

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

TRACTS FOR CATHOLIC ACTION. Our Bishops' Whitsuntide call for the organization of Catholic Action in this country makes opportune the recommendation of the **CAHIERS D'ACTION RELIGIEUSE ET SOCIALE** of the French *Action Populaire* (published by Editions Spes, 17, rue de Soufflot, Paris, Ve.; subscription in England 26 frs.). Each issue of these *Cahiers*, which appear twice every month, consists of a number of detached leaflets dealing briefly and clearly with every subject of interest and importance to the apostle of Catholic Action, ranging from doctrinal leaflets on such subjects as *What does God think about?* and *The Unemployed Christ* to such practical matters as *Eugenics and Morality* and *The Art of making use of the Railways*. Spiritual meditations, documentation on contemporary movements, organizations and events are also included. A set of these *Cahiers*, which began publication last November and which still continue to appear, will afford an invaluable source of information and advice to the Catholic living in the modern world. Those tracts which deal specifically with the theory and practice of Catholic Action will be found particularly helpful. We append a few extracts:

From *L'Action catholique : Les adaptations nécessaires* (Nov. 15, 1933).

Ten or fifteen years ago a priest had only two kinds of work : his parochial ministry properly so-called (the administration of the Sacraments, preaching, visiting, etc.) and the management of 'good works' such as confraternities, clubs, institutions, etc. But now his work is threefold : Catholic *Action* has been added. Catholic Action is not just one 'good work' alongside of others ; it has a purpose, organization and methods all its own. It is, in the words of Pius XI, 'the sharing by the laity of the apostolate of the hierarchy.' It is not therefore a pious confraternity, nor a defensive organization, nor an educational association. It is essentially **missionary** activity carried on by the laity who are organized in their various environments with a **view** to leading back to Christ those circles which are threatened on all sides to be submerged by paganism.

This distinctive nature of Catholic Action is further explained in *La Formation des Militants* (Jan. 1, 1934):

It is a difficult task that Catholic Action imposes on us. Sometimes people shirk the Pope's call to Catholic Action on

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the pretext of continuing the work of the **old** Catholic organizations. They say : ' Catholic Action ! I have been doing that for years.' It is possible, but make quite sure. *An organisation in which the priest is everything can never be integrated into Catholic Action*, which is by definition the collaboration of the *laity* in the apostolate of the hierarchy The priest indeed directs their activities and by his directions he *animates* them ; but the layman also directs it by organizing it in spheres which to the priest are not accessible. (cf. Acts. vi. 3-4.)

Hence, as is emphasized in *S'adapter comme le Christ, aux âmes paganisées* (Dec. 15th, 1933):

One of the first requirements of the religious and social apostolate which **is** organized in Catholic Action, in which every Catholic has the duty of participating, is the Christ-like adaptation of ourselves to paganized **souls**.

The Catholic Actionist must therefore **be intensely realist**. This is stressed in the tract *Pour une conquête efficace: Accepter les faits tels qu'ils sont*.

The great power of the Apostles **and** the early Christians lay in the fact that, finding themselves in a pagan world, they accepted facts as they found them—accepted them, not to leave them as they found them, but in order to start from *realities*.

Instead of which we refuse to see the world as it really is.

We complain : *Oh, if only things were what they were in olden days !*

In olden days ! Don't let us waste time inquiring whether the olden days were so wonderful as **we** make out. They are over and done with : that is enough. While the *world of to-day EXISTS*.

The Church has no business — no time — to bother about what **is** dead or dying. We are engaged in a game which is being played between those who—consciously or unconsciously—are playing against God and those who are playing for Him.

We are playing God's game

He is Master of the game. It *is He* who deals the cards. *He* has chosen the cards we have to play with.

Why, then, do we grumble **and sulk** about them?

The aim of Catholic Action is stated in *Pour une conquête efficace: Présenter un Christ vivant* (Jan. 15th, 1934.)

The fact that our people are no longer **able** to find Christ is largely our fault ; the fault of **us** priests **and** our Catholic élite.

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For our people still dream of a Living Christ, and all they can find among us is a Christ who seems to them to be dead. We must look at ourselves and our religion from the point of view of these people; we must bring them a Christ they can recognize and understand.

BOLSHEVISM AND CALVINISM. The first number of **THE EUROPEAN QUARTERLY** (Stanley Nott, Ltd., 1/-) is full of promise. This new review

will attempt to establish a sympathetic contact between the intellectual life of this country and that of the Continent by the publication of contemporary work drawn from the various literatures. It will also try to supply material from the work of great writers and thinkers of an earlier generation who are still comparatively unknown in this country. Explanatory and critical articles will deal with contemporary European movements in literature and the arts. Believing that the realm of literature, art and thought should transcend all national and political boundaries, *The European Quarterly* will try to foster the growth of the European spirit in every sphere of human activity.

Mr. Edwin Muir contributes a useful article on *Bolshevism* and Calvinism showing the former to be the modern counterpart of the latter. Both are 'deterministic, simple, practical, rational, anti-traditional, anti-romantic, functional, exclusive.' Both are the expression of a revolutionary idea set with inexorable logic in direct opposition to the European tradition.

The fact that the logic of Calvinism and Communism are so alike is not a matter of curious interest; for it is the logic of a conquering class, a class conscious that all the forces of society, the declining forces no less than the growing ones, are working for it, and that nothing can retard or divert their final consummation. It is thus a concrete factor of considerable importance.

Mr. Muir works out the parallel with great ingenuity and concludes:

The whole Marxian argument is directed to proving that Communism is the inevitable next stage of historical evolution, and it amounts in reality to an overpowering suggestion. That fact, along with the obvious economic collapse of Capitalism, is what gives it such power, in spite of the relatively trifling

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number of active Communists. It affects the ways of thought even of its opponents, and that is the technique of victory. Accordingly any real criticism of Communism should concentrate on its technique, which is in danger of becoming the technique of everyone, including the man in the street. The number of people who believe that the reason and will can take an active part in the improvement of society is becoming rapidly smaller; and despite the intellectual virtues of Communism, and its moral passion, it is vitally important that the tradition represented by such people, which is in the last resort the European tradition, should be maintained and if possible strengthened.

A similar note is struck in the extract, in the same number, from the works of the Russian critic M. O. Gershenzon *On Human Values*. Although supposing a false antithesis between the Personal and the Social and advocating an unacceptable primitivism, he rightly argues that 'the starting point to which everything must return is personality: in it is contained all the fullness so far needed by man.' Although *The European Review* seems to be too occupied with the periphery of European thought and culture to pay much attention to its Catholic nucleus with its contemporary representatives, it indicates a tendency which is very welcome.

THE AMERICAN REVIEW celebrates its first birthday in the April number. An editorial retrospect restates its position:

The magazine was founded as an experiment in securing co-operation between a number of groups and individuals none of whom has had a regular organ of expression before, and all of whom represent a single general direction in contemporary thought. The prospective contributors were described in our first issue as being 'radically critical of conditions in the modern world, but launching their criticism from a 'traditionalist' basis.

This 'Right-Wing Miscellany,' as their editor calls them, includes thinkers so diverse as Fr. Vincent McNabb and the disciples of Professor Irving Babbitt, an interesting memoir of whom appears in this anniversary number. Other contributions include a singularly discriminating critique of Spengler's *The Hour for Decision* and a powerful attack on mechanisation by the English Distributist, Mr. H. Robbins. He criticises British Fascism, with its

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creed that 'future organization is a matter for technicians,' as 'even more definitely mechanistic than its (Italian and German) predecessors.'

CATHOLIC ACTION IN SPAIN. An elaborate campaign 'Pro Ecclesia et Patria' is in progress in Spain, thanks to the initiative of the *Junta central de Acción católica*. Its object is by 'a pacific and documented campaign of religious culture and national history' to 'shake up the memory of Spain and make her realize that she cannot efface the work of the Church without denying her whole history.' The organizers decline direct attack on laicisation: their aim is to show positively to the masses what they owe historically to the work and influence of the Church in the secular sphere. In every town of any importance throughout the whole country eminent scholars have been enlisted to lecture to the inhabitants on their local history showing thereby their debt to the Church and to local churchmen. The full programme for each locality, together with the manifesto of the Junta central, is reproduced in *EL DEBATE* of April 29th.

SINGULAR VESSELS OF DEVOTION. Our excruciating 'translations' of Latin prayers are the subject of a serio-comic story by Mr. Michael Burt about *Smith* Minor and the *Liturgy* in *THE IRISH ROSARY* (May). Some specimens are given: 'Thou, **O God**, being turned wilt quicken us' for 'Deus tu conversus vivificabis nos'; and 'For thou, **O Lord**, in hope has singularly constituted me' for 'Quoniam tu Domine singulariter in spe constituisti me.' There are many more—even more meaningless. The writer says:

I am not so much concerned with the question of definitely wrong translations as with the menace of those which are so literally, pedantically correct that they destroy, or at least seriously obscure, any vestige of sense or meaning in the sentences which they pretend to interpret. Surely the whole object of a translation is to render the sense of a Latin sentence in intelligible English, yet it cannot be denied that the 'English' columns of our hi-lingual missals and devotional manuals abound in sentences which are definitely *not English* Word by word these 'translations' may be correct, but in a large number of cases they are both grammatically and syntactically unintelligible To my mind it is not putting it too strongly to assert that many of the 'translations'

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served up nowadays are an insult to the intelligence of the laity, and one cannot help wondering occasionally how some of these publications get their *Imprimatur*.

MISCELLANEOUS PROBLEMS. Some acutely felt problems, occasions of many difficulties and doubts, have been dealt with recently by our contemporaries. The very practical difficulties of *prayer* are treated of, with unusual brevity and soundness, in a reprint of Abbot Chapman's article on *Contemplative Prayer: a few simple rules* in the May number of the Prinknash Benedictines' PAX (6d. from Prinknash Priory, Glos.).—The problem of *evil* and its specifically Christian solution is the subject of a long article of great importance by Dr. Theodor Haecker in HOCHLAND (May, RM. 1.60, from Kosel u. Pustet, Munich). It will be found particularly helpful by those who find the fact of animal suffering a source of special difficulty. A translation of part of this article appears in the current CRITERION.—The problem of reconciling the fact that Faith is a gift of God which cannot be lost without sin, with experience of cases of 'leakage' for which nobody seems to be blameworthy is widely felt. It is faced boldly and soberly by Fr. C. C. Martindale in the May MONTH.—In *Liberalismo y Libertad* Señor E. Aguado in ACCIÓN ESPAÑOLA disposes of false current conceptions of *freedom* and contrasts them with the tenets of Christian philosophy and those of the authoritarian State.—The April number of ESPRIT constitutes an exhaustive treatise on the Christian, as compared with the Capitalist and Socialist, conception of *private property*. A series of articles by experts approach the subject from every angle, and indicate its manifold applications in modern conditions.

PENGUIN.