

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

UNITY AND LIBERTY. Intemperate attacks by powerful French Catholic periodicals on the Dominican-edited SEPT and VIE INTELLECTUELLE, particularly on account of their "working-class" sympathies, have been followed by a public pronouncement of the highest importance from the Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris.¹ An English version of this pronouncement (unfortunately not wholly accurate), appeared in THE TABLET of May 1st. It opens with a reminder of the Holy Father's stern warning in *Divini Redemptoris* that those who cause division among Catholics "must bear before God the most terrible responsibility." But, the Cardinal goes on to explain, unity among Catholics itself demands liberty, variety and mutual tolerance: "In everything the Church demands that the laws of true charity be respected. Hence there are in the Church different schools, numerous institutions, extremely varied currents of thought and action. Together all these movements proclaim the love of a wide liberty, and so they favour true progress." The need for Catholic unity was never so imperative as to-day; but this ideal of unity is to be realized in the old principle, *In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*, not in a dead-level of uniformity imposed by unauthorized individuals or groups, let alone by the assumption by laymen of the prerogatives and duties of the divinely-appointed shepherds of the Church: "The Church very wisely repudiates confusion of powers, a thing which in every society begets anarchy, the worst of evils." His Eminence then turns attention to the specific question of working-class

¹ In a subsequent letter to General de Castelnau, President of the Fédération Nationale Catholique, Cardinal Verdier assures him: "Je n'ai mandaté personne pour appliquer à d'éminentes personnalités les observations contenues dans mon dernier appel . . . Je désirais tellement me tenir au-dessus de tous les partis que j'ai communiqué à *La Croix* seulement le texte de cet appel." Since this, however, Cardinal Liénart of Lille has published the text of Cardinal Verdier's pronouncement together with the following express statement: "L'hebdomadaire *Sept et La Vie Intellectuelle*, dirigés par les RR. PP. Dominicains, ayant été l'objet d'accusations aussi graves que tendancieuses de la part de certaines autres publications catholiques, S.-E. le Cardinal Verdier a fait paraître une note qui rappelle en termes très clairs la pensée de l'Eglise sur tels incidents, Le Cardinal Evêque de Lille fait sienne cette déclaration."

sympathies: the Church is at the present time faced with a new and terrible situation which demands new and very difficult and delicate methods of approach:

She sees with a love full of sadness that the working classes are escaping from her motherly influence, and for their own happiness she earnestly longs to bring them back to Christ. To this end, with great courage, she has in these latter times given a very particular emphasis (*éclat*) to her traditional social teaching, and in so doing has justified many of the claims (*revendications*) of the workers.² This work of adaptation must be undertaken by all generous souls. Everybody will agree that this is a particularly delicate task. Imprudent initiatives, unfortunate compromises, words or writings in which the traditional teaching of the Church is sometimes misunderstood or travestied, all these are human weaknesses, and more particularly to be feared in so new a domain. The Church is well aware of it, and for this reason she requires of the Hierarchy to keep watch over these troops of the vanguard and, without crushing their enthusiasm, to eliminate their misunderstandings and mistakes. But with the same energy she forbids her other children to set themselves up systematically as censors of their brethren or, what is worse, to assume the office and place of the Hierarchy in condemning them. It is certainly allowable, in the domain of free opinions and of attitudes which are left to the free choice of all, to make remarks, to express reservations and even criticisms. Progress is in part due to this liberty. But if they are to be lawful, such remarks or criticisms should be subject to several conditions:

(a) They must retain a personal character and must never be made, especially by laymen, in the name of the Church or in the place of the Hierarchy. Let us not forget that the Hierarchy alone is qualified to judge its own personal action, and that its role is generally more discreet and beneficial than that of noisy publicity wherein personal or partisan interests are sometimes ill concealed.

(b) These observations or criticisms must avoid prejudice, must always have a scrupulous regard for truth, and must be imbued throughout with fraternal charity.

(c) Especially must they beware, in dealing with individual matters of fact, of those generalizations which in fact are ordinarily nothing but calumnies. It is so easy to commit injustice in carrying on controversy!

² Rendered by *The Tablet*: "she has lately given to her traditional doctrine a particular interpretation, and in so doing she has legitimized many of the pretensions of the working classes." Small wonder that the Catholic social movement is apt to be suspected of a sinister opportunism!

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Golden rules of indisputable soundness and timeliness, which we would see hung up in a prominent place in the office of every Catholic publicist.

CAPITAL AND THE CATHOLIC PRESS. To THE TABLET this pronouncement "has a profound significance in view of the present political and economic situation in France." To BLACKFRIARS it has a keener interest by reason of the close bond of sympathy which unites us to the French group of Dominican periodicals, ("*cette liaison spirituelle qui existe entre nous*," as a director of Editions du Cerf recently described it to us). The intervention of the two French Cardinals (Cardinal Liénart has made the declaration his own) is the more gratifying in view of the fact that the reaction of SEPT and LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE under the considerable provocation of the attacks levelled upon them has set a high example of their own lessons of truthfulness and charity, and, we may add, of almost heroic patience. It is, moreover, in some measure a vindication of their aim and policy, an aim and policy which we are happy to think corresponds closely to our own. But the Cardinals' pronouncement has an interest and importance far greater and more permanent than the interest of this unhappy and ephemeral polemic. It is an authoritative recognition that the "Catholic unity" for which the Holy Father so insistently pleads is not to be understood as a kind of *Gleichschaltung*, a homogeneous uniformity in which the free expression of legitimate opinion is suppressed, and in which Catholic opinion is dictated by individuals or groups however influential, worthy, or powerful, but as an organic unity which not only allows but requires the liberty and the variety of its component members. This is a matter of the utmost importance to the Catholics of England as well as to the Catholics of France, and we trust that the special number devoted to the subject which, with the special approval of Cardinal Verdier, is to be issued by SEPT on May 28th will be widely read and studied in this country. How little these principles are understood among us is illustrated by recent incidents connected with the activities of a group of Catholics who, presumably to counteract the effect of what looks like a pro-Fascist semi-monopoly in the expression of Catholic opinion, have thought fit to publish their own views

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on certain current events. We hold no brief either for this group or for their opinions, nor do we contest the right of any journal to decline to publish those views. But when one such journal goes on to denounce the members of this group for parading themselves as "representatives of the Catholic Church, whereas they are merely self-appointed censors of others," the pot seems to be calling the kettle black; and we are astonished that this action is applauded by the Editor of *THE MONTH*. If these individuals do indeed claim to represent the official judgment of the Catholic Church or even the general opinion of their fellow-Catholics on (for instance) Addis Ababa or Guernica, then they deserve all they get, and more. But, in fairness, do they? And if they do not, why are these people to be denied the right of expressing their views on current events and topics, provided they be consistent with Catholic teaching? Or are those whose wealth enables them to possess and control our newspapers to be allowed a monopoly in such expression of opinion? And if so, why? What right to the free expression of opinion has the proprietor or editor or subsidiser of this or that Catholic paper which the members of this group (for instance) have not got? These are serious questions which call for a plain answer. The cost of running a newspaper makes it inevitable, under present circumstances, that our Catholic Press should be financed by capital, and a more praiseworthy way of employing capital can hardly be imagined. But there is a growing suspicion among some people (an example is recorded in the current *CATHOLIC WORKER*) that the interests of capital may be permitted to determine editorial policy, and that wealth may be allowed to dictate Catholic opinion. It is a suspicion which, so far at least as England is concerned, is probably groundless, but it is a danger which from the nature of things must be always present. The courageous action of Cardinal Verdier is a warning that the shepherds of the Church will not allow monopolization of the organs of Catholic opinion by wealth, prestige, or even merit, and still less the unauthorized silencing of dissentient opinion however little endowed with the goods of this world. We cannot, however, conclude these observations without a word of recognition and gratitude for the generosity with which some of our English Catholic editors give space for the expression of

views which do not always agree with their own.

CENSORIOUSNESS AND CRITICISM. We are very fully aware of the overwhelming difficulties which confront the conscientious Catholic editor and journalist; particularly harassing must be the task of those responsible for producing a Catholic weekly. Those who have accepted so toilsome and responsible a task in the service of the Church deserve the most prayerful gratitude of their fellow-Catholics, and the utmost sympathy and indulgence for inevitable mistakes and oversights. Unkindly baiting of the Catholic Press is all too easy a game, and one in which we have no wish to share. If we would offer any comments on our Catholic contemporaries, it is only to the end that we may perhaps assist these men in their aim, so important to us all, of making their papers really efficient and in the fullest sense truly Christian and Catholic, asking from them as good as we give. It is for this reason that we would plead for a clearer recognition of the borderline between legitimate and illegitimate criticism of fellow-Catholics, and for the scrupulous observance of such indispensable rules as those formulated by Cardinal Verdier. We have already had occasion to call attention to what we consider to be lapses of taste, fairness, charity and discipline in this matter. There have been others: too great a readiness to call in question, or put in inverted commas, the Catholic belief and practice of those whose political views or activities do not coincide with those of the paper concerned; particularly deplorable, in our opinion, have been the consistent and almost feverish efforts of certain Catholic organs to discredit the personal religion, sincerity and orthodoxy of those unhappy Catholic Spaniards and Basques who, whatever may be their mistakes, inconsistencies or even errors, will be faced with the truly fearful task (if we are to believe the same papers) of preserving and rebuilding some Catholic life in whatever the war leaves of a Spanish or Basque Republic. We are not here concerned with whether or not there are sometimes real grounds for assertions of this kind; our point is that a lay or priest journalist has no authority to pass judgments which amount in effect to an assumption of the right of pronouncing fellow-Catholics excommunicate, or to un-Church them in the eyes of the public. A more recent lapse is the printed reference of an anonymous journalist to the "completeness with which

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he [Mr. Eric Gill] has succumbed to the great Communist sophistry." No grounds are stated for this extremely grave charge, other than that Mr. Gill advocates a collective or corporate ownership of industrial enterprises by the workers; an opinion shared by many reputable Catholic sociologists at the present time. There may be other grounds but they are not stated. We would urge, however, that this is a charge which no Catholic, other than Mr. Gill's own divinely-appointed pastors, has any business to make, and we would respectfully submit that the printing and publishing of such a statement, if not actually an offence against truth, cannot easily be acquitted of being an offence against charity and ecclesiastical order. Doubtless, the due amendment or explanation will have appeared before these words are published. But the incident serves to illustrate the relevance of Cardinal Verdier's statement in countries other than his own. There is a criticism which, however outspoken and vigorous, is truly helpful and constructive, and indeed conducive to true Catholic unity and progress; there is also a censoriousness, which is Pontifical in more senses than one, which can only be destructive and disruptive.

FASCISM. Our passing use of the word "Fascism" reminds us that we have been rebuked for the way in which we use it and have volunteered to produce a definition (in COLOSSEUM, March 1937). In our claustral remoteness from the realities of the transalpine world, it all appears absurdly simple. Once upon a time (so we are informed by hard-boiled realists), there was a man called Benito Mussolini who started something in his native land which he called Fascismo. Then came other men in other lands who started, or tried to start, similar things of their lands. Whether it was Benito who put the idea into their heads I do not know, nor does it seem to matter. These other men usually called their things by other names (a certain Oswald was less wise), but deracinate Anglo-Saxons, Frenchmen and suchlike scum wanted a name to cover all these similar things. And the word they used was Benito's own name for his own original article: a typical specimen of an employment of terms familiar to logicians as analogical predication, whereby a number of diverse objects are designated by the same name owing to their similarities to a *summum analogatum*, in this

case the aforesaid something started by B. Mussolini. Which being so, we offer as a water-tight definition of Fascism: A name applied analogically to divers regimes, parties, movements, governments, mysticisms, mythologies, *Weltanschauungen* and what-not, which, having their origin during or subsequent to the World-War 1914-1918, possess characteristics which approximate in various manners and degrees to the distinctive characteristics of those associated in Italy with Benito Mussolini. Among the pleasing of these analogous characteristics may be mentioned: the forcible suppression of criticism and discussion; the concentration of all means of forming public opinion into the hands of a Party or State; the illegalization of the right to strike coupled with the retention of the private ownership of industry; something very hard to define which the French call a *Mystique du Chef* with all its concomitant mythology and hokum; the pretension of a single individual or party to embody the will of the people; various forms and degrees of hypernationalism or racialism, with their concomitant arrogance, militarism, and the hatred and fear which they engender; the identification, or tendency to identify, a single party with the State or nation; various forms and degrees of totalitarianism and State absolutism. There are many other characteristics, doubtless not all bad, and not all shared alike by all the states and parties which have come to be known as Fascist. For ourselves, we feel no call to defend or attack foreign variations of Fascism, so long as they keep themselves to themselves. We feel that we can be far more usefully and less dangerously employed than in displaying tender feelings towards the various manifestations of this phenomenon on any and every occasion. We think that the problems at our own doorstep are too pressing to allow us to spend much time in discussing the value of Fascism in preserving a Catholic cultural tradition which we have not got. But we think it well to explain the way in which we understand that the word is commonly used in current English, and the way in which it is used in these pages.

CONTEMPORANEA. CATHOLIC GAZETTE (May): Editorial comment on *Divini Redemptoris* regrets the title of the English translation. Splendid article on *Capitalism and Private Property* by Fr. A. Winsborough.

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- CITE CHRETIENNE (April 20): The aims, achievements and prospects of the Continental movement towards liturgical use of the vernacular described by Dom Paul De Vooght, O.S.B. P. Braun, O.P., gives a critical summary of contemporary criticism of the Gospels.
- COMMONWEAL (April 16): *Communism: Fascism* by Luigi Sturzo. (May 7): *Spanish Relief Number*.
- HOCHLAND (May): *Der Anglikanismus und die Ostkirche* by Nikolaus von Arseniev.
- IRELAND TO-DAY (May): *Monetary Reform* by Eric Gill.
- MONTH (May): A commentary on the Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* by Fr. J. Murray, S.J.; Fr. Thurston unearths another Poltergeist of particular interest; W. Randolph is good on *Bristol in History*.
- NOUVELLE REVUE THEOLOGIQUE (April): A short but penetrating article on the Christian Philosophy of Progress by P. Malvez.
- VIE INTELLECTUELLE (April 25): A very important study by P. Serpillanges, O.P., who expounds the "genius" of the Bergsonian philosophy of free-will, comparing it with that of St. Thomas; M. Bergson himself follows with a note of appreciation.
- VIE SPIRITUELLE (May): An exceptionally valuable number deals with such important matters as *Le sens chrétien du travail intellectuel* (R. G. Renard, O.P.); *Directives spirituelles de l'Eglise: Allez aux pauvres* (A. M. Carré, O.P.); *Théologie et Spiritualité* (M. D. Chenu, O.P.); *Pour un humanisme théologique*. Also a text from St. Basil on *Riches and Money*.

PENGUIN.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE "ITALIANATES" AND REUNION

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

SIR,—As a regular reader of BLACKFRIARS and one who appreciates your valuable periodical, I ask for an explanation of your statement that *Reunion*, in which I am deeply interested, "has nothing to do with the devotional exuberances of the handful of Italianates who have brought discredit on this extremely important movement in the Church of England." I hardly think you would have called the late Lord Halifax one of these "Italianates." But who are they? I have been for many years intimately associated with the reunion movement and, honestly, I do not know of such a "handful." Nor am I aware of the