

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

WORK AND HOLINESS. The saying, "*Laborare est orare*"—"Work is prayer"—which seems to have been a truism to our fathers has become a paradox, if not a blasphemy, to ourselves. The conditions of labour created by many forms of industrialism and its concomitants, whether in factories or in offices, have made the compatibility of Christian living with modern "jobs" increasingly problematic. The few who have reflected on the gravity of the problem have often debated the matter, but discussion has suffered, if not from the infiltration of false ideas regarding work and leisure, at least from lack of a clear grasp of the Christian philosophy of work. With characteristic awareness of the fact that this, perhaps more than any other factor, constitutes the most serious obstacle in our time to the sanctification and salvation of souls, the editors of *LA VIE SPIRITUELLE* devote their September number to a series of outstanding articles on the subject by a team of first-rate writers and thinkers. Etienne Borne outlines the principles of solution in a closely thought-out essay on *Work and Holiness*. He criticizes various current errors regarding work, and, in common with other contributors, emphasizes that work is, or should be, a specifically human thing consequent upon the very nature of man. It is not a "curse" imposed as the outcome of sin: Adam was charged to labour before the Fall (Gen. ii, 15), though his sin rendered conditions of work painful for himself and his posterity. As against preconceptions of Jansenist origin the writer insists on the traditional Christian teaching that work and sanctity are not of their nature incompatible, but, on the contrary, mutually complementary. Christian teaching is equally opposed to any view that, in theory or in practice, would reduce man to the level of being a mere "worker," and would make man exist for work and not work for man. The theoretical problem is also studied, though from a somewhat different standpoint, in E. Masure's *The Theology of Work*. Following their usual practice of exemplifying principles by concrete example of *maîtres et modèles*, the editors present several excellent articles on concrete examples of the Christian harmonization of work and

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holiness. Père Allo, the distinguished Biblical scholar, contributes a study of Saint Paul as tent-maker and wage-earner; Y. Pirat records the life and work of Pauline Jaricot, "*l'amie de l'ouvrier*"; P. Glorieux writes on *The Jocist Movement and the Christian Mysticism of Work*; and H.-B. de Warren on *Manual Labour in the Monasteries throughout the Ages*.

CHRIST THE WORKER. But the outstanding contribution to the number is that of another eminent Scriptural scholar, Père F.-M. Braun, O.P., on *Jesus the Carpenter's Son*. Although the common reading of Mark iv, 3, is doubtful, Père Braun holds it to be certain that not only was Our Lord known as "the Carpenter's Son" (Matt. xiii, 55), but was Himself an artisan. He recalls the assertion of St. Justin Martyr that St. Joseph was a manufacturer of agricultural instruments—yokes and ploughs. Moreover,

There is no need to invoke Egyptian papyri to prove that a village carpenter might also possess an allotment of land for cultivation. The conjecture is quite natural: it would explain in a convincing way His subsequent teaching by the parables, whose realism, so different from the conventional imagery of the rabbis of the time, reveals a familiar and personal acquaintance with the things of which He speaks. If Jesus wielded, during a period of many years, the saw, the axe, the hammer, there is no reason to suppose that He did not also, on occasion at least, sow, reap, winnow, as did the majority of the youths and men among whom He lived.

But, Père Braun insists,

The humble condition which this manual labour indicates, is in no way comparable to that of our modern proletariat. . . . The occupation which Jesus pursued was not one of those which by burdening the body with fatigue or monotony, prevents the free play of the mind. . . . The manual labour to which Jesus devoted himself was therefore *human*. The type of worker whom we revere in the artisan of Nazareth is that which corresponds most closely to our ideal of life, to which mediæval conditions sought to approximate, and to which recent Papal encyclicals have sought to guide the manual labourer of to-day.

Acquaintance with the social and religious conditions in Palestine in the time of Our Lord, Père Braun goes on to show, reveals the immense significance of His having chosen to be born into the working-class, the *am-ha-arez*, as dis-

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tinct from that of the *haberim*, the leisured ruling class who were alone credited with knowledge of the Law and all that that implied.

As against this attitude, and in sharp contrast to that of the Pharisees whom the people feared and revered *from afar*, Jesus appeared to the crowd of the common people, of publicans and sinners, as *one of themselves*. This explains why we find them on such familiar terms with them, in a way that shocked the doctors of Jerusalem.

Living on the same footing with the common people, understanding their cares and their needs, understanding as they did what it meant to have to mend a garment or to lose a small coin or a sheep, He spoke their language and sought His terms of comparison in the affairs of their everyday work. . . Hence the character of utter simplicity that marks His preaching of the Gospel; hence it comes about that even when He is speaking of His Father in the heavens, He keeps his clear vision of earthly things, His contact with the earth and the fine balance of His peasant soul. That is why all men of good will are able to understand Him. The unlettered are not called upon to make efforts of abstract thinking. And the learned, those whom we now call "intellectuals," have only to become like the others in order to raise themselves to be able to hear Him speaking of the highest things of the spirit. . .

To us it appears quite natural to hear it said that perfection is offered in equal measure to all men of good will. In the time of Jesus it was not so. To correct this opinion, the first thing to be done was to smash the barriers which separated the "perfect" from the common people. The great novelty and the chief scandal which He produced was His break with their exclusivism, by presenting Himself to the people as one of themselves . . .

That Jesus, being free to become the equal of the upper classes and the learned, or else the companion of the poor and the friend of sinners, chose in point of fact the latter alternative, is in harmony with the whole trend of the Gospel. It was necessary if He were to reproduce His doctrine in practice and to fulfil His mission. It was also necessary as the only means of resolving the perennial and pathetic problem of human inequality, the problem of "Why us, and not others?" In becoming lowly among the lowly, Jesus has answered that question. . .

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.** The scanty notice taken in this country of the International Catholic Conference held in Dublin in early August has been in small proportion to its

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importance. Some impressions are recorded by one of the delegates, Fr. Gerald Vann, O.P., in the September number of the IRISH ROSARY. We make no apologies for reproducing in full the official report of the Conference, taken from the pages of THE IRISH TIMES:

The Conference adopted the following resolutions:

“That this assembly of the International Catholic Conference at Dublin, being determined to promote the reign of Christian peace, pledges itself to accept and to further the teaching and the directions of our most Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, more especially in what concerns the right order of society and the principles and practices of Christian education.

“That the Conference considers that the Union for Prayer for Peace founded by Father Gerald Vann, O.P., is a spiritual foundation for Catholic peace activities, and that everything possible should be done to make it better known and increase its members in various countries, with the necessary episcopal approval.”

The Conference next considered the summary of the conclusions reached at its various sessions, prepared by Father J. Delos, O.P., and adopted it in the following form:

“1. Confronted with attacks upon international morality and with exaggerated ideas concerning race and national self-sufficiency to the detriment of international co-operation, it is the duty of Catholics to affirm that the existence of an international community is no mere artificial phenomenon or just the result of a certain convergence of interests which States are free to recognise or to ignore. On the contrary, this community reproduces the two-fold character of human nature: unity amid diversity.

“In actual fact, while on one hand physical, racial and historical diversity involve the differentiation of the peoples as nations, on the other hand, the nations themselves are united by the solidarity created by their economic interdependence, and by the universality of the spiritual values—religious, moral, scientific, artistic.

“The international community has thus both a natural and a moral basis. The solidarity on which it rests gives rise to obligations of which neither individuals nor societies can deliberately divest themselves without incurring the condemnation of natural morality or compromising the true welfare of mankind.

“So soon as men and nations realise the bonds which unite them as a community, they reach the stage of a true society, to which it becomes necessary to give positive form. Such a posi-

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tive organisation gives concrete expression to the requirements of the common good of mankind. Its object must be to establish the reign of justice through the collaboration which that common good demands. The positive rules and the permanent organs of this international society are endowed with the authority and obligatory force which attaches to legitimate Governments.

"2. The existing Covenant of the League of Nations marks a historic attempt to give positive and juridical form to the essential solidarity of the nations, with the object of maintaining peace, providing peaceful means of composing disputes, offering collective resistance to aggression. The achievements, as well as the failure, of the League make evident the need for its reform.

"It may truly be said that the application of the moral principles which inspire the Covenant has been hampered by the inadequate preparation of the public conscience in matters international; for the conscience of the peoples is ill-informed concerning the duties which their solidarity imposes, and is very far from being ready to subordinate their national interests to the common good.

"But, in addition to the endeavours to strengthen the moral and psychological basis of the League, it is right to consider how to give effect to the Covenant as a whole, and also how far the Covenant itself can be improved. The reform of the Covenant should not involve any abandonment of the fundamental principles already recognised in the existing text, such as the aim of universality and of equality of rights. But other complementary principles, no less important, should be incorporated, particularly the adaptation of the obligations of each State member to its individual capacity and to its geographical situation.

3. Ideologies, which have become international forces because of the means of action which they employ and their wide diffusion, have resulted in the disturbance of the foundations of the international community, have accentuated the difficulty of collaboration between peoples, and constitute a new threat to peace. The most important of these ideologies are described as well by their adversaries as by their supporters, by the words Fascism and Communism, though the loose use of these terms and their application for the purpose of internal politics add to the confusion in men's minds.

"Faced with these ideologies, the Catholic International Conference, basing itself upon natural philosophy and the doctrine of the Catholic Church, insists upon placing in the forefront of all social and political organisations the service of human personality; for the human soul alone is an end in itself and is alone called to immortality.

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“What are most gravely endangered by the errors contained in contemporary ideologies are the rights of human personality. This Catholic International Conference finds in the respect and defence of these rights the key to a dispassionate and practical policy which, while leaving to everyone liberty of judgment in concrete cases, unites the wills of all in the service of the same principles of civilisation.

“The conference believes that the best way of counteracting the expansion of these errors is for Catholics to take the lead in striving to remedy the political, economic, and social evils from which society is suffering and taking their stand on the principles of Catholic doctrine, to show that the Catholic Church is the true champion of the happiness and peace of mankind.”

**THE BISHOPS AND THE WAR.** August dislocations prevented our taking earlier notice of the moving apologia and appeal for understanding issued by the majority of the Spanish bishops (the signatures of the Cardinal Archbishop of Tarragona and of the Bishops of Vitoria and Orihuela are absent) with regard to their much criticized attitude to the war and to the Franco regime. It is a document of the highest importance and one which commands grateful respect, not only by reason of the position of its authors as chief shepherds of the Spanish Church, but also because of the fact that, although written at a time and in a place where feeling runs high, where one-sided propaganda holds sway and impartial judgment is apt to be blinded, it preserves in the main an astonishing degree of dignity, sobriety and objectivity, and breathes a spirit of charity which is indeed amazing under the circumstances of the provocation that has called it forth. Even more remarkable than the Bishops' charity towards their enemies, and less to be expected, is their formal repudiation of views of the situation maintained by their would-be friends—views which we have been at some pains to combat during the past twelve months. This letter, though almost entirely ignored by the secular press, has already been quoted at length by our Catholic weeklies to an extent that renders a full record of its contents superfluous, and has subsequently been published as a pamphlet by the Catholic Truth Society. Here we would confine ourselves to drawing attention to a few points in the letter which are liable to be conveniently overlooked elsewhere. Their Lordships rebuke what they courageously call “the anti-Christian spirit which has seen

in the Spanish struggle a decisive struggle *for* or against the religion of Christ and Christian civilization," (p. 2, C.T.S. edition—italics ours). While they justify the insurrection as inevitable and necessary under the circumstances created by previous misgovernment and the threat of a Communist *coup d'état* (the allegations that the Government's impotence to maintain order before the war was due to sabotage on the part of Right elements is not dealt with), they deplore the fact of the war, and lay particular emphasis on the fact that it is *not* a Crusade (pp. 5-6). They insist that the Church "has not tied herself to anybody, either parties, persons or tendencies," (p. 24) and that "the Church has not been able to identify herself with conduct, tendencies or intentions which at the present time or in the future might be able to distort the character of the National Movement, its origins, manifestations, and ends" (p. 14). We are indeed gratified that these points, which we have consistently emphasized in these columns to the indignation of many, now receive such striking confirmation from a source from which, we may candidly and ashamedly confess, we had little expected it. The Bishops, moreover, though distressed at the pro-Republican sympathies of certain Catholics, Spanish and foreign, and at their criticism of their own attitude, have no word of reproach to those non-Spanish Catholics who, like ourselves, have felt no call to be embroiled in this hideous war; and we may be indeed thankful that we have been under no such compulsion to take sides as that whereby they justify their own support of General Franco's campaign against members of their own flocks. May this letter do much to clear the air and to gain for the Spanish clergy and laity represented by these Bishops that sympathy, understanding and prayer for which they so urgently plead. Their position, as they explain it in their letter, is a profoundly tragic and unenviable one that commands the most sympathetic respect, even in quarters where some of its contentions on points of fact may still fail to carry conviction.

THE LAND MOVEMENT. The same dislocation accounts for our failure to thank Mr. H. Robbins for his reassuring letter in our last number. We do not regret that we have not preserved the literature of his movement, whose consistency we have never maintained, with that care that would enable us to take up his various "challenges," since, in view of

the large measure of agreement in principle that exists between us, we have no taste for embarking on the futile bickering that must ensue. That some of our reflections on some features of the movement in England were not very wide of the mark is perhaps sufficiently evidenced by Mr. Robbins' letter itself: we refer to its re-endorsement of a criticism of BLACKFRIARS which appeared in the last number of his quarterly (wherein insinuations were made against the "sanctity and learning" in "the urbane and cloistered life of the Modern Blackfriars," as compared with those of the "Mediaeval Friars at Oxford," for no given reason other than that the former are modern and the latter mediaeval), and its slighting dismissal of social work within industry as "impermanent first-aid work." It should surely be plain as daylight that, as a CHRISTENDOM (Sept.) contributor puts it, "the vexed question of ownership in this century will have to be solved on other than a land basis for the large majority." We are sorry indeed that the Land Movement is misunderstood, not only because it distresses Mr. Robbins but because we happen to believe very strongly in its main aims and objects, and have repeatedly said so. But it is just this sort of thing—and there is plenty of it—that helps to discredit it.

CONTEMPORANEA. CATHOLIC WORKER (England). A strong September number includes an Open Letter to Railway shareholders, and a vigorous comment on the recent "recklessness" charge levelled at the Catholic press.

HOCHLAND (Sept.): *Ueber des Wesen des menschlichen Geistes* by Theodor Haecker.

IRELAND TO-DAY (July, Aug. and Sept.): Discussion on some fundamental social and economic matters by Eric Gill and Fr. Victor White, O.P.

MONTH (Sept.): *The Gap in the Christian Front* by Fr. Joseph Keating, S.J.: the lethargy of Christian industrialists.

RUSSIE ET CHRETIENITE: *La catholicité de l'Eglise* by M.-J. Congar, O.P.; *Jeunesse soviétique* by J. Danzas.

SEPT: *Adieux à nos lecteurs*: the end of a great enterprise, for which we pray a speedy resurrection.

PENGUIN.