

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

**THE WAR.** The current numbers of our Catholic contemporaries are, as was to be expected, much occupied with the ethics of the Italo-Ethiopian war. Particularly noteworthy is the long and well-documented article by Paul Catrice in *LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE* of October 25th. He shows that the war is no mere ephemeral, local and insignificant incident, but the logical outcome of Fascist ideology, of Fascism's lyrical conception of its "universal mission in the world." He traces the history of Italy's expansionist dreams, of her relations with Ethiopia till the time of the invasion, and dispassionately examines her action in the light of traditional Catholic teaching as presented by authorities such as the Dominican Vittoria and the Italian jurist Tapparelli d'Azeglio. He enables us to realize that this war confronts us, not only with the ethics of a particular line of action taken here and now by Italy, but with something far more fundamental—the opposition between Christian teaching and the Italian Fascist ideology. The article is the more impressive in that the writer does full justice to Italy's claims and her grievances against Abyssinia, and also draws attention to the lamentable state of the latter which calls for instant remedy. In the same number is published the important manifesto deploring Italy's action, already quoted in the English Catholic press, and signed by leading French Catholic "intellectuals" including Père Bernadot, O.P., Blondel, Claudel, du Bos, Fumet, Maritain, Mauriac, Mounier, etc. This Catholic manifesto was subsequently endorsed by leading non-Catholics including André Gide and Julien Benda.

In *Morale internationale* by Henri Nicaise in *LA CITE CHRETIENNE* (November 5) will be found another excellent résumé of Catholic principles regarding colonization and international relations and their application to "le crime italien." (There will also be found some noteworthy praise, tempered by grave misgivings, of the teaching in a recent English Catholic book on the ethics of war.) The same number quotes from a remarkable article in similar strain by M. E. K. Winter in *WIENER POLITISCHER BLAETTER*. But most pungent is Fr. Gillis's *War is on, Reason is off* in

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the American CATHOLIC WORLD (November): "When war commences the first victim to fall is Logic; the second is Ethics: *inter arma silent leges.*" He examines pitilessly the attempts to whitewash Mussolini in the American press, as well as Italy's own defence; he shows how the objective ethical issue is constantly evaded by sentimentality, cynicism and illogicality:

In the present crisis not only diplomats but journalists and editors, some of them I regret to say Catholics, have been blind to the main moral issue—is the Italian invasion of Ethiopia justifiable? I have seen at least a score of journals that did not so much as confront the ethical problem. . . . They present their readers with a vast amount of biological, physiological, historical information. But what has all this to do with the primary ethical question—what conditions are requisite to make war justifiable? What is the doctrine of St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Suarez, of contemporary Catholic moralists? Is there no obligation upon an editor or writer or an orator to make these things clear to the people? These questions lead to another. What residuum can there be in the minds of Catholic publicists of the rigid training in logic imparted in our colleges? We often insist that the scholastics, mediæval and modern, are the only philosophers who accord reason its rightful place. We boast that we scholastics are swift as a hawk to pounce upon an *ignoratio elenchi* and keen to detect when a fact or an argument is *non ad rem*. But what happens to this alleged superiority in correct thinking when a question arises that stirs our emotions?

To a Catholic, ethics takes precedence over politics. Nothing else is worth discussing until the morality or immorality of an action is settled. It is futile and nugatory to talk about India or Panama or Mexico when the real problem is Ethiopia. To lug in instances of unjust aggression of the eighteenth century or the nineteenth, as if ancient crimes were a condonation or a justification of modern crimes, is to lay oneself open to the charge not only of loose thinking but of immoral teaching. To talk of abuses existing in the country to be attacked is to arouse suspicion that one accepts the abominable principle that the end justifies the means.

"NOW ABOUT ENGLAND." Not only fairness to Fr. Gillis compels us to quote the paragraph that follows under this subheading:

I hope my scorn for the dialectic trickery of alleging England's crime to distract the mind from the immediate problem will not be taken to mean that I condone England's notorious habit of

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land-grabbing. I think that in this matter she has been the worst offender in history. She has conquered more worlds than Alexander and, what is more, she has held on to them. During the World War there was displayed in Canada a poster of the British Bull Dog astride the world, with the caption, "What we have we hold." That's the trouble. The English have and hold so much of the earth's surface that Germany and Italy and Japan, all of whom need room in which to expand, are driven to desperation. Curiously, the English are, as a rule, unable to understand why Europe hates and despises them. Indeed they cannot even see that England is guilty of the very crimes for which she condemned the Kaiser and condemns *Il Duce*. It is unfortunate that both these gentlemen have declared they wanted "a place in the sun." What they really want is a foothold on the earth. . . . But all this is not a justification or even a condonation of Italy's ruthless and murderous adventure. Those who allege England's crimes to justify Italy's are using, though they don't know it, the Cain-killed-Abel-go-thou-and-do-likewise logic.

We would say, however, that these things (*minus* the rhetorical exaggerations) are more keenly realized over here than Fr. Gillis supposes, and that there is no occasion for his surprise that "even" *THE TIMES* should say: "As an imperial Power, we control vast spaces of empty territory under the eyes of Powers clamouring for space with all the zest and vigour of second youth." As Paul Catrice suggests, the war will compel a thorough threshing out of the whole complex problem of European colonies. Good will be brought out of the evil, but (it is perhaps necessary to say again) that does not make the evil good.

For the edification of readers abroad we may quote, as fairly typical of English opinion regarding the Empire, the words of Mr. A. P. Herbert in his letter soliciting votes as an independent National candidate for the University of Oxford:

I shall examine with some suspicion any proposals that may be made for the distribution of the British Empire among foreign countries, whatever their birth-rate, isolation or inefficiency. Having some acquaintance with many parts of the Empire, I am persuaded that its inhabitants, accustomed or apprenticed to the practice of democracy, would receive no startling advantage from a transference to the flag of Italy or Germany. But if we are to resist the odd, and nebulous, suggestions at present being heard it follows that the British peoples must, at least, conceive, if they cannot now begin, some strong concerted effort to fill the empty

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spaces which we hold. Australia is about the same size as the United States and holds the same population as London: and though it is true that large areas of Australia are no more inviting to the settler than large areas of Abyssinia, we cannot for ever expect expanding or acquisitive nations to regard such extensive gaps with benevolence.

CHRISTIAN HUMANISM. Wars and rumours of wars have not abated the output of articles treating of the new Christian humanism, the principles of whose construction are occupying many of the best minds in the Church to-day. Allusion has already been made to the essay by Dom O. Rousseau in *IRENIKON*, which was outstanding if only because of its unusual clarity and simplicity. Here the contrast between the Christian humanism sought by the younger generation of present-day Catholics with the bankrupt anthropocentric humanisms of the past was clearly drawn, and the theological principles involved clearly stated. The October number of *ESPRIT* was almost wholly devoted to the problem of humanism, though here it was its politico-social aspects, especially the contrasts and affinities between Christian and Marxist humanism in this respect, that received greatest emphasis. Particularly noteworthy were the editorial manifesto: *Notre humanisme*, and M. Maritain's *Des chances historiques d'une nouvelle chrétienté*. Rather unexpectedly, *ETUDES CARMELITAINES* now publishes a special "Humanism" number. Its contents include *Humanisme et Mystique*, brief biographies of celebrated Carmelite humanists of the Renaissance, an invaluable comparative study by Prof. De Corte of the phenomenology of the "mystical experience" of the pagan Plotinus and the Christian saint John of the Cross, and an important series of book-reviews *autour de l'humanisme* by Gustave Thibon. But the most important contributions are two lectures delivered by M. Maritain at Santander on *Humanism and Culture*, perhaps the most carefully thought-out contribution to the subject that has yet been made. The English reader will perhaps be repelled by M. Maritain's very abstract treatment of the subject and his rather pontifical manner, but this latter is perhaps not unbefitting so magisterial and definitive a pronouncement. Meanwhile the polite, cosy, Godless humanism of the disciples of Irving Babbitt is not being neglected. Their attempt at Being Human while ignoring God and man's need for

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Him receives lively treatment from Fr. Russell Wilbur in *Humanism and Humanity: Why Mystical Animals can't be Tamed* in THE COMMONWEAL (October 4). He concludes in language that any Babbitt can understand:

the Eternal is a jealous elf  
He wants the whole show for His pelf  
He eats up all that's not Himself  
*Jehovah-God is a consuming Fire.*  
that all must burn is His decree  
heroes and saints in ecstasy  
riff-raff in rutting agony  
the whole world burn and all and He  
*the great I AM Himself is burning FIRE.*

It is not a tame universe but, by divine permission, wild—game-flavoured as a hawk's wing.

This is no doubt the reason why men, made to copulate eternally—that is in the ever-present, timeless, spaceless depths of our own souls—with the Eternal Fiery Source of the whole blazing ramparts of space and time can't, for the nice little parochial purposes of our earthly social life, be tamed. Mystical animals can't be tamed.

NOTICE. *Penguin* has been asked why he seldom refers to the many excellent contributions that appear in THE CATHOLIC HERALD, G.K.'S WEEKLY, THE CATHOLIC WORKER or our weekly ecclesiastical newspapers. He hereby answers that he takes it for granted that his readers have read these already, and that he conceives it to be his business to draw their attention to periodicals—and especially monthlies and quarterlies—to which they are less likely to be regular subscribers. But this year 1935 which has seen the full transformation and consolidation of THE CATHOLIC HERALD must not be allowed to pass without a word of gratitude. From its earliest days BLACKFRIARS has drawn attention to the need for a Catholic secular newspaper and has appealed for a more generous interpretation of the meaning of "the Catholic Press." THE CATHOLIC HERALD has supplied that need and realized that interpretation in a way which has surpassed the most sanguine expectations. *Penguin* assumes that his readers find it no less indispensable for their weekly sustenance than he does.

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- CONTEMPORANEA. COLOSSEUM (September): *Prolegomena to a Christian Philosophy* by Basil Wrighton: the place of philosophy in the Christian's life.
- ESPRIT (November): *Où va l'Inde?* by Raja Rao: the tragedy of India, the significance of Gandhi and the menace of communism.
- HOCHLAND (November): *Custos, quid de nocte?* Karl Thieme discovers the significance of the thomist doctrine of Grace.
- HOWARDIAN: *Laxton Ramble* by Thomas Gilby, O.P.; *Other Sheep* by H. St. J.: the meaning of Catholicism and the demands which being a Catholic makes of us.
- MUSIC AND LITURGY: *Plain Chant and the Plain Man* by Eric Gill: "Liturgy is public worship; it is never anything else. . . We think of 'The Liturgy' as a special set of prayers . . . and forget that such things are valueless unless they represent and express our own worship."
- ORIENTATIONS (October 15): *Le communisme rédempteur* by I. Draime, O.P.: Communism is right in holding that human happiness is a social and collective affair and is unattainable by individualism: it must be met by a "grande renaissance catholique."
- PAX (November): Excellent editorial on the relation of contemplation to Catholic Action.
- VIE INTELLECTUELLE (October 10): Another *Protestantism* number with an admirable *Billet de Christianus* deploring Catholics' "attitude partisane, qui ne vient pas d'un amour vivant de la Vérité, mais plutôt d'un attachement sectaire au catholicisme comme à un système ou aux préjugés d'un parti."

PENGUIN.