

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

“THE HOUND OF HEAVEN” AS A BOOK FOR RETREAT’ was the title of a lecture given by Father Bede Jarrett to the Catholic Poetry Society in 1931. It has been edited from notes by Mr. Maurice Leahy and published in the February number of THE IRISH ROSARY. Father Bede disclaimed any pretence to interpret Francis Thompson’s own thoughts: his aim was to explain what *The Hound of Heaven* had meant to *him* and how it might serve as a programme for a retreat:

The purpose of a retreat in some degree or other is, I fancy, to make the soul lose a sense of complacency, though it should end with a note of *hope*. And I think that *The Hound of Heaven* should pierce anybody’s complacency, even from its original concept of the pursuit of the soul by God. So very often, particularly in what I think one may call the cheaper forms of mysticism, there is perpetual reference to the pursuit of the soul for God, which, I think, is very hurtful because it is complacent. Francis Thompson rather reverses the step. It is not a soul searching for God, but something far more terrible, *God searching for the soul*. Terrible because, I think, as Thompson over and over again suggests, you do not know what you are going to be let in for. If you pursue God you can do it in your own leisurely way, but if *God pursues you* there is nothing leisurely about it

As I understand the poem, it is the soul examining itself in the various stages of its development rather in process of time than from any other standard of measurement the soul trying to escape from God. And again, I think the escape is different according to its age. It is a hiding, and then a sense of distracting oneself from God, and finally there is the bitterness of life, and even of death, and the discovery by the soul of God and of the soul by God.

Revelation means that God bursts into life, not the soul bursting out of life into God—that is impossible. It is the Divine Action, not the human action, which is the consummation of mysticism. That is where we, as followers of Christ, part company with all the mysticism that is being talked round about us.

Father Bede then analyzed the poem, step by step, until he came to

. . . . that divine ending of how all that God took from us is still to be found in God. Whatever you miss, if you have found

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God you cannot miss it. As Tauler says : ' He that would have found God and all the world besides has no more than God.' There is nothing that can be added to *Infinity*. It is Everything, all Truth, all Goodness and all Beauty

And he concluded:

This jealous God ! If He pursues you, won't He take all that you love *from* you and strip you of all the things that you pursue. And yet His ending is that once you have had the vision of Death it will heal you, and you will realize that if you stop running away and let Him catch you up, you have that which you thought was lost. And if you find *Him*, it is worth losing all the rest, for in Him all the rest will be found.

Almost you might sum it all up by saying that God has a poorer dwelling than we. He dwells in us, but we dwell in Him.

COMMUNISM AND THE CATHOLIC WORKER. The same number contains a valuable personal document by 'A Dublin Unemployed.' Though he describes conditions which, in some respects, may be peculiar to Ireland, his *Log of a Labourer* must find an echo in the experiences of Catholic workers, employed or unemployed, in this and other countries:

As an unemployed worker who was more or less sympathetic with Socialism I should like to give my reasons why some Catholic workers become Communists by relating something personal. Thirty-six years ago my parents came from the country to live in Dublin, like thousands did before them and have been doing ever since. They were the children of the dispossessed and they came to live in a quarter of Dublin that was a by-word in civilized society for its wretched housing conditions and people. I have read graphic descriptions of Dublin women, bare-footed and drink-sodden, with children tucked in ' kangaroo ' pouch-like shawls, screaming and quarreling in low public-houses. To such quarters and scenes as these some of ' the best peasantry in the world ' had to come to live because of the land laws that destroyed and dispossessed a thrifty and God-fearing people Possibly the young men of to-day who are revolutionary-minded have inherited as their only legacy a discontent unconsciously handed down To-day they roam the streets, perhaps unemployed or living in a slum. Poverty and ill-education and perhaps a sense of lost respect makes them careless about religion. When they lapse into evil ways, *then* they blame their surroundings and their poverty for their lapse, and in the end they smother their consciences by blaming religion and

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social conditions for their evil, although, alas, many have to blame themselves for their downfall. It is among such people that Communism hopes to spread its doctrines and to fan the flames of discontent. Those who have lost their self-respect and feel the burning passion to destroy a system that seems to them the cause of all their unhappiness are the vanguard of the revolution and the most dangerous because they are animated by hate.

The writer then describes the magnificent organization of Communism among the workers and unemployed, and concludes tersely with a very practical complaint:

Irish Catholicism, as well as a firm faith, wants intelligent, educated laymen, and if Communists can have propaganda lectures and speakers' classes and historical classes, why cannot there be Catholic organization among the lay people? The layman, according to an Encyclical I read, have their part to do in the Church, and here in Ireland almost everything is left to the priest.

Many Catholic workers in this country must be feeling the same thing.

CATHOLIC CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS. The same point is brought home in the February number of that excellent new American paper, THE CATHOLIC WORKER:

As Catholics, we must be class-conscious—conscious of a definite class to which we adhere, a firmly rooted sense of solidarity. We must be conscious that we are members of Christ's Body, conscious of the duty we owe our fellow-members in this Body—to love, serve, help and love again our comrades, whether they be Jew, Nazi, Communist or Capitalist, Morgan or Calles, Pope Pius XI or Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

We are in a class, we Communists, whether at the altar-rail, at work or play, in the subway or at the corner coffee-pot. We have a mission, an apostolate to everyone, for 'if one member suffereth; all the members suffer therewith.'

We must achieve this solidarity, this class-consciousness by definite means. Pope Pius XI, the Vicar of Christ the King, has told us repeatedly to form study groups to study Catholic principles, as a prelude to action. THIS HAS NOT BEEN DONE! Have we become so tinctured with bourgeois class-consciousness as to play the sneering sceptic, the anti-social 'individualist?' He has given us the triple emblem of 'Prayer, Action, Sacrifice!' He has told us to form Trade Guilds to combat the Communist, Socialist and bourgeois unions already in

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existence. But there is not one Catholic Trade Union in America. Can it be that Catholics have chosen Morgan and Stalin for their leaders?

There is no time to lose—too much time has been lost already. There should be a thousand free Workers' Colleges throughout the country to bring Catholic thought to the man on the street; we must get rid of bourgeois and Communist propaganda in our text-books; we must found Farming Communes where Catholic thought can flourish in a pure environment, untainted by the materialist jungle without.

The editorial on Catholic Action in the same number should also be read—indeed, *The Catholic Worker* should be read from cover to cover monthly. It is by far the most vital Catholic newspaper in the English language that we know; it is a workers' paper, but for that very reason it is well calculated to galvanize the Christianity of all. And it costs only one cent—there was never a better ha'porth. (Annual subscription, 25 cents., from M. F. O'Donnell, 436 East 15th Street, New York City.)

THE THOMIST APPROACH TO THEISM. The Anglican review, *THEOLOGY*, has lately given us so many helpful and sympathetic studies in Thomist Theology and Philosophy of Religion that it was with something like a sense of shock that we read the review of Dr. Box's recent books, *The World and God* and *The Problem of Evil* in the February number. The review is, in effect, a criticism of traditional Natural Theology, and especially of the traditional arguments for the existence of God. After propounding the original view that the difference between an *a priori* and an *a posteriori* argument is 'merely formal,' the reviewer continues: 'Given two concepts, *A* and *B*, shall we move from *A* to *B* or from *B* to *A*? The *B* of the Cosmological and Teleological arguments is no less a logical abstraction than the *A* from which the Ontological argument starts.' This prepares us for the confident assurance that 'None of these arguments as propounded by rationalism (*sic*) touches at any point the actual data of experience,' which, further generalized into the statement that 'Between the rationalism of Plato, Aristotle and the Schoolmen on the one part, and on the other the empiricism of science from the time of Roger Bacon onwards, no alliance seems to be possible,' becomes the *motif* of the rest of the review. Had

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the writer turned for one moment to check these dogmatic statements by reference to St. Thomas's own formulation of the traditional arguments, he would have seen that every one is based on experimental observation of fact, and the most elementary acquaintance with Thomist philosophy would have shown him that they could not, consistently with that philosophy, be based upon anything else. But the same number contains the conclusion of Dr. Mascall's fine essay on *Three Modern Approaches to God*, which is in every way worthy of *Theology's* reputation for thoughtfulness and scholarship. Here, following Professor Taylor's *Faith of a Moralist*, the traditional Natural Theology has been both understood and clearly presented. There is also a valuable and practical article on *Christian Principles in Society* by E. J. Simpson.

THE LEGION OF DECENCY. There are, it seems, considerable and important local divergencies in the workings of the Clean Film Campaign in America. Our recent reflections were occasioned chiefly by what we had heard of those of Chicago, and so, we imagine, must be much that is reported in this country. Chicago methods are, it would seem, not those of other regions, as appears from a letter of the Rev. E. S. Schwegler in *THE COMMONWEAL* (February 8th). Here we learn that elsewhere the practice has been introduced of listing pictures which are 'neither endorsed nor condemned . . . films which were found unobjectionable by our reviewers so far as morals or ethics were concerned, but were rejected because of faulty direction, poor castings, vulgarities or lack of artistry.' (The distinction between ethical failings and vulgarities is particularly refreshing.) Fr. Schwegler goes further:

I believe it is also good to endeavor to present an artistic judgment on recommended films. If this is not done, there is room for the criticism that church authorities are lending their assistance to the encouragement of bad art, poor taste, etc. This criticism can be levelled with telling force against the lists emanating from Chicago, which have played such havoc recently in the metropolitan area.

It was precisely these Chicago lists that called forth our astonishment in a previous number, and we hasten to publish this proof that they do not represent the mentality of the Legion as a whole.

LITURGY. LA VIE SPIRITUELLE for January 1st contains a practical article by Dom A. François on liturgical worship that could profitably be adapted for small parishes in England. He points out the urgency of educating the laity to take their proper active part in the liturgy and insists on the Mass as the supreme act of corporate worship. Corporate worship is not obtained by merely putting the missal into the hands of the laity. It is possible to be an adept in the technique of using the missal and entirely individualistic in one's spiritual life. Dogmatic instruction, encouragement, and example are essential. Three chief means are advocated: 1, To create the idea, the spirit, the atmosphere of collective worship. This is not achieved in a week-end; the parish priest must develop it by systematic instruction. 2, To make the liturgy something real, practical and living. 3, To draw only on the resources of the parish. Concert parties of plain chant fanatics from outside should be avoided.

The apostolate of the Benedictines of Mont César is then described. First, propaganda and an invitation to all the parish to attend a 'parochial day' which is really a triduum. Then, Thursday night two priests arrive and open with a simple instruction on the meaning of community worship, followed by a rehearsal of the easiest parts of the Mass, and Benediction. Friday night: an explanation of the liturgy of the Mass, a practice in the chant of the Mass and of Compline. Saturday night: instruction on the priesthood and the participation of the laity in the Sacrifice and further practice and Benediction. Meanwhile, a special Schola has been practising the Proper; the servers are instructed and the organist placated. On Sunday at the first Mass—a Dialogue Mass—the Proper is said so that it can be heard by all. The other priest from the pulpit leads the Responses, Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, etc., and directs the people when to kneel and stand. Later, at the High Mass the Schola sings the Proper and the whole congregation the Ordinary. In the evening Compline is sung communally.

This method has met with remarkable success in many workers' parishes in Belgium; it does not demand an *élite* or an intelligentsia. Why should we not begin to create this 'common mind in Christ' in England?

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FATHER BEDE JARRETT AND ENGLISH CATHOLICISM is the title of a comprehensive article by Dr. Honorio Muñoz in the January number of the *BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO*, the erudite official inter-diocesan organ of the Philippine Islands, edited and published at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila. After describing Father Bede's ideas of and work for Catholic Action, he goes on to describe the various organizations of English Catholicism, not forgetting *El Movimiento de la Vuelta al Campo*. We cannot refrain from quoting what he has to say about BLACKFRIARS. We are, we are told, 'the most scientific and interesting of English reviews . . . distinguished for our doctrinal philosophical-theological character.' We are not 'of those which are sold to gain sympathy or money; but send out the truth to the four corners of the earth, whether it be pleasant or unpleasant.' Finally, we are 'one of the most agreeable and delightful reviews for the interest of our articles, and for the sound solutions which we give to modern questions, whether social or philosophical, moral or theological.' Whence our 'popularity is justly growing daily in English speaking countries and in foreign lands.' An alarming responsibility.

PENGUIN.

CORRESPONDENCE

CATHOLIC ACTION AND STUDY

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

SIR,—Writing in the December issue of *BLACKFRIARS* Anthony Timmons, in his thought-provoking article 'Catholic Action and Study,' throws considerable light on a comparatively obscure phase of the Lay Apostolate.

Mr. Timmons implies that English Catholic Action groups have failed to provide the laity with adequate facilities for 'getting down' to an organized study of Catholic fundamentals. Developing his theme, he calls attention to the fact that two organizations already exist in England which have done noble work in the scientific training of lay apologists. One prepares for platform presentations of a specific nature; the other society's aim and object is 'the study and dissemination of Catholic social principles.' Membership in these units, how-