

EXCERPTA

THE UNPOPULARITY OF LITURGY. Grace perfects nature. Conversely, deficiencies of the natural man hinder the workings of Grace. A false philosophy (materialism or pantheism for instance) excludes supernatural Faith; an evil moral environment or degrading social conditions are obstacles to the action of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The same is true of false aesthetic values. Asking *Why Liturgical Functions are not popular* in the American ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW (November), Mgr. McMahon finds a chief reason to be 'the lack of real education.' He continues 'That which passes for education in this country is largely technical instruction. The beauty and charm of culture have disappeared from among the masses. The most ordinary taxicab driver in a provincial town in Italy or France, the illiterate peasant in out-of-the way places in Continental Europe, will astonish the American tourist by his appreciative knowledge of Catholic architecture, art, music, pageantry. . . . To-day in this country the sublime epic of the Mass, unfolded in its proper setting . . . is enacted before dwindling congregations. And why? Because our Catholic people, our young people especially, have apparently no appreciation of beauty, art, appropriate music, language of the highest poetry, mysticism capable of elevating the soul to communion with the saints of Heaven Unable to distinguish tinsel from gold, what is tawdry from what is real, too dulled to appreciate nobility or language and to perceive the sublimity of truth contained in it, insensitive to what is exquisite because of the coarseness encountered in their daily lives, they cannot rise to the glory of the vision that built and filled our splendid temples in the past and that fills the humblest churches in the Catholic Tyrol' For this state of things the writer finds the clergy largely to blame—their defective instructions, their own disregard of liturgical law and feeling, the 'unquestioning acceptance in

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rectories of jazz, crooning and the like as presented by the artists of the radio.' We need not join in the Monsignor's wholesale condemnation of the 'popular art' of the day to realize the evil done to souls where it is *uncritically and indiscriminately accepted*. Scarcely less important than Catholic social and intellectual action is a cultural action of constructive criticism to combat the false scales of aesthetic values which, among Catholics and non-Catholics alike, prevent the full expression of Christian life and worship, and which disenable men to join heart and soul in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice.

THE CRISIS OF THE LEAGUE. Père Delos, O.P., the eminent professor in sociology in the University of Lille, has contributed to *LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE* (October 25th) an acute analysis of the real causes of *La crise de la Société des Nations*. He finds the League's present decline and threatened collapse to be due to the downfall, in many of the nations, of the Wilsonian liberal-democratic ideals which brought *the* League into being. A new conception of Europe and the nations which compose it, incompatible with the League as at present constituted, inspires many of the governments and peoples. 'They substitute a vital dynamism for liberal formalism; they are anti-democratic if we are to understand democracy in the nineteenth-century sense of the word.' Italy and Germany, in particular, are possessed of new ideals which make any patching-up of momentary dissatisfaction with League procedure impermanent and futile. Diametrically opposed programmes, springing from opposite points of view, are put forward for the reconstruction of Europe. 'That is the real point of the drama of which we are the witnesses. 'Conflict between France and Germany,' 'Conflict of Western democracies and Germanism,' these are but sub-titles. Two cultural principles dispute the glory of the creation of the New Europe. But do not they *both* present indispensable elements? Cannot an integrally human view of civilization succeed in reconciling them and making these disruptive

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forces co-operative? What is the real problem which the nations have to solve to-day.' It is, says Pere Delos, the task of Catholics to attempt to synthesise the 'democratic' and Fascist ideals which threaten to rend Europe with their contradictory schemes to reconstruct her.

CATHOLICS AND FASCISM. What is to be the Catholic's attitude to these Fascist ideals? The fact that Fascism stands for much that we stand for and opposes much that we oppose must not blind us to unacceptable tenets and tendencies. *ESPRIT*, which though not a specifically Catholic review, represents a strong body of Catholic opinion in France, promises a special number to be devoted to the consideration of 'Fascist pseudo-values.' Meanwhile attention may be called to the account by Dr. Giuseppe Tonelli in *HOCHLAND* (October) of The *Lateran Treaty and its Effects on Italian Catholicism*—a historical statement which is by no means pleasant reading. He reminds us, incidentally, that the Encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno*, which formally condemned many Fascist theories and practices at the time of the tension between Mussolini and the Holy See in 1931, 'is, by reason of its expressly religious character, a pronouncement of the Church's teaching authority; and its importance in this respect is in no wise modified by subsequent temporary reconciliations.' The writer concludes that, in spite of the present cordial relations between Church and State in Italy, secured at great sacrifice on the part of the Holy See, 'There is irreconcilable opposition between the two programmes of Catholicism and Fascism. The Fascist doctrine of the 'ethical state' implies a Weltanschauung, a religion. The dogmas of this religion are: hatred of political enemies, blind obedience to the Fascist oath, the deification of the State, nationalist ambition as the supreme virtue and the lawfulness of any means for the attainment of Fascist ends. The reader must decide for himself if such doctrines can in any way be reconciled with Catholicism.' The article may appear the more remarkable for appearing in Nazi Germany;

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but German Catholic periodicals show themselves fully alive to the dangers in the idea of the Totalitarian State. Similar conclusions are reached by Prof. Marcel Prelot of Strasbourg in his careful study of *Le système fasciste* in LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE (October 25th and November 10th). A more optimistic view is taken by the Roman correspondent of the CLERGY REVIEW (December), who writes: 'I consider it is clear that the Corporative State is capable of being made to fit into the frame of the *Quadragesirno Anno*.'

A NON-FASCIST EXPERIMENT IN CORPORATIVE ORGANIZATION.

The 'corporative' movement in Switzerland will perhaps prove more apt 'to fit into the frame.' Details of a government bill before the legislature of the Canton of Fribourg is given by a correspondent to ESPRIT (December) who describes it as 'an effort to introduce a new social order based on Christian economic principles.' The scheme, first put forward by the Catholic Popular Party in 1928, 'is based on the idea that occupational groups are the natural organs of civil society, that they should, as autonomous bodies, enjoy a real independent authority.' The official statement of the Fribourg government and extracts from the proposed law itself are reproduced. Each occupational body (profession or trade) is to be united in State-recognized corporations composed of distinct groups of employers, workers, etc., whose delegates meet to manage affairs in their common interest. No economic monopoly of production is envisaged, nor is membership to be enforced by the State. 'The corporation is for the purpose of social organization only; its aim is to establish a sort of professional family of those engaged in the same occupation.' State-control is to be kept within the strictest limits: 'The State should respect the independence of these natural groups, leaving them full liberty of action in their respective spheres. Never must it seek to substitute itself for them, and never must it intervene, except by co-ordinating, harmonising and unifying their efforts in the interests of the

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common good.' These Swiss corporations will differ from the Italian syndicates in that they will not monopolise production and that association will be voluntary. Furthermore, 'whereas the Fascist syndicates are essentially bureaucratic political organs of the State, at Fribourg the initiative of founding and managing the corporations is left in the hands of the interested parties.' Although the measure is claimed as 'a breach in the edifice of capitalism and a complete break with liberalist theory,' the local Socialists suspect its 'bourgeois' origins. An editorial comment in *ESPRIT* shares their misgivings and throws doubts on the practicability of achieving revolutionary ends by such mild and voluntary measures. **But** the experiment will be watched by Catholics with keen interest and much sympathy.

MIDDLE-CLASSNESS. Belated attention must be called to the remarkable analysis of *The Bourgeois Spirit* by Nicholas Berdiaeff in the *DUBLIN REVIEW* (October). Much of the content of his article is familiar to readers of Léon Bloy, but the thought of that vehement French Catholic is too little known in the nation of shopkeepers. The bourgeois mind (which is by no means confined to the bourgeoisie), reduced to its essentials is a perennial phenomenon whose New Testament counterpart is the 'spirit of the world'—in essential opposition to the spirit of Christ, although, as among the pharisees, it tends to assume pseudo-religious forms. 'Middle-classness is opposed to the **Abolute**, it is destructive of eternity. **A** bourgeois may be religious, and this middle-class religiosity is more hateful in Bloy's eyes than atheism. How many such did he discover among good Catholics—the Lord is very decorative in shops! Léon Bloy studies the average bourgeois, but the problem **can** be deepened, for the bourgeois may manifest himself on a superior and more brilliant plane, even on the higher degrees of the spiritual life where he paralyses **all** spiritual movement and extinguishes the fire which is the very essence of the spirit.' Religious and cultural

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bourgeoisism is ever timid, obscurantist and obstructionist and hence is the mortal foe of Christian life and Catholic action. 'One can be a bourgeois in religion, science, morals, art. . . . *In every sphere he wants to appear and is powerless to be.* He lives by the evanescent force of that inert spiritual surrounding in which he occupies or wishes to occupy a 'position,' and not by the living ontological power of his own personality. When he appears as a scientist or academician, he is self-satisfied, pompous and limited, and adapts science to his own level, dreading the free play of thought, the liberty of the questioning spirit, ignoring intuition. The bourgeois moralist judges severely, his virtue weighs heavily on everyone, he hates the sinners and publicans, and is the guardian of his neighbours' morals. . . . This middle-classness is the overburdening by 'this world,' and is opposed by a lightness born of spiritual freedom. The overcoming of middle-classness means a victory over the intensified will directed to 'the world.' Everything the bourgeois touches, the family, the State, morality, religion, science, is deadened. Contemplation which could set him free is unknown to him The Spirit alone can defeat bourgeoisism; no material means will avail.'

PENGUIN.

CORRESPONDENCE

HAWKER OF MORWENSTOW

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

SIR,—In the effort to be brief in your December issue (p. 1038) I became not merely obscure but inaccurate.

The conclusion of my penultimate paragraph should read thus :

'The chorus of Hawker's Trelawney ballad, the sole relic of the original song—if ever there was one—does not refer to the Bishop sent to the Tower for a week in 1688, but to Sir John Trelawny, his grandfather, imprisoned for a month in 1628, for "contempt of Parliament." Details are given in C. E. Byles's 'Life' of Hawker, pp. 29-31.

P. J. MOWAN.