

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

THE RIGHTWARD TURN. Recent events have marked a definite shifting of weight in the balance of power between the forces of Right and Left throughout the world. Eden has fallen. Austria has become incorporated into the Third Reich, and the Axis has been strengthened immeasurably rather than weakened by the fact. Franco and his allies approach the borders of Catalonia, at the time of writing, and their complete victory seems assured. Japan marches on and consolidates her position on the Continent of Asia—(her ultimate pan-Asiatic and basically anti-British aims should be studied in a well-documented article in *LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE* of February 10th if the full significance of this is to be realised.) Last but not least the terrible and fantastic Moscow trials have done more to shake the alignment of the international Left with the “revolution betrayed” of Stalin than could have been achieved by any amount of anti-Communist propaganda. Those intellectuals who had seen in the forces of the Left the political instruments of their social, humanitarian and even Christian ideals must be becoming increasingly disillusioned, if not of their rectitude, at least of their effectualness. A flattering article in the current issue of *SCHWEIZERISCHE RUNDSCHAU* which contrasts the idealism of Anglo-Saxon (British and U.S.A.) politics with the “power-politics of Machiavelli and Sorel” which dominate the Continent already seems not quite up-to-date. Moreover, the time is passing, even in Anglo-Saxon countries, when it could be claimed that the best heads and the most humane hearts were all to be found “on the Left.” The emergence and consolidation of a strong Rightist intelligentsia, at once traditional and revolutionary, is an event of which there are many portents both within and outside some intelligent organs of Catholic opinion. Illustrative of the trend is the first number of a new review, *THE EXAMINER* which has reached us from the United States. “The editorial policy,” we read, “is informed by three basic convictions. The first of these is that Western civilization is in the midst of a crisis which cannot be resolved except through an essential change in society” which “will depend

upon a reinvigoration of the institutions which, while now perverted from their original forms, are still the safeguards of such health as remains in the community." The second is that "the political forms of democracy—which are not necessarily co-terminous with the democratic spirit—are incapable of effecting the restoration of property." The third, that "our ultimate questions must be ones of philosophy, and, beyond that, of religion." These principles seem identical with those current in THE WEEKLY REVIEW, which, under the name of G.K.'S WEEKLY, had latterly shown itself increasingly inclined to combine its distributist economics with favour of authoritarianism in politics.

ABOVE THE PARTIES. We cannot but welcome the permeation of the Right with Catholic principles, with the consciousness of the necessity of revolution and with a reawakened sense of social and economic justice. The most "Leftish" minded Catholic will welcome the emergence of an "authentic conservatism" such as M. Maritain recently outlined in our pages. But the situation is one that demands all the more a right understanding of the relationship between Catholicism and political parties as such. The muddle-headedness which exists in this country on the subject was illustrated recently by a writer in a Catholic monthly (one which acclaims the Right as "the children of light") to whom the device "*En dehors et au-dessus des partis*" suggests "that there is something discreditable in belonging to a political party." (We are glad to see that he and his editors have since apologised for charging the bearers of this device with "hovering at times on the 'dangerous edge' of material heresy.") Mgr. de Solages' fine exposition of the relationship of Catholicism and of the individual Catholic to the "temporal city" and to its political parties comes at a particularly opportune moment. Originally an address delivered to the *Chrétienté* group at the Ambassadeurs Theatre in Paris, it is printed in extenso in LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE (Feb. 10) under the title *Le Catholicisme au-dessus des luttes des partis*. Quite apart from its value as an unusually clear—and incidentally humorous—statement of the Catholic doctrine on the subject and its contemporaneous applications, the article is of

particular interest as showing that Catholics have shown themselves to be most effective (in France, at any rate) in influencing the political situation for what they know to be man's real good, precisely in the measure in which they have preserved their independence of party alliances. It was to this fact, it will be remembered, that the Holy Father attributed the particular strength of Catholic Action in France when addressing the French Bishops last Christmas. The "Billet" of *Civis* in the same issue is of interest and importance in the same connexion. He shows that the spirit of political responsibility, so far from being identical with, precisely excludes the spirit of political partisanship. Not only is Catholicism as such "above and outside" political parties, the individual Catholic adherent of them must always retain his spiritual independence. He may and should *use* them to forward the temporal *bonum commune*, which he knows to be subordinated to the eternal; for that very reason he must never allow himself to be *used* by them. We cordially recommend consideration of these studies to those who have been so severe in condemning the most vital elements in contemporary French Catholicism.

CHRISTIAN HUMANISM. Many outside of France may be glad to be introduced to the new review *ECHANGES ET RECHERCHES* (50 rue de Lille, Roubaix) directed by an association of young professors engaged in the official State (as distinct from the "free" and Catholic) centres of learning. It is not a "religious" review; it is precisely a literary and "humanistic" review. All the more remarkable is the appearance in the current number of as good a statement as we have seen of the problem of Christian humanism viewed from the strictly theological angle. It is the contribution of Père Thomas Deman, O.P., professor of moral theology in the French Dominican province. We shall not attempt here to summarise this valuable article—itself necessarily summary—we would draw attention only to what is implicit in the inclusion of such an article in such a review by such an author: the recognition of the fact that the problem of Christian humanism—which covers all the problems of the distinctively Christian attitude to "human" knowledge, culture, art, ethics, politics and the rest—must be, in the last

resort, a theological one. For if the fundamental principle of Christian humanism is—as indeed it is—that grace presupposes and perfects nature, its principles of solution belong alone to the specifically theological order of revealed truths apprehended by faith. For only faith, penetrated by theology, can tell us what grace is and what is the manner of the action of God's grace upon human nature. This is implied when it is said that Christian humanism is a theocentric humanism—which, by the way, is something very different from a merely theistic humanism (much pagan humanism was that). The manifold problems of Christian humanism cannot be accurately apprehended or solved if this first principle be inaccurately interpreted. The point needs emphasis. There can be no question but that, in the words of the Anglican editor of the *I.C.F. REVIEW*, "The relation between Grace and Nature, between the Order of Creation and the Order of Redemption; the question of the validity of any Christian critique of the structure of secular society; the question of the propriety of deducing positive social objectives from theological dogma—these are the issues confronting us now."

GRACE AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION. It may be safely assumed that the necessity of a theological foundation for any specifically Christian sociology is generally and increasingly understood by Catholics in this country. It is not always so clear that the relationship between Grace and Nature is always correctly, let alone adequately, apprehended. *BLACKFRIARS* has more than once ventured to question the theological presuppositions implicit in some statements and theories which have been put forward; the matter is one of such vital importance that we venture to return to the charge again. Less by explicit statement than by implication, it seems often to be supposed that the principles that grace presupposes and perfects nature mean that nature must reform itself before grace can be "added," that the perfection of grace is conditioned by the perfection of the predispositions of nature, in short that nature must first perfect itself before grace can come as an added perfection or "crown." Applied to society, this is made to mean that a "human," non-supernatural and political revolution in the

direction of a society more in accord with "human nature" must precede any action, or at least the full action, of grace. Grace, on this view, does not only need human nature (however fallen and stunted) as a subject for its operations, it needs and presupposes a natural perfection of that nature. Thus we read of the factory workers in an article in the current number of INTEGRATION:

If they cannot develop as men, as human beings, it is very difficult for them to live fully Christian lives, since grace needs nature upon which to work, and human nature that has been warped and stunted in the factory is not the best field for its operations. So that human work, work that develops man's nature to its fullest capacity, is not just a desirability. It is a necessity if man is to attain his eternal destiny properly.

(The *crescendo* from "very difficult" through "needs" to "necessity for eternal destiny," besides the equivocation on the term "nature," will catch the theological eye.) We must not press the, at least superficial, resemblance of such a doctrine to the tenets of the semi-pelagians (for whom also the initiation of our sanctification was the work of nature, to which God "complements" His grace), but nor can it readily be allowed to pass as the careless *obiter dictum* of "a Students' Catholic review." The theory here outlined forms the basis for severe criticism of the J.O.C.—just as, in another article, it is apparently presupposed to the assertion that the living of an integral Christian life in London "cannot be done." The writer maintains that "the present position of the J.O.C. abroad is not only logically untenable but also in many ways very dangerous." The reason given is that the J.O.C. does not concern itself with "the anti-human, and so anti-Christian nature of their work." After a characteristic denunciation of the undoubtedly inhuman conditions of the worker and of the inhuman nature of his work, the writer tells us, "there is only one way to Christianize that milieu; destroy it and build something new in its place." Are we wrong in interpreting this to mean that there must first be a social revolution in order that grace may abound? Is the same idea implicit in Mr. Eric Gill's "challenge" in IRELAND TO-DAY maintaining that the social encyclicals are not revolutionary, and that "the revolution is left to us"? J.O.C. has indeed conceived things very

differently. Without denying or decrying the importance of political action, and leaving its members free to participate in that action through the proper political organisations, it has seen that the specifically Christian revolution is not something we *make* but something we *are*. It is not to be denied that we may remove the obstacles to the functioning of grace, even without grace. But the healing of nature, and so of society, is not a precondition of grace but precisely its effect. It is, ultimately, not grace that needs the perfection of nature but nature that needs grace for its own perfection. We have not first to make a human society in order that it may be Christian; if we make it Christian its humanity must follow as an inevitable result. The Church did not first agitate to abolish slavery or destroy the corruptions of pagan society; it converted masters and slaves and left slavery and the rest to die a natural death. So too, if we understand it aright, the importance of the J.O.C., even politically, is that it puts first things first and is not directly concerned with the organization of the *polis*. We do not suggest that the INTEGRATION group would deny these things, but we do think that in its preoccupation with social evils it obscures the fact, proclaimed and exemplified so magnificently by the J.O.C., that Catholic Action and the Christian revolution mean precisely the transformation of human nature and social forms *by* grace. An organization whose immediately objective was the destruction of existing social and economic forms and conditions might indeed be very valuable and necessary; but it would not be the J.O.C. For our part, we trust that the Young Christian Workers in England will cling faithfully to the ideals of their Continental prototype and not allow themselves to be side-tracked into becoming a political instrument—even for the destruction of an inhuman society and the establishment of “natural” and “human” communities.

VICARIOUS SACRIFICE. The above had been already written when there came into our hands an article with this title. Not satisfied with the criticism of the J.O.C. it offers this grotesque caricature of “certain Catholic youth movements on the continent” whose identity is unmistakable:

The idea seems to be that young layfolk, in the way of per-

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fection, should accept the sub-human conditions of advanced industrialism by way of martyrdom for the common good. To put it into concrete terms, those who are already the chief victims of Industrialism are to consecrate their lives to a mass-production travelling belt in order that, without disturbance or intermission, the world may have cheap cars, cheap wireless sets and cheap typewriters.

So much for what the Jocist sacrifice for the salvation of the workers "seems" to THE CROSS AND THE PLOUGH. The article concludes:

Salvation is not of the travelling belt, but of the land and the crafts in the hands of free men. Integrity is sovereign to Catholic philosophy. To it we must return or perish. The world is not to be saved by urging industrial victims to a religious industrial martyrdom. This heresy we shall hit wherever it raises its ugly head.

We should be told, Yes or No, whether the Catholic Land Associations' organ intends to hit so ugly a head as this:

We should like to address a particularly affectionate word to our Catholic working men, *young* and old. They have been given, as a reward for their often heroic fidelity in these trying days, a noble and arduous mission. Under the guidance of their bishops and priests, they are to bring back to the Church and to God those immense multitudes of their brother-workmen who, because they were not understood or treated with the respect to which they were entitled, in bitterness have strayed far from God . . . If this mission, *which must be fulfilled in mines, in factories, in workshops, wherever they may be labouring*, should at times require *great sacrifices*, Our workmen will remember that the Saviour of the world has given them an example *not only of toil but of self-immolation*.

The italics are ours; the words are those of Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, §70. They are followed closely, in §71, with these:

To all Our children, finally, of every social rank and of every nation, to every religious and lay organization in the Church. We make another and more urgent appeal for union. Many times Our paternal heart has been saddened by the divergencies—often idle in their causes, always tragic in their consequences—which array in opposing camps the sons of the same Mother Church . . . Those who make a practice of spreading dissension among Catholics assume a terrible responsibility before God and the Church.

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- CONTEMPORANEA. CATHOLIC HERALD is to be congratulated on its perspicacious, fair-minded and illuminating correspondent in republican Spain, Mr. Peter Langdale, whose experiences and inquiries are being serialized.
- CATHOLIC WORKER (England) contains an outspoken editorial on Prudence—as a virtue which directs action and as a vice which is a pretext for inaction.
- CHRISTENDOM (*March*): Montague Fordham deals, from the "Christian economic" standpoint, with the problem of *Christianity in the Countryside*. R. Ellis Roberts elucidates Charles Williams, who in his turn provides more material for elucidation. Pungent criticism of the Recall to Religion from D. H. MacKinnon, and of "Left Christianity" from Maurice Reckitt.
- CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (*March*): *Family Allowances: Their Place in Britain* by J. R. Kirwan. H. N. Parks and W. P. Wittcutt challenge the C.S.G.'s organ's attitude to distributism.
- CITE CHRETIENNE (*March 5*) issues a valuable special number devoted to the problems of suffering.
- CLERGY REVIEW (*March*): *The Pope and the Bible* by Vincent McNabb, O.P. *Fallow Fields* by "Parochus Ruralis" is another article on the grave problems facing religion in the English countryside.
- IRELAND TO-DAY (*March*): Eric Gill challenges—and is challenged.
- MONTH (*March*): *The Flight from Reason* by John Murray. *Margery Kempe Reviewed* by George Burns.
- PAX (*March*): Mgr. R. A. Knox and Peter Anson contribute memoirs of Caldey in celebration of the silver jubilee of the community's Catholic existence.
- ORATES FRATRES: May the form for the Way of the Cross, compiled exclusively from Scriptural and liturgical sources, (contained in the February 20 number), come quickly into general use!
- SCHOENERE ZUKUNFT, significantly ante-dated from Vienna 13.3.38 contains an illuminating extract from Prof. Josef Nadler on *Austria's German and European Achievement*.
- STIMMEN DER ZEIT, the great German Jesuit monthly, flourishes still despite reports of suppression. The March issue contains a timely exposition of the inter-relation of *Revelation, Theology and Profane Science* by Bernhard Jansen, S.J., and some autobiographical conversion-memoirs from Sigrid Undset.

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- TEMPS PRESENT (March 11): A strong number includes an interview with Mgr. Yu Pin, remarkable contributions on the Niemöller trial from Paul Claudel and Stanislas Fumet, on the Moscow trials from François Courtenay, and on *Un Gentleman Chrétien* (our new Foreign Secretary) by Jean Guitton.
- VIE INTELLECTUELLE (Feb. 25): *The Jews among the Gentiles*, a magnificent address on the Christian view of the Jewish problem and of current anti-semitism, by Jacques Maritain. ("Israel, like the Church, is in the world but not of it; but since the day it stumbled, because its leaders preferred the world, it is rivetted to the world, a captive and victim of the world it loves, but to which it does not belong, nor ever will nor can belong. That is how, with Christian eyes, we perceive the mystery of Israel.")
- WORLD PROBLEM is a "Monthly Survey of Modern Atheism," invaluable for documentation, published by the Vatican Polyglot Press. 6/6 annually from Via Carlo Alberto 2, Roma 128.

PENGUIN.

REVIEWS

THEOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CONFIRMATION IN THE MODERN WORLD. By Matthias Laros.
Translated by George Sayer. (Sheed & Ward; 7s. 6d.)

One of the happier signs of our time is a new awareness, among Catholics, of the Community. The Liturgical Movement, the stirring to Catholic Action, are facets of a great reality, set in the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. It would be more than a pity if the very enabling power, instituted by Christ Himself, were to be neglected. Confirmation is, too often, a forgotten Sacrament; if not in its reception, at least in its appreciation. Yet it is this Sacrament which makes us full members of the Mystical Body; which, as the word indicates, comes to confirm, reinforce, complete and perfect the spiritual life of the baptized. It represents the adult state of life where one begins to live and act not only for one's own personal profit, but for the general good of the community.

This study of the Sacrament of Confirmation, translated from the German, sets out in simple language to deepen our knowledge and appreciation of the equipment that God has given us, as militant members of His Kingdom; for, in the words of Cardinal Faulhaber, quoted by the author, "It is not enough for us to be fishes in the net of the apostle, we must be fishers and apostles ourselves."