'Saints and animals', Walter Gumbley OP contributes what must be one of the earliest essays by any Catholic priest on the subject of animals.

In 1931–32 *Blackfriars* published, in several parts, John Gray's novel *Park: a fantastic story*. This appeared as a book in 1932.⁸ Part science fiction, part novel of ideas, a novella really, *Park* has as hero a secular priest who is transported into a future when England is populated by black people, who are Catholic, technologically advanced and very humane; while a rodent-like white race, descended from the previous population, lives underground. It contains some memorable aphorisms: 'Nothing so delights a cultivated mind as to be surprised'; 'A tomb is a most exclusive apartment'; etc.

In these years, *Blackfriars* offered a good mix of articles and book reviews, with an emphasis on literature and history, yet always with regular reports on what was happening politically, mostly as affecting the Catholic Church, in Continental Europe especially.

February 1933: the suppressed issue

In September 1932 Bernard Delany succeeded Bede Jarrett as Prior Provincial. Fr Bede was elected Prior of Blackfriars, Oxford, and took over as Editor of *Blackfriars*. He relied a good deal on his assistant, Thomas Gilby OP.¹¹

In January 1933 Bede Jarrett set off to preach a series of sermons in New York. No doubt he oversaw the composition of the February 1933 number. Printed, it was withdrawn before distribution when some of Gilby's fellow Dominicans threatened to delate it to the Holy Office in Rome on account of his article on 'Natural Birth Control'. The printers smoothly substituted an article on Catholic Action in Italy. It is doubtful if more than one or two copies of the cancelled number still exist. Bound volumes of the 1933 issues betray no sign of this episode, one of the three occasions (so far) in the history of the journal when a clash with the authorities of the Catholic Church threatened.¹²

The February 1933 Editorial picks out 'some' of the articles, as being 'of importance' — four of the six, to be exact. First there is the text of an address by Archbishop Alban Goodier SJ (1869–1939, Archbishop of Bombay retired since 1926) to a gathering of Anglican clergy assembled to discuss Reunion with the Church of Rome; then an article by Ferdinand Valentine OP, 'Economics, Mothercraft, and Leakage' (in city parishes about sixty or seventy per cent of children between fourteen and eighteen cease to practise the faith; this is a 'crisis of puberty', mostly the mother's fault; she is 'either unworthy of or unskilled in her craft'; but social conditions militate against her); Eric Gill, once again contending against the split between art and labour; and finally Alexander Parker (1908–89), eventually the most eminent British scholar of Spanish literature, arguing that if the Catholics in Spain had taken papal social doctrine seriously the Communists would not have the chance to voice the grievances of the 'exploited classes'.

One of the two articles not highlighted in the editorial, written by an American Dominican, heralds the 'New Deal', the landslide election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, all somewhat cautiously ('It remains to be seen' etc).

The substituted article deals with the 'safe period'. The background is clear. The 1930 Lambeth Conference gave qualified acceptance in the Anglican Communion of the propriety of artificial contraception: where there is 'a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence ... other methods may be used'. Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii*, the following year, condemned any use of marriage 'in the exercise of which the act, by human effort, is deprived

of its natural power of procreating life'. Almost in passing, the encyclical acknowledges the legitimacy of intercourse during the woman's infertile period — the so-called 'rhythm method'.

In the post *Humanae Vitae* era it is difficult to imagine how contentious natural birth control once was. It was officially accepted into Catholic teaching only by Pope Pius XII in 1951.

Gilby's article reads well. He rules out the use of 'contrivances', explicitly and absolutely. In no way is he challenging the traditional ban on 'artificial contraception'. He wants only to highlight what was then the very recent, much contested and even quite sensational discovery of the fact of recurring times of temporary sterility in a woman with a regular menstrual cycle. The discovery was made by the Japanese scientist Kyusaku Ogino in 1924, and the Austrian doctor Hermann Knaus in 1929, quite independently. The 'Ogino-Knaus method', as it was called, in natural family planning, came into Catholic moral-theological discourse in 1931. Gilby sets out the scientifically established fact of 'the safe period'. He goes on to maintain that 'lawful advantage may be taken of it for purposes of birth control in certain cases'. As he concludes: 'This is natural birth control, radically different from the birth control procured by artificial interference'.

Gilby's article must have been passed by the appointed censor of articles by Dominican contributors, as well as by Bede Jarrett as editor. That is why the two or three *confratres* with pre-distribution access to the journal had to threaten to take the matter to higher authority in Rome. Clearly, in their judgment, the fact of the safe period was not yet established; or anyway the possibility of using it for acts of sexual intercourse free of the risk of pregnancy seemed, if not out and out heresy, then at least likely to encourage 'immorality' and to reduce the size of Catholic families.

Jacobin's 'Observations'

Bede Jarrett died in March 1934. Hilary Carpenter OP was appointed editor, at the age of thirty eight.¹³ Thomas Gilby, aged thirty two, continued as assistant.

June 1934, incidentally, was the last issue published by Basil Blackwell; from July onwards, though still printed by the Oxonian Press, Oxford, *Blackfriars* was published for the English Dominican Province by The Rolls Publishing Co., London EC4.

January 1934 opens with the editor noting that 'during the last twelve months we have done our best ... to help our readers to a truer understanding of the problems of today and of the solutions that have been given of them by the Vicar of Christ'. That is to say, since Bede

Jarrett took over the editorship, with Thomas Gilby's assistance, *Blackfriars* moved quite decisively away from the predominantly literary, not to say somewhat precious and belles-lettristic review it was in the later 1920s, to discuss the 'social and economic ills' that afflicted Britain and the wider world, in the light of the teaching of Pope Pius XI. The editor is grateful for readers' support, 'in spite of our occasional perhaps over-frankness of expression'. He is happy to include articles 'that take very different and indeed divergent points of view'. We are back, in other words, to the idea which Bede Jarrett expressed at the outset.

This editorial is followed by 'Observations' signed 'Jacobin' — Thomas Gilby.¹⁴ Under the heading of 'Militarism', he defends the 'military class and tradition' against 'politicians and publicists', the latter of whom he holds culpable of 'the hysterical hatred fostered by lying propaganda', during the War. The same voices who were 'most shrill during the War and most vindictive immediately afterwards' were now, in the 1930s, most vociferous in opposition to rearming Britain. There is, however, 'a natural apprehension that the new Germany may revive that prussianism which we fought with some reason and satisfaction twenty years ago'. Jacobin is by no means keen on the general disarmament much discussed in the early 'thirties. 'All the same, many of the press attacks on the renewed military spirit of Germany seem inspired by a somewhat podgy and black-coated conception of peace as that economic condition of ease in which modern business and finance can thrive'. There needs to be more to 'peace' than happiness for businessmen; here Jacobin repeats a theme running through issues of *Blackfriars* from its earliest days.

Why should Germans not be proud of their military tradition? — 'Though not in our line, Hindenburg is a type we can all respect; and von Hipper and von Richtofen are names that command our regard'. The Weimar Republic, after all, was 'something less than the Germany we admire'. As for the Nazi take-over (Hitler, in office since 30 January 1933, was about to name himself *Führer*): 'it is our hope that the new Reich ... will not too humourlessly and solemnly exalt the qualities of force and effort and lose the old geniality'. (So force and effort exerted with a touch of humour would be no problem?)

Austria is different: 'the test is manners rather than race, human rather than bio-chemical'. 'The inheritors of the Hapsburg tradition are not likely to bother their heads about Aryans'. We regret — 'many of us' — the passing of the Austro-Hungarian Empire — 'a true civilization': 'Eugene, Mozart, Maria Theresa, Haydn, Czernin, Taaffe, Apponyi, Jellalich, Radetsky, Piccolomini — what difference of blood, what unity of culture'. In other words, the racialism of Nazi Germany, evidently regarded as

laughable, may be tempered by the the multiculturalism (as we should say today) of somewhat romanticized post-Hapsburg Austria. 'Fascism in Germany may yet be a debtor to the patriotic fascism of Austria'. (Chancellor Dollfuss was to be assassinated in July 1934...)

Jacobin goes on to note the collapse of the 'German Christian' movement: the Lutherans who collaborated with the Nazi State; and to greet with admiration the stand of Karl Barth and the Pastors' Emergency League. (The Barmen Declaration was to be drawn up by the synod of the Confessing Church on 30 May 1934.) Many of the *Deutsche Christen* had already 'enrolled themselves in the ranks of the Wotan-worshippers'. The Emergency League — 'without the resources of Vatican diplomacy, without the backing of a world-wide Church' — 'has struck a blow for religious freedom against erastianism which compels our admiration and gratitude'. 'Herr Hitler has washed his hands of the whole business and Nazi officials have been forbidden to meddle in Church affairs'.

With hindsight we can endorse the admiration for the authors of the Barmen Declaration; we cannot be so sanguine about the effect of Vatican diplomacy on opposing Hitler; and we know that many Christians, including scores of Catholic priests, were to end in the camps.

Finally, so Jacobin tells us with obvious delight, a certain Carl Thieme so despairs of the Lutheran Church that he calls for a return to Catholic unity and appeals to Rome to receive Lutherans back into communion 'not indeed as individual converts, but as corporate communities with their own pastors and vernacular liturgies'.¹⁵

By this time *Blackfriars* was publishing regular surveys of foreign journals. We hear of a French Dominican, in *La Vie Intellectuelle*, deploring the decline of the League of Nations, blaming the downfall of 'the Wilsonian liberal-democratic ideas' which brought the League into being, and hoping that Catholics may be able to synthesise the 'democratic' and Fascist ideals threatening to rend Europe apart. This is followed by extracts from an article in *Hochland*, the German Catholic review, in which the author (Giuseppe Tonelli) is absolutely clear that co-operation between Catholics and Fascists is absolutely out of the question: 'The Fascist doctrine ... implies a *Weltanschauung*, a religion. The dogmas of this religion are: hatred of political enemies, blind obedience to the Fascist oath, the deification of the State, nationalist ambition as the supreme virtue and the lawfulness of any means for the attainment of Fascist ends'. A more optimistic view is taken by the Roman correspondent of *The Clergy Review*, claiming that the 'corporative state' can be made to fit papal social teaching. But, as the 1930s unroll, *Blackfriars* looks increasingly abroad for support to justify editorial doubts about what was happening in Italy, Spain and Germany, as well as

in Communist Russia.

February 1934 was a special number on Communism, with Berdyaev, Eric Gill and others, predicting military conflict with Russia, sooner or later. Yet, it is not difficult to see, Fascism was emerging as the main challenge.

In March 1934, for example, an enthusiastic review of a BBC performance of Gustav Mahler's Ninth Symphony claims him for Catholicism — 'For us he belongs to the earthly treasury of the Church', an 'ardent Catholic', as one can recognize ('almost') from his works. 'For this great musical figure we must thank the patronage of the Hapsburg Empire' — on the other hand: 'This Austrian Catholic Jew would never have arisen to eminence in a severely Aryan Middle Europe. The new Germany, will it deprive us of future Mahlers?'

Catholic Action

The June 1934 number opens with a powerful editorial by the new editor Hilary Carpenter — insisting, against critics, that a Catholic does not yield on the smallest point of doctrine 'merely because he is prepared to treat Protestants as brethren, though separated, and possibly in good faith'. 'The Reds must not think to claim me as a blood-brother in Atheism because I hold that Capitalism may well have become a curse; nor should the British Union of Fascists expect *Blackfriars* to approve *The Black Shirt* because the Holy Father has deigned to speak well of the Fascist rule in Italy'. Issues need to be discussed 'in an intelligent way without fear or favour'.

In other words, against a tide of criticism from readers, and no doubt non-readers (always the severest critics), that *Blackfriars* is 'ecumenical' (as we should say now), this does not mean diluting its Catholicism; that the general view in the journal is that capitalism does more harm than good does not line up editorial policy with 'atheistic communism'; and that the Pope has welcomed Mussolini's regime does not mean that Catholics in Britain should join with Oswald Mosley. There are simplicities that cannot be accepted in analysis of the current social, economic and political situation.

The September 1934 issue is dedicated to articles on Catholic Action. While *Blackfriars* is in no sense an official organ of Catholic Action, so the editor tells us, 'service to Catholic Action and to the needs of the lay apostle is the chief object of the existence of *Blackfriars*'. Indeed: 'There is a real sense in which every number is a "Catholic Action" number'.

The journal was now addressing itself, clearly, to a readership different from 'the Catholic dining population', to quote Bede Jarrett's somewhat derisive phrase (in a private letter, back in 1925). Rather,

instead of aiming at coffee tables in pious, leisured middle-class homes, *Blackfriars* was now hoping to be passed round in discussion groups of young working-class Catholic activists — almost.

Catholic Action was stirred up by Pius XI's encyclical *Ubi Arcano* in 1922, apostolates of the laity, in social, educational and quasi-political activities. Groups of young factory workers were already established in Belgium (*Jocistes*), the Legion of Mary in Ireland in 1921, and the Grail Movement in the Netherlands in 1929. Such groups diversified enormously during and after the Second World War. Yet, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, published in 1953 by Yves Congar OP, drawing on decades of lay Catholic Action in France, was regarded as highly controversial. By the time of the Second Vatican Council, however, the concept that lay Catholics have an apostolate was taken for granted.

Back in the June 1934 number, Hilary Carpenter's manifesto is backed up by a programmatic article by Thomas Gilby, 'Catholics and the National Consciousness', in which he argues for much more open participation by Catholics in English life (perhaps meaning British).

The Catholic Church is 'no longer an obscure sect'; yet, 'for all its external impressiveness', it is 'actually working as a closed system so far as the general life of the country is concerned'. Gilby names some of the 'specialized manifestations of Catholicism': the Tyburn Walk, the Catholic Evidence Guild, the new (!) Liverpool Cathedral. That is all fine; but the time is come for engagement with the non-Catholic world. He recommends a process of 'infiltration' — astoundingly, though typically, on the model of 'the success that Ludendorff gained in the spring of 1918' — 'And we too have a mist to help us' (vintage Gilby).

Mistakes are to be expected, a certain 'untidiness'. Any activity that is strictly religious is, of course, subject to the bishops. Yet, Gilby insists, there is a whole range of human experience into which Catholicism should penetrate and the clergy are not particularly qualified to engage in this. 'Though many may have the gifts, few ecclesiastics have the time for such occupations as the writing of novels or the production of films, for literature and politics and "secular" affairs, not to speak of the appreciation and criticism of matters which call for special information and training — Social Credit and the restoration of the Hapsburgs and slum clearance and the increase of the Air Arm and land settlement and Mr Gill's sculptures, and so on'. Much of this work is already being done; yet, Gilby goes on, 'a loosely organized group of laypeople might with advantage be formed ... for the co-ordination and extension of this kind of action'. In particular, he would like to see a Catholic weekly or even daily newspaper 'which should engage the interests of the many who have no wish to read about ecclesiastical affairs'. 'Without any parade of

representing the official Catholic attitude ...[it] should instinctively judge all human problems by that Catholic tradition which has formed our civilization and still remains the best vantage ground for appreciating English affairs'. Besides the two million Catholics in England there are many others, not only anglo-Catholics who would support such a venture. 'Theology, especially dogma, Canon Law, full-blooded Catholic piety, all would take themselves for granted in it. It would speak of them as rarely as a healthy schoolboy speaks of his mother and sisters'. Secondly, there might be Catholic films — not 'propaganda' but helping towards 'the formation of that cultural groundwork on which alone the sacramental and supernatural life of the Church can be congenially and firmly established'.

Events in Abyssinia, Spain, Germany, and the approach of another European war soon began to overtake this 'profound and patriotic desire that a Christian civilization should be secured in England'. It certainly is a different world from the one we inhabit now.

- 1 See Fergus Kerr OP, 'The First Issue', *New Blackfriars* October 2003: 434–447
- 2 Vivien Greene died on 1 August 2003, aged ninety-nine; though his infidelities meant that they ceased to live together in the 1940s, Greene refused her offer of divorce; he left everything to her and their children at his death.
- 3 Henry VI (1421–1471), King of England, a deeply religious man who spent much time on retreat in religious houses, etc., was not a successful ruler; having fallen into a 'depressive stupor' (Cross and Livingstone), though not before founding Eton College and King's College Cambridge, he was mistreated by the Yorkist party, replaced by Edward IV in 1461, imprisoned in the Tower of London for years, murdered on 21 May 1471 in the presence of the future King Richard III; his tomb was a place of pilgrimage from the outset; Henry VII (not his son, murdered on 4 May 1471) petitioned Pope Innocent VIII and then Pope Alexander VI for his canonization.
- 4 The Paston Letters reveal a great deal about the reign of Henry VI.
- 5 Reginald Ginns (1893–1987), just returned from studying at the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem; taught Scripture to young Dominicans until 1938; served as an RAF chaplain during World War II; did not settle to academic life thereafter; moved to Stone, Staffordshire, in 1959, as chaplain to the Dominican Sisters, remaining there for the rest of his life.
- 6 David Jones (1895–1974), poet and artist; became Catholic 1921; published among much else *In Parenthesis* (1937) and *The Anathemata* (1952): 'very probably the greatest long poem in English in this century' (W. H. Auden).
- 7 When the Vatican admonished priests not to mix in politics Sturzo took the hint, moved to Britain and from there, in 1941, to Florida.
- 8 Henry Bugeja OP (1885–1957), joined the Order in Malta in 1900, came to England in 1921 and stayed for the rest of his life.
- 9 Younger son of Hermann Raffalovich, a wealthy banker who left Odessa

during anti-Jewish legislation in Russia to begin again in Paris, and his wife Marie, also from Odessa, who lived in Ireland after her husband's death with her daughter Sophie (1860–1960), wife of the Irish nationalist leader and Member of Parliament, William O'Brien (1853–1928); Raffalovich was sent to Oxford in 1884 but health prevented him from matriculating; wealth allowed him access to literary and artistic circles in London; published poems, *Cyril and Lionel and other poems* 1884, *Tuberose and meadow sweet* 1885, etc. (Oscar Wilde: 'To say of these poems that they are unhealthy and bring with them the heavy odour of the hot-house is to point out neither their defect nor their merit, but their quality merely'); he and John Gray were already friends, collaborating in literary ventures; in 1896 Raffalovich published *Uranisme et Unisexualité*, an extremely rare book, 'restricted' in Bodley, remembered if at all for the reminiscences of Oscar Wilde and Alfred Douglas rather than the contribution to understanding homosexuality, in the context of medicine, psychology and criminology; received into the Church at Farm Street; settled in Edinburgh in 1905; was instrumental in building St Peter's Morningside.

- 10 *Park* was republished in 1966 by Saint Albert's Press, Aylesford, with an introduction by Bernard Bergonzi and again in 1984 by Carcanet, Manchester, with an introduction by Philip Healy; for John Gray see Brocard Sewell, *In the Dorian Mode: A Life of John Gray 1866–1934* (Tabb House, Padstow 1983); Jerusha Hull McCormack, *John Gray Poet, Dandy, & Priest* (Brandeis University Press 1991) and *The Man Who Was Dorian Gray* (Palgrave 2000).
- 11 Thomas Gilby (1902–1975), having gained the Ph.D. at the Higher Institute of Philosophy in Louvain with a dissertation entitled 'The Fortunate Man: An Enquiry into the Place of the Appetite in Real Knowledge of the Concrete', was teaching moral theology at Blackfriars, Oxford.
- 12 The other two: the flurry in 1920 over Vincent McNabb's friendly remarks about the Church of England (as noted last month), and the dismissal of Herbert McCabe in 1967 for agreeing with Charles Davis (who had just left the Catholic Church) that the Church is indeed 'corrupt' — arguing however that this is no reason for leaving.
- 13 Hilary John Carpenter (1896–1973) graduated B.Litt. at Oxford in 1926; taught philosophy and theology in the Dominican study house 1926–40; editor 1934–40; chaplain in the Royal Air Force; Prior Provincial 1946–58.
- 14 Jacobin: French Dominican friar, from priory of Saint Jacques in Paris; democratic club at French Revolution meeting in the former Dominican priory; sympathizer with democratic principles; extreme radical; pigeon with reversed feathers on back of neck, suggesting cowl.
- 15 Karl Thieme (1902–1963), then a young lecturer, became a Catholic in 1934, had to emigrate to Switzerland in 1935; after the War he devoted himself to work for Christian-Jewish understanding.
- 16 For the story until 1996 see Allan White OP, 'A History of *Blackfriars* and *New Blackfriars*', *New Blackfriars* July/August 1996: 320–333.