

BLACKFRIARS

tion to hurl; but is it, in this case a just one? St. Basil and St. Benedict were in that sense runaways. It is not (that I know of) recorded that they offered any other solution of the urban problems of their time beyond setting the example of leaving the cities and helping to build up a God-fearing, healthy life and people outside. Let those who believe in industrialism and urbanism solve its problems as well as they can. To demand that those who, with Dr. Carvel, see in industrialism a blind alley, should find a cure for its difficulties does not seem very reasonable. But why brand with dishonour those who believe that the best thing is for all who can to leave industrialism and build up from small foundations outside. The greatest obstacle to this is the throttle-hold which the Money Power has on England's throat. The problems of Babylon will never be solved by contempt of Broodfield, however much we may be prevented from going thither.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

H. E. G. ROPE.

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To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

Sir,—May I express my thanks to you for the opportunity of a brief comment upon points raised in Father Rope's letter? From the kind tribute he pays to the substance of my article there may be possibly more ground for agreement than would appear from the strong exception he takes to its closing paragraphs. These were trenchantly expressed as the conclusion to a paper written and read to arouse discussion. Their tone was provocative rather than pontifical, with the touch of caricature rather than portraiture, ill-drawn, it seems, but not ill-intentioned.

As my words stand, I doubt whether they go quite so far as a dogmatic denial of any individual's right to return to the material conditions of the pre-industrial era. The point is rather that such a *modus vivendi* is not the solution to the problems discussed. Where a virile peasantry to-day is knit into the social fabric we do not find it rejecting the amenities and culture common to that society. Does not the Tyrolese or Canadian peasant use agricultural machinery and electric power where it is available? The peasantry of England formed an integral and vital part of an agricultural people and its external "features and manner" were the spontaneous expression of its nature and living tradition. The seeker to-day for this primitive contentment does so at present in the face of society, and is thus tempted to identify himself with the old peasantry by adopting its external characteristics and habiliments, not by natural development so much as by a self-conscious and deliberate gesture. The external features of a culture flow from its essence and its living spirit; if they are

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adopted self-consciously there is the danger of emphasizing what is unimportant and of slipping into fancy-dress. In any case my remarks bore upon the problem as it affects not individuals but society as a whole.

"Running away" applies equally to any religious, who none the less is still embodied in the organism of society and fulfils his duties to it, besides enjoying the protection and privileges it affords him. Even in the fifth century the eremitical ideal was an exceptional feature of a growing Christendom whose bishops and pastoral clergy remained in Babylon. Did not St. Benedict carry with him and hand on the cultural tradition in which he was nurtured?

Both of us hold the present system to be stultifying and degrading to the spirit of man; but does not the policy of isolation from society as it stands involve the danger of failing in one's duty to hand on the culture which still forms the basis of civilized thought and activity in Europe? Some of us still believe it possible to find, in the corporative State for example, a solution which, while rejecting the evils of Money and Capitalism, does not necessitate the conditions of Erewhon.

In view of the character of my paper may I pass over the expressions "heartless ridicule" and "brand with dishonour"? Like Father Rope, I know and admire individuals and groups whom I had no intention of stigmatizing personally. Finally may I express my gratitude to him for giving me the chance to express my regret to those whom I may have hurt by expressions whose tone and tenour could be interpreted in the light of his letter?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

AELWIN TINDAL-ATKINSON, O.P.