

EXTRACTS

THE NEW LIFE which our Lord came to give to man by his own death and resurrection is summarised by St Paul's 'No longer I but Christ liveth in me'. This making of the new man is christianity; and it is this which causes the opposition between the Church and Marxists. A. Grandier, concluding an informative and interesting article on the Catholics in China under the communist régime (*Études*, May), writes:

Why does communist China persecute the Catholic Church in this way? History certainly shows that an anti-religious fervour often goes with revolutionary movements; a rising class easily thinks the Church to be an ally of the old society which it hopes to abolish. The Chinese experience shows this clearly. Marxist communism looks for something other than a change of social structure; it wants to realise a new man, or rather a new humanity composed of individuals having but one common ideal: the creation of a world in which the disappearance of any 'alienation' in other-worldliness will bring about perfect material happiness.

When Christians realise this they will understand that above all else they must establish the new Christian man in his wholeness and fullness in their own lives. It is no longer a question of social doctrines and wars, but a renewal of the Incarnational life that will overcome the marxist progress. For this reason no modern review concerned with the 'Life of the Spirit' can afford to neglect the challenge of communism.

It is indeed important to realise how the 'spiritual' life is enmeshed in the social so that it is impossible even to 'leave the world' without in fact having a profound effect on everyday secular life. This point is shown in a special number of *The Yorkshire Catholic Monthly* (Leeds; 6d.) dedicated to the Cistercian Kirkstall Abbey, 1152-1952. The Curator of the Abbey House writes:—

The Cistercians were almost as influential in rejuvenating European agriculture as they were in renewing religious discipline . . . settling as they did in remote parts of the country, they soon found that their extensive sheep pastures, their freedom from the restrictions of manor and village and their efficient organisation, produced a large surplus from the year's clip.

So it was that efficiency and self-discipline led to a material temptation. They soon exercised an immense economic influence over England and became very prosperous, in the teeth apparently of the strict observance of their rule. This success was perhaps one of the remote causes of modern social unrest. And yet there is another extreme in which

'mysticism' has a baneful social influence. This is described unwittingly by John R. Yale in *Vedanta and the West* (May-June), who admires the eastern, dualistic ideal—the 'non-self-seeking man, the man of renunciation, the brahmin, the saint, the mystic'. This noble ideal of man affects society, not in the material way of the relaxed monk, but in the way of a 'higher life':

He helps society at large by presenting it with one advanced unit and so introducing diversity into it. In a period of rising religious tide the saint reinforces the trend and heightens the God-craving atmosphere, making awakening more attractive and easier for others. In a period of spiritual decline, by maintaining a standard, the mystic encourages a few others. . . .

In this view the man of God shows some people how to escape their incarnations by release not only from the body but also from the intellect. But the Christian man of God avoids immersion in the material and immersion in the Absolute by living a fully human life, which involves him in a life with Christ and with all Christians. He is led to the life of poverty where he becomes free in charity to associate with all God's creatures. We can see the social value of holiness in the lives of such people as St Catherine of Siena, St Francis, St Aelred that great Cistercian . . . these are the leaven that works in the paste of many human beings mixed together.

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THE BREVIARY as a Prayer-book ought to be a familiar idea, but it often remains quite a novelty. When the value of the Divine Office is realised in this way people often wish to alter without much respect for its essential form to make it more 'useful'. Alarmed by this tendency, a writer in *Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven* (March-April) points out its unique value as a modern way of prayer without any adaptations or changes. Basing himself on *Mediator Dei*, he insists that the breviary makes those who use it realise their place in the Church and the place the Church takes in their lives; it is a means of orientating their life towards Christ and it is essentially bound up with the sacrifice of the Mass. He strongly deprecates the idea of shortening the breviary for priests or religious. On the other hand, in the same issue of the *Tijdschrift* is discussed the merits of a shorter vernacular breviary which is apparently used by active congregations, and these alone, in Holland. It will be a great help to those congregations who have no set form of office and tend to rely on popular devotions; but the author rightly anticipates many objections from the active congregations who already use the Latin Divine Office, if the shorter breviary becomes obligatory. Yet 'Office' never has its real value except it follow a Canon or Law.