

French Opinion

THE 'THIRD WORLD'

French preoccupation with the Algerian settlement and its aftermath seems recently to have stimulated discussion of the larger implications of the emergence to freedom of so many peoples in Africa and Asia. In *Etudes* (July-August), Père Jean Daniélou considers the 'anguish' which the new situation must create for the West.

'The appearance of what is known as the "third world", that is to say the important place taken in the world today by the newly independent nations of Africa, the Near East and Asia, is in process of revolutionizing all our contemporary problems at the political and economic level. Formerly, principal emphasis was on social problems and the class struggle within single countries; it is now replaced by an attitude which contrasts capitalist nations with proletarian peoples, so that opposition is no longer seen so much within the structure of a country as on an international scale. At the cultural level, this revolution creates for the first time for western thought a questioning of its pre-eminence and its absolute value; and a confrontation with new types of culture opens the way to a new humanism. For Christians, questions such as the divisions of the various Christian bodies appear in a completely different light when we are considering peoples who have never known the crises in history that have been ours. Many modifications in the liturgical and theological order appear to be necessary. All this raises immense problems and must create what one can only call a state of anguish for the West'.

Anguish arises, Père Daniélou points out, through a fear of the unknown, and his article considers a number of issues—religious, cultural, political—which will create grave dilemmas for the West and which can only be resolved if many old assumptions are questioned—and abandoned. 'We believed that we were civilized and that the rest were savages. And I am astonished sometimes to see how we go on believing it and how some of our reactions towards Africans and Orientals bear witness to a sort of racialism, not in the ideological sense of the word, but in the sense of a consciousness of naive superiority . . . which can only disappear through contact with others as they make known to us the human riches that are theirs'.

The 'third world' is looking for a humanism that will give meaning to its aspirations. That is where the responsibility of the West lies. 'It would be tragic if we did not respond to that search. It would be tragic if it did not lead in the West to a return to those values on which its former dignity was based, the values which emerged in the light of the Christian revelation and which express human and universal truths . . . Our anguish is not simply created by the threat of danger: it is an anguish in the face of a responsibility that we fear we may be

unable to meet. And that sort of anguish is the beginning of hope'.

In *La Table Ronde* (June) Jean Guilton discusses virtually the same problem in his article on 'The Third World and Ecumenism'. He sees the scandal of Christian disunity as a grave obstacle to the fulfilment of the Church's mission in the new nations of Africa and the East. But he thinks that providentially it may be the missions that will hasten the day of union, as indeed it was the sense of the futility of Christian rivalries that led to the whole modern ecumenical movement. He asks for a 'smoothing away of the stone of contradiction', not in the sense of pretending that divisions do not exist or are not important but rather in encouraging the unbeliever to see 'that there is a nucleus of deep unity that exists among all Christians, beyond all their divisions. There is no question of sinning against interior conviction by an intercommunion which does not correspond to a true sharing of the same faith. But, without artificially concealing the separations, it is possible to make the links manifest; links of faith and links of charity that support each other. The more we insist on common beliefs, the more we succeed in understanding and approaching each other and help in stimulating a common life instead of a mutual paralysis'.

M. Guilton sees 'the third world' as providing a challenge to Christians to rediscover the real roots of faith. 'The Christian incarnation must inform other cultures, taking on new aspects, respecting and enriching all that is good in these other cultures. And to do that Christianity must to a large extent get rid of the old garments of discredited mentalities, just as the insect gets rid of its chrysalis. And this work is not only necessary for the conversion of the peoples of the third world, without violating or weakening their legitimate natural traditions; but it is perhaps essential for the regeneration of Western Christianity itself, in stripping it of all that is peripheral in the attitudes it has adopted, and in purifying it. This is not to say that it must renounce all the values of its own tradition: but the dead branches must be pruned, for they threaten the life of the tree and stifle the young branches'.

M. Guilton finds in Pope John's repeated hopes for the Council an urgent realization of the need for the Church to prepare for unity first of all through 'an immense task of renewal, renovation and a return to the source'. At this moment of history the new world of the uncommitted and freed nations challenges the Church to declare her true mission, and the Pope has called a Council to enable the Church to meet that challenge.

Parole et Mission (April), in a number devoted to 'Integrist' as an obstacle to missionary work, provides a reminder that the liberal and forward-looking elements in the Catholic life of France are still threatened by dissenting voices which mistrust any accommodation of the Church's mission to the social and political conditions of our time. Jean Lestavel asks 'What is Integrist?', and his answer reveals how deep are the resentments in French life, exacerbated as they have recently been by the experiences of Indo-China and Algeria. The 'integrist' temperament identifies the Church with the West, and more particularly with France: it is in fact a 'national Catholicism'. The origins of the

movement (if it can be called such) are to be sought in the Modernist controversies at the beginning of this century. In all that has happened since, Catholics of an 'integrist' tendency have mistrusted any lessening of the narrowest and most authoritarian understanding of the Church's role in society. Not the least tragic aspect of the Algerian war was the confusion among some Catholics of the claims of Caesar and those of the Church. Louis Guinchard, in an article on the political overtones of 'integrist', shows how such a man as Salan, who had never evinced any special interest in religion, could appeal to the French Bishops to support his movement 'in defence of Christianity itself'.

Père Henri de Lubac's recent book on the religious thought of Père Teilhard de Chardin has stimulated fresh discussion on the significance of the famous Jesuit's achievement. In an article in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* (June), Père C. D'Armagnac discusses his writings in the context of Christian apologetic and maintains that from the beginning Père Teilhard was concerned with the aims of any true apologetic, namely to effect a mediation between the human mind and its rational needs on the one hand and the sources and content of revelation on the other. He admits, of course, that Père Teilhard's is not the only method, that 'in fact his method of approach to the Christian mystery needs to be supplemented by another, namely by reflexion on evil and sin; evil which, contrasting with the aspirations of the universe and of man, can pose for man the problem of his destiny and salvation and can predispose him to listen to the voice of Christ. It is a method of approach not simply by the convergence of nature but by contrasts: it is, in different forms, the method of Pascal and Blondel. Teilhard does not ignore it: in a good number of places in his later years he notes that the noösphere cannot by itself alone, without a universal love, achieve its convergence. More deeply understood, this reflexion would give greater balance to his method, by taking more into account the negative aspects of the universe and of human history. The two methods in conjunction would thus make our apologetic rest on faithfulness to the totality of the real. And, from the point of view of dogma, they would enable the modern mind to approach all the aspects of the mystery of redemption, in a wider and more complete sense than the method chosen by Teilhard can allow. Teilhard, who had so so acute an awareness of sacrifice and redemptive death in his spiritual writings, chose, in his apologetic, a method which by its point of view could not lead straight away to an introduction to all the aspects of this mystery. It needs to be completed on this point'.

La Table Ronde has been publishing in its last two issues the script of a film on the life of St Martin of Porres by Stanislas Fumet. An editorial note remarks that 'in raising to the altars this mulatto saint, the Church seems to want to raise the banner of the supreme victory of the gospel over racial prejudice. In the person of Martin of Porres there has been canonized the first "coloured" American as well as the first laybrother of the Order of Preachers'.

P.W.