

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

THE THOMIST, NUMBER ONE. We have already (in our January number, p. 57) heralded the coming of *The Thomist* and underlined its particular interest and importance for our readers, and the very special relationship it is to have to BLACKFRIARS. The first number has now appeared; and subscriptions (\$4 annually) should be sent to *The Thomist*, 20 Hopkins Place, Baltimore, Md., U.S.A. It is fully up to expectations. We are surprised only, and not at all displeased, to find that it is for the most part less rigorously specialist and technical than we had perhaps anticipated. Of the main articles which comprise the number, none would seem to suppose any very deep or extensive previous knowledge of Thomist theology and philosophy on the part of its readers. This is not to say that they are mere efforts at popularisation; but they are all sound, lucid and relatively simple expositions of basic ideas rather than erudite discussions of knotty points of detail. Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., fittingly opens the first number with an exposition of 'Humility according to St. Thomas.' Fr. Walter Farrell follows on 'The Roots of Moral Obligation.' Fr. Charles Miltner, C.S.C., expounds clearly the Thomist conception of 'Social Unity and the Individual'; but we may question whether it is not making more equivocal an already confusingly equivocal term to equate 'government for the governed' (which should be the purpose of every form of government) with 'democracy.' Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., Editor of BLACKFRIARS, provides an illuminating introduction to St. Thomas's Natural Theology in 'The Philosophical Approach to God in Thomism.' In 'The Mansions of Thomism' Fr. Robert Brennan, O.P., expounds the Aristotelian-Thomist division and classification of the philosophical 'disciplines.' But perhaps the most stimulating, as certainly the most original, feature of *The Thomist* is 'Problems for Thomists,' introduced by Professor Mortimer J. Adler—'a series of articles which will try to formulate and explore problems which lie on the periphery of settled philosophical knowledge.' He sees the need for this feature in the fact that,

On the one hand, there are those who think that philosophy consists of nothing but problems, persistent questions which have not been and probably never can be answered demonstratively On the other hand, there are those who think, or at least act as if, there are only answers.' And he asks, very pertinently,

Unless we believe that there are genuinely unsolved problems in philosophy are we not hypocrites when we talk about deepening Thomistic thought? And unless we can definitely formulate such problems,—avoiding the worse hypocrisy of presenting *as problems* questions to which we think we know the answer—we are in no position to undertake the task we have accepted as our obligation. In fact, it is difficult to know what one means by believing there are problems when one does not know any.

The problem which Professor Adler first sets out to formulate is very happily chosen; for it is one on which it is far too commonly assumed that we know all the answers precisely because we have never known how to pose the question—often to the great hurt of our thinking and of our understanding of St. Thomas. It is the problem of our knowledge of 'species.' It will be a salutary surprise to many to find how little the keenest Thomist minds of history claimed to know about it, and how very few 'species' they claimed to 'know.' So *The Thomist*, besides providing expositions of already established doctrine, is to provide plenty of material for the constructive thinker to get to work on.

WAR AND THE INDIVIDUAL. In a more immediately practical field the value of formulating problems correctly is illustrated in *The Dublin Review* by Fr. Gerald Vann, O.P. Too long have we had to put up with nugatory discussions on the ethics of war. It is no answer to the assertion that the means are bad to prove that the end is good. And it is no answer to the assertion that the end is good (and perhaps of moral obligation) to prove that the means are bad. And because the means are bad it does not follow that the end does not matter; and because the end matters it does not justify the means. The value of Fr. Vann's article lies not in the fact that it answers important ques-

tions—it answers very few—but in the fact that it should render futile discussion at cross-purposes impossible for the future and compel us not to evade the conflicting issues by talking about something else. The article has already produced some interesting reactions. *The Glasgow Observer* pronounced it ‘an admirably lucid and cool article,’ to be ‘strongly recommended to all who are concerned with the difficulties of young men these days.’ Mr. Reginald Dingle told *The Universe* he was ‘deeply disturbed’—posing questions without answering them may be useful in science; but ‘the unsettlement of minds’ is not what he expects from the religious orders. *The Universe* itself thought the article was ‘brilliant’; and approved particularly of the contention that we are not to ‘expect the Pope to give us a cut and dried decision.’ But what we are not to expect from the Pope, *The Universe* expects from the Bishops, adding:

But does it follow, as Fr. Vann suggests, that we must make up our own minds, and decide for ourselves this highly complex and difficult set of moral cases? Are we competent to, and can we safely, abound in our own sense in such circumstances? Each Ordinary in his own diocese is guide and teacher of the faithful, as well as the Pope the guide and teacher of all, and the Ordinary can deal with local circumstances and varying contingencies—and when necessary he does. We have guidance, and are not left to the resources of our own amateur moral theology. We Catholics are not saddled with the Protestant incubus of private judgment.

One is tempted to despair of the conversion of England when a newspaper, widely read by non-Catholics, confuses Protestant private judgment in matters of faith with the very Catholic ideas of the individual conscience and personal responsibility in matters of morals. How are we to disabuse our fellow-countrymen of the idea that we are priest-ridden and dragooned automata if we tell them that we regard it as an ‘incubus’ from which we are happily free to have to make up one’s mind in matters of personal conduct? But, however unhappily expressed, one sees the point. Guidance, whether by way of precept or counsel, from the Hierarchy is a thing devoutly to be wished for in this matter, and it would afford immense relief to thou-

sands in solving problems they find beyond them. But this is not to say that we have any right to expect it, still less that we can cheerfully load our Fathers in God with the moral responsibilities for our actions. For as *The Catholic Herald* Editor very wisely points out:

In perplexing and crucial matters of this kind some people are satisfied to await the decisions of ecclesiastical authority. For many indeed . . . this can be the only satisfactory attitude. And for all of us any decision of ecclesiastical authority will provide the practical solution in the light of which we should act. But the existence of authority does not relieve any Catholic who feels seriously and personally concerned about right behaviour in matters concerning the practical application of moral principles of the duty of thinking for himself within the limits of his knowledge and competence. On the contrary, decisions of ecclesiastical authority in such matters do not derive directly from Divine inspiration. Judgments on the correct Catholic attitude in such matters are to be sought in Christian ethics, so that all the authorities can do is to make a little more explicit what is derived from a study by natural reason of what is intrinsically right or wrong. . . . It is the duty of all of us to cooperate to the best of our ability towards the formation of a Catholic outlook, providing the material, so to say, to which ecclesiastical authority will give definite and authoritative form.

These points are important. Those who expect their Bishops to give them clear-cut decisions on the justice of a particular war or the legitimacy of the means employed are asking for a decision on which they are guaranteed no special inspiration. If the Hierarchies of warring countries were to issue contradictory pronouncements regarding the justice of their respective causes, the scandal would be immense and both would run the risk of not being taken seriously. But there is plenty of precedent for authoritative definitions of the limits of the obligations of obedience to civil authority in particular circumstances and localities; and on these lines we may less unreasonably hope for—but certainly not demand—some light in our perplexities. Meanwhile, a suggestion by Mr. C. S. Lewis to the readers of the Anglican *Theology* merits the consideration of Catholics also:

Decisions by the private conscience of each Christian in the light of Mr. Mascall's six rules (a summary contributed to a previous number of the traditional doctrine of the 'just war') would divide Christians from each other and result in no clear Christian witness to the pagan world around us. But a clear Christian witness might be attained in a different way. If all Christians consented to bear arms at the command of the magistrate, and if all, after that, refused to obey anti-Christian orders, should we not get a clear issue? A man is much more certain that he ought not to murder prisoners or bomb civilians than he ever can be about the justice of a war. It is perhaps here that 'conscientious objection' ought to begin. I feel certain that one Christian airman shot for refusing to bomb enemy civilians would be a more effective martyr (in the etymological sense of the word) than a hundred Christians in jail for refusing to join the army.

It seems worth remarking, however, that 'a clear Christian witness' is not necessarily a uniform one. In the early Church there were saints who bore witness to Christ in the Roman legions, and saints who bore witness to Christ by refusing to enrol in the Roman legions. Though they reached different practical conclusions as to what Christian principle involved in practice in their particular circumstances, the witness to Christian principle was proclaimed and exemplified by both unmistakably.

PRO-COMINTERN PACT? The art of evading questions by answering other ones has been illustrated in other ways just lately. The prospect of an alliance between Great Britain and the Soviet has, very properly, been giving our publicists plenty to think about, and on so perplexing a problem it is understandable that the thought has not been on a uniformly high level. One Catholic weekly has run a vigorous campaign against the alliance, eliciting 'non serviam' declarations from its readers. A second has very rightly drawn attention to the impropriety of making premature and categorical statements in the press which 'could tend to create a false conscience and impede the later action of ecclesiastical authority.' But the fun has been in the correspondence columns of a third. Here a prominent Catholic writer, justly renowned for a book called *The Flight from Reason*, entered the lists; and of

course detesting and distrusting the proposed alliance with the best of us. But 'Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax share this dislike and distrust . . . and must be assumed to have counted the cost of a Russian Pact and to believe, if they advocate it, that *its advantages outweigh its disadvantages*' (italics ours). 'A nation that is fighting for its existence,' we are told, 'must seek help where it can, irrespective of religious, political or ideological sympathies.' It is irrelevant to ask where this estimable principle is to be found (we remember what was said to Spanish Republicans who said much the same thing), for it entirely misses the point. Whether Russia may help us is more Russia's affair than ours; *our* problem is whether *we may help Russia*, and that problem is not solved by solving the problem as to whether we may accept Russia's help. But this is not the only argument we are offered: 'No Catholic who defended Franco's alliance with Hitler can logically refuse help to his country if his country is allied with Russia.' One trembles to think what General Franco will make of that. But he might quite plausibly argue that Hitler is not Russia, and that accepting the services of German troops in a Spanish war is not an alliance with Hitler, nor yet to advance Nazism. The odd thing is that British Catholics are being urged to do, not what the Nationalist Catholics were defended for doing, but precisely what the Basque Catholics were condemned for doing—and not only by zealous English Catholic lay writers, but by nearly the whole Spanish Hierarchy. An alliance implies *mutual* help and collaboration: and if anybody over here imagines that the Communist Government has any altruistic idea of helping the capitalist democracies without gaining anything for Communism, the Russians themselves think very differently (see 'Faut-il dénoncer le Pacte?' by Jean de Saint-Chamant in *Temps Present*, May 12, 1939). It is well known (though more so in France, where it has long been a live practical problem) that the extent of the 'collaboration with Communism' solemnly prohibited by Pius XI is not yet very clearly defined; but at least it is not easy to see how military alliance with the Soviet can be excluded from it. But this is a matter of the interpretation

of positive precept which no individual can decide categorically on his own authority.

TRUTH, PROPAGANDA AND THE TEAM-SPIRIT. There are other forms of Christian witness which are likely to become increasingly imperative as they become increasingly arduous and even dangerous. *The Catholic World* has reminded us that the first victim of modern war is truth. And, as even the hyper-patriotic French Catholic newspaper, *La Croix*, has recently pointed out, 'the truth, which alone makes us free, is neither French nor German, but simply *that which is*.' That is not the view of the propagandist capitalist press which lives on selling 'sensation.' As the new Editor of *The Month* writes:

Nothing is perhaps more painful, and more degrading to an honourable profession, than the effort on the part of a certain type of English newspaper to aggravate every international incident to sustain the present tension and to employ rumour and report to keep alive an unhealthy anxiety and apprehension. The cause of this is to be sought for, partly in the cult of the sensational and the news-value of startling headlines, partly also in the irresponsibility of the daily, and almost more, the Sunday Press. But it is difficult not to sense something more unpleasant and dangerous behind this temper and to feel that interests are at work to widen the gulf between the people of this country and of Germany, to make future *rapprochement* as remote a thing as possible. That similar tactics are made use of in German official quarters is a poor excuse for their practice here.

But modern war-propaganda demands not only that lies be told about the enemy, but also that the truth must be suppressed about ourselves. When Cardinal Hinsley told the C.T.S. that there would be peace if only the propagandist press could be silenced, he was very naturally widely quoted in the German press. The English press, reporting the matter, dropped broad hints that His Eminence had 'let down his side.' Similar things were hinted about the Duke of Windsor's broadcast. The incident is symptomatic of much we may have to look forward to. Between the propagandist principle that self-criticism is to 'sell the pass' to the enemy, and the Christian principle that a

nation's first duty is self-examination, confession and amendment, a sharp conflict is inevitable sooner or later.

CONTEMPORANEA. CATHOLIC WORKER (May) reverts to editorship of R. P. Walsh. Includes *Trouble brewing in Munition Works* and *Is Modern Trades Unionism a Racket?*

CHICAGO CATHOLIC WORKER (April) quotes Bishop Lucey: 'We do not go completely to the working man when we write academic editorials in defence of his rights. I think we ought to get into the parade and go down the road with labor . . . with them, for them, of them.'

CHRISTENDOM (March): Valuable criticisms of Barth and Berdyaev.

CLERGY REVIEW (May): Fr. M. Bévenot, S.J., improves further on his recommendations for a reform of the convert's ' *professio fidei*.'

COMMONWEAL (April 14): *The Environment of Nazi Operations*: international justice without war: 'a war front against Hitler is wrong.' (May 10): *Peace and Justice*: a sermon by Fr. Drinkwater: 'If we go to war as things are, it will be indeed to resist violent aggression and restore the sanctity of treaties, but also to keep in world-power the very money-lords who are responsible for the condition of our own unemployed and low-wage-earners.' *The Coming Struggle for India*: a grave warning from Srinivas Wagel.

MONTH (May): Sir Michael M. J. McDonnell on *The Policy of the Ostrich in Palestine* and its particular concern to British Catholics: 'We can hardly be surprised that Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini are given occasion to blaspheme when we are ready to exclaim against the mote in our neighbour's eye without dealing first with the beam in our own.'

PAX of Prinknash expands into an 80-page quarterly, and begets a promising new liturgical monthly called THE CHURCH AND THE PEOPLE.

PEOPLE AND FREEDOM NEWS SHEET (April): The Group receives the Papal Blessing.

PRESERVATION OF THE FAITH (April): *Are Catholics Social Hypocrites?* Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P., 'from a very full and self-accusing heart, speaking only for himself, answers: Yes!'

- PURPOSE** (April): Rayner Heppenstall on Catholicism and Manichæanism, and on William Blake as anti-Manichæan prophylactic. George Every, S.S.M., on *The Task of Concentration*: towards 'a new reading of the classical Christian texts' which will be a return to the old reading.
- SCHOENERE ZUKUNFT** (April 23): *Zum 50. Geburtstag des Führers Grossdeutschlands*: a remarkable Catholic tribute to the achievements of Adolf Hitler: the demands of heroism and atoning suffering which his 'mission' imposes on German Catholics and the response they should give: dignified reproaches to the Christians of France and England. Recommended to all who would hear 'the other side' at its best.
- SOCIAL FORUM** (April): The Canadian equivalent of *The Catholic Worker* presents weighty considerations to prove 'It does not seem likely that the next war will be a just one. If it is not, we cannot support Britain. . .'
- TEMPS PRESENT** (April 28): Special 'Labour' number.
- THEOLOGY** (May): *Sensuality and Substance*: Charles Williams on Christianity, the Body, and D. H. Lawrence. *Christian Social Thought*: a review of recent work by D. M. Mackinnon: 'It is perhaps in the reconciliation of the Thomism of Fr. Vann with the Biblicism of Fr. Casserley that the emergence of a true Christian response to impending events depends.'
- VIE INTELLECTUELLE** (April 10): P. Thomas Deman, O.P., on *Christian Peace*. (April 25): Mauriac on *Lacordaire*. Two whole and serious articles on *Sparkenbroke*.
- YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKER** greets May Day with its first printed issue.

PENGUIN.