

tellectual no-man's-land on the continent, at least in France, is not a waste land of mental apathy, but one over which the battle of ideas is in full swing. Over the land is being fought the contest between Christianity versus the rest.

We conclude with a translation of the introduction to the first volume of *Rencontres*, which sets forth the groundwork for all our aspirations for the reconstruction of Europe.

### THE PRESENT IMPORTANCE OF CONTEMPLATION

Calmly and seriously we take up anew the task which we could not bring to completion before. We speak again. And before all else, to our brethren everywhere we say this: however far apart we may be, however blank our ignorance of each other's faces and even names, let us live together as believers in Christ, as the upholders on earth of his Spirit.

We have not, we must admit, escaped failure. We have lacked something, lacked that spiritual violence which alone storms the Kingdom of Heaven and without which to be gentle is to be a coward. We have lingered over things preliminary to the Faith or consequent upon it, forgetting our first task, to keep alive Faith in the Crucified. And that is how the Salt of the Earth turns savourless.

Here and now, then, we proclaim the need for contemplation, and in particular for contemplation of the Redemption actually at work in the world. What is contemplation but the noblest Christian activity, the supreme labour of love? How can Charity be alive in the world if it be not alive in our minds' effort to explore the mysteries of our Faith? If we submit ourselves—and rightly—to all the lowly tasks that are part of authentic Christian living, this must not cause any misunderstanding of the nature of our obedience. It is not the blind obedience of a slave, like a pawn in some great game beyond his comprehension. We are friends, not slaves. Light has been given us and light is required of us. And light from our Faith will not flood us except we employ all that we do—the low and dreary tasks as much as and more than the nobler and more free—as a means of entering every day into deeper intimacy with the Incarnate Word. 'That I may know him and the power of his Resurrection' (*Phil.* 3). Truth alone can set us free; and truth contemplated is the world's need.

But this contemplation must be placed in its proper perspective; restored to its true continuity with human life as a whole, in all its conditions. No one, obviously, will deny that 'there are some whose vocation is principally contemplative, while to others belongs by preference the sphere of external activity.' The distinction of the 'two lives,' active and contemplative, is certainly valid. But valid as it is it presupposes the total life of the Church who is at once contemplative and active like the Mother of God.

We insist on this word 'Contemplative.' We are sick of compromise. We need a great uprising of contemplatives, of contemplatives who are such in the ordinary round of their daily lives; men who no longer fancy that either the small things of daily life or the great struggles which engage humanity need distract them from the work of the Redemption; or that love for their wives and children, for their work and their country and for all mankind need distract them from loving God.

As for those called to the purely contemplative life, they must never forget that their special vocation has not set them apart from the Mystical Body; in which Body alone it finds full significance. If Christ has led us into the desert, there to speak to our hearts, it is for him to speak and for us to listen in silence. And Christ's main preoccupation is the Cross. With the Cross he draws all things to himself and upon it he is lifted up so that from it he may view all and do all. On the Cross, the debt is paid to the Justice of the Father, mankind is thoroughly restored and consummated; and the Son contemplates the Face of Infinite Mercy and calls his Mother to the same contemplation. No Christian can be a contemplative truly, without taking his share in this most profound and effective of activities.

'All this is a commonplace,' you may say; 'we have heard it all before.' But in time of tribulation it is surely worth while to repeat the commonplaces that express, still, the grounds of our hope. And it is our boast that in our most dire extremity we have only to turn to our age-old tradition to find the food we need.

Besides, these old commonplaces are as young as ever: they are youth itself. It is for us to lay bare their unique novelty. Christ's word is Life, and life ever brings new things out of old. Either that or life dies. Christ dared to call us his Mother; therefore we must bring him into the world, into this our own world, to-day. By our Faith; and our love; and our words; and our works; and our unyielding will; and our contemplation.

A tirelessly active contemplation, not only eager to illuminate and direct all our action, but ready to make itself ever more penetrating and more real, constantly alert to learn from those teachers God sends us every day—the events of each day.

A contemplation again which never divides us, which rather binds us together in love, as brothers; like grains of wheat in bread, like grapes in wine. Which searches out both the Tree of Nature and the Tree of Grace (Trees which *ont noué leurs deux bras de noeuds si solennels*); which has faith therefore in the natural communities into which men are born, which men have built up and without which they could not exist. A contemplation which knows that it is essentially communal; that its Faith, Hope and Love are the Faith, Hope and Love of the Church, that all our Grace flows from

Calvary, the birthplace of that Mystical Body which could nourish, if we let it, all our human contacts.

A contemplation devoted to the words of Christ which the Spirit delivered to the Church two thousand years ago. Inheriting this age-long experience, enriched by it, our contemplation should reach back to those first words themselves, as to the sources of Faith and Charity. For the first days of the Church are so close to us. The early Fathers are near to us. Nearer still St. Paul and the Gospels. We have only to read them.

We shall never tire of proclaiming this essential duty. But problems too will arise, and many of them, out of the very nature of our aim: the recovery of the full habit of and taste for a vital, communal contemplation. Much is wanting in the Christian education of the laity. The Clergy must come to a deeper sense of their vocation. Families should be more aware of their function as cells of the Mystical Body. Religious should learn to regard their religious Profession as a means of living in closer union with their fellow-men. The Church herself, in short, must be more alive in each of us: In our forthcoming numbers we propose to tackle the different problems raised by these duties.

This issue is but a preliminary appeal; wherein we sketch out very schematically the perspectives, the tasks and resources of the kind of contemplation the times require of us. First, its perspectives: it should be apostolic; it should be communal; it should extend through the whole Mystical Body. Secondly, its tasks and the humble conditions of its life: the distractions which usually beset it; the trivial and mortifying cares and worries which can feed it; the noble and tranquillising duties of parents; priestly work among prisoners of war. Finally, the resources of contemplation and especially the doctrinal and sacramental resources; instruction in the Faith, presupposing the natural love of all truth and enriched by a knowledge of the Scriptures and of the Fathers; the sacramental life crowned by Holy Mass—sung Mass, with everyone joining in. . .

At the end of the book we print a prayer written by our friend, Joseph Malegue, not long before he died. In her present distress our country makes the first calls on our Christian Charity: to pray for her is our first duty. But our vision is not bounded by France. Her resurrection itself depends on the Church, to whom all men's salvation has been entrusted; and the fortunes of the whole Church should be the concern of all. It would therefore be most fitting that many of those who read these pages should be brought by them to repeat in their hearts those words of the Apostle (giving them no 'escapist' sense: St. Paul was no coward): 'we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal' (II Cor iv, 18).