

# BLACKFRIARS

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## REPRESENTATION

THE Catholic is aware of his solidarity with all men, aware too that in the sacrifice of Christ the whole of human history presses upon our present immolation and oblation for the achievement of Christ's kingdom. It is certain that in being dead to ourselves we may become channels of the Church's redemptive action upon the body of mankind. We know first of all that what God now demands of us is not that which we possess but that for which Christ died. Nothing can be restored to Christ that does not belong to Him already. Our vision of the boundaries of the Church's redemptive action has extended beyond the saving of our isolated souls to include all existence. And the boundaries of our own action are also extended. We do not have to prove before God the precise relation of our action to its effects, but our action, however partial and limited, is a participation and formulation of mankind's supplication to the mercy and the victory of Christ.

If we are that grain of wheat which, falling to the ground, has not flinched to die, our fruit is corn where men are hungriest and where the poor and the stranger come to glean. To bring the simile into terms of living, this losing of our life that we may gain it is a twofold supplication and identification. Firstly it is that death to self which through the agony and crucifixion is the identification of ourselves in Christ, and the supplication of God for a no less universal intention than that for which Christ died. So much is true of ourselves in so far as there is supernatural life in us. But secondly it is an identification of ourselves, through breaking down the limits of the ego imposed by our encrusted individualism, with all mankind as needing Christ and as hungry for Him. And this is a supplication through all men of the mercy of Jesus Christ our Lord. A twofold action, and obviously you can't have one without the other: supplication for all men through Christ, and supplication of Christ through all men.

Man was not made to be alone, and we needed our neigh-

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bour not as someone to receive our spiritual largesse but as someone without whom we could hardly hope to return our soul to God. It is true that each may say, Christ died on the cross for me, but none may say, Christ died for me alone. We are members of each other. Hence the paradox of charity which needs nothing from the creature yet needs everything from the creature, and the tension of the Christian life in which the more is given the more remains to give, the more is possessed the more is needed and with the deeper yearnings, and the man who has received no less than the Body of God at the rails of the altar may need to receive his own soul from the unemployed man at the first street corner. For it is the Body of God that Christ has given us and not, so to say, a packet of spiritual candy.

It seems that our yearning, in so far as we are not wholly closed up from the movement of the Holy Spirit, is proportioned to the need of men for Christ, and that where the need is greatest there is the more intimate identity with our supplication. It is *because* of the infinite needs of one sinner that ninety-nine just may be saved from the suffocation of their own virtue.

It would be incredibly smug to say that the Christian knows what others need. He knows practically nothing. If we know by faith what others must come to know, perhaps we know nothing even of what we need ourselves save that His name is Jesus Christ. Perhaps we had better not assert too strongly that we desire what others need, for we understand our desires still less than our knowledge. But it is quite certain that we need what others need. There is our communication, that we should be hungry with the hungry and with their hunger, that so the Holy Ghost may be *permitted* (it is an outrage to write the word) to communicate through us to God the supplication of Christ in the person of those who need Him.

In a sense, a sense at once most exalted and most humble, the Catholic is the *representative* not so much of *other* men as of all men. In particular, as the phrase<sup>1</sup> which has given a new charter of spiritual life to the world seems to imply, he is the representative of his immediate fellows to whom the

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<sup>1</sup> "The immediate apostles of the working men must be themselves the working men" (*Quadragesimo Anno*).

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common life of labour binds him. I do not mean the kind of representation which fills the seats of parliament. I mean some infinitesimal participation of what the Little Flower of Jesus meant when she said, “. . . the infinite treasures of His merits are mine, to Thee I offer them with joy, beseeching Thee to see me only as in the Face of Jesus and in His Heart burning with love.”

For the rest he is a tongue in the throat of his fellows and a light in their eyes, on condition that he should learn to communicate in their body, to move in their throat, to form on their lips the words of the Word made flesh.

BERNARD KELLY.

*ERRATUM.*—In the March issue, p. 168, line 22, read: “*Faith* is belief . . .” instead of “*Truth* is belief . . .”