

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

GERMAN SPIRITUALITY. "The spiritual vitality which is manifested in the works of contemporary German Catholic writers deserves our very closest attention," wrote P. Geiger, O.P., recently in introducing a chronicle of *Courants de spiritualité allemande* in LA VIE SPIRITUELLE. He continued:

This is so, not only because it attests, notwithstanding the insinuations of the official press, the courage of the Catholic *élite* in Germany, but still more because it gives us an example of a process of purification which tends to purge the essentials of the Christian life of the impurities and compromises with which it too often becomes adulterated. At times in which the very existence of the Faith is in danger, the Christian soul, in self-protection from the threats of enemies and the enticements of false prophets, becomes, as it were, forced into the inmost secret sanctuary where, in direct contact with the Word of God, it perceives with unaccustomed clearness the *religious* quintessence of the Gospel message. Must we not admit that for us (outside of Germany) confronted by the social disorder around us, the role of apologetics tends to become too facile and superficial? If we over-emphasize the undoubted benefits of the application of Christianity to the secular and social domain, there is a risk that we obscure or dilute the inward essence of the Christian life itself. When, as in Germany, the State takes it into its own hands to organize charities, to provide for the unemployed, to undertake the *Winterhilfe*, many might be left to suppose that religion has left to it no role to fulfill. And indeed much Liberal Protestantism has found itself atrophied by the annexation of its activities by the National-Socialist State . . .

It has to be admitted that the charitable and social work of the Church has not, on the part of all its representatives, always been so disinterested and unadulterated as might be desired. When one is concerned for social affairs it is difficult to avoid participation in politics, and under a parliamentary regime this inevitably means engagement in *party*-politics. Is it perhaps in the realization of these defects, however human and inevitable, and in the seeming failure and frustration of so many good works, that we may see the reason for the return among German Catholics to a less extroverted, more deeply spiritualized, Christianity? At all events, those of us who are watching developments in German Catholicism are

the witnesses of one of those processes which periodically recall the souls and consciences of Christians from one pole to another of the manifold expressions of the Christian life.

But other influences seem also to be at work. Common interests have approximated Catholics more closely to the more vital elements in the Protestant communions, whose emphasis on personal religious experience is so characteristic. More recently still, contact with the philosophical outlooks begotten of Phenomenology, and the religious philosophies inspired by Kierkegaard, have provoked, whether by imitation or reaction, a quite original current of spiritual movements and tendencies.

The chronicle goes on to give some account of these achievements of German Catholicism since the advent of the National-Socialist State: particularly noteworthy are the deepening of the sense of the mystery of the Church, both in theoretical exposition and in actual, "existential" expression in liturgical living (a fitting Christian response to the totalitarian claims of secular society springing solely from "Blood and Soil"), and in the valuable constructive work that has been done towards a specifically Christian interpretation of those values which are especially extolled and distorted in the National-Socialist *Weltanschauung*—Honour, Courage, Heroism, etc. It would seem that the pressure of a constant martyrdom, which Christian living in a paganized totalitarian *milieu* involves, is showing itself to be productive of a new and stronger type of spirituality from which all of us who live in the modern secularized community have much to learn. It is significant that another characteristic of Catholicism in the Third Reich is an intensification of interest in the life and spirituality of the early Church, the Church of the Martyrs.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST. Contemporary German Catholicism is finding yet another source of self-enrichment in an intensification of interest in the traditions and spirituality of the Eastern Churches. Illustrative of this trend is the current number of Romano Guardini's admirable review, *DIE SCHILDGENOSSEN*. The number

is offered in the service of the great work of the reunion of the Eastern Church with the apostolic Mother Church of Rome. We have made it our task to follow, to the best of our ability, in the spirit of Vladimir Soloviev. In the selection of material we have quite deliberately set aside such as treats of the theoretical beliefs

and productions of the Eastern Church; we believe that no such exposition is fruitful without a previous understanding of the distinctive living spirit (*Daseinsform*) of Eastern piety such as we have here attempted to present.

The attempt is singularly successful; we are given none of that preoccupation with antiquarian curiosities of oriental ceremonial or with external organization which too often renders study of Eastern Christianity tiresome and useless; rather are we enabled to share in the distinctive ethos and outlook of the faithful believer in the Eastern (and particularly in the Russian) Church. Dr. Leo Kobilenski-Ellis introduces the number with an illuminating essay on *The Tradition of the Eastern Church* in its ascetic and contemplative aspect, showing it to be a distinctive product of the seed of the Gospel (especially as sown by St. John) on the soil prepared by pre-Christian oriental mysticism. Its development is traced through the solitaries of the Thebaïd to the staretz of contemporary Orthodoxy; its distinctive characteristics are also explained:—its emphasis on the *Theosis* of the entire creation, its fundamental conception of revelation as *sophia* (Wisdom) as distinguished from *pistis* (Faith), the all-importance of the doctrine of the Resurrection in the Eastern spiritual outlook whereby the Christian spirituality of the East is redeemed from the manichæan dualism which it replaced. The inadequacies of Eastern Christianity are, however, fully acknowledged, and we are led to the conclusion that the synthesis between “Johannine,” Eastern “Wisdom” and “Petrine,” Western “Faith” is attainable, for their mutual benefit and enrichment, “solely through the reunited Church of East and West through the power of Christ the King.” In subsequent contributions this distinctive Eastern spirituality is studied in concrete examples of Eastern sanctity—in St. Seraphim of Sarov, the fascinating Russian staretz of the early nineteenth century; in St. Sergij of Radonjesch, the fourteenth century emancipator of Russia; and in brief sketches of a number of representative contemplatives and martyrs of Mount Athos. Such a presentation of types of sanctity is itself in full accord with the Eastern outlook, for, as one contributor (Vladimir Iljin) expresses it:

The meaning of genuine, concrete, historical Christianity may be defined as the fullness of the manifestation of the Divine

(Theophany). The essential representation of this is the Ikon, for the Ikon is nothing else than the Face of Holiness, the portrait of the Lord Himself. The very foundation of Christianity and its head corner-stone, the Lord Christ Jesus, is the Ikon of His Father; while the hosts of the Saints, with the Mother of God at their head, are reflections of His Face, rays which convey to us diversely the infinite manifoldness of the unique Theophany whose dazzling incomprehensible light is, as it were, broken up as by a prism. In each saint is the fullness of the portrait of Christ, but dwelling in some peculiar and distinctive manner; in this way is preserved the distinctive individuality of each. In each is reflected the concrete, historic element of the divine Light, and its authentic, eternal and immutable value is revealed in a created nature. Thus the essence of Orthodoxy in general, and of Russian Orthodoxy in particular, is perhaps in no way expressed more clearly and completely than by the honour which it pays to the Mother of God and the Saints. This cult is thus very far removed from the dry rationalism of the "head" and from unhealthy dreamy mysticism of the "visceral" type; it is fully in accord with the most evangelical interpretation of the Bible and the teaching of the Fathers.

Such passages as these suggest the value of this line of approach to the study of Eastern Christianity, not only for that preliminary understanding which is a condition of reunion, but also for a fuller understanding of our own Western religious life and practice. This is further revealed in the study by Sophia Alexejevna Lichareva of the symbolism of the architecture and adornment of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and in a reprint of extracts from Nikolai Gogol's moving and profound description of the significance of the Byzantine liturgy. This latter brings out that liturgy's emphasis on the necessity for uniting the hearts and wills of priest and people in a way that must be inspiring to German Catholics in their great revival of congregational worship. The number is completed by three studies by Dr. Kobilenski-Ellis, respectively treating of *The Sense of Tragedy in Russian Literature* (a brilliant piece of literary criticism), on *The Power of Smiles and Tears in N. Gogol*, and on Soloviev's theological approach to the philosophy of art and of beauty. The whole number makes a splendid introduction for the Western mind into an unfamiliar spiritual world from which not only German Catholics have much to learn. It may be hoped that it will be the forerunner of many such productions in Western countries.

THE NEW "NO POPERY." Memorable words of the Holy Father to the French Bishops during their recent visits *ad limina* are reported in the pages of TEMPS PRESENT (Dec. 17):

The unparalleled strength of Catholic Action in France is due to the fact that it acts freely, and untrammelled by politics . . .

While we proceed with the necessary caution in regard to those who do not agree with us, it is incumbent upon us that we be always ready to give a hearing to the needs of their souls; that we be unremitting in trying to understand them better; that we approach them in a spirit of respect and friendship; that we avoid charging them inconsiderately with stubbornness; that, without allowing ourselves to be duped, we treat them with that affability which Christ always displayed towards the strayed sheep which He encountered . . .

The age in which we live is one of the most troubled that mankind has ever known, yet it is also one of the fairest. For it is an age in which mediocrity is forbidden, in which the lives of many Christians are shining forth in all their glory, and in which the way is being prepared for the greatest triumphs of the Church. But for that, the great essential is *sanctity* . . .

Dear Bishops, dear Brothers, I am happy to thank you for all the consolations which come to me from France, your France and Ours. I thank you for the consolations which come to me from the dear Jocists and Jacists and Jécists . . .

Much is being said to the Catholics of France about the *maine tendue* [the extended hand which the Communists offer to the Catholics inviting them to collaborate in the Popular Front]. Are we able to grasp this hand which is extended to us? I could wish that it were so; an extended hand is a thing not to be refused provided it be not to the detriment of truth. But the truth is God Himself, and God must not be sacrificed. Moreover, those who invite us to take their hand do not explain clearly what they intend. In their language there are confusions and obscurities which need to be cleared up. But let us take the hand which they offer precisely in order to draw them to the teaching of Christ. And how shall we lead them to this teaching? Just by expounding it? No; but by living it . . .

Nevertheless, the pages of our non-Catholic contemporaries, ranging from the Anglican CHURCH TIMES and even CHRISTENDOM to the Communist NEW MASSES of New York (which brightly suggests that Pope Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli are "sabotaging" the Church), are wet with tears about the Church's alleged betrayal of her mission by "compromise with Fascism and War." It may be of some

comfort to know that the press of the authoritarian states is no less indignant with the benevolence of the Holy See towards "democracies" and its refusal to opt unequivocally for the Rome-Berlin axis and all its divers dependencies—an article on *Italien und der Hl. Stuhl* in DER DEUTSHE IN POLEN (Dec. 12) presents some interesting specimens. Meanwhile, the sharp decrease in the number of conversions to Catholicism in England and the marked return to coldness and even hostility towards Catholicism on the part of our countrymen (noted especially by those who have recently returned to England after a long absence) suggest that the revival of the "No Popery" campaign under the guise of a pained "No Papo-Cesarism" is meeting with some measure of success. It is certain that the business is a source of considerable embarrassment, perplexity and even of anxiety to many English Catholics. We may be thankful that it has not reached the dimensions of a panic such as it would seem, to judge from a sensational (not to say, sensationalist) article by E. Mounier in the November *ESPRIT*, to have attained in some Catholic circles in France. The Duce's own threats of punishment to "wavering Catholics" who are not even Italian subjects were certainly not reassuring, and the tendency among some Italian Catholics to equate the universality of the Church with the universality of the imperial-minded Italian genius (*L'Italia e l'Europa* by Giovanni Papini in the November number of the Florentine Catholic-Fascist review *IL FRONTESPIZIO* may be instanced) would be as disturbing to Catholic orthodoxy as to patriotic feeling if taken literally. Such manifestations are well calculated to provide anti-Catholicism with the brickbats it casts so tearfully. But apart from many crocodile tears and much deliberate misrepresentation, there are many who are sincerely perplexed that the Holy See, while intransigently hostile to Communism on the one hand and to National Socialism and Action Française on the other, can yet find so much as a *modus vivendi* with the Italian regime. In this connexion we would recommend consideration of the thesis maintained by Ross J. S. Hoffman in the current *AMERICAN REVIEW* (*The Totalitarian Regimes: An Essay in Essential Distinctions*). He holds that to represent the dilemma which faces civilized nations as that between Dictatorship and Democracy, or even as that between the

rival ideologies of Fascism (including National Socialism and kindred totalitarianisms) and Communism, is to introduce "false distinctions, and therefore to draw a veil of obscurity over reality." He continues: "Communism, National Socialism and Fascism may indeed be evil; they may be equally evil; they may have numerous affinities and similarities; but they are essentially different and cannot be resolved by the same common denominator." This essential difference which underlies all similarities, Dr. Hoffman argues, lies in the fact that whereas Marxist Communism and Hitlerite National Socialism, and to some extent "democratic" Liberalism, conceive the State as a mere instrument in the hands of a Party for forwarding its own preconceived ideology, Italian Fascism is "devoid of dogma and fixed vision of any particular social ideal; it was therefore thoroughly pragmatist and without any other programme than to deal practically with concrete problems as they arose." For Marx the State is a weapon which the Party must control to enforce its own programme, and should itself "wither away" when the goal of the Party is attained. Likewise for Hitler the Nazi "Party is not to be a mere instrumental activity of the nation for rebuilding and vindicating the sovereign autonomy of the state; but is instead an independent, all-powerful organism determining the ends of political activity, doctrine, education, and the life of the mind and spirit." But "Italian Fascism does possess a primarily political character and cannot in any way be described as a religious movement. It has neither ideology nor *Weltanschauung* that can be called peculiarly its own; and in Italy there is no party rule of the State . . . Hitler is a prophet and Stalin is a pope of the modern Muscovite religion, but Mussolini is a man of tradition with whom Aristotle or St. Thomas or Machiavelli might without too great difficulty feel at ease." All this, doubtless, is to over-simplify a highly complex issue, and we must query whether St. Thomas, at least, would approve such frank political pragmatism. But it serves to explain why the Church, always anxious to respect secular authority so far as is absolutely possible, need have no *a-priori* quarrels with Italian Fascism such as she has with Communism, National Socialism or Action Française—so long, at least, as it lives up to Dr. Hoffman's ideas of it.

GOD AND CÆSAR. The fact that Mr. J. V. Langmead Casserley swells the more or less sincere chorus of lament over the alleged Papo-Cæsarism of contemporary "Roman Catholic policy" does not detract from the value of many of his observations in the second part of his brilliant essay on *Evangelism and History* in CHRISTENDOM (Dec.). Such quotations as the following may stand by themselves independently of the wider context of his argument:

As our civilisation becomes increasingly complex and urbanised its biological vitality is sapped away. Men become more and more disinclined to attempt dangerous social adventures, and they appeal to Caesars to save them from such courses. With the rise of Caesarism in politics, according to Spengler, comes the "second religiousness," a kind of religious revival full of genuine piety but devoid of real vitality, prompted by insecurity and disillusion, guided by a sentimental idealising of the past analogous to an old man's anecdotage. Men flock back to religion in order to preserve the social fabric, out of conservatism and fear, and not because of any compelling beckoning vision. "The material of the second religiousness," says Spengler, "is simply that of the first, genuine, young religiousness—only otherwise experienced and expressed." It is youth seen through the wistful eyes of age. It is difficult to deny that here we have an accurate description of the period upon which we seem to be entering. . . .

The relevance of this to the problems of the evangelist is clear. Is it to a vigorous Christianity, or to the Christianity of the "second religiousness" that we would recall our fellow men? If we become propagators of the latter, if we proclaim that men must return intellectually and devotionally to the "ages of faith" (forgetting that the makers of the "ages of faith" were creators not mimics), if we make it our priestly task to baptise indiscriminately traditional secular values, if we make Caesar our friend at Caesar's price, if we turn our Church into a kind of social funkhole, bidding men come to God not for His sake but their own, then there are many indications that we shall soon achieve a striking success, but it will not be the kind of success which causes joy in Heaven . . .

All of us in these days realise the comparative superficiality of optimistic liberal doctrines, which are only accepted during those epochs in which too much security restricts experience and paralyses intellect. Let us take care, however, that our rejection of them is based on a genuine moral and spiritual advance, not a mere vulgar mental reaction. The sin of liberalism is to be found not in its axiology but in its sociology, not in its conception of the immense value or potential value of human individuality,

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but in its failure to perceive that a purely individualistic social order, which enfranchises the savage with the saint, is ultimately destructive of precisely those values which it is designed to conserve. Unless we are careful to preserve this truth we shall be betrayed into "the Catholicism of the Chromium Age," as one reviewer has wittily named it, the Caesarised Catholicism of the second religiousness, which confronts us in effect with a new Christ, a Christ who journeys to Calvary seated safely upon a gun-carriage, not to be crucified but to crucify, not to save life but to destroy. This is the lowest form which it is possible for our policy of alliances to take . . .

Before leaving this subject, let us be quite clear as to our reasons for rejecting such a policy. Some regard it as unwise because it may invite anti-religious reprisals in the event of the suppression of Caesarism by the forces of the political left. We have seen no particular reason, however, to suppose that the latter are likely to score any particularly widespread triumphs. Indeed, if Spengler is right, the Caesars in the long run should get the best of it. The alliance of Church and Caesar is not merely inexpedient but wrong. We should abandon it, not because we fear the Bolshevists, but because we fear God.

The article concludes with a good statement, in markedly "catastrophic" terms, of the Christian view of history and its implications for the Church's mission in the world:

Since the days of Augustine at least the Christian concept of history, which Christians have seldom troubled to conceive, has been of a dualistic character. History confronts us not only with the world, but also with the Gospel of Christ which seeks to transform the world, with the City of Man and the City of God. The former, we may say in our terminology, is undoubtedly subject to the birth-growth-maturity-decay-death cycle, as we have already seen, but from this subjection the gospel is free and the Church also insofar as it surrenders itself to the Spirit of the Gospel. In the Gospel of Christ we find the Elixir of Life, the Secret of Eternal Youth which the pagans sought, and seek, in vain. The Gospel is ingredient into history (it is, indeed, of the essence of the Gospel that it functions within history), but the Gospel is not of history, neither is it subject to history's laws . . .

A civilisation is never entirely destroyed. Always it leaves behind a remnant purified by suffering, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, the guide, philosopher and friend of younger peoples. Our final contention here is that the essential task of contemporary evangelism is the preparation of the remnant. This necessitates detachment. There are two dialectical processes at work in the world to-day, the dialectic of Grace and the normal

dialectic of history, the dialectic of life and the dialectic of death. Since the Church, regarded from one aspect, is a human organisation the latter forces are at work within it, seeking to subject it to their own laws, striving to make the Church share the life and death of the world. But the dialectic of Grace is also at work within the Church, for the Church is in origin divine. These two dialectical processes, though distinct, yet run parallel to each other. At each of the chief stages in the historic process there corresponds a proper shifting of emphasis in our presentation of the Gospel. In a waning world the dialectic of Grace produces an attitude of prophetic detachment in the mind of the truly surrendered evangelist. The first duty of a remnant is to survive the catastrophe.

We use the term "survival," of course, in no merely personal or physical sense. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." The process of survival begins upon Calvary. The remnant must be baptised with fire. The suggestion here is not that Christians should refuse to suffer (a futile endeavour in a distracted civilisation), but that they should insist on suffering in the right cause. Secular causes perish at Waterloo not Calvary. Hence they know no resurrection. It must be written by those that come after that the Church of the twentieth century, or possibly of the twenty-first, was martyred not because it allied itself with this or that historic tendency and shared its horrid fate, but because it kept faith with its Master and preached the whole Gospel in a world which had abandoned the Gospel.

It is strange that Mr. Langmead Casserley's uncompromising—if qualified—Barthianism runs alongside Mr. Amphlett Micklewright's cosy eulogies of F. D. Maurice's monistic and immanentist "Christian Platonist nominalism," and the suspicion is aroused that the CHRISTENDOM group are still far from clear about the inter-relation of Nature and Supernature which must be the foundation of any distinctive Christian sociology. Without priggishness the hope may be expressed that both writers will find the synthesis between the antinomies of Barth and Maurice—as well as the dialectic of God and Cæsar—in the "modern Roman thought" which both despise.

CONTEMPORANEA. BONAVENTURA (Winter): In *The Philosophy of Education* Fr. James, O.M.Cap., contributes a fine essay on the Thomist foundations of pedagogy.

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CATHOLIC SURVEY (Vol. II, no. 6) of the Catholic Council for International Relations includes an acute analysis by John Eppstein of the present "internal disarray" of the Communist Party.

CITE CHRETIENNE (Dec. 5): Special "Culture" Number.

CLERGY REVIEW (Dec.): *Geburt* by Josef Emonds: Bethlehem de-sentimentalized for persecuted Christians: the Crib as the threshold to the Cross: "escape into the soft candle-glimmer of the old-time Christmas no longer permissible to us." Useful studies of *Peter Wust* by K. Pflieger, and of *G. K. Chesterton* by J. Sellmair.

MONTH (Dec.): Fr. Keating's *Christianity and Class*, Fr. Murray's *England and Italy* and James Wallace's *How and Why Communism fails* ("Communism is doomed as soon as it succeeds") deserve special attention.

REVUE THOMISTE (Nov.-Dec.): Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., on *The Axis of the Spiritual Life* which is shown to be the theological Virtues, and not the Gifts. Marcel de Corte begins an original and suggestive *Ontologie de la Poésie*.

TWENTIETH CENTURY VERSE (Nov.-Dec.): Double Number in appreciation of Wyndham Lewis.

VIE INTELLECTUELLE (Nov. 25): Reports on Oxford and Edinburgh by P. M.-J. Congar, O.P. The metaphysics of the "moral personality" of societies and nations discussed by P. Delos, O.P., who rejects the sociological nominalism sometimes represented as "Thomistic."

VIE SPIRITUELLE (Dec.): *The Primacy of Love in the Teaching of St. Thomas* by P. Simonin, O.P., is recommended to those who glibly talk of the "cold intellectualism" of Thomism. P. Gardeil's magnificent *Le Sens du Christ* concluded. P. Régamey, O.P., writes originally on the place of irony and sarcasm in the Christian life. P. Renaudin tells of the life and work of Dom Baker, and G. C. defends and praises the *Spiritual Letters* of Abbot Chapman.

PENGUIN.