

with the "charitable neighbour", his character, circumstances and all the rest; and what is his position vis-à-vis the other? One doesn't know, and until one does I don't see one can presume even to begin an answer. In other words, it's all a matter of personal relations to be worked out between them, and I don't think anyone who doesn't know either can give them any blue-prints or "authoritative answers". But G.H. seems to assume that he is the person with all the charity (though doubtless not a strong nervous system), while the other person has got all the disease. Not very promising for either of them . . . but I should imagine the "neurotic" loathes charity, and G.H. can't do anything for *him* or *her* so long as he is afraid for his own sanity.'

X.Y.



POINTS OF VIEW (II)

IN A recent article in the *Catholic Herald*, Dom Columba Cary Elwes has brought new courage to many by pointing out that this is the age of the apostleship of the laity, and he has added that 'we are back in a contemplative age, but a contemplation of God in the world as well as out of it'. The laity has become familiar with the idea that it has a part to play in the redemption of the world through Catholic Action. United in such organizations as the Legion of Mary, lay men and women fight side by side to convert the ignorant, to reclaim the lapsed, to bring consolation to the lonely and thus to share in our Lady's work on earth for her divine Son. There are many other forms of organized Catholic Action, such as the Young Christian Workers and the Grail, but all have one thing in common. They seek to instruct their members in the social and moral teaching of the Church, in doctrine and apologetics and they encourage them to build their lives around the centre of the daily Mass and to live in the spirit of the liturgy. In so doing they will learn to give their lives to the service of God in their neighbours. They will learn to serve wisely with the wisdom born of knowledge and of prayer.

Today the many works of social service, of healing and of education are for the most part in the hands of local authorities and government bodies and are undertaken by their employees. It is clear that if such works are to be informed with the Spirit of Christ this can be brought about only by the lay people who are given the control of them. Apart from such specifically charitable and educational work there is no legitimate activity of social man which can claim exemption from the jurisdiction of Christ the King. The vital principle underlying all Catholic Action is that each individual members of the Mystical Body should bring Christ into his home, his work and his recreation. He should use to the full all that modern techniques of study have provided to enable him to understand the social background and the personal problems of all with whom he comes in contact. Jesus understands the needs and the desires of every human heart and we too should seek to understand rather than expect others to conform with our particular pattern of acceptable modes and manners. We live in a generation that tends to lose sight of the individual in consideration of his group. We talk of the problems of the aged rather than the difficulties of old Mr Brown or old Miss Jones. We think of displaced persons who may be at a convenient distance from us and forget the rather trying foreigner who lives next door. The saints, on the contrary, have always loved Christ in individuals and served him by ministering to individual needs. It is this divine love for individuals that is the desperate need of the millions of unhappy people whom we classify as young delinquents, criminals, displaced persons or deprived children. There is a vast thirst for love in the world around us and it is the privilege of the laity to be the bearers of the chalice from which alone that thirst may be quenched. It is we who may go where priests and religious have no right of entry, and going with Christ we can bring his healing and his refreshment to the men and women who have no other opportunity of meeting him.

This is the age of the apostleship of the laity and so great a responsibility demands great grace. We know that when God calls a man to perform a service for him he gives the special grace through which alone the work can prosper. It is not surprising then that our age should be another age of contemplation. That such a statement should be made by the Prior of Ampleforth will puzzle only those who imagine contemplation to be a matter of

visions, ecstasies and the like, or think that it demands conditions of silence and mortification to be found only in the seclusion of religious houses. Many will still be called to the contemplative life of the cloister and by their lives of contemplation they will fulfil God's purpose and bring strength to all parts of the Mystical Body. Many, too, hear the call to contemplation amid the noises and distractions of the world.

Contemplation, defined by Fr Augustine Baker as 'a pure internal prayer, divinely inspired', is a gift that God gives to whom he will. It is a growing awareness of God's presence who dwells in the market place as in the convent cell; it is the constant love of the will tending always towards God and clinging to him in times of temptation and aridity as in times of joy and consolation. It is in the depths of such internal prayer that man meets God, that he is cleansed and instructed by the Holy Spirit dwelling within him. It is in such prayer that he learns, not the self-regarding charity of his earlier years, but the compassion of Christ and the maternal love of Mary. Informed by the love of the Father for his creation, united in love with Christ the Redeemer, taught by the Holy Spirit and touched by his fire, the lay apostle of this age will live to win the world to Christ through the joy, the love and the compassionate understanding imparted to him by the Blessed Trinity in the hidden depths of prayer.

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