

Correspondence

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Sir,

I am hoping that you will print this letter, despite its length, on account of the importance and urgency of its subject. I feel that your readers ought to be informed, from the pen of a Roman Catholic, of what is at present going on within the Roman Catholic Church. It is, of course, important to distinguish between the new legislation which has been introduced by the hierarchy and the general climate of opinion and behaviour—all-pervading as the latter may have become. One cannot, however, draw an exact line—because these general tendencies are being given strong official encouragement.

The following are the changes which have lately come about:

1. The introduction of the vernacular Mass. This change is, of course, known to everyone; and its purpose is apparent. I shall confine myself to the remark that the translation which has now been approved is so unbelievably shoddy that one cannot avoid the conviction that deeper meanings have been lost.
2. The substitution of new translations of the Bible for the old Douai version which was almost identical with the incomparable Anglican Authorised version (now likewise superseded). Not many Sundays ago my astounded ears were regaled with the following: "Take a look at the lilies. They don't do any work."
3. The total transformation of the movements and atmosphere of the Mass. In the past the congregation were at liberty to kneel almost all the time—there was an atmosphere of deep quiet, contemplation and awe. Now the whole congregation is ordered to repeat—I almost wrote "gabble" because that is what it sounds like—virtually the whole of the Mass aloud—standing most of the time—getting up and down perpetually. The possibility of prayer in the contemplative sense has been removed.
4. The Traditional idea, so profound in its implications, of prayer "with intention" has been replaced by the Protestant idea of praying firmly, slowly and "thoughtfully" —as if one were conducting a personal conversation with God.
5. The sacred words of Consecration which in the Roman rite used to be whispered by the priest with head bowed over the altar—are now uttered not only loudly but *expressively* into two microphones which stand permanently on either side of the tabernacle in all churches. Moreover since the Mass is frequently broadcast, these words resound in places where they mean nothing, where they will be disregarded or switched off.
6. We must no longer kneel in the Creed at the words "and was made man." Why? The answer is clear if one considers why this custom was introduced. It was of course an act of humility and awe at the unutterable condescension of God in relation to the (now idolised) human race.

7. The reading from the opening chapter of St. John at the end of the Mass has been abolished. Here too we used to kneel at "The Word was made flesh." This new ruling is to be associated with 6. Incidentally, this and other changes mean that many communicants have to leave the church (or get themselves walked over) immediately after returning from the altar.

8. The introduction of the Mass facing the people. This is part of an exaggerated emphasis on the "Priesthood of the laity" just at the moment when the lay person is more obviously incapable than ever before of assuming the functions and dignity of a priest.

9. The rites of baptism and the last rites are to be altered—so far as one can gather so as to remove all traces of "unpleasantness"—that is to say any distasteful reminders of sin and punishment.

10. The movement towards a relaxation of the marriage laws is so strong that great changes seem inevitable. The danger here is, perhaps, less in the probable changes in themselves (since traditions differ in this respect) as in the assumption that sex must be regulated by man's "ideals" and convenience—that is to say by more or less sentimental and unreal notions of "personal relationship" (about which one hears these days until one is weary, as if there could be any true relationship save in obedience to the will of God within a Traditional context).

11. There is a tremendous "climate of opinion" against devotion to the Blessed Sacrament outside the context of a "sacred meal." Here again one sees the emphasis shifting from God for His own sake to God-for-man's-sake.

12. Adoration of Our Lady—one of the greatest mystical Activities of the Church—is not only on the wane but is openly disapproved of by "progressive" Catholics. The great Mysteries concerning Her, although not yet officially denied, are all but unmentionable.

13. Other virtually unmentionable subjects are : miracles, unless interpreted in some vaguely "psychological" sense; Original sin; and Everlasting Punishment. The names of all those saints, such as Therese of Liseux, whose attraction is wholly supernatural rather than human, as also that of the saintly Pope Pius XII, seem to have been expunged from the vocabulary of the *New Catholic*. To enter a large Catholic bookshop such as Burns and Oates opposite Westminster Cathedral, one would suppose that none of the above mentioned subjects had ever been heard of. Portraits and book displays of Teilhard de Chardin dominate the scene.

14. There is an all-pervasive "climate of opinion" against (1) Religious Obedience. (2) Voluntary poverty except as a means of identification with the "underprivileged," no longer of course known as the poor—who must never be insulted by "Charity" although they must be assisted to "progress" and "develop." (3) Vows of virginity —a state no longer regarded as being of any positive significance. (4) Contemplation either as an end in itself or as an activity incidentally profitable to the world.

15. The emphasis is all on humanism, " progress," " development " and adaptation to the world. This last is called "dialogue." The proliferation of "gimmick" words is something at which to marvel. At a recent important Catholic conference theologians emphasised that the work of the Church at the present time was to foster something called "development" all over the world.

16. The idea that the Church is of its nature opposed to the World is regarded with horror. Equally shocking to the "new Catholic" is the suggestion that the Church has Authority to teach and admonish the World. The Church of today, instead of repenting its sins, grovels in sentimental "humility" before the World, asking explicitly to be *taught by it*. There is total confusion between the sins (word not used however) of individuals in the past and the rightful Authority and dignity of the Church in relation to society.

17. Admiration and interest are fixed above all upon:

(1) Teilhard de Chardin.

(2) "Christian Existentialism"—which provides most of the "gimmick" words in common use.

The latter seems to have a twofold effect: (1) Those theologians who presumably understand what they are talking about purvey a doctrine of "personal relationship" and "involvement" which strikes at least one Catholic as being heresy at its most shameless. (2) The vast number of "intelligent Catholics" who don't understand what they are talking about are led into endless byways of woolgathering and self-deception. In fact the situation in the Church at the moment can be summarised as follows: On the higher levels—Heresy. On all other levels—Wool.

18. In view of all this, it is scarcely surprising that the Church is now avid for "dialogue" with Marxism instead of recognising, with Pius XII, that certain systems of thought are evil-in-themselves and discrimination should label them as such. Marxists, more faithful to their own convictions, are noticeably unenthusiastic in face of this courtship.

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Medbourne, Leics. 6:11:67