

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN. *Christianus* has a fine letter on this text from St. Paul, which he calls "the most perfect formula for every apostolate," in LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE (November 25):

Being an apostle implies far more than expounding doctrines we know to be true; it implies on our part a desire that those whom we instruct should derive as much good from those truths as we have. The apostle must combine a really deep-rooted conviction of the truth he imparts with a great suppleness of mind. The problem is: How fuse these seemingly contradictory qualities?

Evidently, there can be no question of watering down the doctrine. The difficulty lies in understanding those we are trying to "get at." We may know the doctrine we are teaching; all too often, with disastrous results, we know nothing of the minds to which we wish to impart it. We must, so far as we can, become *like* them; *all things to all men*.

Truth is one; yet it assumes many guises. The human soul is infinitely complex. Temperament, education, even one's physical make-up, induce in us particular attitudes of mind, ways of understanding, purely personal reactions. But the most powerful factors in moulding our attitudes, ideas, mental formation are our respective social environments. Two workers in the same trade, two teachers devoted to the same science, look at things from the same point of view, use kindred arguments in their discussions. Hence an apostle will have to adapt himself not only to each individual, but more particularly to each social *milieu*. . . .

The chief obstacle to this [adaptability] comes from the accusation of those who charge such as would devote themselves to this apostolate with compromising with error. This accusation is made all too easily. That those who are lacking in apostolic spirit should fail to aim at ideals they deem too lofty is regrettable enough. But it is really distressing to see them putting (often quite unconsciously) what little they have of courage and ability, at the service of error by putting obstacles in the way of others. . . .

But these things will not surprise a Dominican. St. Dominic experienced similar contradictions. He too wanted to tackle a widespread defection from the Faith: that of the Cathari. With the holy bishop Diego he went to the heretics—and he realized that he would have to begin by *leading their life*. It was because he had such an understanding of them that he knew how to distinguish what should be accepted and what should be rejected in their doctrines and manners. For that very reason, his case against them was made all the more effective. The most reliable

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

historians show us that, in so far as it was possible, *he became one of the Cathari*; not by accepting their doctrines but, so far as possible, by leading their life. Of the doctrine itself he condemned only what deserved to be condemned. Some Christians attacked him for this. He often had to defend his methods. He was approved by the Sovereign Pontiff; he held firm; he won. . . St. Paul's words will always hold good. Still, to-day, the apostle must make himself all things to all men.

CHRISTIAN SOMNOLENCE. To some THE MONTH might seem unduly subservient to that happy *Anti* school of thought described in our pages recently by Fr. Prince; and indeed an article on *Catholic Re-action* in its December number might confirm their belief. But it was THE MONTH that coined the term The Church Dormant, and it is as indefatigable as ever in its onslaught on the thing. A contribution by Fr. Vann, O.P., to the same number is, moreover, not just anti-*Anti*; it is an excellent constructive statement of the positive organic vitality of the authentic Christian life.

The divorce of religion from life is a not unusual sermon topic. It is not right, we are told, and rightly told, to come to church on Sundays and be self-seeking pagans throughout the week. Religion is not one of many departments of life; it is not even the most important department of life; if it is religion at all, it must mean the elevation of the whole of life into a new mode, for grace is fully explicable only in terms of life, of the power of activity which follows from the possession of life, and the attainment of an end towards which the activity is the striving. The Christian life is not divided into two series of activities, the one carried out upon the natural plane, as shaving, working, enjoying a Brandenburg; the other upon the supernatural plane, praying. By virtue of the supernatural life, on the contrary, every natural activity is caught up in a wider sphere of reality, is given new meaning and purpose, becomes operative as a means to the acquiring of an end above and beyond the natural end of man. And, if that is so, if there can be no aspect of life however small and insignificant into which the efficacy of grace does not penetrate, if on the contrary every problem and every reversal is to be met by the whole united personality, integrally supernaturalized, then obviously there can be no question of "peaceful somnolence" for the Christian. There can be no question of an opiate for the people. There can be no congruity in proposing or providing a worship and a place of worship to be a peaceful haven for the bothered soul. . . .

When Christian integrity is viewed as negation, the negation of wrongdoing, how can the result be otherwise than death? . . .

## BLACKFRIARS

Integrity. If only we understood more clearly what it means; understood that man without the supernatural cannot be truly integral, that, on the other hand, Christianity is what precisely integrates him, or may integrate him if he will, that it fills him, his natural self, with life as a room is suddenly filled with light, that it means, in consequence, not a code but a creative evolution of whose pattern the code is but the external formulation. The worship would be adequately estimated, the due homage to Him from whom is life; the Mass would occupy its proper central position, the sum of human homage, the chief means whereby life is bestowed. Then the churches would be built, as they ought to be, for the Mass, and the *Ite Missa est* would be, not the end of a spectacle at which one has assisted, but the beginning of a day which one is to live. Then (the door of the church) would no longer stand for the be-cushioned tranquillity of escapism, the somnolence, the unreality, of a religion separated from life.

“MUCKING IN.” Our readers are perhaps little likely to be deceived by the escapism whose enticements are cushioned church-doors, “pale blue drapery . . . pretty tunes . . . nice smells . . . lace cottas.” But there are possibilities of more subtly disguised escapisms which may prove yet more alluring, especially to the Catholic intelligentsia; escapisms more dangerous in that, under cover of a profound concern for the permeation of the temporal by the spiritual, they may in effect lead us back to the old dualism and the refusal to take Catholicism into everyday life. We have already (November, 1934) suspected a shirking of the real concrete practical issue in some contemporary discussion of the relationship of Catholicism and the Bourgeois mind; and that suspicion is only confirmed by the excellent, informative, but not very practical treatment of the subject by Mr. Christopher Dawson in the December *COLOSSEUM*. We have also ventured to suggest (July, 1935) that behind M. Maritain’s over-niceness regarding the “purification of means” may too easily lurk “a pretext for not taking any means at all and relapsing into lethargy.” In this connexion we strongly recommend to the serious consideration of Catholics an article on *Mucking In* by Charles Smyth in the current number of *CHRISTENDOM*; not indeed as a definitive solution with which we are by any means in complete agreement, but as an unequivocal statement of the problem which our Catholic “intellectuals” must face and make up their minds about. He writes:

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

The real question for the Church in the modern world is, to put it bluntly, the question of "mucking in." That issue was most clearly seen in Germany after the establishment of the Third Reich, and Lutheranism on the one hand and Catholicism on the other adopted diametrically opposite solutions. The Lutheran Church recognized itself to be involved, inextricably and as of sacred duty, in the tremendous tension of the situation. Resisting the obvious temptation to contract out of it and let the revolution take its course, it knew itself to be, under the hand of God, an integral and essential element in the whole concrete situation, and saw that, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, it was its God-sent duty to "muck in" with it, or, in more elevated phraseology, to take up the Cross which it has since borne with an unyielding and heroic courage and confidence in Almighty God. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, seized the first opportunity to play for safety: it contracted out by the time-honoured expedient of a Concordat ("You leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone"): and the difficulties which have since pursued and overtaken it, though they are being faced with equal heroism, are at least none of its own seeking.

Now, as a statement of the position in Germany this is a gross caricature. The German Catholics as a whole, and especially the younger ones, have shown the utmost readiness to "muck in" (*mitarbeiten* is the word they use) in the reconstruction of their country; and Mr. Smyth clearly misrepresents the scope and purpose of the Concordat. But his words do illustrate two diametrically opposite policies based on apparently contradictory views of the relation of the Church in general and of the individual Christian in particular to "the world." To which of these are our Catholic intellectuals leading us—to "mucking in" or "mucking out . . . to cultivate our Garden of the Soul?"

"SANCTIFIED DETACHMENT?" Mr. Smyth maintains that two of them at least—M. Maritain and Mr. Christopher Dawson—are choosing the latter alternative, despite affirmations which would suggest the contrary. Perhaps Mr. Smyth is wrong; perhaps he is right and they are wrong; perhaps they are all right. But his challenge, with its far reaching implications, should be met frankly. For, as he says, the point is: "What should *A* do?" And *A*, the individual Christian, cannot do both at once. Writing of M. Maritain, Mr. Smyth warns us of what he considers an "extreme lucidity" which is "by no means incompatible with an ex-

trepreneurial elusiveness . . . the famous *clarté française* is frequently a smoke-screen for obscurity." He makes good sport of the technicalities of *Du Régime temporel et de la Liberté*, and comes to the conclusion that they serve only to hide "a distinguished and sanctified detachment from the contemporary scene." Only the third section *On the Purification of Means* "is somewhat distantly related to the question 'What should A do?'"—The conclusion indicated is that A will find himself so taken up with purifying the means that he will have no time to apply them to the appropriate ends." Having "abandoned M. Maritain to his detachment," Mr. Smyth turns "expectantly and even anxiously to Mr. Dawson" and professes to find him no less unsatisfactory and inconsistent. He concludes:

Of course there is a great deal of truth in Mr. Dawson's criticisms: there is a real danger of the stream of Christian Sociology running into the sand of secular humanitarianism. But to withdraw into the fastnesses of an other-worldly pietism, even with the intention of returning ultimately, with one's mind purified, to the things of time, is not the remedy. Rather, the remedy is to be found, as Canon Hudson has lately pointed out, in an insistence that "the only sound foundation for a true Christian sociology must be theological rather than ethical—the Person rather than the precepts of Christ," together with a resolute endeavour to build on that Foundation, bearing in mind at the same time the warnings of St. Paul (I Cor. iii, 10-15). Striking is the contrast between what may for convenience be called the Roman by-pass, as represented by M. Maritain and Mr. Dawson, and the busy main road of Anglican social theory and action, so clearly distinguishable from the byways and blind alleys of mere humanitarian idealism. Neither road is likely to be easy. But an aphorism from M. Maritain may perhaps assist us in our choice: "To absent oneself from history is to seek death."

Charitably ignoring the unworthy sectarian complacency and badinage, we may thank Mr. Smyth for presenting the issue so clearly.

WHAT IS THE BOURGEOIS TO DO? In England we have not "the tremendous tension of the situation" of a Nazi revolution, but we have the no less real "concrete situation" of our Anglo-Saxon bourgeois civilization. "We are all more or less bourgeois and our civilization is bourgeois from top to bottom," writes Mr. Dawson in *COLOSSEUM*, and he con-

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

cludes an illuminating study of the history and characteristics of the bourgeois mind:

To-day Catholics are faced with a . . . heavy responsibility. There is always a temptation for religion to ally itself with the existing order, and if we to-day ally ourselves with the bourgeois because the enemies of the bourgeois are often also the enemies of the Church, we shall be repeating the mistake that the Gallican prelates made in the time of Louis XVIII. The Catholic Church is the organ of the spirit, the predestined channel through which the salvific energy of divine love flows out and transforms humanity. But it depends on the Catholics of a particular generation, both individually and corporately, whether this source of spiritual energy is brought into contact with the life of humanity and the needs of contemporary society. We can hoard our treasure, we can bury our talent in the ground like the man in the parable who thought that his master was an austere man and who feared to take risks. Or, on the other hand, we can choose the difficult and hazardous way of creative spiritual activity, which is the way of the saints. If the age of the martyrs has not yet come, the age of a limited, self-protective bourgeois religion is over. For the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.

So true! It is certain that we cannot just "muck along." But if this is to be more than fine words we must know what the individual Catholic bourgeois in his particular villa in his particular suburb must *do*. Is he to pull his weight with all his might in his *milieu*, or to pull out of it to the best of his ability? Is he to conceive sanctity and suburbia as incompatible and to save his soul only *in spite of* his suburb; or is he to regard his suburb, his job and his *milieu* as precisely the God-given means for the working out of his salvation and the salvation, eternal and temporal, of those with whom they bring him in contact? Until this is answered, Catholic forces in this country will remain disastrously divided, education in Catholic schools will be without definite orientation, and there would seem to be little hope of any genuine Catholic Action or sense of lay vocation. We look for a clearer lead on the questions—*Penetration or Segregation? "Mucking in" or "Mucking out"?*

CONTEMPORANEA. CLERGY REVIEW: *The Breviary as the Priest's Book of Devotions* by Fr. F. J. Pinkman may induce some laymen to use it too. *Sermons and Gesture* by H. D. C. Pepler: the place of action in preaching.

BLACKFRIARS

COLOSSEUM: Besides Dawson on the *Bourgeois Mind*, a thought-provoking discussion of the *Function of the Catholic Critic*, an excellent statement of *The Present Task of Traditional Philosophy*, an *Anatomy of Death*, and a vivid account of the life and martyrdom of Fr. Pro. Also translations from Léon Bloy and Paul Claudel.

ENGLISH REVIEW: *Whither Christendom?* by the Rev. A. H. T. Clarke: the betrayal of Christianity by leaders of the "churches."

ESPRIT: Special number on *Colonization: Its Future and Liquidation*: the problem of the re-distribution of the earth's surface boldly faced.

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW: *The Vatican and the New Nationalisms* by Harrison Brown.

IRENIKON: *Bishop Charles Gore* by Dom Th. Belpaire. The "reunion movement" of Karl Thieme related and reconsidered.

MONTH: *Poetry and Religious Life* by J. H. Crehan: another harmonization of the Jesuit and the Poet in G. M. Hopkins.

PENGUIN.