

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

HEROISM THROUGH HUMILITY. Père Sertillanges, O.P., contributes to *LA VIE SPIRITUELLE* (October) some thoughts which will be found helpful by the many who entertain a sneaking fear that "the foundation of the Christian virtues" induces timidity and paralyzes action. We translate freely:

It is often supposed that humility and cowardice go together, and that the man who makes little account of himself will make little success of life. This is the very reverse of the truth. "Timidity is a disease of *pride*," says M. Francis Chevassu. The really humble man has no fears; for does not fear arise precisely from a solicitude for oneself? Once I have disregarded my ego as something negligible, nay contemptible, what reason can I have for fear? Ambrose before Theodosius; Chrysostom before Eudoxia; Thomas More before Henry VIII, these are examples of the heroism of humility. Never can one raise one's head so bravely in the face of the world, of circumstances, of dangers and obstacles, unless one has bowed it in humility before God. When reality affrights me, I have only to make this interior act of humility in order to affright it in its turn.

Nietzsche has defined heroism as a state of soul in which the subject no longer takes account of himself. If we accept this definition, we may say that the humble man is always heroic, for everything is to be preferred and dared before his own personal interests. He *expects* to be contradicted, thwarted, misunderstood, calumniated: is it not always thus when we refuse deliberately to follow the crowd? The humble man cares nothing for all that; he cannot be discouraged. Once he has made up his mind, no personal considerations will hinder his carrying out his resolution. Nothing is too costly to him who makes no calculations. His humility disarms his enemies; for what can be done to harm a man who has once made up his mind to be of no account? . . .

It was, I think, M. André Suares who said, "Pride has as much resemblance to courage as has a soul in hell to a soul in heaven." The soul in heaven, absorbed in God, is on fire with Him, stayed by divine power; the soul in hell is left to feed upon itself, it has turned away from the source of strength and is abandoned to despair.

The humility which fears nothing will dare everything for the interests it has substituted for the interests of self. It will exhale God, says St. Thomas Aquinas, for it has already inhaled Him. It will be ready to dare all things for the truth and the good. It will act with equal energy in big things and little, for it is deter-

BLACKFRIARS

mined to do *all* things. It will seek no reward and no praise, for it will deem the greatest reward to have nothing. . . .

Moreover, humility being uninhibited by any personal consideration, being unconfined by any selfish ambition, will engender a limitless courage which will stop at nothing. It will forget what has been accomplished and think only of what remains to be done; its left hand will not know what its right hand doeth. It defies paralysis and premature age, engenders an infinite capacity for taking pains. Above all, it will never compromise with that servility of which Saint-Beuve thought when he wrote, "*La plupart des hommes célèbres meurent dans un véritable état de prostitution.*"

The prostitution of ideals is for those who ask of life wealth, praise, glamour, an idle tranquillity. He who has made renouncement of self for the One Thing Necessary will persevere to the end. He clings to it without fussiness, without fear, without becoming disheartened. It is enough for him to seize opportunities without seeking renown or publicity. *Les étoiles, qui seules savent l'heure, ne tintinnabulent pas.*

SIMPLICISM is, apparently, an American neologism for a vice which we have often denounced, and of which, perhaps, we have more often been guilty, in these pages. It is thus described and trounced by John A. Loftus in *THE COMMONWEAL* (September 18):

Simplicism is a habit of mind prompting thinkers to ignore difficult technical aspects of a problem in favour of a solution drawn with neat logic from high and remote abstractions. It is the tendency to find single cure-alls and panaceas for complex diseases requiring each its particular treatment. It is the urge to reduce all the tangled threads of causation to a single irrelevant generality. It is the defence-reaction which escapes analytic thinking by claiming the solution is ready to hand. It is always grandiose; usually eloquent; inevitably facile and futile. The simplicist attitude is doing the Church no good.

A particularly conspicuous manifestation of the simplicist mentality is found in the triumphant I-told-you-so tone with which "Apostleship-of-the-obvious" writers point out the relevance to current economic problems of various passages in the two famous encyclicals. Of course Leo and Pius made observations relevant to present-day issues. It is platitudinous to say so. But do or do not those papal documents lay down a tangible programme of resettlement that is, in some not-too-remote way, applicable to economic maladjustments in America to-day? If they do, what is it? What is to be done, and why? How do the programmes of

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

various secular groups agree or disagree with the papal programme? What correlation can be established between Catholic theory and measurable facts in the economic order? Answer these questions. Stop these interminable reiterations of generalities. Then perhaps the Church will be recognized more widely as a reconstructive social force; and will have greater objective claim to boast of itself as such.

Another simplicist battle-cry is the complacent and perpetually repeated assertion that our doctrinal riches can heal society's wounds, that the sanity of Christian thought will open the path to social rehabilitation, that our inherited spiritual tradition contains all the remedies for economic and social disorder. This is simplicism riotous and untrammelled; at the bottom of it is sheer mental sloth. It is a string of half-truths. Those who talk in this smug vein are oblivious of the gap between our large ethical theorizations and the concrete conditions of contemporary industrial civilization; they are unwilling to set to work on all the hard, close thinking that must be done before that gap will ever be bridged. . . .

The chief gaucherie of the simplicist camp is to advance platitudes as cure-alls for economic sickness. First place among these platitudes is easily taken by the doctrine that the Church's wonderful salvific function for the economic order is to bring about a renewal of the Christian spirit that will operate automatically to adjust all ills. A beautiful thought. Like all platitudes it is, of course, true—more or less. It is the Church's function to bring about this spiritual renewal, or at least to strive to bring it about; and when it is come, it will make all things new—probably (I find it hard to speculate with any sense of realism on such an exalted and distant eventuality). But it is clearly not going to happen in our generation, nor for many generations to come. A leavening process is necessarily slow. Meanwhile the world shrugs its shoulders and sets about trying to fix a bad situation of to-day. A spiritual Golden Age of centuries hence is a poor remedy for current problems. . . .

[Simplicism engenders among outsiders] an attitude of mingled scorn and pity toward Catholic assertions of competence to solve social and economic problems. This attitude will continue to be strengthened and justified, so long as Catholics advance banalities, generalizations and highly simplicist solutions, rather than realistic analyses. It is high time to cancel this pretentious smugness; to cultivate an approach that will not disdain to be humble, objective, scientific, concretely constructive. The skeleton of an essentially sane Christian tradition we already have, to give strength and coherence to that which we shall build around it. It is time now to do the building.

BLACKFRIARS

It is time, too, that these things were said. But if simplicism may be a dangerous escape-mechanism from the facing of hard and complex realities, so too may an exaggerated fear of simplicism give a plausible excuse for sloth and inertia. The impossibility for most of us of thorough study of the complexities of a problem must not be allowed to dissuade us from doing our best with inadequate equipment in the hope of making some contribution towards their solution. If we may yet venture a platitude: our crying need is for co-operation of theologians and moralists with experts in other fields: between clergy and laity.

PROGRESS AND PROCESS. We suspect a trace of clerical simplicism in an article on *Social Atavism* by Fr. H. E. G. Rope in the current number of *THE CROSS AND THE PLOUGH* in which he offers high praise and severe criticism of Fr. Tindal-Atkinson's remarkable study on *The Music of a Dead Culture* in the February *BLACKFRIARS*. Referring to pp. 117-119 of the article he says: "It is begging the question and assuming the truth of the progress theory condemned a few pages earlier, to call normal human life 'social atavism.' To condemn the peasants of France and Eastern Canada and the healthier part of mankind as 'social atavists' betokens an Anglo-centric criterion which is indeed an anachronism!" Fr. Tindal-Atkinson condemned no authentic peasantry; and he assumed the truth of no progress theory. He simply faced what Fr. Rope seems to prefer to ignore, the historic fact of a radical cultural change of which, whether for better or for worse, we are the inheritors. Rejection of Progress, a judgment of value, does not justify our rejection of historic Process, which is a judgment of fact. Nor, because we cannot regard "the greed of commercial Jacobins for an act of God," can we regard its historic outcome as other than a reality—*our* reality—which divine providence has permitted to be the *milieu* in which *we* are to proclaim and spread the Kingdom of God. We cannot re-establish right values until we face real facts; we must accept, if we cannot acquiesce in or approve, our historic destiny. Fr. Tindal-Atkinson faced the problem and stated it admirably, though he confessed he did not know the answer. Fr. Rope, by confusing fact with value, runs away from the problem and declines to look for

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

an answer. Perhaps the problem is insoluble, save by a real "act of God" and the coming of the new Dark Ages described by Wells and, far better, by John Collier in that grim novel *Tom's a-cold*. But meanwhile we have no business to shirk it by confusing issues.

MUST R.C.S BE C.O.S? Laymen also may be perilously *simpliste* when they come to treat of delicate and complex matters of faith and morals. The very urgent problem of conscientious objection on the part of Catholics in modern warfare is one with which professional theologians seem very reluctant to deal. Mr. E. I. Watkin in *COLOSSEUM* shows no such bashfulness. It is a well-known fact (though not perhaps so well-known as it should be) that many competent theologians hold, with varying qualifications and very varying degrees of tenacity, that under modern conditions the declaration and initiation of war can never or seldom be justified conformably to Christian principles and Catholic tradition. This view, which is certainly very tenable and highly probable (though quite respectable arguments have been advanced against it) is raised by Mr. Watkin to the dignity of a certainty, although the reasons which he advances, though weighty, can hardly be regarded as scientifically conclusive. From this he goes on to argue that participation in such a war involves co-operation in evil, and that consequently Catholics have the "duty" to refuse military service and "should be conscientious objectors." We have no wish to gainsay Mr. Watkin's conclusion, to which he is fully entitled and which is certainly arguable; but we would urge that, failing an explicit declaration on the part of ecclesiastical authority, a conclusion which places such an immense burden on the Catholic conscience should not be advanced so categorically without very much better reasons than those brought forward. Many factors ignored by Mr. Watkin must be considered before so startling and onerous a conclusion can be stated with the necessary scientific certainty. Of particular importance is the distinction between the rights and wrongs of initiating a war (with which theologians have been chiefly concerned) and the rights and duties of the individual citizen once the war has broken out when many other factors and interests become involved beyond the original *casus belli*. The Spanish revolt forms a

BLACKFRIARS

striking example. Many a Catholic adherent of the CEDA may, before the outbreak, have held strongly that the use of force against the Popular Front would be morally wrong and, even subsequently, have considered the military rebellion unjustifiable. Nevertheless, once the war had become a fact, many who deplored it may have rightly and reasonably considered it their bounden duty to join the insurgent ranks as the only means, under the circumstances, of saving their country from Bolshevism. Recognition of this distinction would seem to be implicit in the attitude of the Holy See towards the Ethiopian war. Before that war, the Holy Father did everything in his power to prevent it and condemn it in advance; but once it had broken out the efforts of the Holy See were reasonably confined to bringing it to a speedy conclusion and prevent its spreading. This important distinction is but one of many which must be borne in mind before we can charge Catholics with being necessarily guilty of mortal sin when they take part in modern warfare. Mr. Watkin's article will, however, be valuable if it induces moralists to give more thorough consideration to this extremely difficult and delicate matter which may, at any time, become an urgent one for the consciences of Catholics.

We welcome, too, a leaflet announcing "Pax,"

an association of those who maintain that spiritual activity and personal integrity are the first means towards the removal of the causes of war and that all men of good will have the duty to work actively for peace and justice; and that, meanwhile, individuals have the right to abstain, on grounds of conscience, from any sort of warlike activity.

The association, which is under the presidency of Mr. Watkin, has as a primary object "To give practical support and professional help to those of any nationality who at any time come into collision with the civil or military authorities on account of conscientious refusal of military service." Its "Principles" are:

Though the use of force for the vindication of an undoubted right is in some circumstances and under certain conditions allowable to mankind, both individually and collectively, nevertheless under the conditions of to-day in all wars waged between nations for national ends the moral and physical evils involved must enormously exceed any possible legitimate gains by either side.

For this and other reasons such wars are morally unjustifiable.

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

It follows that those who are convinced of the truth of this have the duty to do every legitimate thing in their power to remove the causes of such wars and to encourage policies and individual action that would hamper warlike activity, and consequently have the right and duty to refuse to take part in such wars.

Delete "and duty," and we should be more inclined to give "Pax" unqualified support.

CATHOLICISM AND FASCISM. English Catholics may take a legitimate pride in the cleaning-up process which their Press has undergone in recent years in the matter of sectarian bigotry. Not so long ago, pointless gibes at the vagaries of Anglican dignitaries and clergymen—gibes sometimes true, seldom charitable, never helpful—formed the stock-in-trade makeweight for many Catholic editors. To-day such a feature in our Catholic weeklies is so rare that its unprovoked appearance would cause astonishment. Anglicans, however, would seem to have less reason to take pride in *THE CHURCH TIMES*, which, clinging tenaciously to the older tradition of polemical "religious" journalism, seems still to think any stick good enough with which to beat "Rome." After a pontifical and categorical pronouncement in its issue of October 2nd to the effect that "The Roman Church is now aligned with the Extreme Right," it followed up in the next number with this unbelievable nonsense:

We have said, and we repeat, that the Roman Catholic Church, with its immense international influence, is now definitely allied with the forces of reaction. We have said, and we repeat, that this is a fact of the most profound importance. Incidentally, we are naturally encouraged by the fact that such distinguished Churchmen as the Archbishop of York and the Dean of Winchester take our view of the situation. Fr. Woodlock has been making another heroic attempt to rebut our view of the situation. . . .

("Repeat" is right.) Having made the most of Fr. Woodlock's recent journalistic enterprizes, *THE CHURCH TIMES* concludes:

The attempt, obviously organized and officially directed by the Roman Catholic authorities, to excite British opinion in favour of the Spanish rebels depends largely on inflaming indignation against the outrages committed by the Government forces. . . . The Roman Catholic Church cannot get out of it. Its most influential spokesmen in England eulogized the Abyssinian cam-

BLACKFRIARS

paigned as an effort to extend Christian civilization. Its priests and its lay apologists are now busy describing a military rebellion, supported by foreign Powers and largely dependent on Moslem mercenaries, as a war for the Christian Faith. The Roman Church is definitely allied with extreme reaction, and the wise judgment of the authoritative leaders of the English Church may yet save the Faith. Rome is for slavery, Canterbury for liberty.

Modestly declining to put in a claim to be "influential spokesmen" of the Roman Catholic Church, we would nevertheless submit gracefully that a perusal of our pages in recent months, with their quotations from numerous "influential" Catholic periodicals, might have convinced THE CHURCH TIMES either that "the attempt obviously organized and officially directed" has been singularly inefficient or that Rome's "slavery" is singularly unservile. (And we seem to remember that BLACKFRIARS, in common with many other Catholic periodicals, was pretty severe about the Abyssinian war.) While it may suit THE CHURCH TIMES to regard Fr. Woodlock as a "spokesman," and to ignore our humble selves and the many who think with us, it yet deserves to be recorded that periodicals more representative of the Society of Jesus than those controlled by Lord Rothermere and Lady Houston view matters somewhat differently. The (English) MESSENGER OF THE SACRED HEART (October) publishes a fine appeal for *Prayer for Spain*:

It is of importance if we are to pray aright, and in a way pleasing to God, that we should have right thoughts about the struggle, and right feelings in regard of both the warring parties. It is not enough to feel indignation against those who have outraged the Blessed Sacrament and killed or tortured priests and nuns. It is not enough, even, to feel compassion and admiration for these who have died because they are the servants of Christ. The Archbishop of Westminster, giving directions for a triduum of reparation, says: "We are convinced that the disorders which afflict us, class strife, social unrest, international hatreds, wars, are permitted by God as a chastisement for the world's neglect and defiance of His law," and he goes on to ask whether we, Catholics, have not paid too little heed to the warning uttered by Pope Leo XIII nearly half a century ago: "The cause of the poor and the toilers is the pressing question of the hour. . . . A remedy had to be found, and found quickly, for the wretchedness and misery burdening, so heavily and so unjustly, the working classes."

We cannot, then, think of the Spanish war merely as a war

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

between religion and irreligion, between Christ's cause and that of Satan. Practising Catholics are fighting on both sides. And while there may be many among the Rights who have a "thirst after justice" for the poor, and many among the Lefts who are merely seizing the chance to vent a hatred against God that comes straight from hell; yet the remote, but real, cause of this war is certainly the social injustice condemned by the Popes. We cannot therefore, while we pray, take sides absolutely. If we condemn, as we must, the indifference of a Government that, before the conflict began, tolerated the savage destruction of churches, and has openly aimed at the ruin of all religious education; yet, also, it is not our part to judge as to the necessity of an armed rising, or to justify the manner in which it is conducted.

The Editor of THE MONTH, claiming a superior acquaintance with the facts, is positive that the Spanish revolt was justified and that the Spanish insurgents are *not* Fascists (what then *is* this "authoritarian" state proclaimed at Burgos?), but adds a timely note on Catholicism and Fascism:

Those who are under the delusion that the Catholic Church is somehow in alliance with Fascism had better read and ponder the long and vehement protest by the Pope issued on June 29, 1931, against the outrages, preceded by calumny and accompanied by violence, committed by a so-called Catholic State run on Fascist lines. It has been published by the C.T.S. with the title *Non abbiamo bisogno* . . . [In it the Pope] went on roundly to condemn as unlawful the taking of the Fascist oath of obedience to civil authority imposed by the State even on children, unless it is qualified by profession of allegiance to the Catholic Faith, and he exposed the whole endeavour of the [Fascist] Government "to monopolize completely the young . . . for the exclusive advantage of a party," as "based on an ideology which clearly resolves itself into a real pagan worship of the State." In the end, though he refrains from condemning Fascismo as a whole, yet in its own interests he points out clearly "what is contrary to Catholic doctrine and practice in the programme and activities of the Party." *Non abbiamo bisogno* stands ever for Catholic guidance as a thorough unveiling of the unsound pretences of Totalitarianism.

We commend this authoritative and most vigorous of Encyclicals to the notice of THE CHURCH TIMES.

"PASSING THE BUCK" heads a pungent article on anti-Communism by Mr. Donald Attwater in THE COMMONWEAL (October 2) from which we extract:

BLACKFRIARS

Communism can be successfully fought only by removing the causes of Communism. These causes are, for the people at large, economic and social. Economics as such is no concern of Christianity; but if economic and social conditions are fraught with injustice and oppression, then it is the business of Christianity to refuse avoidable co-operation with them and to protest loudly and unceasingly at their continuance; and it is the duty of individual Christians to make those protests effective by the appropriate means, whatever they may be found to be. Until serious Catholics, rank and file as well as leaders, realize that economic and social injustices have a greater claim on their attention than sectarian interests and girls playing tennis in shorts, Communism will increase, priests will be burned alive, nuns ravished. A Catholic workman writing recently against the "means-test" ended his article with the words, "Our Catholic leaders are not very active in this matter. Small wonder the Catholic workers follow the Communists' lead." Plain truth.

In other words, Communism must be fought, not with hot air, not with politics of the Right, but with true religion, with faith, hope, charity and justice. One of the gravest dangers is that religious people allow themselves to be thrown by Communist violence and success into the arms of opposite parties in which Christians should not be found (just as the converse happens). Processions of our Lady accompanied by men triumphantly waving rifles, and "anti-Red" militia whose uniform includes a badge of the Sacred Heart, churches used as arsenals by anti-Communist troops (all reported recently from Spain, the last by a well-known Italian Catholic)—these are the sort of thing that give colour to Communist charges against Christianity, that confirm the belief that Catholics will stick at nothing to "down" Communism and uphold flagrantly unjust social and economic systems and the material possessions of the Church. The fact that Communism would establish a system fundamentally in opposition to the divinely created nature of man must not blind us to the fact that in so far as they testify against oppression and wickedness Communists are right. When we protest as loudly and more effectively, then they will be forced again to say (as Peter Maurin excellently puts it), "See how these Christians love one another," instead of, as at present, "See how these Christians pass the buck."

CONTEMPORANEA. CATHOLIC WORLD (October): *Aldous Huxley*,
Moralist by Theodore Maynard.

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

- CHRISTENDOM (September): The Editor's *Civil War in Europe*, Waldemar Gurian's *Christianity in the Third Reich*, C. S. Gillet's *Nature and Grace*, and W. G. Peck's *The Sacramental Principle* (a first-rate summary of Thomism) are all outstanding contributions to Christian sociology.
- CROSS AND THE PLOUGH (Michaelmas): *Action Stations* by Vincent McNabb, O.P.: "You have begun," but "we are beaten."
- DOWNSIDE REVIEW (October): *What is to be done?* by Dom Christopher Butler, and *The Problem of Knowledge* by Dom Mark Pontifex are particularly noteworthy.
- EASTERN CHURCHES QUARTERLY (October): *Meetings between Catholics and Orthodox*—and Protestants: Fr. M. J. Congar, O.P., relates some experiences and suggests possibilities.
- ESPRIT (October) consists almost entirely of a *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* by E. Mounier.
- HOCHLAND (October): Dr. Theodor Haecker continues his important contributions to the philosophy of art with a consideration of *Schönheit. Die Niederlage des Moralisten—noch einmal*: our "Scandalphobia" Comments commented.
- IRENIKON (Juillet-août): *Le problème unioniste*: the author of *Wrestlers with Christ* summarizes usefully the thought of Oskar Bauhofer on reunion.
- PAX (October): *The War on Religion in Spain*: vivid first-hand accounts by Catalonian monks disclosing its popular character.
- SOWER (October): *Praying for Spain*, a Sermon by F. H. D.: "There are rights being defended on both sides, and terrible wrongs done on both sides . . . nothing good can come of a civil war like that." *Purity and Sex*, an Upper School Conference by Henry St. John, O.P.
- VIE INTELLECTUELLE (September 25): *Examen de conscience pour notre temps* by Jean Guilton: the more reputable reasons for the instinctive "conservatism" of Catholics.
- VIE SPIRITUELLE (October): *La Spiritualité de Karl Barth* by Gaston Rabeau: the spiritual value and shortcomings of crisis-theology. *Faut-il désirer que les dissidents tombent dans l'indifférence religieuse?* or Is it better to have no religion than to be a practising Protestant? Some would say, Yes; Fr. M. J. Congar gives an emphatic and reasoned No.
- ZEIT IM QUERSCHNITT (October 1): *Penguin's* Berlin première with *Der Ursprung des Gotteshasses*. Also a remarkable article by Max Pribilla, S.J., on overcoming misunderstandings between Catholics and Evangelicals. *Z.i.Q.* is a useful literary digest, with lighter fare provided by grave nonsense from *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*.

PENGUIN.