

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

THE PRESS AND THE PAPACY. Even those who are so prone to deplore the disregard of ecclesiastical news by the secular press can hardly have been less than astounded at the prominence given by the national dailies to the death and funeral of Pope Pius XI, and at their long and sympathetic accounts of his life and work. The phenomenon cannot be explained solely by the fact that, in the last years of the pontificate, the policy of the late Holy Father in regard to Nazism, Totalitarianism, and Racism had accorded more than hitherto with popular British sentiment. Still less is it explicable in terms of any real appreciation or interest in the immensity of his achievement for the Catholic Church. Too much importance must not be attached to the use by the secular press of such terms as 'Successor of Peter,' or 'Vicar of Christ,' which may be presumed to be marks of courtesy rather than indications of any definite belief in their validity, but the fact that they can be used at all and without quotation marks is remarkable. It is the more remarkable when we remember the widespread unpopularity of the late Pope in this country at the time of the Abyssinian war. Yet it does not seem too much to say that the vigorous pontificate of Pius XI has achieved something approaching a *de facto* recognition, however vague, by the British public of the Papal claims to primacy and leadership in Christendom. However far the elusive 'average' Englishman may still be from *de jure* recognition and acceptance, the Papacy has now come to be implicitly recognised as in fact the norm of Christian teaching and the bulwark of Christian tradition, a veritable centre of Christian unity amidst the rising secularisms; in deed, if not in right, the Rock of the Church. It is a very big step, the significance of which will not be lost on those who long for Christian unity. If the belief be true that we are witnessing the twilight of European civilisation, the pontificate of Pius XI may well prove to have regained for the Papacy a prestige

which will enable it to play a role in the new Dark Ages analogous to that which it played in the old.

INTERDENOMINATIONAL DISCUSSION. Professor Otto Urbach's article, 'Zum Gespräch zwischen den Konfessionen,' in the February *Hochland* is an important contribution to the cause of Christian reunion. His main preoccupation is naturally with the mutual understanding of the two great German 'Confessions,' the Catholic and the Evangelical, and some of his observations have little or no application in England. Loyalty to the teachings of the original Reformers, for instance, is for English non-Catholics too negligible to be either a powerful hindrance or (as Möhler made it) a powerful instrument to the reunion of non-Catholic Christians in the One Church. But it is as true of England as of Germany that now, no less than at the Reformation, the crucial issue between Catholicism and Protestantism (using that equivocal term to cover all forms of dissident Western Christianity) turns on the doctrine of Grace and Nature. If, under this head, 'Protestantism' offered any compact and consistent body of doctrine in direct contradiction to Catholic teaching, the prospect of any ultimate reunion, or even of any profitable mutual discussion, would be hopeless. But in fact, the writer argues, this is very far from being the case. The irreconcilable contradictions now lie not between Catholicism and 'Protestantism,' but within 'Protestantism' itself. Lutheranism, while professing the utmost fidelity to Luther, almost from the first was compelled to repudiate his fundamental dogmas *in practice*, and to revert *in practice* to the Catholic doctrine he so vehemently repudiated that grace perfects nature and is not a mere extrinsic imputation. The success of Möhler's 'Symbolik' was due to the fact that it revealed objectively the authentic doctrine of Luther and Calvin, enabling readers to contrast that doctrine with that of contemporary 'Lutheran' and 'Calvinist' pastors, and showing by implication that the latter differed little from that which Trent formulated *against* the original Reformers. Since then there has developed within 'Protestantism,' first the rationalising Modernism which so telescopes grace into nature as effectively to deny

the latter, then the Barthian resuscitation of the original doctrine of the Reformers which in effect repudiates nature. Present-day non-Catholic Christianity, therefore, so far from presenting any united front against Catholic doctrine on the very point which caused the breach, is torn between two radically contradictory tendencies, to which Catholic doctrine offers a *via media* which is also a synthesis of each. Catholicism, in fact, lies nearer to each of these tendencies than either does to the other. The Catholic synthesis, with its affirmation of grace *and* nature, can alone unify the contradictions within 'Protestantism' itself. The *objective* factors which brought about the break-up of Western Christendom in the sixteenth century are no longer operative, and *objectively* the time is ripe for a profitable comparison of the doctrines of Catholicism and 'Protestantism.' But Professor Urbach has no illusions regarding the immensity of the subjective, the 'all-too-human,' obstacles in the way of fruitful discussion between the 'Confessions,' and he enumerates them with freedom and frankness. It is now less objective beliefs than purely human and indeed un-Christian failings, faults, pride and loyalty, that still keep us apart. Reunion, he infers, is now a matter of nothing so much as a radical *moral* purification on both sides, a purification which is being fostered by the persecution and humiliation of Christian people:

It is not that which is Divine and True, it is that which is 'all-too-human,' that sunders us: it is human modes of speech; it is sin that is the divider. That sin must, on both sides, be ruthlessly recognised, confessed with heroic humility, confessed with sincere repentance; satisfaction must be done for it by a new and confident obedience to God.

Every testing of the Church has its blessing in this, that it compels the purely 'human' elements in the Church to recognise the justice of the chastisements which God permits her to undergo, and compels them to utilise to the full the forces of Faith and Love in renewed obedience. Hence it is likely that reunion in one faith, and in one visible Church, will come about not in Christianity's days of prosperity, but in the dark hours of its deepest external anguish. Only under the shadow of the Cross will Catholics and Protestants fully understand and pardon one another, and come together as brothers in one free

communion of prayer and faith, a faith which is active in love. So should we be even grateful to God for every onslaught, which He permits, of the enemies of Jesus Christ on the visible Church, knowing that every such onslaught brings Christendom nearer to its desired unity. Every such onslaught is a contribution to the overthrow of purely human dominion in the Church and to the coming of the triumph of the dominion of God. *Sub Cruce* may the hope of Frederick Lynch be fulfilled: 'Perhaps one day the Church will suddenly be seized by an impassioned, ardent enthusiasm for Christ and His Kingship, and will as suddenly discover that she is one, after she has long sought in vain to *make herself* one.'

**THE LANGUAGE BARRIER.** Sin, in the strict sense of personal fault, is not the only 'all-too-human' obstacle to mutual understanding between the 'Confessions.' Professor Urbach understands well the immensity of the obstacle presented by the language barrier which separates those brought up respectively in the Catholic and the Evangelical traditions. Having shown that the beliefs of many 'Protestants' to-day on the subject of grace and nature are far nearer to Catholic teaching than they imagine, he continues:

It follows that discussion and comparison of beliefs between the 'Confessions' can only be undertaken profitably if Catholic teaching on Nature and Supernature, on History and Revelation, Freewill and Grace, Reason and Faith, be systematically expounded. It will be said that this has been done often enough. That is true. But a guide-book to Japan in Japanese is no use to an owner who does not know the language. What we lack is an exposition of Catholic teaching which a Protestant can compare with his own beliefs. It should be understood quite clearly that the very *language* of a Protestant with regard to religious, theological and philosophical matters is quite different from that of a Catholic. The language of an educated Catholic is based on that of the Roman Liturgy, on that of the standard 'lives' of the saints and spiritual writings, on that of Aristotelian-Thomist philosophy; and many of his expressions (e.g. 'works,' 'merits,' etc.) have an arrogant sound to the faithful Protestant. The language of an educated Protestant, at least until some twenty years ago, was based on Luther's Bible, on his popular hymns, on Luther's Catechism, on the phraseology of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy;

and many of his expressions (e.g. 'through faith alone') have a foreign and suspicious ring to Catholics. It often comes about that Catholics and Protestants say the same thing and mean something quite different or that they say something different and mean the same. This difference of language often makes discussion between Catholics and Protestants over matters of belief practically impossible. We have only to remember that Catholics and Protestants alike are, with few exceptions, acquainted only with the literature of their own co-religionists to see how it has come about that each 'Confession' has become a closed language-area impenetrable to the other—for few Catholics can be really acquainted with Luther's Bible, or few Protestants with the Roman Missal. It must also be remembered that language is not only a means of expression for the mind, it is also a powerful formative influence on the mind itself. Where shall we find Catholic Fundamental Theology *translated* into 'Protestantisch'? Yet there can be no doubt that such a translation would have astonishing results: many Protestants, including many Protestant divines, would discover that many conceptions which they have believed to be revolutionary discoveries of the Reformation are in fact thoroughly Catholic, and that many doctrines which they have believed to be Roman and medieval are in fact the pure doctrine of the Reformers. An effort to express basic Catholic teaching in a language familiar and intelligible to Protestants would have a decisive effect in contributing to a better understanding of Catholicism on the Evangelical side. The conviction in the increasingly imperative necessity for a collaboration of all Christian 'Confessions' can only come to realisation if Evangelical Christians can once and for all view Catholicism and Catholic teaching as it really is.

For 'Luther's Bible' read the 'Authorised Version,' for 'Luther's Catechism' read 'The Book of Common Prayer,' and the relevance of this to our own case should be evident. It is perhaps more a matter for regret than for self-congratulation that we lack the external pressure which is forcing German Catholics to face so bravely and immediately the task of repairing the damage inflicted on Western Christendom in the sixteenth century and to discover in common suffering just how little and how much there is that still really separates their non-Catholic fellow-sufferers from them,

OUR QUARTERLIES. 'Laicus Ignotus' writes in *The Church Times*:

Let a journalist pay tribute to good journalism. The Roman Catholic monthlies and quarterlies published in this country are excellent. In the selection of articles, the general excellence of the writing and the wide Christian understanding of most of the writers no Church of England publication of the same order compares with *Blackfriars* or *The Dublin Review*, and *Colosseum*, the quarterly produced by a group of young Roman Catholics, has attractive qualities that are all its own. To me the January *Dublin* is incomparably better reading than the *Contemporary* or the *Nineteenth Century*. Every article is informative and provocative.

The tribute to the current *Dublin* is gratifying and well-deserved. The articles display a competence on the various subjects discussed which is by no means always reached in the 'secular' reviews, and each contributor shows a real sense of what the function of a quarterly should be. Not the least achievement of the present comprehensive policy of the *Dublin* is the remarkable unity of outlook displayed by its very heterogeneous contributors. The editors show a laudable determination that the leading English Catholic quarterly shall not become the organ of any one 'school' of English Catholic thought, and in the current number writers rub shoulders whose more 'popular' products might dub them as irreconcilable 'Rightists' or 'Leftists.' Yet on the level of objective research and dispassionate reasoning which they attain in the *Dublin*, there is little or no sense of any fundamental disharmony—rather of the quite remarkable agreement which really underlies partisan propaganda. This is as it should be, and the *Dublin* would be valuable if only as a vehicle for such dispassionate and supra-partisan work. But when all has been said of the very real excellence of the articles in the current *Dublin* in their own sphere, it must be recognised that that sphere is a limited one. Every article is in fact an article of information on historical or topical fact, accompanied in greater or lesser degree with critical comment. The importance of such work is not to be belittled, but we cannot conceive it to be the whole function of a Catholic

quarterly. Only in one or two book reviews is there any attempt to deal with theory—theological, philosophical or of any other kind—and then sometimes with only a pathetic dilettantism which is little credit to the competence of English Catholic thinkers in realms approaching those of ‘pure thought.’ It is perhaps only to be expected that Anglo-Saxon Catholics should find themselves more at home in dealing with hard fact than with hard thinking, and in this the *Dublin* only reflects our national strength and weakness. But the weakness remains, and the need for remedy is evident.—*Colosseum* takes its reviewing more seriously, and the reviews in the current number reach a generally higher standard of critical acumen and are often really illuminating. The importation into the same number of Paul Valéry’s odd effort to extricate himself from a bog of nominalist scepticism into an affirmation of human freedom likewise shows a realisation of the importance of ‘pure thought,’ and doubtless his mental contortions may have some value as an *argumentum ad hominem* to such readers as may find themselves in a similar bog. Bernard Wall conveys the history and ethos of German racism in a useful article; James Oliver flogs the religion-substitute forms of Liberal Humanitarianism; and there is a very good note on Max Jacob.—Had ‘Laicus Ignotus’ forgotten *Christendom* in his depreciation of Church of England periodicals? The current (December) number is particularly noteworthy for W. R. Jarrett-Kerr’s ‘Art and Society,’ and for the concluding instalment of D. M. Mackinnon’s study of logical positivism, which, he shows, ‘offers a challenge to Catholic thought as fundamental as Marxism, and a challenge which in the practical sphere issues every bit as much as the Communist doctrine in the obscuration of the dignity of man.’ Recent books by Catholic writers—Martin Turnell, Georges Bernanos, Gerald Vann, Hewin de Lubac—are the subjects of some very interesting reviews.

PENGUIN.