

## INTEGRAL HUMANISM<sup>1</sup>

“TO propose to man no more than what is human, Aristotle remarked, is to betray man, to will his unhappiness, for by the principal part of himself, the spirit, he is called to something greater than a merely human life. On this principle, if not on the manner of its application, Ramanuja and Epictetus, Nietzsche and St. John of the Cross are all agreed” (p. 10). Is the remark humanist or anti-humanist? Humanism, like so many other good things, is sometimes looked at askance by pious people because of the associations or the expressions it has wrongly or at least accidentally acquired. The Renaissance humanism, anthropocentric as M. Maritain here calls it, was or became an enemy of humanism as Aristotle, as the Christian, understand it, because it in fact reduced the potentialities and in consequence the possible fulfilment of man to the narrowly human. It was a partial humanism, a half-truth. Against this the Christian sets up the ideal of a humanism which is integral and theocentric, and integral because theocentric, the boundary of the perfection at which it aims being nothing less than the sharing in the life of God, including within this the human life of body and spirit in the world of men. “Let us say that humanism . . . tends essentially to make man more truly human, to manifest his original grandeur by making him a sharer in whatever may enrich the personality in Nature and in history. . . . It demands that he should develop the potentialities contained within him, his creative energy, the life of the reason, and should work to make of the forces of the physical world the instruments of his liberty” (p. 10). So far, M. Maritain goes on to remark, we are on common ground with all the historic forms of humanism. But the Christian demands the further and greater ideal. *Dii estis*: “I said, Ye are gods”; he will not be content with less than this. For him then an added problem. The personality is to be perfected and enriched in the realm of the supernatural, not merely of the exclusively natural: the ideal of political

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<sup>1</sup> *Humanisme Intégral: Problèmes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétienté*, by Jacques Maritain (Fernand Aubier; 20 frs.).

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society is one in which the conception of a supernatural City of God plays predominant part, while the natural perfection of society, analogous to that of the individual, is also to be achieved. Christianity is not acosmist. Yet are the two things in fact compatible? "Can there be a heroic humanism?" (p. 11).

The saints, it is sometimes argued, have clearly found the two things incompatible, and have despised the world of sense for the life of the spirit. Is this in fact true? "Here some remarks may be put forward with regard to that scorn of creatures shown by the saints which is so much in evidence in the literature of hagiography. We must not be misled by the expression, which reveals chiefly the feebleness of human language. The saint sees, practically, that creatures are nothing in comparison with the God Whom he loves, the End he has chosen. His scorn of them is the scorn of the lover for whatever is not the beloved. But the more he despises creatures as God's rivals, as object of a possible preference over God, the more he cherishes them inasmuch as they are loved by God, truly made by Him, and worthy of being loved. For to love a thing in God and for God does not mean treating it as a mere means, a mere occasion of loving God; it means loving it and treating it as an end in itself, because it is worthy of love. . . . So is explained the paradox that at the last the saint embraces in a universal love of friendship, of *pietas* . . . all that is fleeting, all the beauty and the feebleness of created things, all that he has left" (p. 82).

The Christian has a "temporal mission"; he has a duty to perform in the world and for the world. Not merely to save his soul, not merely to save the souls of others if the phrase be taken in the sense of an exclusive preoccupation with spiritual as divorced from temporal affairs; but to save in the sense of serving to perfect and fulfil his own and other personalities in accordance with the Christian pattern. We cannot say that the humanist ideal is superfluous or irrelevant, a luxury. We cannot so separate eternal and temporal as to achieve perfection in the one by alienating ourselves wholly from the other; for we can become saints only by

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living one kind of human life rather than another, we can help humanity to holiness only by helping it to lead, or at least desire to lead, one kind of life rather than another. Sanctity is not patient of departmentalization; if religion is not life it is not religion. Sanctity and subhumanity, to bring the issue to these more immediate applications, are incompatible. Our civilization has led and is more and more definitely leading to subhumanity. It is for the Christian, then, to work for the establishment of the ideals of a Christian humanism, for the recovery of men's "original grandeur"; for to preach Christianity otherwise is ultimately to beat the air with wings. "A new age of Christian culture will no doubt understand better than heretofore . . . the ultimate importance of giving the real, the substantial, precedence in every sphere over the apparent and decorative—the really and substantially Christian over the apparently and decoratively Christian. It will understand moreover that it is useless to affirm the dignity and the vocation of the human person without working to transform the conditions which oppress the person, without ensuring that he may be able worthily to eat his bread" (p. 104).

How to work for the establishment of a Christian humanism, a Christendom? The first thing obviously is to be clear as to what this Christendom ought to be; the second, to see what may be done, remotely and proximately, to bring it about.

The first problem is not so simple as it might at first sight seem. There is no pattern to which we can point, as to something which merely demands to be revived. We cannot revive the Holy Roman Empire. As sanctity will differ in manner in different historical conditions, and as "one may suppose that a consciousness of the temporal function of the Christian calls for a new type of holiness to-day, which one might characterize primarily as holiness, and sanctification, of the secular life (*la vie profane*)," so the new type of Christendom to which the exigencies of to-day would seem to point is a Christendom not *sacrale* but *profane*, a civilization no longer an instrument of the spiritual, but an end in its own order (*finis ultimus secundum quid*) (p. 134). The old bad theory

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of the Two Ways: contemplation, perfection, for the cloister, the bare minimum observance of commandments for the world (the state of the imperfect), this invalid distinction, "so widespread, it would seem, in the 16th and 17th centuries," will receive practical refutation: "profane will no longer be opposed to sacred as impure to pure"; for the Gospel principle—the sanctification of the profane, the penetration of grace into the *plus profonde du monde*—will reach a further step in its gradual manifestation and realization.

"Ought we to conceive of a new Christendom . . . as essentially, specifically different from that of the Middle Ages, while expressing in itself (analogously) the same principles? We reply Yes. . . . For not only do we recognize the radical irreversibility of the movement of history . . . but further we hold that this process is the stage of a divine and human drama whereon visible events are but signs, and that humanity, carried on by this irresistible movement, passes through essentially different historical climates which create specifically different conditions of realization for the principles of civilization." "An experience which has been outlived (*trop faite*) cannot be begun anew." Further, "it is impossible to conceive that the sufferings and experiences of the modern age have been in vain. That age . . . has sought for the rehabilitation of the creature; it has sought it in the wrong directions, but we ought to recognize and salvage the truths which lie hidden there captive." "It would be to go against God Himself, to fight against His supreme governance of history, if we were to try and immobilize in one univocal pattern, in a pattern of the past, an ideal of culture worthy of being the aim of our activity" (pp. 152, 153).

The aim of Christian action will be, not to recreate an old dead culture, but to create a new and living culture. So the Christian position is *intégraliste* and *progressive*: "the task which confronts the Christian is the task of saving the humanist truths which four centuries of anthropocentric humanism have disfigured, of saving them at the very moment when culture is decaying and when these truths, together with the errors which distort and oppress them, are

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threatened with dissolution" (p. 81).

The "armory of ideas" for this task is to be found in St. Thomas. "As the Augustinian theology of grace and liberty dominates the Middle Ages, and the theologies of Calvin and Molina dominate modern times, so, in our view, will the theology of St. Thomas dominate a new Christendom" (p. 84). For St. Thomas is not scholasticism, nor is thomism essentially bound up with scholasticism; and while the latter, being essentially a particular mode of expression, of approaching problems, belongs to a "dead past" and we cannot seek to revive it, thomism is in essence bound to no particular type of expression or method, but on the contrary carries with it St. Thomas's "discernment, in the heart of established order and oecumenical catholic tradition, of the strongest forces of life, of renewal, of revolution," and can, as St. Thomas did, "salvage and assimilate into the catholicity of a doctrine perfectly pure and free all the truths, despising no one of them, towards which the thought of paganism in its darkness, the discordant systems of philosophers were striving" (p. 222, 223).

For this is one of the main planks of the integrationist platform. If we are to establish the pattern of a new Christendom it must be by way first of criticism of our world as we know it; but secondly, constructively, by way of assimilating into Christian society whatever of good our civilization has achieved.

"Christian humanism, integral humanism, can embrace everything because it knows that God has no contrary and that everything is irresistibly carried forward by the movement of the divine governance. It will not cast out into the exterior darkness that which in the human heritage is the fruit of heresy and schism, of errors of heart or mind: *oportet haereses esse*. In the system of Christian humanism there is no place for the errors of Luther or Voltaire; but there is a place for Luther and Voltaire, inasmuch as, in spite of those errors, they have contributed in human history to certain enrichments, which belong to Christ as does everything of value in mankind" (p. 102).

The building up of the new Christendom, then, will not

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be viewed as the mere rehabilitation of the traditional values of Catholics and the expulsion of all other achievement: it will consist in the reassessing and criticism of the former, the adoption and, where necessary, the Christianizing of the latter. "The radical fault of anthropocentric humanism was that it was anthropocentric, not that it was humanism" (p. 35).

The criticism of the Christian world: "The Christian world is one thing, and Christianity quite another." Christianity divine and indefectible; the Christian world all too human and frail. Why the deep resentment against the Christian world of which there is so striking a recrudescence in our day? "Above all, through the fault of a Christian world unfaithful to its principles" (p. 49); and the tragedy is that this resentment fails to make the fundamental distinction, and its hatred of the behaviour of Christians becomes also a hatred of Christianity and Christ. "The Christian world of to-day has failed in its duty . . . in general, it has enclosed divine truth and life within a limited section of its existence—in the things of worship and religion and, at any rate among better Christians, in the affairs of the inner life. Social, political, economic life, these it has abandoned to their own carnal law, withdrawn from the light of Christ. Marx for example 'is right when he declares that a capitalist society is an anarchical society wherein life is defined exclusively as a gamble in private interests. Nothing is more contrary to the spirit of Christianity' (N. Berdiaev). Hence the resentment against those who have not been able to realize the truth they bore, a resentment which rebounds on to that very truth itself" (pp. 51, 52).

This refusal to acknowledge that there can be anything to criticize in Catholic society—a refusal due, it would seem, to a sort of collective inferiority complex, fruit of the centuries of persecution and oppression—this refusal, as it is the cause of the hatred of Catholicism, as it is the cause also of secession from the Church ("The saints had for three centuries been calling in vain for the reform of the Church when the tempest of Lutheranism broke"—p. 50, n. 1), so also it is the greatest practical obstacle to the reunion of Christendom,

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and as such is of first importance in the present context, the formation of the new Christendom.

The criticism of anti-Christian humanism. If Marx is right in his criticism of Capitalist society, it is easy to see where, from the humanist standpoint, he together with every form of totalitarianism is wrong. Marxism is Manichee and anti-humanist precisely as excluding the liberty and the possibility of supernatural fulfilment, without which an integral humanism is impossible.

With that criticism we are sufficiently familiar. The evils of liberal-democracy we are less ready to see. Yet it has led, and is more and more definitely leading, to a state of affairs far too similar, to a parallel sub-humanity and dethronement of human and Christian values. A centralized control, a power uneasily divided between oligarchy and independent bureaucracy, encroaches more and more upon the rightful exercise of individual liberty, while at the same time allowing the evil despotism of money to enslave and degrade mankind. There is always the danger that human government will be coercive of the wrong things. We are, in our democratic state, becoming enslaved to a tyranny as rigid in its way as that of any Eastern despot. This is true of its direct activities; far truer, of other activities which it allows. The Big Business Man is often as powerful and as autocratic as a Pharaoh; but while the Pharaoh's subjects often regarded him, wrongly, as some sort of god, the B.B.M.'s employees often regard him, rightly, as some sort of devil. It is primarily the lust for profit which governments have to constrain and which liberalism has so conspicuously failed to restrain. Hence the growth of the evils which have undermined our society, and which, more than anything else, have turned a race of theoretically free men into a race of sub-men, of servile cogs in an inhuman machine.

Yet here as elsewhere we must be faithful to the integrationist principle, we must not allow ourselves the over-emphasis of so many reformers, and throw away baby with bath-water. Christianity to-day calls for an industrial revolution. But we shall harm the cause of Christianity if we are merely destructive, if we exaggerate. Many will refuse to

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consider the establishment of Christian order because they find its advocates fighting under the banners of Erewhon or Rousseau, and they have no desire themselves to return to Nature. But it is not a question merely of policy. To advocate the destruction of all machinery is to advocate what would lead to immense hardship and suffering; more, it is to advocate the surrender of our so hardly won conquest of material environment; more radically still, the abdication of a human faculty and vocation. "The disease of modern civilization," as Mr. Dawson has put it, "lies neither in science nor in machinery but in the false philosophy with which they have been associated." "The truth is," M. Maritain writes, "that it is not the business of science to rule our lives, but of wisdom. The supreme task of civilization is not in the realm of transitive but of immanent activity; if we are really to make machinery, industry, science, subservient to man, we must make them subservient to an ethic of the person, an ethic of love and liberty. It would be a grave error to repudiate machinery or industry or science, which are in themselves good, and which we ought on the contrary to utilize, for the achieving of an economic of plenty. But we must choose between a civilization which is essentially industrial and a civilization which is essentially human and for which industry is but an instrument and subject therefore to laws other than its own" (pp. 208-209).

The ingenuity which has created the machine age could be used to create a better, a Christian machine age. A right criterion, a right direction of invention and enterprise, these are what is needed. A positive, not a negative programme. The safeguarding and the perfecting of the creative faculty in man, in *every* man, is the Christian criterion; and with this, machinery as such is not necessarily incompatible. It can increase, not destroy, creativity. The town-building which is, or rather would be, possible with the aid of rationalized machinery implies greater creativity than the building of the agglomerate of huts which is possible without. (We should not scorn the possibilities of urban civilization simply because our towns are in fact so frightful, because the word "urban" has in fact sunk to such ignominy that we



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have to add an *e*, as in Smith, to make it polite.) It is essential, and it is possible, to have a machinery which both in the making and in the use of it does not imply sub-human service from man, which does not usurp what the hand can better do and ought to do, which helps the hand to do what without it it could not. At present, man is being made to do the dirty work of the machine; the machine must be made to do the dirty work of man. We should not forget the enormous effect the substitution of electricity for steam may have; and this not least in the way of promoting small enterprise, for small enterprise, coupled with the restoration of small ownership of property, is surely one of the keys to the recovery of human freedom.

Small ownership. A society in which a man cannot call his house his own is on the way to becoming a society in which a man cannot call his soul his own.

“St. Thomas teaches, as we know, that on the one hand, primarily in view of the exigencies of the human personality considered as working on and elaborating material and subjecting it to the forms of reason, the appropriation of goods should be private, since otherwise labour would be ill exercised; but on the other hand, in view of the primary destination of material goods to the human race, and the need each person has of these means in order to direct his life towards his last end, the use of goods privately possessed should serve the common good of all. . . . This second aspect has been completely lost sight of in the epoch of liberalist individualism” (p. 198). The Socialist or Communist reaction is no remedy to this neglect, for again, like most revolutionary doctrines, it tries to redeem one aspect of the truth by suppressing the other. “Precisely in order to extend to each individual in suitable form the advantages and guarantees which private property brings to the exercise of the personality, it is not a state-Socialist or Communist form, but, in our view, a form of partnership (*sociétaire*) which property should take in the sphere of industrialism, such that joint ownership (*co-propriété*) should take the place as far as possible of the wage system, and that the human person should be compensated for the conditions

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imposed by machinery by the intellectual participation of labour in the birth and direction of enterprise" (p. 200).

The working-out of this idea cannot here be followed. But the basic principle may be again recalled; we should not strive to recreate a dead past. In the economics of industry, "the very interests of the personality demand a collectivity of property itself . . . the more enterprise is perfected by machinery, rationalization and the means of financial mobility, the more accentuated becomes this tendency to collectivism." On the other hand, rural economy, "under modern forms, and utilizing the advantages of machinery and co-operation, would tend towards a renewal and re-vivifying of family economy and family ownership; and it is this rural economy, more fundamental than industry, which should first be assured" (p. 178).

Again, the distribution of enterprise and ownership should be accompanied by a parallel distributism of political responsibility. Bureaucracy, unless it is opposed, will complete the de-humanization which the economic régime, basking in the *laissez-faire* atmosphere of liberal-democracy, has so successfully begun. Again a positive programme is essential. And of this, one element must surely be a large measure of devolution. How can a village, let alone a district, hold up its head when its life, its *mores*, its housing, and even its carousing, are controlled from Whitehall?

Education, for example, has certainly lost far more than it has gained by centralization. The contemplation natural to the peasant is practically a thing of the past; and in its stead the child is given a mass of material information sufficient to enable the man to read the *Mail*, do accounts, and know the geographical position of Birmingham and Blackpool. We are, in other words, doing our best to produce the kind of public which falls an easy prey to the advertisements—to say nothing of the leaders—in the press. Once again, we should not advocate the abandonment of education because, like machinery, it would seem so far to have proved almost more of a curse than a blessing, but we ought surely to be urgent in working for its improvement, for the creation of an order in which the

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child's faculty of vision shall be not killed but perfected, the educational environment beautiful instead of ugly, its technique not mechanical but personal, a matter not of arid regimentation but of fertile individual care and initiative.

Whatever form of government may be in question, it is to the establishment of democracy in the true sense of the word that the new Christendom must aim, a *démocratie personnaliste*, compatible indeed with "organic differentiations and inequalities," yet preserving as first condition of its structure the dignity and autonomy of the person. Then law "would find once again its moral function, the function of *pedagogue of freedom*, which it has all but lost in the liberalist state"; it would concern itself with "the education of men to the end that they might cease at last to be under the law, for they would then do of themselves, voluntarily and freely, what the law prescribes—a thing that happens only to the wise" (p. 196).

These matters and many others are profoundly dealt with by M. Maritain in this book, and there is no need for the reviewer to stress its importance. In some ways, indeed, it is disappointing: the style is difficult, not least by reason of the constant enormous parentheses; the book as a whole, owing, as the author tells us in his preface, to lack of time, is not the exhaustive survey for which one had hoped, but remains substantially a course of lectures referring to, without embodying, his other works on the subject. But these are minor disappointments in view of the positive value of what is here given us. There is a section entitled *What Should "A" Do?* referring to the recent discussion in *Christendom, Colosseum* and *BLACKFRIARS*; the question is answered by the remark that this is the affair, not of the philosopher, but of the Church. Perhaps; yet this book, in principle if not in detail, goes far towards providing an answer. For the first condition of successful action is contemplation; it is useless to be busy about many things, to be a "sound, practical Catholic," unless we are sure what we ought to be busy about and aiming at, unless we have thought rightly and deeply about the structure and constitution of the earthly City of God.

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