

THE GERMAN CATHOLIC IN THE NEW STATE

THE notice of *German Catholic Reviews* in the last number of BLACKFRIARS gave a clear survey of the problems which confront German Catholicism as a result of the Revolution and the establishment of the new National-Socialist State. It would, indeed, be quite wrong to suppose that the attitude of German Catholics to this new order was chiefly one of irritation at the *Gleichschaltung*¹ of the Catholic Centre Party, or any such secondary outcome of the Revolution. The Catholic's outlook obliges him to view things in their *essentials* and to confront them from the standpoint of what is *fundamental* in his religion. And it is a striking testimony to the true greatness of our religion that it should, by its emphasis on objective truth, awake in co-religionists in other countries such understanding and regard for the present situation.

Each successive age tests anew the determination of the peoples, who live and labour in the stress of it, in their task of human self-realization. Each age shows how human weakness, human thought and human endeavour unite under divine Providence to shape the present. Man, although imprisoned in Time, has his own part to play for the attainment of his ideal which is timeless and eternal. Divine forces arouse determination and effort within him to give temporal expression to his spiritual ideas, and a people gives to its epoch a supra-temporal significance when, in its progress towards the future, it recognises the true foundations of all existence. Thus the spirit of an age is nothing less than the expression of the soul of a people, the point to which creative forces are focussed for the attainment of what is stable and permanent both from the divine and human standpoints. For us Catholics this means that a people reaches the apex of its civil and spiritual

¹ The official term of the Revolution to denote the synchronization of the various units which compose the corporative State. (Tr.)

development when it has achieved the right equilibrium between State and Church, and so, in the last analysis, between the secular and religious spheres. Future history will see therein how far the mind and will of a people have realized in their time their approximation to the Eternal and the Divine.

The exactions of the World-War brought a set-back to the German people which left them in that state of exhaustion and lethargy which must follow upon any super-human effort. Those forces became dominant which every nation rightly regards as its deadly foe. The Catholic Centre Party had indeed, from its beginnings, fought against these forces which sought to introduce any kind of Marxist Socialism or 'Godlessness' among the people. But the liberal-democratic system divided the people more and more; the countless opposing parties, each of which claimed exclusiveness, dissipated and sapped their strength. The Centre Party itself, firmly united though it was on general principles, was not wholly uninfected. One political movement alone succeeded in achieving the greatest unity possible out of all these heterogeneous and individualistic elements torn asunder by false teachers. It alone succeeded in fusing the common will of the people. And from this unity of will sprang the Revolution of March, 1933.

Revolution is revaluation. It is a reversal of values; but only in the appreciation of them and not in their intrinsic nature. The process of all events postulates growth, ripening, reaping, but also presupposes ploughing and sowing, and we cannot emphasize one at the expense of another. *All* these things are necessary; so likewise are revolutions, whether conscious or unconscious, whether in individuals or in nations. A period is overthrown, and with it its values; then that which had hitherto been neglected comes to be esteemed. Yet it must never be forgotten that the field remains the same; that the plough does not destroy the ground; earth remains earth. A revolution is a reversal of values; but it fails in its mission if it negatives the eternally valid order of things. The idea of *Gleichschaltung*,

which characterizes the Revolution and fashions the social organism externally, should leave the inner man untouched. Parties may be destroyed, their active members may be compelled to abandon party divisions, an external conformity may be established by physical force, but, if the thing is to live, a *spirit* must indwell which permeates and vitalizes the whole and which imparts to it its organic growth. This spirit may be new—indeed, often must be new—but in its essentials it must have its origins in the past and in the abiding order of nature.

Times of change call especially for thoughtfulness. Thoughtfulness suggests new orientations and indicates new paths. Yet the newly-found paths are really already old, for in the things of the spirit there is for ever only one right way to the right destination. Thus the people of Germany and the men who now govern them take for granted, in spite of Revolution and *Gleichschaltung*, the abiding conditions of that people's specific organism and evolution. Hence National-Socialism is in no sense whatsoever a fixed dogmatic programme which penetrates into the minute details of private life, nor yet into the public spheres of culture and morality. It is a *movement* which is based on the spiritual impulses and the moral values of the German people. It utilises the primitive energies of our culture, which, in their turn, had their origins in the transcendental forces of the Christian and Catholic religion.

The Catholic's attitude to the new State in Germany is to be determined by his attitude to States in general. For him the Revolution stands for a needed reawakening of consciousness; a change, a new start from God. The new organization of the State gave new possibilities for the expression of his religion. Much of the old order has been taken away; but he sees that the consequent changes are in externals only. Any other change is, for him, unthinkable. To Catholics, the Revolution is neither 'Catholic' nor 'Protestant'—it is an event in time, and one which calls us to search our own conscience. Such searching of conscience is necessary, not only in things political—be-

cause of the break-up of the political organizations of Catholicism which conditions had hitherto necessitated—but in every sphere of activity. The Catholic sees in religion the relationship of man to God, and that must permeate every expression of human life. For him there can be no cleavage between the religious and the secular, no disunity in his life in any form whatsoever.

The self-examination of German Catholicism will be entirely inadequate if it be confined to public affairs, in the narrow sense of the word, and absorbed by questions of party-politics. That is, truly enough, *one* of the spheres which have to be dealt with. But what must ever be borne in mind is the *whole* of human life and endeavour, and how they can and should be permeated with Catholicity. It is thus that Professor Brauer² reasons and refers us to the *Quadragesimo Anno*. In that Encyclical the Holy Father, although not treating specifically of the situation in Germany which led to the Revolution, sketches with astonishing insight the social conditions which prevailed in Germany as elsewhere. Existing social and economic conditions, said the Encyclical, are in very great measure to blame for the terrible destruction of souls that goes on around us.

So the all-important question becomes posed for German Catholicism: How can it be brought about that the dynamic forces of Catholicism be directed to influence the formation of the spirit and the shaping of the destiny of our country in such a way that what is specifically *Catholic* attains its due importance, in a concrete and effective manner, in the rich and variegated texture of our national life?

But what is this 'specifically Catholic' thing? How is it to operate? We Catholics know that it belongs to the essential and primitive forces of true *Deutschtum*. And Catholicism is something living, it is vital religion, it is the Mys-

² Prof. Theodor Brauer, a Catholic Professor in the University of Cologne and author of the recently published book *Der Katholik im neuen Reich*. (Tr.)

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tical Body of Christ Who continues His life as that wonderful Synthesis of all Being and all Value, that *complexio oppositorum* which is adjusted in eternal harmony to all the changes and chances of earthly existence and is yet truly mobile and dynamic: a *complexio oppositorum* more truly national than the most extravagant Nationalism, more social than the extremest Socialism; which will ever be perfect, though its individual members remain for ever human and infected with all human faults and failings.

Some, here and there, have sought to represent the German Revolution as something specifically Protestant because, they suppose, the spirit of revolution is more proper to Protestantism; but that is quite untrue. Elsewhere it has been urged, by reason of the dissolution of the Catholic political organizations, that the inner unity of the Catholic people could likewise be dissolved. Forces do indeed exist which tend to divorce Religion and Life, and such divorce does make for 'Godlessness.' But our adversaries set up Religion and Fatherland in a relationship of mutual opposition which is as sterile as it is false, and which springs from a misconception of the very nature and exigencies of a 'People' viewed in its entirety. Others proclaim that the 'reformed Catholicism' of the 'Reformation' is alone of value to Germany and reject the changeless form of authentic Catholicism. Their only argument is that they will relentlessly oppose it! Intolerance towards other religious communions from those whose distinctive religious creed is tolerance and private judgment!

With Brauer I hold that the distinctive Catholic attitude consists in a sense for realities, in universal affirmation of all reality and all value, in a belief in the possibility of progress and in a keen awareness of passing events; from such universalism springs a fundamentally sound scale of values. To these may be added a reverence for the teaching of history and for tradition, for from these proceeds every evolutionary process. If we hold with Pascal that one generation stands on the shoulders of all preceding generations, tradition itself is found to be an essential and important element in our general attitude. It intensifies moral

energy and safeguards it from excesses. Social-consciousness and social-conduct, the longing for self-realization through charity, is the very essence of Catholicity.

This 'essential Catholicity' has its part to play in the reconstruction of Germany and the German people: in overcoming individualism and egoism; in proclaiming and exemplifying true social fellowship; in taking a lead in cultural developments. With Eibl³ and Brauer I see in the idea of a 'People' the threefold unity of *natural* factors (*Blut und Boden*—common race and country), *cultural* factors (*Sprache und Brauch*—common language and customs), and *spiritual* factors (*Bildung und Schicksal*—common spiritual formation and a common destiny).

We see with increasing clearness how these factors, essentially Catholic and old, adapt themselves to Catholicism. It becomes clear that the result of our self-examination is an affirmation of the State—which, indeed, is something natural and instinctive to us, but which now becomes explicit and deliberate. But it also becomes clear that all extrinsic machinations against the grown organism are futile, senseless and wrong. Yet, for Catholics, *Gleichschaltung* can and must mean no more than what is reasonably and willingly acceptable.

We stand at a critical juncture in the history of our people. On the way hither Destiny loaded in our favour the dice for the election of government, such as it was. We know that many wounds are still gaping. We know that much honour is due to many of the dead institutions which had become dear to us. We know that many trials and obstacles await us on the path that lies before us—trials which may be more serious than any we Catholics have yet encountered. Such especially may prove to be the re-

³ Prof. Hans Eibl, an eminent philosopher and patrologist of the University of Vienna. For several years he has been engaged in a campaign for the union of Germany and Austria. He has exalted ideas of the mission of the 'New Reich' which are set forth in his *Vom Sinn der Gegenwart: ein Buch von deutscher Sendung*, the publication of which coincided with the Revolution. (Tr.)

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awakening of anti-Roman passions in the recent revival of the ancient German paganism which, under the mask of religion, is determined on the annihilation of Christianity and especially of the Church. (To that an entire article might well be devoted.) But we know, above all, that it is our duty so to use this time into which God has called us that something positive may emerge from it. We are convinced that we have the duty, by reason of our all-embracing Catholicism, to support the political commonweal in all its forms. The Catholic stands no longer aloof in this new State, even though many may wish him to do so, for its basic ideas are the same as ours. We must unreservedly play our particular part for the revival and strengthening of our common good.

We Catholics of Germany have deliberately set aside secondary side-issues in order that, in our own and in purely religious interests, the eternal values may be given their due importance. We have thrown ourselves heart and soul into the labour of our particular epoch and will cooperate disinterestedly whatever sufferings we may have to endure. We shall encounter sufferings in the shape of misrepresentation, disappointment, ingratitude, treachery and the like; but none of these things must deter us from what we have acknowledged and accepted as our bounden duty.

Translated from the German of

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EDITORIAL POSTSCRIPT

BLACKFRIARS takes no sides in the internal politics of foreign countries, and the publication of Dr. Krumbach's article must not be interpreted as a manifesto on our part in favour of Nazism. But all our readers will be indebted to this very busy leader of Catholic Action in Germany for favouring us with this 'special and exclusive' contribution. Not only does he approach the most discussed question in Europe to-day from an unfamiliar and distinctively Catholic standpoint, but his treatment of the subject is, incidentally, an important statement of the distinctive

Catholic outlook on affairs in general and their application in Catholic Action.

All Christians, whatever their views on Nazism, will sympathize with Dr. Krumbach in his anxieties regarding the new 'nordic paganism.' This movement ('Wotanism' it has been called), led by Professors Bergmann and Wirth, which ostensibly aims at the resuscitation of the old German gods, is in fact (as Dr. Krumbach himself has recently shown in his review, *Zeit und Volk*) nothing more exotic than a revival of liberal anti-clericalism, 'free-thought,' 'No Popery,' and Marxist 'Godlessness.' So far from being the authentic religious expression of Nazism, it is, Dr. Krumbach holds, in fundamental opposition to the principles both of Religion and the Revolution. The doctrines of Bergmann are as explicitly 'Godless' as any that have emanated from Russia. But the movement gains in impetus and vigorously agitates for recognition as a 'Third Denomination' alongside the Catholic and Lutheran communions, with a view, ultimately, to destroy them. The threatened schism within Lutheranism may bring it many converts from those *Deutsche Christen* whose Germanism is blind fanaticism and whose Christianity practically non-existent. May the united efforts of Catholics and Evangelicals convince the Berlin authorities that, in the words of a Lutheran Bishop, 'To raise the flag of National-Socialism over this "Nordic heathenism" is unmitigated hypocrisy and deceit.'