

## EXTRACTS

CERTAIN 'BIBLE CHRISTIANS' have recently been condemned in Paris, namely, the 'Community of Christian Hope' under the leadership of a young crippled priest, Père Massin. The event has caused a stir in Christian circles. Numerically a tiny group, it is nevertheless symptomatic of the times and it conforms to the inevitable plan of heresy which refuses to admit the Church as a third party between the Christian and his God. A great deal has appeared in French journals, both Protestant and Catholic, either encouraging or condemning this unbalanced community. But we take occasion here to quote only from Père Congar's article in *Témoignage Chrétien* for 11th January; and we quote at length because his words are of great moment. He wrote under the title 'True and False Reform in the Church':

History shows the vanity of any pretence at reforming the Church in spite of herself and of working on her from the very beginning by standing apart. In reality today there runs through the Church herself a spiritual movement that is very true and is nourished by a well balanced evangelical and liturgical diet; the excesses of a few no more militate against the movement than the accidents on the roads bar all traffic; they remind us of the importance of rules, that is all. We must work within the Church in matters concerning the rules of unity and communion . . . We cannot do otherwise, they say, our conscience directs us . . . Holy Scripture tells us . . . Certainly we can never go against our conscience. But conscience can be wrong and we have a duty to put it right, to go to the furthest limits possible in providing delays and occasions of better information. This is especially true when the convictions at which we find ourselves arriving are in conflict with the witness of the people; still more when this people is the people of saints.

They set Jesus in opposition to the Church. But the saints who have the most fully lived the life of Jesus, even to the extent of receiving the stigmata in their bodies, are those who have belonged most fully to the Church: St Catherine of Siena, St Francis of Assisi. Is it not sufficiently obvious that if we had not the Church—the Roman Catholic Church—we should not have had for a very long time past faith in Jesus Christ, God and Saviour? To set Jesus in opposition to the Church is vain when there is nothing in the Church which prevents our finding Jesus and living with him. There is nothing even to prevent the utmost variety in the ways in which we experience and live the life of Christ—the most complete poverty, the intimacy of married life, true liturgy, prayer. But it is clear that the Christian can never, in spite of this, exercise an absolute and radical autonomy in his

behaviour; this fullness of life, this spontaneity in living, is granted within the orbit of an essential factor of apostolicity and communion: Christianity is tradition and communion or it is nothing. It is only in relation to this that one can validly appeal to the movements of conscience and of the understanding of Scripture. Every heretic without exception, all the revolutionaries, have appealed to their conscience and to the Scriptures; the Fathers pointed that out. Moreover, by a sort of tragic logic, these very people who thus justify themselves as regards the great Church which they leave are soon confronted face to face with, or indeed find themselves in the centre of, new antagonists invoking these very justifications. . . .

But for the time being the community is naturally rather welcome among those who uphold Scripture and conscience against the Church. The weekly *Réforme* (29th December) regards them as groping their way in the spirit of true 'Bible Christians' to the position of the Reformed Church, led by the Bible and the Spirit of God. But, as Père Congar points out, they are only making confusion more confused, introducing new fissures which perhaps it will be the task of years to repair. But, he concludes, these lessons from history should only draw from us greater brotherly love and prayers, asking the Lord to have mercy on all. 'The Church also raises her voice, at once anguished and serene, severe and tender, motherly: she says "My children", and she entreats them to remain or to return.'

AMEN, the journal for the American Vernacular Society (P.O. Box 1991, Delray Beach, Florida), carries in its autumn issue several English authors—C. C. Martindale, S.J., Mgr H. F. Davis (on the Priesthood of the Laity), Donald Attwater, L. C. Sheppard—and lengthy excerpts from the *Catholic Herald*. The United States seems to be doing a great deal in the matter of an Englished liturgy.

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