

BLACKFRIARS

CORRESPONDENCE

CATHOLIC ACTION OR SEGREGATION?

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

SIR

Mr. Thistlewaite's modesty in submitting his programme for *The Catholic Family* as 'Notes for Criticism' disarms, to some extent, that criticism. It does not dispose of the astonishment which most of your readers will feel that he should present such a programme for serious consideration at all.

Of the *practicability* of Catholics constituting an independent social and economic unit I will not judge. Of its *morality* there can surely be but one opinion.

He tells us, in effect, to abandon the society in which God has placed us, to imitate the Mormons (1), and herd ourselves together as social pariahs in concentration camps where we can breed ad lib. away from the 'pity, contempt or reprobation' of our (evidently suburbanite) neighbours.

We need no Mr. Thistlewaite to remind us of the hardship of leading a normal Christian family life under present economic conditions. But it has its glory and its reward. It is difficult to conceive of anything more ignominiously inglorious than retiring to Mr. Thistlewaite's Utahs.

Certainly this is not the stuff that apostles and martyrs are made of. Mr. Thistlewaite writes of the 'failure' of 'infiltration.' Has he considered that, had the early Christians adopted this policy of flight from the *completely* pagan society in which they found themselves, Europe would never have been Christianised and he would never have so much as heard of Christianity?

But the issue seems clear. On the one hand the Papal programme of social and Catholic Action and the conception of the social mission of Christ and His Church so often explained by your contributors. On the other hand the defeatist programme of flight to Utah, of segregation, and of the abdication of social and apostolic responsibility. *Either* renewed effort in the struggle to extend the Kingship of Christ and 'to restore all things in Him,' or retreat and capitulation, leaving the world in the undisputed possession of His enemies and the forces of evil, in the foolish belief that in so doing we shall more easily save our own souls. Between the contrary policies of Catholic action and Catholic segregation it is difficult to see any possibility of agreement or compromise.

Is it to be wondered at that many Catholics at home and abroad regard the tendencies and views of *some* of the advocates of 'Back to the Land' with increasing misgiving and anxiety?

Yours, etc.,

HENRY GORDON.