

GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN OPINION

THE Second Council of the Vatican continues to claim the attention of Catholics and others in the German-speaking countries. It is evident from many articles that the centre of interest has shifted from speculation about the results of the Council to its agenda. Considerable hopes are entertained, but it is possible to detect a certain apprehension lest the success of the Council be impaired by unnecessary rigidity in matters not essential. This does not mean any advocacy of tampering with the Truth, but relates to matters like relations with other Christians, the use of the vernacular, etc. It may be remembered that many Germans deem the Council of Trent to have been a defeat for German Catholicism, some sections of which pleaded, at the time, for Communion under both kinds, and similar matters which would have made reunion with the Protestants easier.

Among many articles we may mention, G. Gieraths in *Das bevorstehende Konzil und die Einheit der Christen (Neue Ordnung in Kirche, Staat, Gesellschaft und Kultur*, vol. 14, pt. 3, June 1960, p. 180) hopes that the Council will deal with the relations between the Pope and the Bishops and will determine their respective spheres of authority. This is one of the questions that the First Council of the Vatican would have examined if there had been time. The author of *Anregungen und Hoffnungen fuer das II. Vatikanische Konzil (Wort und Wahrheit*, vol. 15, pt. 4, April 1960, p. 245; pt. 5, May, p. 325; pt. 6/7, June/July, p. 405) pleads for a careful examination of the differences between Christians, a solemn declaration of Faith, a discussion of the difficulties confronting Christianity in an age of technology, and the modernization of theology, both as regards the problems it studies and the language in which it presents its findings. He urges that time be devoted to liturgical reform, including the question of the use of the vernacular, to an examination of the place of the diaconate and its possible revival as an independent office, to a satisfactory definition (not necessarily in the technical sense) of the position and authority of the Episcopate, and to a reform of the canon law.

As always, and particularly in the hope that the Council will be a step towards Christian unity, there is great interest in the Orthodox and Protestant Churches and the World Council of Churches. C. J. Dumont in *Rom, Konstantinopel und Genf (Wort und Wahrheit*, vol. 15, pt. 3, March 1960, p. 165) describes the efforts towards

Christian unity made by the Oecumenical Patriarch from the end of the first world war, and explains why it is that Constantinople is primarily interested in the *Life and Work* aspect of the World Council of Churches (this is not true to the same extent of all the Orthodox Churches), and Rome in *Faith and Order*. He goes on to examine the tensions in the relations between the Orthodox Churches and the World Council and the more serious ones between the Catholic Church and the Council.

The *Herder-Korrespondenz* (vol. 14, pt. 5, February 1960, p. 221) reports discussion between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Old Catholics as well as increased pressure by the State on the Roumanian Church. Pt. 7, April 1960, p. 331, gives details of Orthodox lay movements in Greece.

Two articles in *Ostkirchliche Studien* are of great interest: B. Schultze in *Heilige Schrift und Ueberlieferung in Verbindung mit dem oekumenischen Konzil in der byzantinisch-slawischen Theologie* (vol. 9, pt. 1, March 1960, p. 3) surveys the part assigned to Tradition as a source of dogma by Orthodox theologians. This varies considerably from treating it as purely subsidiary to Scripture to viewing it as an independent source. A. Esser in *Photios, Patriarch von Konstantinopel* (*ibid.*, p. 26) finds that Photios has been much maligned, but that he was to blame in his relations with his opponents within the Eastern Church and with Rome and particularly in his conduct in the *Filioque* dispute.

Two items about the German Evangelical Church should be mentioned here. The *Herder-Korrespondenz* (vol. 14, pt. 4, January, 1960, p. 170) gives details of the development of individual confession in some at least of the Lutheran Land Churches, and (pt. 6, March 1960, p. 262) reports the debates concerning the interpretation of Romans 13, 1 (cf. p. 133 *supra*) at the synod of the Church of Berlin-Brandenburg. The notice is critical of the conduct of Bishop Dibelius' opponents towards him.

To mark the seventieth birthday of the well-known theologian Otto Karrer and as a token of appreciation of his work for Christian unity, sixteen Catholic and sixteen Evangelical theologians have written contributions on 'oecumenical' subjects to *Begegnung der Christen: Studien evangelischer und katholischer Theologen*, edited by M. Roesle and O. Cullmann, published by Knecht in Frankfurt-am-Main. The work is very important. A review appears in the *Herder-Korrespondenz*, vol. 14, pt. 8, May 1960. Some of the subjects discussed are: Jesus and the Church; The unity of the Church in the New Testament; Scripture and Tradition; Faith and Sacrament; Spiritual office and community; Justification and sanctification;

Mary as image (or symbol?) of grace and sanctity; the office of Peter in the early Church.

Sinn und Möglichkeiten einer liturgischen Erneuerung des Bussakramentes (Herder-Korrespondenz, vol. 14, pt. 4, January 1960, p. 180) summarizes the results of an enquiry into the Easter duties. This arose from the question whether the faithful tended to treat their Easter confession as a matter of routine or whether it was apt to produce a real *metanoia* or conversion. Many points of great interest and importance emerged from the answers, bearing on the Sacrament of Penance generally and not on the Easter confession only. Many priests think that Easter confession has a lasting effect, possibly because those who would treat it as a routine matter would very often not trouble to go to confession at all. Most priests would not wish for any paraliturgical form or elaboration of the Sacrament of Penance such as corporate confession or penance. Many of the faithful are so anxious to preserve their anonymity in the confessional that they go to great trouble to avoid going to confession in their own parish church. This again makes spiritual direction, which is recognized as desirable, difficult. Many Catholics approach their confession in too formalistic a spirit. This is due partly to the use of printed aids and to the way these are usually arranged, partly to faulty teaching in childhood. The importance of correct training is stressed. The difficulties caused by the sixth commandment are twofold: on the one hand, people tend to equate sin with sin against purity and this leads to a lopsided view of the concept of sin as such. On the other hand, the pastoral problem of those who cannot be absolved because they live in an invalid marriage has not been solved. Absolution in the vernacular is desirable.

Other articles of interest that may be mentioned here are: *Die liturgische Gestaltung des 31. Eucharistischen Weltkongresses* (The liturgical shape of the 31st Eucharistic World Congress: Herder-korrespondenz, vol. 14, pt. 9, June 1960, p. 427); *Der Episkopat und die katholische Presse im 3. Reich* (The Hierarchy and the Catholic Press in the Third Reich), (*ibid.*, pt. 8, May, p. 374); *Die Kollektivierung der Menschen in der Sowjetzone* (The collectivization of man in Eastern Germany), (*ibid.*, pt. 9, June, p. 419); W. Picht: *Albert Schweitzer in Lambarene* (*Wort und Wahrheit*, vol. 15, pt. 4, April 1960, p. 292); W. Beutler and J. Erzner: *Die Geschichtlichkeit der Kirche* (*Werkhefte katholischer Laien*, vol. 14, pt. 5, May 1960, p. 154). The authors attempt to show the influence of the facts of history on the life of the Church, based on the realization that she does not live and operate in a vacuum, but always in a given set of circumstances.

Progress has been made in the settlement of the difficulties sur-

rounding the Austrian Concordat (cf. p. 133 *supra*). On the 23rd June, two treaties were signed between the Holy See and Austria. Under the first, the Burgenland, ceded to Austria by Hungary after 1918 and ruled by an Administrator Apostolic since, becomes the diocese of Eisenstadt (the capital of the province). This was entirely non-controversial. Under the second, the Austrian government undertakes to pay an annual sum (to be used mainly for salaries for the clergy) as compensation for confiscated Church property. On the other hand, the State receives the property of the Religious Fund, created by Joseph II in the eighteenth century from confiscated monastic property for the support of the parochial clergy, and consisting mostly of forests. About 10 per cent of the Fund's property is left to the Church and will be used for the upkeep of certain buildings which had belonged to the Fund and now become Church property. Finally, the Archbishop of Salzburg, who lost all his property in 1803 and has been the government's tenant in his own palace ever since, now has his palace and chapter buildings restored to him, together with some forest property for their upkeep.

The International Catholic Institute for Religious Sociology has undertaken a survey into Catholic life in Austria. The findings were also published by E. Bodzenta under the title: *Wie katholisch ist Oesterreich?* in *Wort und Wahrheit*, vol. 15, pts. 6/7, June/July 1960, p. 423. During the last fifty years, the percentage of Catholics has fallen from 93 per cent to 89 per cent. This is partly due to the increase in the number of Protestants, itself caused largely by the transfer of the Burgenland from Hungary to Austria and by immigration, and partly to the fact that many people who had been nominally Catholic left the Church formally for political reasons after 1918 and after 1938. Church attendance, taking the whole of Austria, is near the European average, higher than in France or Italy, lower than in Holland or Ireland. In Austria, it varies enormously from areas of good attendance, e.g. Vorarlberg, to areas of poor attendance, e.g. Vienna. It is expected that more people who have lost all connection with the Church will formally leave her and that the quality of the practising Catholics will continue to improve. It is a bad sign that certain sections of the population, such as employers, workers, and intellectuals, are poorly represented among practising Catholics, and that the life of the Church rests largely on certain classes such as the peasants and the urban lower middle classes only.

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