

As this issue comes from the press, all children will have recommenced another school year and the first general assembly of the new synod of representative bishops will be meeting in a few days time in Rome. These two events have a much deeper connexion than might at first sight appear.

Fr Schillebeeckx recently suggested that there are two ways of looking at the communion of the universal Church as expressed in the collegiality of the bishops. According to one view, which he characterized as western, one starts from the universal Church and works down to the local Church; whereas according to the other, which he characterized as primitive and eastern, one starts from the local Church and works up towards the universal Church. As such, these views are merely two ways of regarding the one Church of many peoples, but they do also seem to point to two ways of growth and communication: from above downwards and from below upwards. Evidently in the complexity of life these two tendencies meet and complement one another. Yet to allow even the idea of a growth and initiative from below, let alone the reality in its different forms, is a decision which many have not yet taken, at least whole-heartedly. This is a matter of the maturity of national churches coming into being; which depends in turn on our education, at all levels.

We must therefore again reconsider the state and purpose of our education. Much else, of course, is compelling us to such a reappraisal, and this is why we need to look at the thrust and accidents of the development of our educational system in the way in which Fr Gaskell suggests in the article we publish this month. The closing of Laxton and Beaumont may have been a matter of forced retrenchment rather than of deliberate strategy; and yet the most interesting, if delicate, hint of Fr Peter Levi, S.J., was surely a much more reflective feeling towards such a possible strategy: 'It [Beaumont] has been closed when we have reached such a point of Catholic popular power and confidence of sentiment that it no longer seems necessary to extend that power or embody that confidence in privileged institutions: it is even possible (not surely for the first time) and may occasionally be desirable for the Church to withdraw from positions of privilege' (*The Tablet*, 15th July, 1967). Again the current inquiries of the Public Schools Commission and the searching work of Dr Royston Lambert must, or should, be provoking deep self-questioning about one sector of our educational system. And it

is in line with these developments that Mr Anthony Spencer should recently have made a much-needed plea for a radical inquiry into the condition and purpose of the Catholic educational system.

And the real question is as to our purposes and aims. The technicalities and consequences can be worked out by the experts, but it belongs to us all, and especially in a journal of this sort, constantly to re-open the question of aims. It is a question, to adapt a phrase of Mr David Holbrook, of education for maturity. But how are we to define this maturity?

Now this has most recently been magnificently done, it seems to me, in what Mr Brian Wicker has truly called a 'magisterial book', *The Transformation of Man*. Mrs Haughton is surely in the fullest tradition of the Church when she states that the crown and climax of a Christian formation is abandonment, love, faith, transformation, ecstasy, displacement of the ego, a going out from one's country and kindred and father's house, however one cares to put it; but that this is an uncovenanted mercy which a formation cannot produce, only conduce towards. On the other hand, precisely because such a conversion and going out of oneself, cumulative or sudden, is timeless and without content and certainty, and yet commitment *par excellence*, the determinations which the very creativity of this commitment must take depend on the particular exigencies and time in which it occurs. And if Mrs Haughton is further right in detecting a radical shift of ideology within the Catholic tradition in our own time, a return to the primitive Johannine sense of salvation *already realized*, combined with a post-Christian social awareness (learned in large part from the revolutionaries and Marxists), then we have a criterion of our education that is as supple as it is principled.

For formation, she so rightly insists, stands to transformation both antecedently and consequently, at once disposing us towards it—and thereby judgable according as it conduces to this end—and providing instruments and language for this transformation once vouchsafed. Formation as antecedent must therefore be of a piece with formation as consequence. But we can hardly doubt any longer the nature of the change of ideology registered by Mrs Haughton and therefore the direction of formation as consequence: the Pope's appeal for the fulfilment of 'all men and of the whole of man'; the new Bishop of Malaga's insistence on the primary duty to the poor; the resolution of the 4th Latin-American Congress of *Caritas* in Caracas in favour of a 'social and economic revolution'; the Catholic New Left; and the following statement in a recent number of *America* are all in the same line or re-orientation: 'The image of the Church after Vatican II is that of an earthly community empowered by God to guide mankind in its thrust toward human betterment, which in its terminal form is salvation' (*America*, August 19th).

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up within a cultural structure, but is yet not a part of that structure itself, following rather its own devious rationality to its own self-created ends, then Mann's problem has not for all that been relegated to the merely historical. In its intemporal form it remains even more difficult perhaps than it was when Mann laid down his pen. 'There is at bottom only one problem in the world, and this is its name. How does one break through? How does one get into the open?'

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COMMENT (*continued from page 4*)

The return to school and the gathering of the bishops converge therefore on the new direction of our common efforts and on our relationships in the working out of this common task. The Bishop of Cuernavaca surely speaks for more than himself when he presents himself to his faithful as 'the educator of (their) faith and the *minister of the common discernment* of charisms'.

P.L.