

KATHOLISCHER GLAUBE. By Mathias Laros. (F. Schöningh, Paderborn.)

The distortion of the Cross into the Swastika by the Nazis occasioned in 1937 a Papal Encyclical (*Mit brennender Sorge*) condemning those false prophets who, emptying religious concepts of their traditional Christian content, tried to coin a worthless currency by investing the old words with new values based on a philosophy of Blood, Soil and Race.

Dr. Laros, amplifying the encyclical, has set out to provide the German layman with a weapon of defence against the new Circe. It is more necessary to-day than perhaps ever before, for the Catholic layman to have a knowledge of the faith, if he is not to succumb to the specious arguments, the cacophony and parade of the modern propagandist. This in addition to the fundamental necessity of knowledge as a prerequisite to human action: for action presupposes purpose, and purpose implies that we know what we are seeking, and why. Dr. Laros, then, tries to provide the German Catholic layman with that knowledge of the faith which will enable him to answer objections, and, more important, to foster his own spiritual life. He deals, in simple language, with the fundamental truths of Christianity, belief in a transcendent yet personal God, in the Redemption of man by the Incarnate Son, truly God and truly man, Who, if He were not God-man, but only God appearing as man, could not have redeemed us, nor been our mediator. Dr. Laros also treats of the effect of the Incarnation which raises man to the stature of God, by making him share, by grace, in the Nature of God, a result brought about by the Church, which, as the Mystical Body of Christ, is the sole channel of grace, and that which imparts to its members the very life of its invisible Head, which is Christ. Christ is the objective holiness of the Church, but Dr. Laros curiously omits to discuss at any length the way the Church imparts that holiness to the faithful by means of the sacraments.

The Church is not only an interior, but also an exterior society, having a visible head, and the Primacy of the Pope is discussed at some length, as also is the monarchic constitution of the Church. The Church is inspired by the Holy Ghost, and her teaching is infallible: not only does she not fail, but she cannot fail, for the Church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is subsistent Truth. Infallibility then is not merely a gift to the Church, but an attribute bound up in her very being or essence

(*cf.* Eph. iv, 14-16). Hence her right to define the content of our faith.

Finally comes a consideration of the relations between priest and state, and priest and layman. This latter part of the book rather labours the distinction between the man and the office, the infallibility of the Pope, and the fallibility of popes, the holiness of the Priest and the unholiness of priests; necessary perhaps as an answer to Nazi attacks on individuals.

The book is topical, occasioned by the attempts to establish Nazism as a religious and not merely a political creed, but it has notwithstanding some permanent value to the Catholic layman even outside Germany: Dr. Laros achieves his purpose of providing a handbook of the Catholic faith.

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#### MISCELLANEOUS

SAINT JUST. By J. B. Morton. (Longmans; 15s.)

Mr. Morton's biography of Saint Just is an admirable representative of Mr. Belloc's biographical convention. There is the sense of psychological tension, the power to recapture a particular moment, the perception of moral issues, the careful period sense, the sustained and vivid use of imagination.

It is a method admirably suited for a study of Saint Just. He had made his first speech in the Convention when he was twenty-five, he was guillotined less than two years later. His work for the reorganization of the armies was primarily achieved in a single winter as commissary in department of Bas-Rhin. Necessarily he can only be studied by spotlight. Yet he remains one of the most significant of the leaders of the French Revolution, for he represented its possibilities rather than its facts. It is clear that Mr. Morton has provided a tenable psychological reconstruction which must affect the conventional estimate of the events of Thermidor and strengthen Mr. Belloc's conception of Robespierre. There is no trait of his Saint Just which can be questioned; the logic and integrity of thought, the clear passion for justice and due order, the final act of loyalty that cost his life. This is the Saint Just of the bust by David d'Angers, austere yet classical in its serenity. Yet there was perhaps another Saint Just, that of the Greuze portrait with the careful pose of the eyes, and the mobile sensual lips; the Saint Just suggested by such stray curious documents as the letter from Sceaux—self-centred, self-loving but not self-deceived, a speculator of small sums,