

## OBITER

MOUNIER AND SANGNIER. The recent deaths of Emmanuel Mounier and Marc Sangnier have served to remind French Catholics how much they owe to two men of integrity, whose very mistakes were generous ones. That the Christian Democrat movement has avoided the pitfalls of *Le Sillon* has been to no small extent due to Sangnier's recognition of the danger of identifying a Christian view of society with specific political claims. (*Action Française*, at the other extreme, had to be reminded of the same danger, and the lesson has been largely learnt in France by this.) Mounier's influence was even more profound, since his personalist philosophy touched intellectual life at every level. Père Daniélou has, in a recent number of *Etudes*, paid tribute to his achievement.

Mounier's whole life and work were a passionate struggle in the name of the spiritual life and of the rights of the human person against every sort of injustice and oppression. He called one of his early articles 'A break with the established disorder'. He always remained faithful to that programme. He always denounced with vigour—to the frequent annoyance of some—the compromises of the Christian world. For him Christianity was a force which should keep the temporal order in a state of crisis and prevent it from ossification. His articles were a constant examination of institutions in the light of the life of the spirit. It may be said that any political realism inevitably has dirty hands. The greatness of Mounier was that, in a world which is all too ready to excuse injustice on the grounds of expediency, he represented a calm and lucid, though wholly inflexible, refusal to be intimidated by force.

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LANDMARKS IN THE HISTORY OF PREACHING is the title of the Donellan Lectures, delivered in Trinity College, Dublin in 1949 by Yngve Brilioth and now published (S.P.C.K., 2s. 6d.). The Swedish bishop, writing within the European Protestant tradition, gives nevertheless a valuable summary of patristic and medieval methods of preaching, and he is right to insist on the necessary reconciliation of the liturgical and prophetic offices of the preacher. Bishop Brilioth realises the special difficulties of the preacher

nowadays: his message 'has to be grasped in its purity, and apprehended anew in each generation, not revised but rediscovered, re-thought'. He sees in the 'sharing of experiences between the churches' a new and urgent 'ecumenical task'. It must be agreed that a real obstacle to Christian unity is the conventionalised language of exposition, inherited within a particular tradition and unfitted to illuminate those outside it. A dictionary of theological terms, as accepted by the various denominations, would for instance be of value for Catholics who, confronted with such a term as 'grace' at once give it theological connotations unintended by its Protestant users. In this connection the new edition of Donald Attwater's *Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary* (Cassell, 42s.) may be commended as an eirenical work of the first importance. It has every merit such a book should possess, and it is to be hoped that non-Catholic editors will have it on their desks as an essential work of reference.

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CONFIRMATION. The latest Liturgical Album in the *Fêtes et Saisons* series (obtainable from BLACKFRIARS, 1s.) deals with the Sacrament of Confirmation, and, as usual, excellent photographs illustrate an original text. The Sacrament of adult Christian life has a special importance in our own day, with its renewed understanding of the responsibilities of the lay apostolate. But insistence on a Catholic action that may in reality be but a series of Catholic activities can minimise the radical work of sanctification which Confirmation is intended to secure for all the baptised. It is a matter for thankfulness that the specialised agencies of Catholic Action are increasingly conscious of the essential rôle of contemplation (in the deepest sense) for their apostolate, and such spectacular demonstrations as the recent congress of the *Jeunesse Agricole Catholique*, which brought fifty thousand young French farmworkers to Paris, might be little more than stunts were they not based on a prolonged and serious spiritual formation.

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THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY is for Christians a religious one. The platitude is more profound than it seems, since the impact of political and economic planning can, by its urgency, deflect the attention even of those whose concern must first of all be a spiritual understanding of the function of men in society. *La Vie Intellectuelle* (May) largely devoted to this matter, has a notable

article on 'The Love of Enemies' by Friedrich Heer, which concludes:

The witness of Stephen, the first martyr, who forgave his enemies as he lay dying, saw the first breach in the closed world of a man who was destined to open the doors of the Christian community to the universal Church and to a universal history. Saul became Paul. If we could understand that Pauline situation at that moment of history, perhaps, God willing, we might see a great door opening once more—opening on to a renewed humanity, to a renewed Christendom, to the Church.

Criticism of British insularity, and of our failure to identify ourselves with the destinies of Europe, is now being voiced very fully in almost all Continental countries. Once more our brethren beyond the Channel, mystified by our diplomatic and financial policies, are beginning to mutter the words, 'perfidious Albion'. A balanced summary of the reasons for this distrust comes from the pen of Karl Heinz Abshagen writing in the *Frankfurter Hefte* (March 1950). His slightly academic treatment of the matter receives very trenchant confirmation in a note on a later page—'Last December an order for about 100,000 tons of railway lines for China, which had been given to firms in the Ruhr, was cancelled. It is now known that the order has since been entrusted for the most part to British firms. What a coincidence!'

Our insularity in spiritual matters has displayed itself recently in the many pronouncements on Reunion which have been made in the least likely places, few of which seem to have taken account of the striking developments within the Oecumenical movement. If discussions on the lines of *Una Sancta* are to take place in this country it is earnestly to be hoped that theologians from all quarters will acquaint themselves with Continental discussions. The surest way of doing this is by regularly reading *Herder-Korrespondenz*, which misses nothing of importance in Oecumenical affairs. And profit, as well as edification, is also to be found in the debate between Hans Asmussen (the 'catholic' conscience of German Lutheranism) and Karl Rahner, published in *Wort und Wahrheit* for March. One of the wisest of Fr Rahner's many wise remarks is to the effect that material agreement on individual theological issues should not raise our hopes too much, because on each of these issues the Lutheran's formal principle of faith differs from that of the Catholic—on one side, conscience

guided by the Scriptures and the Holy Ghost, on the other side, the teaching of the Church.

As one might reasonably have anticipated, the shattering events of the last half-century have prompted the encyclopaedic Germans to a wholesale reconsideration of the meaning of history. A most impressive team of historians has begun to co-operate on a vast survey of historical research which is to include volumes on the West, Asia Minor, Greek-Rome, Byzantium, Colonial Experiments, etc. The series, entitled *saeculum*, is published by Verlag Karl Alber, Freiburg-Munich, and each number is to cost seven D.M. A reading of the first number suggests that history departments will find the volumes worthwhile additions to their libraries.

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Professor Butterfield, in a paper on 'The Tragic Element in Modern International Conflict' (*Review of Politics*, April), applies his customary clarity (and how welcome in an academic historian is his unabashed insistence on those spiritual values without which history is meaningless) to a related theme.

While we are at war, and the conflict is a matter of life or death for us, we may hardly have any part of our minds free for devoting to a general survey of the whole predicament in which the human race is standing. When the war is over, however, a time of healing ought to come, and it is our duty to carry all our problems to further analysis. Politicians, in the hurry of affairs, and in the stress of conflict, may hardly have an opportunity to cover the problem in an all-embracing survey, for we must regard them as generally acting under great pressures. We in universities, however—and especially those of us who study history—have a duty to think in longer terms and seize upon the problem precisely where the difficulties are most challenging. We ought to be straining our minds to think of new things and to enlarge the bounds of understanding; for though our enlarged understanding of the problem will not necessarily prevent war, it may remove some of the un wisdom which has made victory itself so much more disappointing in its results than it otherwise might have been.

CLAVILENO is a new review issued by the *Asociacion Internacional de Hispanismo*. The first number includes an article on Calderon and the Holy Year of 1650, as well as admirably illustrated studies of El Greco's pictorial treatment of our Lady and of the little-known Spanish primitives in the Prado collection.     ALDATE.