

## OBITER

PRIESTS IN EXILE. So constant is the catalogue of the disasters of our time that a law of diminishing returns may begin to work, and sympathy itself may die. The headlines of persecution and pain can cease to astonish. It happens far away, and there seems little to be done here, the other side of the wall. But an account, such as that given by Canon van Straaten in *De Linie* (Amsterdam), of the plight of priests expelled from the eastern areas of Germany, is a fresh reminder of the responsibility that no member of the Church can escape—a responsibility at least of understanding and prayer. Canon van Straaten describes the seminary at Koenigstein, near Frankfurt, which has been a place of refuge for hundreds of expelled priests and a retreat house for priests who are at work in the Protestant regions of Germany.

They come from the grim regions of Saxony and Schleswig, the rubble-strewn plains of the West, the enormous shifting colonies of the big cities, the sprawling derelict camps, even from the Soviet zone. It is a long time since any of them owned a cassock or even a dark suit. I see them come dressed in odd pieces of discarded allied uniform, in the moth-eaten cutaway that someone's grandfather had worn on his wedding-day. . . . Koenigstein stands on the frontier of civilisation, a spiritual bastion from which a new army prepares to assault the kingdom of darkness. . . . There are young men, too, and here they work, building with their own hands a house of God out of a disused army barracks. They are the poorest of the poor and share the grim heritage of the people they are destined to serve.

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SAN SEBASTIAN has for the last fifteen years been the setting of annual 'International Catholic Conversations', and the proceedings for 1948, concerned with the problem of Religious Freedom, have now been published by *Documentos* (San Sebastian). Contributions include papers on 'Democracy and Freedom', 'Dogmatic intolerance and civil toleration', and a valuable study of 'Christianity and the Rights of Man' by L. J. Lefevre. M. Lefevre finds Maritain's conception of 'The Rights of Man and the Natural Law' metaphysically sound, but queries his optimism in finding its application possible in an international society 'which largely rejects the natural law and the true nature of man, which

mistrusts or altogether denies his divine origin and his destination in God'. He concludes, perhaps too pessimistically, that 'nothing can be hoped for in our present world, infected so completely with irreligion, so long as the nations fail to recognise the rights of God'.

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SION (the review of the Archconfraternity of Prayer for Israel) includes in its Spring issue 'The Religious Problem of the State of Israel' by Père de Menasce, O.P., an authoritative and wise assessment of 'Judaism as a faith and as a religious law in the new State'. In the same number is an account of Edith Stein, 'Jewess, Philosopher, Carmelite and Martyr'.

THE IRISH ECCLESIASTICAL RECORD (June) has a valuable study of 'The Defence of the Accused in the Medieval Inquisition' by Dr Walter Ullmann. 'What is needed is a balanced picture of the medieval inquisition, and this can only be obtained if the competent authorities, that is the canonists, are given first place'.

LES ENSEIGNEMENTS SOCIAUX DES PAPES (Editions Spes; 125 francs) is a useful summary of recent papal social teaching compiled by the Abbé Leguillier. Extracts from encyclicals and addresses are arranged under such headings as 'Private Property', 'The powers of the State', 'Capitalism', and the book should be a valuable source of documentation on Catholic social teaching.

THE DUBLIN REVIEW (second quarter, 1950), in a number of great interest, includes Humphrey Johnson on 'The Hierarchy restored', Jacques Chevalier on Descartes, David Jones on 'Aesthetics and History', and—most revealing—Stanley Godman on Gustave Thibon, 'an almost unique synthesis of the concrete, immediate experience of a life immersed in unremitting toil on the land and the speculation of a profound and philosophical mind'.

LA REVUE NOUVELLE (15 June) includes an account of the 'Rencontres internationales de Genève, 1949', at which Karl Barth and the Dominican Père Maydiou were the Christian representatives 'and had the task of defining the actuality of the Christian message from the humanist point of view'.

THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH is the title of a booklet published by the newly formed Scottish Catholic Historical Committee (25 George Square, Edinburgh 8). The university was founded in 1450, and the essay is an account of its Catholic origins and of its renewed Catholic life in recent years.

LE PERE DE FOUCAULD is the subject of the July number of *Fêtes et Saisons* (obtainable from Blackfriars Publications, 1s.), and a readable text and excellent illustrations do justice to the French hermit and the immense influence that has been his since his death. ENVOY, an Irish *Horizon*, has in its June number an interesting study of Nijinsky by Michael MacLiammoir, and a well-documented account of contemporary German fiction by Werner Milch.

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A CORRESPONDENT WRITES:

The times in which we live provide peculiar difficulties for the conversion of men to Christ. Perhaps these difficulties are not greater than those of other ages but precisely because they are *our* difficulties we need to understand them fully; and it is an encouraging sign of the times that a conference was held recently at Blackfriars, Llanarth, under the guidance of Fr Henry St John, O.P., and with the approval of the Archbishop of Cardiff, to enable priests to discuss the problems of the modern apostolate.

The first lecturer was Fr Mark Brocklehurst, O.P., who asked himself, and us, what is it that is deepest and most universal in man? what is that thing in him that we need to penetrate and to touch before we can get him moving, however imperfectly, God-ward? And he gave the answer in one word: Conscience—conscience not so much in the sense, at first at any rate, of a practical judgment, as of an intuition of the Good, as an awareness of his own contingency and of his need, eventually, for the Infinite Good. This in fact is the starting point and will lead to some realisation of the Natural Law and its requirements. There are two great realities, said Fr Mark; the Cross and the human conscience and the way from the latter to the former will be the way of the Natural Law and the moral life. We go from the conscience of man to the conscience of Christ evoking, eventually, the response, in faith, of a person to a Person.

In his second lecture Fr Mark considered the radically social nature of man, summing the matter up by saying that inescapably, and even apart from the supernatural order, we are members one of another and that we make each other human. In the light of this, service or generosity or justice (and he showed they were fundamentally the same thing) must be the pivot of modern life. The lecturer then passed on to consider the typical and normal

union, marriage, and the family wherein we are truly 'made human', and finally led us back to his starting point by showing us that the conscience is perfected by submission to God, by worshipping him.

This summary can give no idea of the quality of Fr Mark's lectures. We were able to re-think with him, and to bring alive for ourselves, familiar truths that seemed of little practical importance. All the priests present testified to the effect these lectures had on them, and it is significant that the discussion after the first lecture went on for an hour and a half.

There was a striking unity of thought between Fr Mark and Fr John Fitzsimons, the other lecturer, though they were moving on different planes of thought. In his first lecture Fr Fitzsimons led us to consider the social context of modern man, reminding us that we must be concerned with this not as a matter of convenience but as a necessity of the first order, for not only has the individual to be reclaimed for Christ but the social order itself must be redeemed and restored to Christ. First, Fr Fitzsimons outlined what is lacking to modern life, the dignity of man, of the family, the importance and neglect of the working group, etc. To restore these to the social order, lay-apostles are necessary, and the first task that lies before us is the training of those apostles. It was in his second lecture that he made the obvious and yet startling statement that the moral vacuum characteristic of our times must be filled not by putting principles back, but by getting people to act according to the Christian pattern of society. Against this background he gave us a deeply impressive account of the Young Christian Workers. As one priest said, he had really understood it for the first time. As all would have agreed, even if the initiation of Y.C.W. groups in parishes is a difficult matter, yet it contains within itself the seeds of the remedies for the evils of our time.

There is much more that could be said about these fruitful two days. A merely negative criticism of our times was seen to be futile, the mere hawking of the much vaunted 'Catholic principles' was seen to be ineffective. What, we realised, is necessary is the embodiment or incarnation of principles in actions and persons, for then we shall touch the spark of conscience in others, and so be able to lead them slowly and painfully back to Christ.

All who were present agreed that there should be a similar

conference next year. And the success of the Llanarth Conference suggests that here at least is one way, that of informal discussion and the exchange of experience, by which principles may be seen as applicable, and the apostolate made more than an academic name.

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#### ANTHONY FOSTER AND PAUL HARRIS

At the Ashley Gallery, which is very easily found opposite Westminster Cathedral, an exceptionally interesting exhibition of Anthony Foster's carvings and Paul Harris's paintings has opened. Mr Foster, profoundly influenced by his experience under Eric Gill, is yet an artist in his own right. His use of stone is assured, faithful to its demands, and in his 'Sacred Heart', for instance, a muted religious eloquence informs a most confident handling of the material. Indeed, his craftsmanship is so honest, so exact, that its deeper meaning may be taken for granted. It is a matter for gratitude to find an artist in whom an essential humility is allied to manifest skill and for whom the thing made has a contemplative perfection far removed from the fashionable *tours de force* of the art world. At a time when much is said of the need for a religious art that shall be honest and expressive, Mr Foster's work may be recognised for what it is: religious but never pietistic, original but by no means febrile.

Mr Harris's paintings, superficially far removed from the formal, almost liturgical pattern of Mr Foster's work, yet share with it a religious inspiration that is authentic. His 'Healing of the Blind Man', or his 'Flight into Egypt' reveal an artist in whom a disciplined execution goes with an almost metaphysical curiosity. He is concerned to explore the fundamental impact of religious experience, and this he does through using contemporary figures—our own flesh and blood in the world we know—representing an incarnational view of life which gives vitality and an exciting relevance to his work. He is still developing, and his integrity of purpose gives even to his less successful essays a candour of vision, and an enthusiasm for its expression, which make a gladdening experience. No one who cares about religious art can afford to miss this exhibition, so admirably arranged and, we may add, so modestly priced.

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