

EXCERPTA

THE CENTRE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. From an important article by Dom G. Laporta of Louvain in *ORATE FRATRES* (February 24th): 'One hears it affirmed again and again that the Eucharist and Eucharistic piety constitute the center and summit of the Christian life. That is true. It is even more true than those think to whom it is incessantly repeated. For, in spite of convincing explanations, things finally come to such a pass that those with a positive turn of mind suspect here once again one of those pious hyperboles to which sacred rhetoric has perhaps habituated them. But **no** one has the right of proclaiming the Eucharist as the center of the Christian life except on the express condition that he possesses a right understanding of the Eucharistic cult, on condition that he does not mistake its accessories for the essential. For, after all, it is not the accidental practices of Eucharistic piety which may be placed at the summit and culminating point of the religious life of the Christian. The Eucharist marks the completion of Christianity only by the essential it contains, that which is of divine institution. Care must be taken not to confuse this nucleus with the pious practices which, in modern times, the faithful of the Latin Church have added to the rite inaugurated by Christ. Thus it would be wrong to seek the apogee of Catholic life in the cult which now surrounds the Blessed Sacrament outside the Sacrifice. Visits, perpetual adoration, solemn expositions, Benedictions, triumphal processions—all that is secondary and must remain such in a well-ordered Christian life. Communion itself will appear in its rightful place, as the heart of our religion, only by him who recognizes in it something more than the simple visit of Friend to friend, who sees in it more than a repast in which the individual soul recuperates its spiritual forces. The Eucharist is the center of the Christian life properly only in so far as it is a sacrificial rite, sacramental Communion being the mode of normal participation in the Sacrifice. To understand this we must first have a clear notion of the Christian life itself.' This the writer goes on to explain in an article which should be read, as well as that on *Liturgy and Morality* in the same number.

BLACKFRIARS

CATHOLICISM AND HEIMWEHR. A section of the English Press has taken unduly seriously Chancellor Dollfuss's identification of his government's policy with Catholicism, even to the extent of laying to the charge of the Church the recent tragic 'massacre' at Vienna. The following *Declaration* has been issued and signed by a number of French Catholic writers and dispatched to President Miklas: 'This present appeal is made independently of any political consideration, and does not profess to pass judgment on motives. But we cannot forget that there are spiritual values which transcend politics. We are obliged to express the deep distress which we feel regarding the bloody conflict which has set in opposition in Austria a party of workers and a government which is officially Catholic.—Such an event, moreover, threatens to impose upon Christianity responsibilities of a kind which is foreign to it.—We look upon it as a historic calamity.—Men who have fought courageously for a cause which they hold to be just have a right to respect. A large number of Austrian Socialists are at present held in preventive custody. We express the hope that the conquered will be honourably treated by the conquerors, and that an amnesty, as generous as possible, will be granted them.' Stanislas Fumet, O. Lacombe, J. Maritain, E. Mounier are among the many signatories of this Declaration which appears simultaneously in *Esprit* and *La Vie Intellectuelle*.

NEW BRITAIN AND OURSELVES. Under the heading *Do we need Churches?* the leading article in **NEW BRITAIN** for March 14th is devoted to some kindly comments on our reflexions in last month's **EXCERPTA**. The writer gives two reasons for his negative answer to the question. The first is that 'The churches also require to be made new. They are too entangled within the present social and economic system to inspire as they should those who seek to re-fashion it.' The Church—in the sense of its members and not excluding its prelates—is unavoidably entangled in the unchristian social-economic system in which it finds itself, though it be, as is decidedly the case of the modern Catholic Church, under constant protest. (On this point see, for instance, *l'Eglise et le progrès du monde* by A. Boulet in **LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE**, Feb. 10.) It can be affirmed emphatically, at any rate, that the Church 'needs' the *révolu-*

EXCERPTA

tion nécessaire which will liberate the human person from the constraints which the existing social-economic system imposes upon it. Hence our interest in movements such as that of New Britain, whatever we may think of the details of their programmes. Nor are we concerned to deny that it is possible, ideally at any rate, for such movements to attain their admirable aims without any positive reference to Catholicism, nor yet to base their position on a perfectly sound philosophy. We question only whether they will in fact do so. Thus the writer's second line of argument raises an issue, serious alike to Catholics and New Britons. We do not need the Church, he says, 'for there is an authority as universal as the Church and above it, a witness to the truth, which those who have never heard of the Church have as certainly as the saints themselves, that is the individual conscience. What we have to do, all of us, is to act by the light of conscience . . . The conscience in each individual is that which witnesses to the truth, and on the knowledge imparted by the conscience action can be taken.' He then reminds us, by reference to St. Thomas and Karl Adam's *Spirit of Catholicism* that it is 'good Church doctrine' that the conscience, even the erroneous conscience, must always be obeyed. Excellent: we must follow even a wrong conscience. But that does not make a wrong conscience a right conscience, and it is universal chaos, not a new order, that is begotten of wrong consciences. The road to chaos is strewn with good intentions. And if individual consciences, right or wrong, are to be the ultimate norm for New Britons will not the result be social disintegration and atomisation? Is the philosophy of New Britain to deliver us from the constraints and tyranny of collectivism only to hand us over to the chaos of individualism? The rôle of the Church in the spiritual revolution which New Britain desiderates will be to impart *right* consciences, by making individual consciences of one mind by informing them with the mind of the living Christ, and further by imparting Divine Power to live up to those consciences. We invite New Britons to study that book of Karl Adam in its entirety. And to reconsider their conceptions of individuality and individual liberty in the light of Maritain's precious *Du régime temporel et de la liberté*.

PROBLEMS OF FILM-CRITICISM. *Celluloid*, the film-critic of

BLACKFRIARS

THE CATHOLIC HERALD, bewails the hardness of his lot in the issue for March 10th: 'It is a pity that films cannot be classified under two heads, the nice films and the nasty ones. Such a classification would make life easy for a critic, but it would not be very helpful. The trouble is that all nice films are not good films and all nasty films are not bad ones. There are such a lot of things that have to be taken into consideration. If a critic had to consider only the moral point of view, his course would be fairly simple; he could, like the censor, label pictures 'U' or 'A' and have done with it. But artistry, technique, interest, story and pictorial value have to be taken into consideration and also the sad, but understandable, fact that a 'U' certificate keeps quite a lot of 'A's' out of a cinema. There was once a reason for this. Not long ago a 'U' certificate meant that a film was puerile, that what was labelled for 'Universal' consumption was cinematic pap fit only for babes and sucklings. That is no longer the case. No longer is it necessary to find an 'Adult' certificate to be reasonably sure of rational entertainment. We would even go so far as to say that most of the best films of recent date are passed by the Board of Film Censors as fit and proper entertainment for everybody irrespective of age, sex, race, creed or colour. This is a very big step in the right direction. Simultaneous with it there has been a short step in the wrong direction. Up to a few months ago it would have been safe to say that there was no such thing as an immoral film. There were plenty of films of low moral tone, many depicting unsavoury and regrettable incidents, but there were none frankly immoral in theme and portent. Now there are. Contemporaneous with a definite raising of the moral standard, two or three films pernicious in theme have managed to 'get by' the censors. Because they have obtained their certificate it is inadvisable to pillory them for two reasons; the less important concerns the law of the land, the other that curiosity which is, unfortunately, a characteristic of many 'good' people. No, a conscientious critic's life is not so easy as a casual reader might imagine.'

LA NOUVELLE REVUE FRANÇAISE. The February number contains a series of articles by distinguished writers on *Count Gobineau*, monarchist, aristocrat and Catholic, ambassador of France in the East, the 'Claude of the Second

Empire.' He is of interest to-day because he was the first European writer to emphasize the importance of *race*. His ideas on this subject reached Germany through H. S. Chamberlain, became cheapened and vulgarized, and are now being busily exploited in the name of National Socialism. He is of interest also because he was one of the first to realize the significance of Asia for the modern world. Articles by Halévy, Cocteau, Alain, Thibaudet, Seillère, Masson-Oursel, Keyserling and others illuminate his thought from all points of view, while Trotsky analyses the racial bluff which is being used in Nazi Germany to veil the capitalist reality.

THREE NEW PERIODICALS of singular interest have come our way. THE COLOSSEUM was recommended by our colleague Jacobin last month.—REUNION (published by Baxter's Press, Oxford, price 6d.) is the new organ of the Confraternity of Unity which 'is composed of members of the Anglican Communion who believe that the See of Rome is the centre of unity for all Churches. This Confraternity, therefore, seeks through corporate action within the Anglican Communion a basis of reunion with the Holy See which will not be prejudicial to the facts of her sacramental life.' The crest on the cover bears the arms of Rome and Canterbury and the domes of St. Peter's and St. Paul's encircled with the *Tu es Petrus*. Contributions to the first number include a memoir of Lord Halifax, extracts from a sermon by Archdeacon Carleton on 'Thou art Peter,' *Steps to Reunion* by the Rev. Spencer Jones, articles on *The Appian Way* and *Stigmata*. Fr. Hugh Pope discusses the Petrine claims in the light of the Council of Jerusalem on the hypothesis that St. James presided. We are tempted to question whether there is indeed 'a consensus of opinion nowadays that St. James presided'; the authority of Conybeare and Howson in 1859 is not convincing. We look for an article in a future number examining the validity of that hypothesis.—SEPT is the latest publishing venture of the French Dominicans of *Les Editions du Cerf* (Juvisy, S. et O.), a 75 centimes weekly which is something quite new in Catholic journalism. We suggest to our own Catholic newspaper proprietors that something of this genre in this country would be a great blessing and a commercially sound venture.

PENGUIN