

POINT OF VIEW¹

For my part I cannot visualise the boundaries of theology, mysticism and what are termed the normal things of everyday life. For me every question seems finally to resolve itself into a theological problem, and to me theologians sometimes appear to be deliberately confusing, intentionally ambiguous and vague, e.g. in the question of pacifism. . . .

Since the industrial revolution life has become increasingly artificial and therefore unwholesome. The rapid application of new discoveries to industry, where the effects on human beings never enters the minds of the technologist, is quickly reducing humanity to a vast machine. . . .

Now no one can quarrel with a hierarchy, provided the masses themselves are integrated beings, or at least are given every opportunity to attain such wholeness. Modern society, capitalist and communist, denies such a possibility. Hence the physical, moral and spiritual degeneracy of our age, characterised by an unfallible belief in what is termed progress, built on the theory that man must conquer nature in order to survive. . . . It seems probable at some future date that man may be able to produce the kind of animals and human beings he desires; and if his desires are contrary to natural law the result will be obvious. . . . I feel that nature will, as she has done in the past, assert her authority, but it will be a very painful business indeed.

What has all this to do with your Review and the mission of the Church? Before coming to know *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* I had been reading about Eric Gill and his association with Harold Robbins, Fr Vincent McNabb, G.K.C. and others, and the now-dead Catholic Land Association. I also read *Death of the Christian West*; for agriculture and nutrition Sir Albert Howard and Sir Robert McCarrison respectively are my authorities. More recently I read *Mission to the Poorest*. The effect on me of this reading

¹ In this section we hope regularly to quote from letters to the Editor and other statements of personal problems and points that seem relevant to *The Life of the Spirit*. The Editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed.

leads me to believe that the Church, not only in France and Ireland but generally, is out of touch with the man in the street: out of touch spiritually and 'socially'.

But what is the remedy, if any? It seems to me that there can be no immediate remedy. The machine age, now becoming the atomic age, will evolve its own solution—but not without very great pain, and a complete change in the heart of man. Since I believe our civilisation will somehow destroy itself, a return to a more civilised yet less sophisticated form of life is desirable—if you like, a return to the land, for when all is said and done it is our only real material wealth. Mentally and physically alive human beings can result only from a soil treated with reverence by human beings, where creation of fertility is the theme and not, as now, fertility extraction. Being thus mentally and physically alive, man would soon aspire to the spiritual and thus be fulfilled. This may look like putting the cart before the horse; if so I can only ask you to look at the frustrated millions in our large cities the world over, Christians of all sects struggling valiantly to make ends meet with little or no time or thought of their spiritual needs.

Since such aggregations of human souls are denied the fulfilment it seems to me that Catholics ought at least to concentrate some of their energy and resources on populating the countryside in small groups, aiming at being self-supporting in as many ways as conditions will allow, to make things first for use rather than for profit, where every task could be a prayer and Christ reign supreme.

Such small communities must cater for all types, the simple and the learned. That religion is only for the initiated is an oft-heard criticism; and many communities have failed, I feel, because of the esoteric atmosphere surrounding them. It takes all sorts to make a world; and a real community must cater for the unskilled and unlettered, for we are nonetheless brothers in Christ. Perhaps there are such Catholic communities; I don't know. But, whether or no, I feel the need is urgent, and perhaps others, though few, feel likewise. Perhaps *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* could do something here.

Bardney, 7 November, 1952.

JOHN P. McWALTER