

## BLACKFRIARS

of relief. His letter is printed elsewhere in this issue. Contributions to the general fund, offers of hospitality or of work, are ways of helping this effort to organise Catholic charity, and any offerings will be gratefully received by The Hon. Secretary, Catholic Committee for Refugees from Germany, 120 Victoria Street, S.W.1.

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

OUR AIM OF DETACHMENT. The complaint is sometimes made about BLACKFRIARS in general, and these *Extracts and Comments* in particular, that we habitually "sit on the fence" and adopt a non-committal attitude towards burning questions of the time. It is not, we are well aware, an attitude that always invites popularity or esteem. If we have angered some by refusing to enrol under the banner of General Franco, we have angered others by refusing to fall into line with some "Left Catholic" periodicals on the Continent by siding with the Spanish Republicans. On other complex issues, such as the recent activities of the Austrian Bishops and the Sudeten Catholics, we have refrained from passing any judgment whatever. We have consistently adopted a non-committal attitude regarding more domestic controversies which sharply divide Catholics at home: the issue of conscientious objection, for instance, and the contentions which centre round such words as "industrialism," "non-participation" and "infiltration." But not content with "sitting on the fence" ourselves, we are, we are told, only too willing to hurl insults in *both* directions. Such an attitude inevitably invites the charges of cowardice and of insufferable pretensions to superiority over our fellows. We derive some comfort from finding that similar charges are levelled against TEMPS PRESENT (April 22). Though we cannot pretend to be able to claim its self-defence as our own, a paraphrase of it may serve to explain the object at which we aim but perhaps too seldom attain:

We are sometimes reproached with being too dispassionate, with cultivating a too philosophical detachment and a temperateness of judgment which some find pretty irritating.

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The complaint misses the target. The tune must not be mistaken for the words, nor a deliberate moderation of language for a cowardly impotence of thought. We try to be gentle because we believe that our position is strong . . . We know that we must not forget of what spirit we are, nor what Love it is that calls us. There is no lack in our time of hysteria, of maniacs and epileptics, of clowns and mountebanks—if these are what are wanted. We have no taste to add to the number . . .

But it is true that we try, amid all the agitations and squabbles and passions of our time, to cultivate *not neutrality but impartiality*. Trying to preserve our independence outside and above the parties and factions, we have no reason to wish to imitate their self-complacency and their exclusiveness of all that does not belong to them or fit in with their schemes and views.

Yes. It is true that our aim is detachment. But it is not a philosophical but a *Christian* detachment that we seek to achieve. We would cultivate detachment with regard to all that does not hurt the supreme realities of our faith. We would let the wheat and tares grow together till the harvest, lest in rooting up that which should die we should root up also that which should live.

Yes. It is true that we seek to be calm and detached while all around us is agitation and tumult. We believe that that which distinguishes man from the rest of the animal creation is his reason; and we believe that it is our reasonableness that should lead our passions and not our passions that should blind our reasonableness.

Yes. It is true that we consider dispassionate serenity to be our duty; that it should be the outward expression of inward peace and the necessary condition of peace among men. While so many around us are walking on their hands or clambering like apes from branch to branch of the trees, we find that we are being sufficiently original in walking straight on, one foot after the other, with our eyes fixed on the road before us. Wisdom, Christian wisdom, that is what we believe it to be our vocation to possess and to communicate to the world around us. It is the wisdom of one who knows his way, marked by the Cross, and who knows that he is in the hands of the Living God . . .

It is, indeed, a high ambition and a hard calling; and one which, we are well aware, we often fail to follow. But can it well be denied that it is a Christian duty? And if it belong to our high Christian calling, can we reasonably be chided with putting on superior airs in our efforts to respond to it? We would ask those who bid us "come off the fence" and attach ourselves to their particular parties, groups and

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cliques, at least to remember that once off the fence it is difficult to see the other side.

**IMPARTIALITY AND NEUTRALITY.** The distinction made by the **TEMPS PRESENT** writer between these two concepts is important. The neutral man is the man who will see neither side; the impartial man is he who will see both, and because he will see both will attach himself to neither. To many of the burning issues which enflame passions and, sadly, divide Catholics, we cannot be neutral. But, for our part, we must often refuse partisanship and resolutely resist all the temptations prompted by personal or ideological sympathy for one side or the other, or both, which induce us to accept simplistic shibboleths, solutions and programmes. Too often these breed fanaticisms which, however worthy their origins, cannot easily be reconciled with a Christian spirit. ("Fanaticism," says Santayana, "consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim.") Too often do these controversies, even when they steer clear of personalities and self-assertion, degenerate into battles of catchwords and labels which obscure rather than resolve the complexities of reality. But though the detachment for which we would strive is Christian rather than Stoic, theological rather than philosophical, it is something which is demanded of a Dominican by his philosophy as well as by his faith.

It is a matter of elementary geography that to the man on the Left everyone is Right, and to the man on the Right everyone is Left. Thus Sir Stafford Cripps from the Left strives "... to awaken the British public . . . to exert every pressure that is possible on the National Government to desist in their covert help for Franco and his rebel forces." While *Action*, from the Right, is of the opinion that "... our democratic leaders mean to fight the Fascist countries eventually." The attractions of the down-right and the unequivocal should not be made the excuse for indiscriminating blindness. And it remains that for the most part the world is either Right or Left, over-emphatic in its judgments and sympathies, either agreeing with Professor Laski that human liberty is the "absence of restraint," or with his opponents for whom it is the apotheosis of restraint. The advantages of a central position is at least the antecedent possibility of a measure of disinterestedness. But we hope that it is already clear to members of the Aquinas Society that a central position means more than that. It is a synthesis, not in the Hegelian sense which

would be at best arbitrary and at worst eclectic; but in the Aristotelian sense. It is *de facto* a systematisation of elements common to every shade of opinion, from extreme right to extreme left, because positively and *de jure* it acts with the conviction that reality is impelled from within by principles and not from without by circumstances.

We gratefully borrow these words from the *Third Annual Report* of the Leicester Aquinas Society. Such a philosophy differs widely from the spirit of toleration induced by Liberalism. While the latter is tolerant because it believes in little or nothing and doubts the attainability of any absolute truth, a Thomist tends to be tolerant because his mind is open to all Being and persists in adhering to all truth wheresoever it may be found. Positive error apart, he will find only intolerance intolerable: that is to say, the presentation of a partial truth as though it were the whole truth, and the consequent exclusion of other partial truths. We are conscious that we shall fail to achieve our aim of Christian detachment if we allow less than this to disturb our equanimity.

“LEFT” AND “RIGHT” CATHOLICS. In aiming at impartiality, then, we are not called to deaden sympathies or even preferences. While claiming to be “outside and above” contemporary groupings of “Left” and “Right” Catholics, and seeing truth in the contentions of both, we do not need to veil our predilections which are consequent upon the particular situation in which we are placed. A writer in the April SCHWEIZERISCHE RUNDSCHAU shrewdly attributes the cleavage between “Left” and “Right” Catholic groups to the fact that the former are preoccupied with absolute principles—the *forma universalis*—at the expense of the sense of historical realities which is apt to preoccupy the “Rights.” “That,” he adds, “is particularly evident in France and England.” A similar diagnosis is suggested by the editorial of the April COLOSSEUM comparing the outlook of the Italian and “Rightist” FRONTESPIZIO with the French and relatively “Leftish” TEMPS PRESENT:

*Frontespizio* sees Catholicism in a very close historical relationship with civilization. Not with civilization in the abstract but with civilization as it exists. Its attitude is not dissimilar from

the attitude taken by Mr. Belloc in *Europe and the Faith*, or by G. K. Chesterton. The history of Catholicism and the history of our true civilization cannot be separated from one another. This *historical* view of Catholicism is rather characteristically Italian. Large parts of the world may have apostatized, other parts may be of doubtful stability, but the fact remains that Western civilization, Roman civilization as remodelled and inspired by Christianity, is still a living reality: and the return to Catholicism means a return to that norm.

The group of French Catholics round *Temps Présent* does not accept this view. If *Frontespizio* sees the Church in the light of the view which has grown up since the conversion of Constantine, the *Temps Présent* writers are more inclined to go back to the early Christians. They throw their emphasis not so much on the Church in history as on the Gospels and the sacraments. Though they do not go so far as some Russian thinkers, who see the ecclesiastical system and "Cæsaro-Papism" as the Grand Inquisitor who tortures the spirit of Christ, they are desperately anxious to avoid the contamination of historical and temporal forms.

*Frontespizio's* view is perhaps easier to follow in Italy than in France. Catholicism is much stronger in the life of the Italian people than it is in France. It plays its traditional part in daily events and its *ethos* colours everything. In France this is no longer true. Catholicism in France is only about as strong as Protestantism in England, and owing to the revolutionary developments of the last hundred years Catholicism has been driven into the catacombs. On the other hand the "early Christian" outlook of certain French Catholics to-day would be difficult to hold in Italy, where the evidences of the Christian civilization dominate and meet you on every side.

We believe this analysis to be fair, and it may serve to explain why, as English Dominicans, we may sometimes seem to show greater favour towards Catholic "Lefts" than to Catholic "Rights." The fact that we are Dominicans and Thomists forces us into sympathy with those who uphold the rigour of principles which can so easily become obscured by absorption in concrete historical forms. The fact that we are English likewise makes us more at home among those who are struggling with the problems of Catholic living in a non-Catholic society than with those who would sacrifice all for the preservation of a Catholic civilization which we do

not possess. For this reason, without prejudice to our aim of impartiality, we rejoice that the recent editorial reorganization of the American COMMONWEAL has brought about a change of policy and outlook in what a correspondent calls a "radical Thomist" and "Maritainite" direction. If it is a partisan exaggeration to say with this weekly that "Nothing now remains but the bare bones of the pre-Reformation world, and this skeleton is a structure that has rejected Christ; life has fled from it, and the means of resuscitating it have become, in a world almost wholly pagan, so ponderous that it is doubtful if much can be done with the corpse," it is one which corresponds more closely to present facts than summonses to the armed defence of "Catholic civilization." During the past few weeks, by the way, THE COMMONWEAL has become by far the best and most stimulating Catholic weekly in English. Gerald Vann's *Jerusalem among the Mills*, Vergil Michel's *What is Capitalism?*, C. O. Cleveland's *Between War and Peace*, J. A. Breig's *Apostle on the Bum* (Peter Maurin), Bishop O'Hara's *Christian Social Order* and Donald Hayne's *Ingredient Sadly Lacking* (on the humourless sensitiveness of the Catholic press)—to say nothing of the unsigned cartoons—have all been of exceptional excellence. But we would recommend all who are tempted to an unbalanced adhesion to "Left Catholic" ideas or to emulate too closely some of its less balanced Continental forms to ponder the criticisms of the SCHWEIZERISCHE RUNDSCHAU article.

JOHANN ADAM MOEHLER died in April 1838. He was, almost certainly, the greatest and most influential theologian of his century. He was the inspirer of the tradition of the Faculty of Catholic Theology in the University of Tübingen so magnificently upheld in our own day by Karl Adam; through the influence of his writings on Newman he probably did as much as any other to inspire and shape the Oxford Movement in England. He was the father of all subsequent ecclesiology (the theological—as distinct from the apologetic—study of the mystery of the Church), and the first in modern times to formulate *theologically* the idea of the growth and development of the Church and of her teaching. His rigorous apprehension of the transcendence

of God in his polemics with the contemporary Hegelian "philosophisations" of Christianity set the type for all subsequent Catholic resistance to the inroads of modernism and immanentism. His centenary has been worthily and practically celebrated by several periodicals which stress the importance of Möhler's theology for the problems of our time. The French Dominicans devote to him the April number of their *REVUE DES SCIENCES PHILOSOPHIQUES ET THEOLOGIQUES*. Père Chaillet, S.J., presents a profound study of Möhler's central concept of Tradition, and brings out the importance of his distinction between objective and subjective Tradition and the danger of confusing them. Father Henry Tristram of the Birmingham Oratory reveals the extent and depth of Möhler's influence on Newman, and Père M.-J. Congar, O.P., traces the evolution of his thought regarding the relationship of "spirit" and "institution." Père Congar also contributed to *LA VIE SPIRITUELLE* in the same month an article on *The Patristic Spirit in Möhler* in which will be found a rich development of ideas suggested by Fr. Mathew's recent *Patristic Revival* in our own pages. But the centenary has produced nothing more brilliant than Bernhard Haussler's *Möhler—Theologe der Kirche* in the April *HOCHLAND*, which lays particular stress on the relevance of Möhler's transcendentalist theology of the Church to contemporary problems of Church, State and World. It also tells us something of Möhler the man; of his highly developed sense of irony "which is characteristic of all great theologians from Ignatius of Antioch to Newman." The genuine theologian is always a figure of tragedy, for he must always be overwhelmed with the inadequacy of finite concepts to express the Infinite and the irony of his own efforts to utter the Ineffable; the tragic-comic contrast of the divine realities which he studies and the realities of the world about him. His highest and deepest apprehensions must always prove unutterable. Thomas Aquinas was unable to finish his *Summa* after his vision at Naples: "I can write no more; it is all as straw." Möhler's last words were striking in their likeness as in their unlikeness: "Ach, jetzt hab' ich's gesehen—jetze weiss ich's; jetzt wollte ich ein Buch schreiben—das müsste ein Buch werden . . . Aber jetzt ist's vorbei . . ."

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

- CONTEMPORANEA. CATHOLIC DIGEST (May): *Christianity and Sex* by Richard E. Cabot, M.D.: "Chastity is really the consecration of affection . . . The recognition of the uniqueness of personality consecrates affection. The baser types of love are base because of this lack of choice, of their impersonality, and not because they are 'merely physical'."
- CATHOLIC WORKER (England) drops the pilot.
- CATHOLIC WORKER (U.S.A.) announces the foundation in New York of a Union of Prayer for Peace centre in conjunction with that at Laxton, and contains the text of Cardinal Verdier's letter to *La Paix Civile*, organ of the French Committee for Peace in Spain ("You must avoid partisan attitudes.').
- CITE CHRETIENNE (May 5): A useful abstract of Rosenberg's *Mythus*. P. Braun on the late Père Lagrange.
- CLERGY REVIEW (May): Mgr. Barton pays a fine tribute to Père Lagrange: "He was, and will remain, the chief glory of his Order, of the Church in France and throughout the world, and of Catholic biblical studies." The writer refers to P. Hugues Vincent, who contributes our own memoir, as "the foremost expert in biblical archeology in Palestine or elsewhere."
- EASTERN CHURCHES QUARTERLY now includes a valuable review of reviews.
- HOCHLAND (May): *Thomas a Creatore* by Dr. Josef Pieper: the "impersonality" and "bloodlessness" of the writings of St. Thomas.
- HOLY NAME JOURNAL (April 10): *Chastity* by Vincent McNabb, O.P.
- IRISH ROSARY (May): Peter Pensive's *Letter from London*, always worth reading, is particularly shrewd this month in interpreting the average British attitude to foreign affairs.
- MODERN SCHOOLMAN (May): Short studies of SS. Augustine, Bonaventure, Albert and Thomas form a useful special *Great Scholastic Thinkers* number.
- MONTH (May): *Communism versus Labour*: the present position of the British Labour Party as seen by R. P. Walsh.
- NEW REVIEW (April): A. Lallemand presents a case *In Defence of Machines*.
- NOUVELLE REVUE THEOLOGIQUE (April): An excellent article on *The Doctrine of Renunciation* (of Society, Things and Self) in the New Testament: important for many "Christian humanism" and "non-participation" issues. P. Levie, S.J., pays homage to P. Lagrange, and Don Sturzo contributes an important review of P. Renard's *L'Eglise et la Question Sociale*.



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PEOPLE AND FREEDOM NEWS-SHEET (No. 1): A new "Catholic democratic" organ which seeks to provide "a platform for opinions on questions of the day which have hitherto largely lacked opportunities of expression." (One Penny, from 35 Campden-street, London, W.8.)

VIE INTELLECTUELLE (April 10): *The Christian and the World*, by Maritain; *The Wisdom of Gamaliel*, full text of Pastor Niemöller's last sermon. (April 25): *Orthodoxie et Conformisme*: Gabriel Marcel, playwright and "existential" philosopher, describes the havoc wrought by conventionalism become orthodoxy and orthodoxy become conventionalism. *Problèmes du mariage* by A. Robilliard, O.P.: the meaning of that "obey."

VIE SPIRITUELLE (May): *En Marge du Mystère de Jésus*: Jean Steinmann completes his study of the spirituality of Pascal. *Jérémie et la Religion de l'Esprit*: P. Dumeste, O.P., shows the contemporary relevance of Jeremias to the problems of institutionalism. *Un Effort pour l'Unité* by P. Lajeunie, O.P., and *La Vierge d'Intercession dans l'Iconographie ancienne* by Maurice Vloberg show the debt of the Western theology of *Maria mediatrix* to Eastern liturgical forms and images. *La théologie de la Messe* made alive and practical by P. Bouëssé, O.P.

PENGUIN.

## CORRESPONDENCE

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS,*

Sir,—The Archbishops and Bishops of England and Wales at their last Annual Low Week Meeting, decided to commend to the generous support of our Catholic people, the work of the Catholic Committee for Refugees from Germany and Austria, recently formed under my presidency. It is my earnest hope that, despite the needs of our own parishes, schools and poor, which it is our first duty to meet, this appeal will find a ready response. For it is one that gives expression most clearly to the supernatural unity of Catholics which has its foundation in their membership of the Mystical Body of Christ. It is one that affords opportunities for the practical exercise of that charity enjoined upon us all in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where it is the kindly foreigner who did minister to the needs of the afflicted Jew by the wayside.

From Austria and the rest of the German Reich, there comes the sad tale of many of our fellow Catholics who through no fault of their own are suddenly deprived of their means of subsistence, simply because they have some Jewish blood in their