

tinuist, which is suspected by the other side of no very real appreciation of the historical complications of sin. Confusion is made worse by the use of theological analogies in a question whose solution lies in a theological penetration of economics, sociology and psychology.

BERNARD KELLY.

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POETRY AS PROPAGANDA. An article on *The Value of Poetry* by Father Richard Kehoe, O.P., in the January number of the DOWANHILL COLLEGE MAGAZINE deserves wide circulation:

It must be said immediately that by "value" in this title religious value is meant. Jeers and laughter perhaps. It *does* seem unenlightened to be prepared to treat poetry as some high form of propaganda. Nevertheless, there is a very important, a supremely important sense according to which this is justifiable. What is needed is very careful discrimination. One must not fall back into the heresy which regards poetry as being only a relative, that is a representational thing, the purpose of which should be to describe faithfully, represent accurately, in beautiful language and figures, this world of ours: simply to be a lovely clear mirror of physical and human nature and of their values.

The true sense in which it must be loyally proclaimed that poetry is essentially independent and autonomous in its truth and its beauty is contained in the statement that poetry like all art means creation, not imitation. Suppose a new flower were to appear on the earth. We should consider its beauty absolutely, not relatively: it would be beautiful for us not because the texture of its petals was an equivalent of the texture of a lovely face, nor because we saw in it a symbol of the glory of Solomon; it might mean such things for us, but that would be "accidental." Essentially it would be beautiful *in itself*, according to its own nature: to be appreciated it would need to be studied in itself, allowed to speak for itself. So with a poem. Its truth, its beauty are established by its own inherent laws, rhythm, nature; that is, they do not belong to it simply by reference, by association: for example, inasmuch as it calls up the beauty of sunrise or of the wake of the moon on the sea. It is *itself* a beautiful thing, as beautiful perhaps as the dawn or as moonlight. You insult it by suggesting that it is only an echo or a reflection of something else. In this indeed lies the glory of art, that it is a new creation by man. And in this its primary religious significance is to be found. It is a new world

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to sing the glory of God. And not a servile sketching of the already given world. With that given world of ours nevertheless it has essential relationship; for it is not absolutely but only quasi-creational—only God can create absolutely. It is from this world of ours that the poet learns the laws of beauty, of truth, of life. He studies the art of God in the works of His creating, and he then imitates that art. He does true honour to the Divine Artist, by no mere issuing of faithful Medici copies of His masterpieces, but by creating new masterpieces under the inspiration of, as taught by His artistry. Already then the deepest, the constant (potential) religious value of all works of art is apparent. (Potential, because this meaning may be ignored. This hymn of praise may be sung or hearkened to without the spirit of praise and love.) They are beautiful creations which supplement this world's praise of God. A tree praises God simply by being the beautiful thing of His creating that it is; a poem praises God simply as it is a beautiful thing of man's creating, man's work of creation being a disciple's, an admirer's, a creature's under-studying of the art of God. It must be said moreover that there is still more of praise of God contained in a poem than in a tree or a sunrise, for here there is conscious praise, a man's admiration and humble discipleship. (At least there is by right.) But the sunrise is purer; God's creation without any admixture or tempering, one may object. It is an invalid objection. The poet's creating itself is likewise from God: the poem is ultimately but a richer, a more subtle work of God's making.

This deepest religious value of poetry, then—its ontological "propaganda" value—far from being in any way a derogation from its purity and autonomy, is precisely to be found in its very nature as creational art.

Poetry is propaganda, because it is creative; but it may also *serve* propaganda by reason of its content. Such is the professed purpose of Dante, Eliot, Hopkins and "some of the best of our modern poetry written by Communists." But:

. . . in holding that religious value is to be found and derived from Dante, Verlaine, Eliot, Rilke, Hopkins, Claudel, etc., one is not implying that their poetry is of a kind that deals with something *else*, something *other*. The relations of matter to form, of body to soul, is a far nearer illustration of the reality (but still only very defective) than the common conception of portrayer to things portrayed. In a poem there is a "body" of statement, religious, philosophic, physically descriptive or what; but this is in no way separate or separable from the poetry, for the poetry is as the soul of it, a soul of beauty; one whole indivisible entity has been created. This body is completely "informed," but not

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dissolved; so you *have* your intellectual or emotional statement, and it may be—it merely depends what was the original inspiration of the poet—religious thought, religious emotion. If so, then it is part of the appreciation of the full-blooded reality of the poem to be affected by it. With a good conscience, then, with a perfect conscience, one may read poetry finding in it first, and always, an objective witness of the glory of God—this in so far as it is poetry, as it is a thing of beauty originally inspired by the beauty of God's universe, physical and spiritual; and moreover freely and joyfully seizing on (only it must be in and through the poetry, not apart from it, as for example by means of a translation of Dante, regarded as an adequate way of arriving at the "substance" of him) whatever religious message it may happily embody.

POWER OF THE CATHOLIC PRESS. Some weeks ago His Grace the Archbishop of Westminster had occasion to make an important public statement to the effect that "the Catholic press in this country, in matters regarding faith and morals, is under the general supervision of the hierarchy. Beyond this the hierarchy is not responsible." The importance and timeliness of this pronouncement was stressed at the time in a leading article in *THE TABLET* (December 19). It was pointed out that Mgr. Hinsley's statement afforded a necessary protection, not only to the bishops, but to the editors and proprietors of Catholic papers themselves:

Writing week by week, about the issues that arise in a society so largely dechristianized and secularized . . . Catholic journals can never hope, and should not desire, to write on critical matters in a way that will command general agreement. The Catholic public is much too varied in origin and outlook. Parts of it live so deeply immersed in our present-day society as to have acquired much of its outlook, while there is a sense in which the Catholic critic of modern society is much more revolutionary even than the Communist. . . . The political structure of modern England is intertwined with its economic structure, and institutions take their form and character from the beliefs of those who compose and work them. These things it is the business of the Catholic journalist to discuss. If he could presume upon agreement in advance, his work would hardly need him, or attract him.

The outside world always inclines to believe that every Catholic activity is rigorously controlled from above, and probably directly from Rome. A wide diversity of political approach in the Catholic press is welcome as a corrective to this prejudice.

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Unfortunately these facts are not commonly appreciated, and notwithstanding such pronouncements as that of Mgr. Hinsley, the Catholic press is endowed, by the faithful even more than by outsiders, with an authority and prestige far beyond what it can rightly claim, and to which it cannot pretend without jeopardizing its own freedom and utility. This spurious authority, and the grave problems and scandals to which it may give rise, are the subject of an outspoken article by "Parochus" in the current number of our stimulating contemporary *THE SOWER*. He states the nature and cause of the problem as follows:

The fact that Catholic newspapers are sold at church gives them a tremendous and unexpected authority in the minds of the faithful. To the prestige of the printed word is added the prestige of the clergy, who, when they take an active part in distributing a paper, are naturally presumed to be in agreement with its contents.

Indeed it would be nearer the truth to say that nowadays, rightly or wrongly, the Catholic paper is the *ecclesia docens*. . . . Incidentally, Catholic newspapers have their columns of "Answers to Correspondents" where an anonymous consultant gives his (usually sensible) judgments on precisely the kind of questions which in old-fashioned days were regarded as the province of confessor or parish priest. As for non-Catholics, they naturally regard anything they read in a Catholic newspaper as the official teaching of the Church.

To do the Catholic editors justice, we need not suppose that they have intentionally arrogated to themselves such undue authority; it is not they who arrange to have their journals sold at church, and they probably do not realize clearly what an enormous enhancement of sheer authority is thrust upon them in this way. Anyhow, the problem remains and ought to be faced—are the Catholic newspapers (taken altogether as a whole) fully worthy to fill a position of such unique responsibility?

The incisive criticism that follows, with which we are in general agreement, suggests a negative answer; and a powerful plea is made for more fairmindedness and objectivity on the part of our press:

Let us suppose that next week civil disturbance or revolution should break out in some Catholic Ruritania, that class-war and anti-clerical passions should blaze high and terrible events should be happening amidst the confusion. Everyone can see the great opportunity that such a situation would present to our Catholic

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newspapers of showing everybody the difference between truth and propaganda, between Christian charity and un-Christian hatred; an opportunity of giving, not perhaps an impartial, but at any rate a fair-minded picture of the situation, and of rising to an atmosphere above mere partisanship and unscrupulous hate propaganda. Could we hope from past experience that such an opportunity would not be tragically missed? Is it inconceivable that Catholic newspapers should fall to the level of the worst secular press in such a matter? Is it possible (for example) for a Catholic journalist to write of the Church's persecutors as if they had no souls to save but were non-human vermin to be exterminated?

We join heartily in the plea; but are inclined to question if so ideal an improvement in the standards of Catholic journalism, much as it is to be desired, reaches the roots of the problem. A false valuation of the authority of the Catholic press is to be corrected, not by attempting to live up to that valuation, but by correcting the valuation itself. Catholic journalism should be proclaimed as what it is; and its spurious authority should be firmly and modestly repudiated.

WHERE BELIEVERS MAY DOUBT. For our part, we do not for one moment question the right or the desirability that Catholic journalists in Catholic papers should give the most emphatic expression to their sincere and considered views and sympathies with regard to the happenings in the Catholic Ruritania, provided all be done in truth and charity. But such at present is the power and prestige of our press that, not only may their views be endowed with an authoritative-ness which they do not possess until they be elevated into something like articles of faith, but that power is liable to serious abuse and to be the cause of much scandal:

As things are now, there is an obvious possibility that two or three men, responsible to nobody in particular, can at any juncture stampede the whole Catholic body in the direction they please—merely by setting forth their chosen point of view strongly enough and *by not allowing their readers to hear of the existence of any other Catholic point of view at all*. Such complete silencing of alternative opinion is the main element in the new kind of unscrupulous mass-suggestion as raised to a fine art in Red Russia or in the Germany of Goebbels, and if any Catholic paper should sink so low it would be time to draw the line between what can

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and what cannot be distributed under the auspices of the Church, which after all still numbers catholicity as one of its four marks.

Indeed, not only may it happen that the readers of the Catholic press in a particular country be not allowed to hear that the Catholic press in others is by no means so unanimous on the subject, but also their very words are liable to be mutilated and their meaning distorted, and even their very orthodoxy called in question. That such Catholic papers should criticize their dissentients and try to convert them to their own viewpoint is understandable. What is intolerable is that their views on Ruritania should be so identified with the official teaching of the Church that insinuations should be made against the faith as well as the reason of those who do not agree. Still worse would it be were the clergy to upbraid as disloyal and Communist-tainted Catholics, or even as no Catholics at all, such members of their flock who do not share their faith in their Catholic weekly or in the Ruritanian Generalissimo of their predilection. Yet such is a real danger if the authority of the press on such matters is not recognized at its true value. And it is whispered that such cases have already occurred.

FAIRNESS THROUGH LOGIC. One step towards fairmindedness in our press might be some training in logic on the part of its leader-writers. How illogicality can make for unfairness was exemplified in one of our Catholic weeklies recently. This paper

is interested to know that there are still in existence English Catholics who hold that Catholics should not support *either* side [in the Spanish War], for *if they are right* it means that the immediate danger to the Church and civilization on the part of the *Reds* is, after all, negligible. *Unfortunately*, however, the "*Catholic —*" is itself utterly unable, in view of its reading of history and the evidence available, to agree. Entirely in agreement as it is with such Catholics in regard to the horror of war and the need for a Christian social revolution, it cannot in conscience allow the military triumph of men whose God—*since* they have no other—is force, nor can it swallow the absurd contradiction of *supporting anti-God social reformers* in order to achieve Christian social reform.

The italics are ours, but the dialectic is the leader-writer's very own. Though some details of the argument are rather

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obscure, the general drift is clear and not unfamiliar: There are English Catholics who hold they should not support *either* side, therefore they are not anti-Red, therefore they are pro-Godless. The quality of the logic is nobody's business but those responsible for its publication. But that so calumnious an insinuation against fellow-Catholics should rest on such a process of thought is a fact that calls for notice.

The facile dialectic which must allocate everything and everybody into the categories of "pro" and "anti" is in fact an unworthy borrowing of Popular Front tactics. THE SOWER quotes a relevant passage from AMERICA:

Strategists of the Left are masters of the broad stroke. They believe in no distinction save that of ally or opponent. As to opponents, all are thrown into the same puddle and moulded into one unity. Thus, the Communists have scored the point of identifying the Catholic Church with all the conflicting classes that detest Communism. Hearst attacks Communism on a low principle and the Catholic Church opposes it on a high, and totally distinct, principle: but the Communist mind and Hamilton Basso in the *New Republic* make Hearstism and Catholicism quite identical. Wall Street seeks the death-penalty for Communism for money reason; the Catholic Church condemns Marxism for soul reasons: but Leftist writers link Capitalism and Communism as comrades in arms. Fascism and Nazism swear implacable hatred against Communism for national and material reasons; the Catholic Church stands squarely against its ideology for purely spiritual reasons: but Communist propagandists make it appear that Catholicism is Fascist. The Catholic Church is not allied with Hearst, Wall Street, Mussolini, Hitler or the Republican party. It would oppose Communism even though Hearst were Stalin, and Wall Street were Red Square, and Mussolini were Lenin and Hitler were Browder, and Republicans went Marxist. Apart from all governments, all parties, all economic systems, the Catholic Church will remain anti-Communist as long as Communism is atheistic. When Communism ceases to be atheistic it will cease to be Communistic.

THE SOWER itself draws these lessons:

The above quotation from our contemporary we hold to be profoundly true. It expresses concisely and vividly the reasons for our reiterated warnings against any alliances with those who are opposing Communism for their own ends. For Hearst read Rothermere; for Wall Street, read the City; for the Republican, read the Tory party; and you have an accurate description of the protagonists as they line up on this side of the Atlantic. . . . We

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hear a great deal about the menace of Communism. It is quite evident that the people who write and talk about it have not realized the serious threat it is to religion and civilization, or they would not recommend such ineffective and useless ways of combating it. Marxian materialism is much too dangerous and insidious a philosophy to be counteracted by the slogans of the stunt press. We have got to settle down to some very clear thinking, to a close and critical study of the social problem, and (what is more important) to the formation of a constructive alternative programme if we are to make any headway against irreligion and anarchy.

CONTEMPORANEA. AMERICAN REVIEW (January): *What is the Use of Art anyway?* Ananda Coomaraswamy shows how the deification of Art is dehumanizing Man.

CATHOLIC GAZETTE (February): *What is Dialectical Materialism?* by Father John Garvin: rare qualifications of fairmindedness, lucidity, humour and a sense of realities brought to bear on Communism by a Catholic critic.

CITE CHRETIENNE (January 20): Another excellent special number devoted to *Problems of Marriage and the Family* with particular attention to the economic difficulties made by modern society in its various strata.

CLERGY REVIEW (February): *Peace and the Clergy* by Edward Quinn: particularly noteworthy for its remarks on the character of true Christian patriotism and on the ethics of modern warfare.

ESPRIT (February): *Le fascisme, fils du libéralisme*: J. Ellul argues plausibly that Fascism, far from being a revolt from Liberalism, is its legitimate offspring who inherits papa's worst characteristics.

HOCHLAND (February): *Die Märtyrer und die Kirche*: Prof. Erik Petersen, one of the keenest minds in contemporary Catholic literature, shows that martyrdom belongs to the very essence of the Church in an article which is at once penetrating, timely and inspiring (and, incidentally, an original line of apologetic for the *cultus* of the saints).

IRENIKON (November-December): *Le Cœur théandrique et son symbolisme dans l'œuvre de Nicolas Cabasilas*: a fourteenth century Greek theologian of the Sacred Heart: his refreshing and profound approach should be illuminating to twentieth century Westerns.

MONTH (February): Father Herbert Thurston patiently accepts and diligently meets one of Dr. Coulton's challenges.

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PAX (February): Dom Bruno Webb concludes a helpful and simple treatment of the *Problem of Evil*.

SEPT (February 12): Special number devoted to *Christ and the Worker*: Mauriac, Daniel-Rops and Maritain contribute with others of less note but with no less power: a number to arouse the deadead of social consciences.

VIE INTELLECTUELLE (January 25): A particularly strong number. J. Malègue, author of *Augustin*, treats most helpfully of the psychological aspect of faith, unbelief and "doubts"; the Rev. G. Dix, Anglican monk of Nashdom, gives some account of the Unity Octave among Anglicans; Robert Pitrou relates the story of the persecution in Germany; F. Perroux gives an objective and not altogether unsympathetic outline of Nazi theory. Best of all is Daniel-Rops on the material basis of spiritual life and activity.

PENGUIN.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE MARTYRDOM OF SPAIN

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

SIR,—In view of what many consider a misunderstanding by your Review of the main motives which actuate the Nationalist movement in Spain, may I attempt briefly to summarize, for the benefit of your readers, the outstanding points in the Instruction which has been issued by the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo to the faithful of his diocese, as well as for general information abroad? This document may be obtained, in its English translation, through the C.T.S., and should be carefully read as an authoritative and thoughtful pronouncement on the Spanish War. (*The Martyrdom of Spain*.)

His Eminence's chief points are:

1. The issues which have called Spain to arms are really world-wide issues; the attempt of all the sound elements in the nation to free the country from a world-tyranny, which for years had been seeking to impose itself on Spain.

2. It is fundamentally a clash of principles, of two totally opposed concepts of life, the Christian and the Marxist, of those who value all that is venerable in Spanish civilization and those who hate it and are attempting to destroy it.

3. It is a national, spontaneous movement, as is shown by the tremendous support it has received in all those parts of Spain which are most Spanish and most Catholic.

4. The religious aspect is the chief aspect, whatever other