

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH was the title of a courageous article by Fr. Francis Devas in the October number of THE CATHOLIC GAZETTE. It was, in effect, a plea for an English Church for English Catholics, and has led to interesting correspondence. The latest contribution is a letter from Dr. E. C. Messenger in the December number of the *Gazette*, which deserves a long quotation:

Father Devas has expressed what many of us have thought and felt for a long time past. Any priest who mixes much with his non-Catholic fellow Englishmen will realize that Father Devas's diagnosis of the situation is quite correct. Perhaps I may mention a few points which occur to me as worthy of consideration.

(1) Are we doing our best to foster a native clergy? If the ideal is Chinese bishops and priests for China, should not our ideal here be English priests and bishops for England? I have known cases of priests who have omitted the Prayer for the King after Sunday Mass, though this is, I believe, of obligation. They did so because they are not English, and owe no allegiance to the English King.

(2) Secondly, are not many of our devotions thoroughly un-English? Even the 'official' (?) translations of many of the special devotions authorized by Rome for the Universal Church are expressed in appalling English. Witness the Litany of the Sacred Heart, in which we speak of the Heart of Our Lord as 'glutted with reproaches'! I might also go on to speak of our dreadful church architecture, but I will confine myself to saying that most of our new churches are in any foreign style conceivable, but few are in any sense English. And yet the Pope's representative in China has given orders that churches built there should be Chinese in style. (I remember reading this a year or two ago, but I am afraid I have lost the reference.)

(3) The Church's Liturgy. This is often performed in a most slovenly way. And incidentally, I understand that Rome went out of her way to offer to the late Cardinal Vaughan the use of the Sarum Rite for England. His Eminence in his wisdom refused the offer, and said he preferred to have the pure Roman rite. I mentioned this once to a High Church clergyman. He replied, 'What a mistake on your part! If you had taken up the Sarum rite you would have swept the board in this country.' Exaggerated no doubt, but is it entirely baseless?

(4) The use of the vernacular. Rome has recently allowed the extensive use of the vernacular in the administration of

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certain sacraments, in Germany and, I believe, in Czecho-Slovakia. Here in England everything practically has to be in Latin, save a very few parts of the baptismal service, and the marriage rite. Even the reception of a convert is practically all in Latin. Could not something be done in this connection?

(5) I feel I must mention one other point: the dedications chosen for our churches. In Dunstable, for instance—a typical English country town—a small foundation has been started, and the dedication chosen for the temporary chapel is: 'The Immaculate Virgin of the Miraculous Medal'! What is the average English Protestant going to make of that? Are there no English saints available?

(6) I hope those who read this will not think me disgruntled. Like every other priest, I have the conversion of my country very much at heart, but I am sometimes dismayed at the magnitude of the problem, and appalled when I realise the absolute unsuitability of much of our religious practices for the Englishman of to-day.

PRIVATE PROPERTY is more often talked about than understood by some would-be social reformers. *On Property* by Francis and Edmund Howard in *COLOSSEUM* (December) will be found a helpful introduction to the Catholic approach to the subject. To the same number Fr. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., contributes an essay on *Immortality*; Mr. Bernard Wall concludes his *Marxism and Man* with a simple but excellent critical study of the materialist interpretation of history; M. Stanislas Fumet examines some predominant forms of sub-humanism; Mr. G. M. Turnell compares the importance of Pascal and Bossuet and, in a second article, reads some sound ethics into the Mamoulian-Dietrich film, *The Song of Songs*. A review of Mr. Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* pleads that the problem of the Catholic novelist should be threshed out in England as it has been in France by Charles du Bos, and that potential Mauriacs, Von le Forts and Undsets may flourish unhampered by unedifying criticism from their well-intentioned but ill-informed co-religionists. But the outstanding contributions in an outstanding number are the vivid *What I saw in Leningrad* by the author of *The Gates of Hell*, and Richard Dana Skinner's *The Inner Progress of Eugene O'Neill*. The enigma of O'Neill puzzles and fascinates many, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, and *Days without End* cannot

be regarded as the final solution. Mr. Skinner sees the truth that the enigma cannot yet be answered:

Many critics have tried to pry into the inner privacy of his soul in order to discover the nature of his spiritual beliefs in the light of this play. It seems to me that all such efforts are both premature and lacking in taste. We can assume that there are many struggles within the poet's soul still ahead. *Days Without End* does not represent the peace-filled consummation of a Parsifal holding aloft the Grail. It is more like the young Parsifal at the moment when he grasps the spear which Klingsor has thrown at him and finds the magic gardens withering. He has the long road of knighthood still to travel. . . .

Editorials on *Water for the Waste Land* and *Suggestions* display a fine sense of responsibility balanced by a humility which promises well for the future of the review no less than does the excellence of the contents of this number.

FILM CRITICISM. Last month *Penguin* urged the immediate necessity for positive and constructive action by Catholics in the matter of Cinema. Before his words had been published an important step had already been taken, thanks to the initiative of Fr. Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. and the C.T.S., by the formation of the Catholic Amateur Film Society described in this month's Editorial. Mention must also be made of the contribution of THE CATHOLIC HERALD by its offer of £100 in prizes for amateur films, and its enterprise in promoting the private showing of films by free demonstration of small talkie apparatus. *The Catholic Herald* has taken the right line. But as a correspondent points out in the issue for December 15th, *The Catholic Herald's* attitude to the public cinema does not seem altogether consistent:

Your reform of the public cinema ought to begin with your own film critic. The noble Lord fascinates one just as the public cinema does; he also sends one away with the same feeling of irritation and despair. His talk is all of 'stories' and actors and actresses, with occasional excursions into politics and economics and morals—especially when there are no morals.

BLACKFRIARS has so long urged the need for sound objective film-criticism in the Catholic Press that we may be permitted, while congratulating the *Herald* and Lord Clon-

more on undertaking the job at all, to endorse and add to that criticism. The *Herald's* film-criticism (if such it can be called) may be better than much of its kind. But in a Catholic paper, and indeed in any intelligent paper, we expect another kind. The task before any film-critic worthy of the name, and especially the Catholic film-critic, is to criticize *Film*, and in so doing to neutralize the non-filmic reactions which are the cause of all the havoc which the Clean Film movement sets out to combat. A critic who records his own subjective impressions, however worthy and admirable they may be, is no help to the film-goer and encourages precisely what it is his business to destroy. There is such a thing as objective film criticism, and it is that, we believe, to which the Pope refers when he speaks of the obligations and power of the Catholic journalist with regard to the Cinema. The objective critic, without being 'highbrow' or 'arty,' and while taking into full account the non-aesthetic functions of the existing public cinema, will enable audiences to appraise films on their intrinsic merits and not be distracted by irrelevancies, demoralizing or otherwise. We look to *The Catholic Herald* to follow up its fine work for the Cinema by giving us a lead in this matter, and we suggest that the work of the foreign Catholic institutions for film-criticism might be studied and perhaps improved upon by its critic.

THE LEGION OF DECENCY. The activities of this American campaign are becoming of the utmost concern to Catholics throughout the world, whether interested in films or not. We have endorsed its aims and the general line of its methods. But it is time to make it plain that, notwithstanding the enthusiasm of the yes-men among European Catholic journalists, some of the recent activities of the Legion and the pronouncements of its leaders are causing increasing embarrassment among Catholics in other countries, on whom they threaten serious repercussions. We quoted last month the judgment of an American Catholic writer that the Legion displays ignorance of the art it sets out to control: frankly, we are tempted to suspect that its conceptions of what constitute morality and decency are not ours. This does not matter; but it does matter that the Legion's conceptions

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are naturally being identified in our Press and elsewhere with those of the Catholic Church. The alleged condemnation by an American Bishop of the European practice of classifying films into 'A' and 'U' categories on the ground that morality is one and the same for children and adults is truly astonishing. Are we to teach catechism-children the doctrines *de sexto* that we teach seminary students and adults? Or is the Legion, even more than Hollywood has done, to assume and encourage infantine immaturity in grown-ups? The rumour that promoters of the campaign regard the rôles cast for Miss Janet Gaynor as the ideal for screen heroines encourages this belief and is hardly calculated to arouse admiration for the ideal of womanhood which the Legion would present as the Catholic ideal.

THE CASE OF *Ariane*. But it is the actual black, white and 'spotted' lists that have emanated from the Legion which we find most disturbing. We fully realize the great difficulty of drawing up such lists and the inevitability of mistakes; this only strengthens our doubt whether it should ever have been undertaken. But it is extraordinarily difficult to understand what are the principles which govern the lists that have been drawn up; and the charge in our secular Press (see, for instance, Miss Nerina Shute in *THE SUNDAY REFEREE* for December 16th) that the Legion is concerned for pharisaical taboos rather than Christian morality we do not find easy to answer. We will say nothing of the films which have appeared on the white lists. We will take one astonishing instance of black listing. We understand that *The Loves of Ariane* has fallen under the ban. It is not only an unusually beautiful film; it deserves the highest praise for the power with which it enforces a vitally important moral lesson and the remarkable combination of delicacy and strength with which the subject is handled. It could have taught nothing sinful to child or adult they did not know already. Elizabeth Bergner's wonderful characterization of a schoolgirl's love and constancy, together with excellent direction and editing, reveals to the full the power of the screen in conveying profound moral truth in a way impossible by the written and spoken word, and that to a public largely outside the influence of the professional moralist. Its lesson may be superfluous to the conscientious

Catholic layman and to the pious convent-schoolgirl; but it would do them more good than harm, and they do not form the bulk of cinema audiences. By banning this film, and so trying to make its exhibition impossible, the Legion seems to display, not only its insensitiveness to great art (and Miss Bergner's performance is no less), but also its incompetence to judge the moral teaching which our age needs and the unique ability of the screen to supply it.

American readers with fuller knowledge of the inner workings of the Legion than ours must remember that in Europe our knowledge is based exclusively on newspaper reports and gossip. The Editor of *BLACKFRIARS* would gladly give publicity to an authoritative account of the principles and workings of the Legion which might allay such misgivings as those we have expressed. Nor would we have it thought that we are anything but grateful for the great work the Legion has done or anything but sympathetic with its aims and its courage.

INTENTION. The difficult position of those Anglicans who 'believe that the See of Rome is the centre of unity for all Churches,' and yet remain convinced of the validity of the Orders of their Church is one with which many will sympathize. It is the position of the editor and promoters of the review *REUNION* which has already done much to explain and justify to Anglicans the claims of the Apostolic See. In the latest number (November) the editor turns to examine the question of intention as affecting Anglican Orders. He says, very truly, that:

It is one thing to find a primitive Ordinal with no explicit mention of Sacrifice, but with the authority of the Catholic Church behind it. It is quite another thing to take a fully-developed rite and to expunge all sacrificial language from it, as did Cranmer. In the first case there is implicit belief in a sacrificing priesthood; in the second case there is evidence of explicit disbelief.

This could not be better stated. But the writer continues:

Again it is one thing for a Roman Catholic Bishop to say (hypothetically): 'I believe I have the power to make sacrificing priests, but I do not intend to do so.' This would be a defective intention of the minister. It is quite another thing for

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a heretical Bishop to say (as in effect Cranmer did): 'I do not believe I have the power to make sacrificing priests, but neither do I believe that any Bishop in the world has that power. I, therefore, do not intend to make sacrificing priests, but such priests as Christ intended to make and made; and that is all any Roman Catholic Bishop can do, whatever he may think. Consequently the priests I ordain are just as much priests as those ordained by any Roman Catholic Bishop; and those ordained by a Roman Catholic Bishop are no more sacrificing priests than those ordained by me. In the first case there is intention not to do what the Church does, and there is lacking that degree of intention which St. Thomas Aquinas defines as necessary, 'The minister of a Sacrament must intend to do what the Church does, even though he believes that to be nothing.' In the second case the intention is to do what the Church does, though there is error with regard to one of the effects of the action. That is the quality of intention in the Cranmerian Ordinal.

We are compelled to disagree. It is impossible to intend two contradictory and mutually exclusive things at the same time. If the editor of *Reunion* grants (as he does) that the form of the Anglican Ordinal affords evidence of explicit disbelief in a sacrificing priesthood, and that Cranmer did not intend to make sacrificing priests (nor, consequently, that his Ordinal should do so), the conclusion of the *Apostolicae Curae* follows inexorably. It is true that intention to do what the Church intends suffices, however erroneously one may think concerning the Church's intention. But the intention must be to do what the Church *in fact* intends, and not what one wrongly *thinks* that the Church intends. It is simply impossible to intend what the Church *de facto* intends, if at the same time one *excludes* what the Church, *de facto*, intends. So seldom is the question discussed nowadays on common ground that we seize with alacrity the opportunity of disputing with *Reunion* this, for many people, fundamental issue.

NOTABILIA. Søren Kierkegaard, although he died in 1855, is one of the strongest influences on contemporary religious thought. His influence may be found in various degrees and ways in the works of writers so diverse as Karl Barth, Nicholas Berdyaev and Ida Coudenhove. An excellent summary of his life and work, at once sympathetic and critical, will be found in *LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE* for November 25th

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over the signature of Père M.-J. Congar, O.P. A description of the recent revolution in the Asturias and some salutary reflexions on its lessons by a professor of the University of Oviedo will be found in the same number.—Dr. Oskar Bauhofer continues his valuable contributions to the solution of the problem of Christian reunion in an article on *The Present Relations between Catholicism and Protestantism* in DER KATHOLISCHE GEDANKE (July-December, 1934). He distinguishes between the sociological and the theological issues: the contrary errors of 'sectarianism' and 'ecumenicism' are due to the confusion of these issues.—*The Distributist* by Mr. Hilary Pepler in THE AMERICAN REVIEW (December) may be called an admirable plea for uncompromising but comprehensive Distributism, and should be read by Distributists and those suspicious of Distributists alike. But it is no less important for its appreciation of the real greatness of Mr. G. K. Chesterton, than whom few have been so praised and so blamed for the wrong reasons.—HOCHLAND (December) contains an important article by Dr. Wilhelm Moock on *The Individual and Society*; the same subject is sanely treated in a review of Dr. Ethelbert Kurz's *Individuum und Gemeinschaft* in the current number of the Flemish KULTUURLEVEN.—Interesting developments of the New Britain Movement with which our readers will be sympathetic may be studied in the new organ of the Oxford branch of the Movement. It is called CONSPIRACY, costs one shilling, and is obtainable from Paul G. Mandahl, Esq., St. John's College, Oxford.

PENGUIN.