ET NOS MUTAMUR IN ILLIS

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I WAS kindly asked to write something for the first number of BLACKFRIARS, in 1920, and now, to suggest what changes may have occurred during those Forty Years Gone.

When the Archduke was murdered in 1914, our insularity may have asked: 'Who was he? Where is Sarajevo?', even, 'Does it really *matter*?' But a member of the Austrian imperial family, when asked: 'But you don't think it means the end of a dynasty?' answered: 'It's the end of a world'. Exaggerated? Well, in 1918 many were exclaiming: 'Now for a new world!' and I too, though lastingly bruised by the sorrows of that war, felt full of hope. Why? One must select.

It was obvious that there would be an immense influx of students into the depleted universities. It was agreed that Catholic societies should be reinforced, or revived, or created, to welcome Catholic arrivals. It was hard to get the better of the idea that such societies existed only to 'safeguard' the faith and morals of their members. Some, however, hoped for the formation of a liberally-educated Catholic mind which would make a positive impact on public opinion. 'The International Society of Intellectual Co-operation' soon enough existed in Geneva alongside of, not part of, the League of Nations. But this impact seemed far more likely to happen if such societies were 'federated', learned to meet and know one another, and become more than merely local groups of which the members just 'talked to one another'. But simultaneously with this idea—if indeed it did not come first—arose the wish to be in touch with students' groups in all countries of Europe and the U.S.A., and this met with far greater difficulties and even hostility. (I thought we might begin with something concrete; the sending of money and clothes to men and women students who—seminarians included—existed in hideous conditions in Germany and especially Austria. Our students responded magnificently; but I came in for very bitter criticisms from elsewhere.) The 'movement' grew; Catholics from the several universities had their annual reunions at home, and went in unexpectedly large numbers to students' congresses abroad: 'Pax Romana' was finally approved in Rome.

At Oxford, which I left in 1927, it seemed to be regretted if no Catholic gave his opinion in any general discussion: we were

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1960.tb06395.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

expected to have principles—from miracles to music. But, if we expressed them, we needed also to show that we appreciated the principles—or lack of them—held by others. (A friendly non-Catholic doctor took me round a hospital for 'shell-shock' cases, and said: 'These men don't get better and *can't*: they have no principles for living'. 'Why don't you give them some?' He laughed, and said: 'Because we haven't any either. This is where you should come in'.) Frankly, I felt that the change had been great, but 'domestic': we still felt no responsibility to communicate what we had, and were not interested in—or might not even know—what 'others' had. Was that the fault of our schools and even clergy? Did not the post-war 'national mission' show that we thought in terms of a revival of the past, not of a resurrection into a new sort of life? We think a great opportunity was missed: the country *was* 'receptive'; but did we take it, or only ourselves, into account, or speak 'according as they could hear' (Mark iv, 33)? Even those 'Religion and Life' weeks—how soon they became academic! Well-educated men of good will preached and talked to *one another*, even if their subjects were rather new.

But the war had made me 'grow up': I met all day long 'ordinary' suffering men: I had always wanted to serve the most 'disinherited' of all: in Poplar dockland I could get a little of the way 'down': by 1927 the effervescent post-war optimism had of course disappeared: there was resentment; but worse (to my mind), sophistication—stevedores used words like 'reaction', 'complexes'; girls bought 'perms' on the instalment system and were progressively in debt, and took the lead in sexual cynicism. Help, often heroic, was given by some ladies (I doubt if even nuns guessed the changing minds of the young); but though London was full of young Catholic men being 'educated', it seemed seldom suggested that a truly Catholic education implied a sense of dedication. As a transition, saddening yet stimulating, may I quote an incident belonging to the summer of pre-War II? A boy of about seventeen came up and said: 'You 'eard about Bill? He don't believe in Jesus Christ no more. He's waiting for you to 'ave a word. . . .' I went. Bill said: 'If Jesus Christ was son of God, *same as they tell us*, how could God go and kill 'im? *I never could kill the child of me own brain*!' That is textual, though the italics are mine. Here was a boy who had been taught—perhaps as well as the teacher could—his catechism, but who now resented being 'told' what his reason stumbled at, and what offended his innermost instinct. And he was *suffering* from this and called for help. 'But he was exceptional! He was a poet, almost a mystic!' Yes;

but the exception existed: a jet of pure spirit forced its way up through the débris. One such encounter compensates for many hours when 'nothing happens'.

After the second war I seemed to meet a more obstinate version of young men who said bluntly: 'We no more talk your language: our *minds* are different. Yours was formed by Jerusalem, Athens and Rome. We have washed all that out.' They did not realize how 'dated' this was! How long ago was it that Henry Ford proclaimed that 'History is bunk!'? But now that Greek is virtually strangled, and Latin fighting for survival, 'minds' *must* be incurring a change, and our apostolate is all the harder. At the opposite end (but encroaching rapidly on any self-satisfaction) I found a mood expressing itself in words like 'chaos', or more gently, 'muddle', or the 'jungle' in which we live. It is indeed ridiculous to call our condition 'peace' just because we have stopped fighting with guns or bombs within our tiny (and shrunken) peninsula of Europe. Not only we (like the U.S.A.) are suffering from one of those recurrent crime-waves: but is there not a new 'psychological' element discernible in them—the ready use of the knife? and the brutal assault by adolescents or even boys upon the aged? or gigantic thefts of money immediately needed for wages, failure to receive which at once may mean disaster to whole families? This argues an 'insensitivity' which St Paul puts as the head of pagan vices. This 'insensitivity' is what the authoress of *Journey into a Fog* notes so disturbingly in the many 'youth clubs' she visited regularly: the 'dead-pan' faces of those for whom lust itself had grown chill. This is a stage in dehumanization further even than violence.

A change so huge as often to elude our sight is concerned with the centre of world-civilization, hitherto complacently assumed to be Europe. Even our missionaries too often seemed unconscious of vast ancient 'cultures' into which they went. Maybe those 'cultures', higher or lower, are even now breaking up, though not because of that are they the more likely to be Christianized. Less than ever are they willing to accept anything from the West save material. But if, on the one hand, we cannot foresee ourselves Europeanizing e.g. China, and still less Latinizing it, we probably can introduce Christ by means of good works done for his sake even though not explicitly 'religious' (such is the astonishing development of 'Cheshire Homes' in India), on the other hand we must probably be ready for great changes in the presentation of our Faith, not only aesthetically and liturgically, but maybe in formulas other than the scholastic ones to which we are accus-

tomed. I have always thought of Pius XI as prophetic in his insistence on the creation of native priesthoods and hierarchies. But these cannot be improvised all in a moment: any considerable change, if abrupt, would be extremely perilous: the Holy See cannot be hustled: a loyal Catholic will need courage both to wait, and when the times comes, obediently and energetically to act.

THE CRIMINATION OF SIN

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

TWO traditions, of the 'necessary evil' and of the 'noble city', contend in the Christian attitude towards the State. Augustinist and Aristotelean alike profess the duty of obedience to the secular power, yet while to the former this is virtue there encountering its occasion to the latter this is virtue there findiug its proper object. Both agree that all power descends from God; the difference arises from how we conceive a causal order of subordinate agents and purposes. Here, as we shall see presently, a scholastic distinction, between instruments and means on one hand and principal, if secondary causes and intermediate ends on the other, is relevant to the contemporary debate about treating sins as crimes. For if the State is no more than a useful convenience then its rule, though providentially ordained to prevent anarchy, is devoid of moral value within itself. If, on the other hand, the State is endowed with a moral authority of its own then virtue and vice as such can be its concern.

You would not expect men of the Augustinist tradition to bow before the powers that be, nor men of the Aristotelean to warn off the government for not minding its own business. History however does not always follow a thin logic of ideas; those who have believed that true religion is other-worldly and not committed to politics have been left most defenceless before the encroachments of temporal power, while a strong thread runs from St Thomas to the sturdy radicalism, and perhaps some of the pressure-groups, of later centuries. Catholic moralists shade off to both sides, and the muddle increases because it is the Thomists who are the more uneasy about the notion of laws we are not bound to observe so long as we are prepared to pay the penalty.[1] Yet we can

[1] J. Tonneau: *Les lois purement pénales et la morale d'obligation.* Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques, xxxvi, pp. 30-51. Paris, 1952.