

## REFLECTIONS ON THE END OF AN ERA

DR Niebuhr has given us a book' not unlike M. Berdyaev's *End of **Out Time***. Both works lead us to deplore the complacency of Conservatism (as we know it) and the hypocrisy of Mercantile Christianity. Both books drive us to an alternative; with M. Berdiaeff we must choose between the humanistic individualism of the Renaissance and Christian individualism, while Dr Niebuhr in impressing upon us the pharisaical injustice of this closing era would induce (it seems) an aggressive and vindictive Christianity.

While M. Berdyaev may be more profound and nearer to Catholic vision, we cannot deny that the author of 'Reflections on the End of an Era' is more startling—may even give us more food for thought; and we are provoked to examine for ourselves the antithesis accounting for the attitude indicated in Dr Niebuhr's book—as much as to insist on the only true remedy—a Revolution based on the charity of Christ, Catholicism. The spirit of Conservatism, if we take it to mean the spirit of sheer negative *laissez-faire* in matters of economic justice, is derived largely from a sense of well-being, a personal satisfaction which we wish to prolong. We prosper: those who are our immediate responsibility prosper: at least we do not want; the business of blind and wholehearted conservatism is the Past; and the Present is no more than its legacy. Our concern for the future is limited to our care for our present ease. At whatever cost that must not be prejudiced. Conservatism is the pseudo-philosophy of the prosperous. Inspired by a convenient fatalism in respect of the submerged, relegating economic ills to theotechnic treatment alone, it associates itself not unnaturally with an ideology affording compensation hereafter. It is an advantageous postponement. We only regret that Christianity is thus, by Con-

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<sup>1</sup> *Reflections on the End of an Era.* (Scribner; 10/6.)

servatism's adoption of it, miscalled (rather excusably) the opium of the people. We speak of the philosophy of Conservatism however, an optimism based on well-being and self-esteem (affirming not unnaturally the world to be the best of all possible worlds) that we may understand that which has reacted against it. Palpably the extreme opposite to the theosophy and hall-seeing optimism of Conservatism is to be found in the pessimism of anarchy. The pessimism of many notable anarchists of modern times is, we suspect, little more than a disappointed hedonism. That is to say, a cosmology which regards life and the world, the cosmos or an essential constituent thereof as evil. The world, they suspect, is the worst of all possible worlds. They do not, of course, admit the implications of their fundamental pessimism, and, hope springing eternal in the human breast, seeks to make a little less bad this worst of all possible worlds. *Sociocentricity is the result*—and a state of affairs such as has existed, till the present time, in the U.S.S.R. Bolshevism with its resolution of metaphysic into consciousness of historico-social immanation and the missionary fervour with which it disseminates its doctrine is the supreme instance of the paradoxical forcefulness of pessimism. It is the dynamic of revolution—Revolution *against* the *Unknown*.

Every main modification of pessimist theory has its place in Soviet literature up-to-date, and where such a modification is not sufficiently in line with the official philosophication of the Party we have only to seek its manifestation in the novel or short story.

The greater our rapport with Revolution the more evident it becomes that its impulse is generated by pessimism. Modern Bolshevism may prefer to disclaim its sombre parents—but they are there in the Revolution against the unknown. We need not here insist on the only solution—the Christian view of reality: the pessimism of earth which shines with the optimism of Heaven: the Triumph of Tragedy: the tragedy of the Place of the Skull, the triumph of the Cross that bore man as well as God: the long night that awaits the perfect day.

## BLACKFRIARS

It is by a return to the fullness of Catholic vision that Conservatism and radicalism may become one—for it is the Church alone that bridges the past and the future. It is by the *fact*, once apprehended, of Catholicism that reaction and revolution may cease to strive. It is the Faith (in all its implications) that may rob Revolution of its sting.

J. F. T. PRINCE.

## DEUS QUI HUMANÆ SUBSTANTIAE

To Fr. Bede *Jarrett, R.I.P.*

**So** mix the sunsets and the silver  
Of autumn skies,  
**Mix** in the flavour of the *grape*,  
And cool  
Its burning suns, its cyclic orbits  
In the liquid crystal  
From the deepest pool.  
**Mix** in the fire of amber,  
Flame with anti-flame,  
Attar of roses and the scentless,  
Coin a Name  
To smite the sky asunder!  
Hope not to understand  
Silence broken into thunder.  
Stand amazed!  
Let the faint stand!  
Flawed is the hand,  
Fixed the unfix'd,  
And the sand  
Tempered to stone.  
The dust wakes and weaves  
**A** flame of new leaves.

FRANCIS BEAUCHESNE THORNTON.