

the light which should burn within them is supplanted by either a flicker of pieties or a burning brandishing of a party line. Inasmuch as they lose their independence and become mere means of propaganda, to that extent they lose their integrity.

Catholic truth is something too vast, in fact too catholic, to be confined within narrow limitations since its province is the whole of life; and axiomatic with this concluding statement, in going from the general to the particular, one may add as an assertion of true critical standards that a novel must be considered first as literature, before its specific merits as 'Catholic literature' can be assessed.

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CATHOLICS and ADULT EDUCATION

THE great growth in adult education through the tutorial and other types of classes has been one of the most interesting educational developments of recent years. This in its turn has led to an increase in the numbers of adult educational centres and colleges; these vary from the purely technical non-residential schools to long-term residential colleges such as the Catholic Workers' College and Ruskin College at Oxford. There are also shorter courses, normally of a week or week-end, running throughout the year at places like Ashridge, Burton Manor and Grantley Hall. Many of the ideas which inspired the founding of this latter type of college are attributable to the Danish Folk High Schools, and in England, to the work of Sir Richard Livingstone, in particular to his valuable little book, *The Future in Education*. The other force behind this growth in adult education centres has been and still is the work and ideals of bodies such as the Workers Educational Association and the University Extra-Mural Departments. Those who attend tutorial classes, one-year, or terminal classes, have in many cases wanted to meet together away from their normal, and often grim, environment; this desire has been met by holding summer schools in the universities or other large residential centres. The keenness of those attending these summer schools and their appreciation of the chance to spend a week or so at Oxford or Cambridge are touching; the fervour is almost religious. Now the several newly started residential colleges have given many the chance to spend what may be best described as an inexpensive short retreat of an educational nature. In doing so these colleges have fulfilled a deep-seated want that has not previously been sufficiently realised, let alone catered for. Those of similar interests and tastes can meet each other under reasonably

comfortable circumstances, they can discuss their mutual problems, exchange ideas, make new friends and benefit not only from the teaching of experts but also from meeting and talking informally with these experts. This new trend in adult education opens up great possibilities for Catholics and prospects for the Church that have not as yet been fully grasped. Before considering these prospects, it is essential to review briefly the recent historical background of the adult education movement in this country.

One of the most influential bodies in this country is the Workers Educational Association. The W.E.A. was founded in 1903; amongst its promoters was William Temple. Nevertheless, the influence of Christianity, as such, has been small in the movement. Fears of arousing inter-denominational quarrels may well have been partly responsible for this. A more important factor was that adult education movements were chiefly concerned with the further education of the under-privileged, with the working class people who had had only an elementary education but had great latent abilities and interests in education. The main concern was with social and material affairs; hence economics, the historical background of the contemporary evils and the working class struggle to right these evils dominated the programme. Many of the most active tutors were Socialists, men with powerful social consciences; in common with the spirit of the age, the majority of both tutors and pupils had an unshakable faith that all the current problems could be solved by a mixture of purely social, educational and political means.

Few Catholics appreciate the work done, especially in the early days by the W.E.A. and other movements, nor do they realise the extent of the self-sacrifice and enthusiasm that were aroused in many working class districts. The following quotation is taken from *Oxford and Working Class Education*. 'We have known students sit up, not once, but regularly, completing an essay, till one o'clock at night, and enter the mill next day at 6.30; or to attend classes on Saturday afternoon after a week containing twelve hours of overtime over and above the standard fifty-three hours'. These tutorial classes lasted for three years and were made up of three annual sessions of twenty-four lessons each, the students being pledged 'not to miss a single attendance other than from unavoidable causes and to write twelve essays in each session'; these essays were based on private reading as well as on the lectures. The quality of the work was in many cases very high, up to the best university standard. Large numbers of the early Socialist M.P.s received their first training through the tutorial classes. The same is true today. Margaret Cole, in her *Growing Up Into Revolution*, writes: 'What is more, in 1945 a large

number (over 100 to my knowledge) of the Labour M.P.s had been trained as tutors in the adult education movement'.

Recently Mr S. G. Raybould has written a most stimulating book called *The W.E.A.: The Next Phase* (W.E.A. Publications, 38a St George's Drive, London, S.W.1; 3s.6d.). It is a book that should be read by all Catholics who want a clear and forceful view of the problems of adult education today. Mr Raybould maintains that the W.E.A. in particular has reached a crucial stage of its development and that it must now be prepared to review and where necessary readjust its policy to meet changed conditions. Amongst other points Mr Raybould discusses the policy of the W.E.A. towards religion. 'If it is the business of the W.E.A. to promote studies which throw light, or may throw light, on the contemporary situation then we must, I suggest, be prepared to look again at our attitude to the study in our classes of religion and theology. For on the one hand it is plain that on many issues of the day the opinions of great numbers of people are influenced, if not wholly determined, by their religious beliefs, and on the other hand I believe, for what my impression is worth, that there is amongst the younger generation which has become adult during and since the second world war, or at least the more thoughtful members of it, a much more sympathetic interest in religion and in what it may have to say to our condition than was the case in the years after the first world war.

'There is, I think, a curious uneasiness in the W.E.A. in regard to the study of religion and theology, an uneasiness which seems all the more curious when one recalls how many eminent clerics and churchmen were active and influential supporters of the Association in its early days, and how many of its present tutors and students seem to have had in the past, and in not few instances still to have, religious interests. . . I think that we shall be failing in our attempt to help people to find their way about the world in which they live if we either positively discourage the promotion of classes in these subjects or take the line (which seems quite innocently to be taken in some branches) that subjects are plainly outside our purview altogether'.

Mr Raybould goes on to say that he considers what is needed are 'classes studying the nature of religious experience, the inference theologians draw from it as to the nature of man and the universe and the bearing of those influences on problems of history and society'. Mr Raybould stresses in particular the modern growth in the nature of mystical experiences.

At the end of the book there is a list of the types of tutorial classes held over a period of recent years. Social studies accounted

for over 60 per cent of all the classes held; religion is placed under social studies and accounts for between 1 per cent and 2 per cent of the classes.

From a very short experience in adult education, I can confirm all that Mr Raybould writes. One of the main reasons why this revival of interest in religion has occurred is that the social reformers have achieved so much of what they set out to obtain half a century ago. It was then firmly believed by many that social and material progress were in themselves sufficient ends. The disheartening discovery that this is not the case has led many people to make a more serious study of Christianity in order to see whether its claims may not have more validity than was previously conceded. It is only too easy for Catholics to be smug and to show that the Church has always taught that purely material and social progress can never satisfy the deeper instincts of man. Such an attitude helps nobody and moreover the part played by Catholics in bringing about many vital social and material reforms is nothing to be proud of. We ought rather to take the fullest advantage of the present situation. As Catholics we believe we have something unique to offer the world—Truth—and we believe it is enshrined in the teachings of the Church. We believe too that faith, in the final analysis, is a gift from God, but we know that right knowledge is part of the preparation for faith. Therefore if we can help as many people as possible to understand just what we do believe (and equally as important what we do not believe) and why we believe it, we shall be doing God's work in a practical way and in a way that lies within the capabilities of many of us.

This opportunity must however be seen in its true perspective. In the eyes of many the Church is fundamentally a 'reactionary' force; it is a great hard impersonal organisation efficiently administered for the ends of the clergy who control it. People who hold this view of the Church can see in practice little difference between Catholicism and Communism and argue that if the Russians persecute Christians, condemning them to death or sending them to hard labour for life, do not the Spaniards do the same to Communists and Socialists and with the encouragement of the Church? Arguments of this kind can be multiplied *ad nauseam*, and are always designed to show that the Church is primarily a political organisation, an appearance that is sometimes sustained by the irresponsible outpourings of some Catholics. Nevertheless, paradoxically, the traditional views on the Church are often held from lack of information rather than from conviction. If Catholics would participate more in outside social and educational fields many current misconceptions

could be dispelled; the attitude of regarding ourselves as being members of a semi-persecuted minority dies hard and seems to be considered as a certification of exemption from making anything but Catholic contacts. I am not advocating that Catholics should 'infiltrate' into adult education in order to convert those who are not Catholics—God forbid, for that would be abusing the purpose of these classes and would rightly antagonise many of those attending. Rather, Catholics might well consider joining adult educational classes primarily for the excellent teaching they will receive and also for the contacts they will make. At the moment there is a great and widespread interest in the Church, but the ignorance about her teachings and beliefs is abysmal. How many non-Catholics, or Catholics for that matter, know the Church's teaching on social doctrines and the way in which they condemn many aspects of Capitalism in terms as strong as those used by any Socialist? It is no use saying that those interested in the Church can always visit the local priest and get all the information they need. Many non-Catholics have a horror of approaching a priest; they feel certain that somehow or other they will be entrapped and committed to something. Do we as Catholics, especially those of us who have been brought up in the faith, fully appreciate the violence of the mental wrench needed to alter a person's mind from a traditionally materialistic outlook to a sympathetic view of the Church? The distance to be traversed is truly terrifying. Therefore Catholics who treat with anger or contempt what appear to them to be ridiculous or outrageous statements about the Church do great harm and convince the deluded of the truth of their delusions. Hence any Catholics who feel that they might be of assistance in this sort of work must have patience as well as knowledge, must be content not to expect 'results', and be happy if someone has revised their opinion on the Church as a result of his or her behaviour or exposition.

Any article of this kind must come round to the question of the starting of a Catholic residential college. The need for one is self-evident. The Anglicans have recognised this need; Moor Park, near Farnham, was opened on 24 November, 1949. I should like to make a few tentative suggestions as to the form a Catholic college might take.

1. It must be expected to run at a loss of at least £1,000 p.a. This loss would probably not cover the interest on a capital loan needed to launch the place.

2. It would be best run under lay control. A warden, a resident tutor and a full-time bursar should be a sufficient permanent staff on the academic side.

3. The ideal size would be between 50 and 60 beds for students.

4. The college should be able to rely on the co-operation of the hierarchy and the religious orders, as well as on the laity, for outside lectures. Such co-operation would, to be successful, presuppose a genuine desire on the part of all to see the scheme succeed; it might demand, at times, a heroic sublimation of personal or even corporate policy.

5. The object of the place would be to cater for two main types of courses. First it would provide a centre where specifically Catholic societies and groups could come together. Secondly it would aim at providing courses where the teaching of the Church could be suitably presented, discussed and studied by anyone who wished to come. No attempt at the conversion of non-Catholics would be attempted. I would go so far as to advocate that when Communism, for instance, was being studied, a practising Communist be invited to give a lecture. The subjects could be divided into two main categories: those most likely to be of interest to Catholics only, such as pure apologetics, and those subjects that would have a more general appeal, such as mysticism or one of the Eastern religions. The standard of lecturing should be at least up to that demanded by the other adult educational establishments.

6. The college could also act as the focal point for local Catholic study groups throughout the country.

I do not pretend that this is more than the barest outline, nor do I expect that such a college should anticipate a smooth passage, for it certainly would not get one. I am sure, however, that the project is worth attempting and the sooner the better.

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