

sweetness and sanity only by the supernatural; and his remark is most appropriate here. Of the interpretation of time by eternity, however, it is not the purpose of this essay to write, except to suggest that it is only from the light of that instant and immortal radiance, so little known, so long forgotten, that the golden ages are reflected at all; and that if the knowledge of it were finally quenched in a vast utilitarian industrial culture covering the world, men would live only as sentient units of production and consumption, without hope or purpose.

RENEE HAYNES.

O B I T E R

THE CHURCH IN RETREAT. Action and Contemplation: Christians who are bold enough to give themselves to the one must be rooted in the other. Such is the reminder Paul Claudel has recently given in an address at Louvain (quoted in *La Vie Spirituelle*, April)

'Our Lord remains with his Church to the end of the world. With that Church which is always being put in her place, cross-examined, constrained! And her only reply is the Cross, her only reply is to make a Cross of herself, placarding it with the glorious proclamation of St Paul: 'Learn of me what is the breadth and length and height and depth'. She must needs spring from her Master, she must spread in every direction those eagle's wings of which the Apocalypse speaks. The depth: that is to say a firm rooting in the faith, in doctrine, in the rock (*pierre*) that is Peter (*Pierre*). Her arms must be large enough to embrace not this world only, but the one to come no less. . . . And what in the end is the purpose of those eagle's wings but to carry us away; but where? St John gives us the answer: into the desert. And Moses explains further: into the hidden places of the desert, into that desert of prayer where we stand alone, face to face with the Sun, face to face with our Creator. That is what we need more than all else, we need prayer more than bread. It is in the desert that we shall be able to consider all those things of which we are not going to be forever deprived by the tyranny of Pharaoh!'

Sunday, the day of rest which mirrors the seventh day of God's own resting, is the central point of Christian contemplation. Not indeed the desultory 'obligation'; the last Low Mass and the raffle tickets in the porch. To recover the meaning of Sunday is to find again the foundation of the life of grace, *semper agens* necessarily, for we live in the world. But first of all *semper quietus*. It is a sure instinct that has devoted the whole of *La Vie Spirituelle* (April) to a

consideration of the *mystique* of the Christian Sunday. This, too, will be the subject of the second Congress of the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* to be held at Lyons and Ars from 17-22 September this year. (Details may be had from the Secretary of the Congress, 5 Rue Mulet, Lyon).

LA MAISON DIEU (Cahier 10, Blackfriars Publications; 5s.) includes a 'Preface for the Congress' from Père Duployé:

'We concentrate nowadays on presenting attendance at Sunday Mass as a rigorous duty—it is that of course—to people who for the most part, despite their baptism, are really catechumens, ignorant and unmoved by any eagerness when face to face with the mystery of Christ. For the first Christians the Mass was the last act of a long initiation, ardently longed for. Today we impose it as an obligation, under pain of mortal sin, as a categorical duty to men living in practical unbelief, men who cannot understand what sanction compels them to a weekly hour amidst a semi-pagan existence, to a sacred act which finds in them no fruitful response'.

The Mass must, then, be related to human life and its needs. That is why active participation in the Mass is not a form of 'devotion': it is essential. In summary form, Père Duployé explains: 'No human life is possible without Sunday, no Sunday is possible without religion, no Christian religion is possible without the Mass'. *In corde est sabbatum nostrum*, says St Augustine, and the recovery of the sense of the day of the Lord, joyous, salvific, peaceful, is the necessary framework for the Christian life.

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THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION in this country has been analysed by Mass Observation in the latest *Contact* book. (*Grand Perspective*, 5s.). 'Faith and Fear in Postwar Britain' makes melancholy reading, and there is no need to question the accuracy of the general picture.

'Of every 100 children born in this country today, 67 are baptised at Church of England fonts. . . . Of the 67, 34 later join Church of England Sunday Schools, etc. . . . Of these, 26 are finally confirmed by the bishop. Of the 26 who are confirmed, 17 soon give up attending Church, while nine remain as Easter Communicants. How many of this nine per cent. are regular worshippers, or ardent believers, how many rarely or never attend Church or think of their religion except at Easter?'

On the other hand, 'Statistics relating to the Roman Catholic faith show a reverse trend'. The Catholic population has increased by half a million in less than a generation. The number of pupils in Catholic secondary schools has doubled between 1920 and 1945.

Mass Observation took a cross-section of the residents of an ordinary London borough. One person in four openly expressed doubt about the existence of a deity, and about one in 20 expressed fairly definite atheistic views.

'Of the doubters, however, only a quarter admit that they sometimes pray to the God whose existence they question, and one in 12 sometimes goes to Church. Of those who say they *do* believe, nearly two-thirds admit that they have not been inside a church for six months or so. . . . In Metrop, although there are three people who go to Church of England services for every one who goes to a Catholic service, the number of more or less orthodox Christians seems in each case to be roughly the same. Today the Roman Catholic Church claims as members in England and Wales nearly as many people as the Church of England claims as Easter communicants'.

The decay of religious faith brings with it inevitably a crop of superstitions—astrology, spiritualism—to serve as alternatives. Pathetic, and typical, is the reply of the woman who, when asked whether she ever prayed, said: 'I pray when I've got more trouble than I can handle. But it's got to be something very bad to make me pray'. Or the young man who said unequivocally: 'No, I don't think there is a God', who thought Christ was 'only a man'; but all the same, 'I pray for my brother in the Army, and in the Live Letter Box in the *Daily Mirror* people ask in their letters for help, and so I pray for them'.

The sad decline of Protestantism in England need cause no joy in Catholic breasts, unless indeed the situation is seen as providentially *good*, in the sense that it cries out for the redemptive truth which the Church alone can give. The supreme question today is how to bring Christian truth to bear upon a post-Christian world. Some words of Cardinal Suhard in his notable Lenten Pastoral suggest a starting-point:

'Have no fear that you will be feebler Christians because you are fuller human beings. Every conquest you make in the world is a new province annexed for the universal kingdom of Christ. . . . Christians must take part in every single search for truth, in all the ramifications of a world of which they are citizens. . . . Today as ever the world can only be saved from the Flood by the Ark. Today too "the Spirit of God moves over the waters" and sends the dove, a living symbol with the olive-branch in her mouth. And that frail witness of an undiscovered continent has nothing in common with the dead leaves: it has grace, it has the living sap of spring'.

VITA CRISTIANA, published by the Dominicans of Florence, devotes the whole of its May-June number to St Catherine of Siena, in celebration of the sixth centenary of her birth.

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IRENIKON (Volume XX) begins a series of articles on the theology of Gregory Palamas by the Archimandrite Kern and includes as usual its excellently documented *Chronique Religieuse*.

ALDATE.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, BLACKFRIARS

Dear Sir,

We live in an age of 'priorities' and this is written in the belief that many of your readers may be disposed to agree that the fostering of international sympathy and understanding through foreign travel occupies a high place in the long list of post war aims.

The Newman Association International Committee has done all in its power since the cessation of hostilities both to facilitate the visits of British Catholics abroad and to smooth the path of Catholic student visitors to this country. Experience has convinced the Committee that the work to be done in this direction is virtually unlimited but further progress must largely depend upon cooperation of the Catholic public. There is most urgent need for accommodation for visitors from abroad who desire to come to Britain for long or short periods (one week to one year) and who wish to be received in Catholic families either as paying guests, or *au pair*. Perhaps the most satisfactory arrangement is that of exchange hospitality.

May I appeal to those of your readers who have accommodation available for visitors, whether upon a reciprocal basis or not, to write to me.

Yours sincerely,

B. A. M. McSHANE,

The Newman Association,

117a Park Street, London, W.1.