

this may be read in the Passiontide pastoral, especially in its two concluding paragraphs.

However this may be, the fact remains that our only hope for future peace lies in the true Christians in Germany. If at the end of the war they can be liberated, given a clearer view of the international situation, and assisted in a positive work of reconstruction according to the Christian tradition in which they have been born, then there is hope. If that element and all its great history is overlooked, the only course will be negative and repressive, a peace of slavery and death which can only foster future war. Dr. Karl Meyer, speaking to the 'People and Freedom' group recently, insisted on this fundamental policy. 'He saw in the Catholic Church and its natural ally, the Confessional Church, with the best in the trade-union movement and Social Democrats, the only forces that would form a new way of living for the German people' (cf. *People and Freedom*, June, 1942).

#### TRENDS OF CATHOLIC THOUGHT IN MODERN GERMANY

It is of profound significance that since the end of the last war Catholic thinkers in Germany should have devoted themselves almost exclusively to the preparation for the struggle for the Faith which is now raging. It is as though they had sensed the impending danger and were concentrating all their energies on the twofold task of arriving at a true appreciation of the present spiritual situation, and of providing the means to solve its problems in the spirit of Christ. This struggle for the Faith, for the very reason that it is fought on the spiritual plane, is by no means identical with the present war, which only becomes relevant as it serves to clarify the situation, and affects the spirits of men. The decisive events will take place in the depths of the human heart; it is here that the future of mankind will be decided. The crucial question is the same, which has at all times determined the fate of the individual as well as of nations: 'What think ye of Christ?'

This question was asked in the days of the Roman Empire, when to acknowledge the Kingship of Christ meant torture and death. It was asked in ages when belief was easy, when the individual was not yet torn out of community with his fellows, and lived in a world which bore in every detail the stamp of God. It is characteristic of the present situation that the very conditions which enabled such

a question to be heard and answered in the past, seem no longer to exist. To-day we have arrived at a stage in the spiritual history of Europe, when the developments begun in the fifteenth century are drawing to a close, and the new age lies, as yet undetermined, before us.

In two critical studies of inexhaustible wealth, Romano Guardini traces the development of European thought during the last four hundred years. For this purpose he chooses the works of two masters, who lived one at the beginning of man's emancipation from God, and the other at the completion of the process, leading up to the very threshold of the new age: Pascal<sup>1</sup> and Dostoevski.<sup>2</sup> In the writings of Pascal, according to Guardini, we may find the unique moment in the spiritual history of Europe; man feels himself no longer secure within the boundaries of the medieval world, which he knew to be determined by God, but tossed out, as it were, into a world whose dimensions are infinite, and with a shock he realises his own limitations in the face of such overwhelming forces. Then in defiance he proceeds to accept his limitations, and establish himself in this world as the final reality. Pascal himself, it is true, remains a son of the Church. But the process of secularisation, whose beginnings he witnessed, continued its course. One sphere of life after another claimed its independence from God, till in the second half of the nineteenth century the moment came when the finite world was ready for the final separation from God. This is the situation revealed in Dostoevski's most searching novel, *The Demons*, which, in Guardini's opinion, is nothing but a living commentary of Nietzsche's 'gospel' of the superman.

At this stage of the process of emancipation man is ready to take his stand upon the finite world alone. Conscious of his powers, though unconscious of the purpose for which they were given to him by his Creator, aware, too, that he is destined for a higher life, though unaware of the fact that it can only be attained by loving submission to the Will of God, he attempts to reach this higher life by his own efforts. In this he experiences the presence of the Creator as an obstacle and a menace, which is all the more resented, since it threatens his independence. Here originates the desire to eliminate God altogether, which finds its expression in Nietzsche's ominous words: 'God is dead.'

Present-day realities, as Guardini himself points out, prove that this view of the spiritual situation is not incorrect. To-day man

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<sup>1</sup> 'Christliches Bewusstsein,' *Versuche über Pascal*, Leipzig, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> 'Der Mensch und der Glaube,' *Versuche über die religiöse Existenz in Dostojewsky's Grossen Roman*, Leipzig, 1933.

actually lives in a world closing in upon itself, a world in which, taken as a whole, only the faintest memory of its divine origin and destiny lingers. He is prepared to shoulder the burden of his 'responsibilities' and take the shaping of the future into his own hands. In Bolshevik Russia and in National Socialist Germany he is already trying to do so. Lastly, by psycho-analysis and Sterilisation Laws, by State interference in the most private spheres, he is busy conditioning the individual and the race, so that in complete physical and mental (!) fitness, men may be impervious to the claims of the spirit, impervious also to that horror, which is bound to lurk in a world which has cut itself away from God.

Such is the present situation in all its grimness. Yet from this situation, as from all others, there is a way leading out to God. There is a way leading from the vague dread of a mysteriously aloof Creator, whose claims are resented because they interfere with the new independence of man, to the Triune God, from 'emancipated man' to the maturity of the Christian, who has reached 'the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ.' There is a way from the misconception of the relation between human limitations and the infinite, to the Christian relationship, which is determined by the Incarnation and the Mystery of Divine Grace.

In true appreciation of the difficulties of the situation, Catholic thinkers in Germany have proceeded to correct the current misconceptions of the nature of man by showing what man really is. The problem is treated by four authors of very different rank and ability: Theodor Haecker, Erich Przywara, S.J., Romano Guardini, and Peter Lippert, S.J. Theodor Haecker, best known to English readers as author of *Virgil, Father of the West*, approaches the subject directly by asking the simple question: 'What is Man?'<sup>3</sup> In his answer, which is the answer of revelation, man was created *ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*, he unfolds some of the possibilities of the future. Haecker has many penetrating things to say about the overcoming of modern nationalism in the spirit of Catholicism, the meaning of history, which is the *gloria Dei*, about the essential barrenness of the machine age, and the need of establishing the hierarchical order of things. His intimate knowledge of antiquity as well as of the spiritual history of Europe lends an added attraction to a book, which is certainly provocative of much thought.

If Haecker endeavours to answer the question 'What is man?' Erich Przywara studies the problem of human existence.<sup>4</sup> With an

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<sup>3</sup> *Was ist der Mensch?* Leipzig, 1933.

<sup>4</sup> *Christliche Existenz*, Leipzig, 1934

insistent voice he recalls man from the impossibility of his subjectivist position to his real status of representative of God upon earth; and, since God can only be adequately 'represented' by the fulness of creation, he recalls him to his duty of overcoming his isolation from his fellows and the world. He recalls man, who was created a soul within a body, from the impossibility of existing as a pure spirit to acceptance of his limitations as a member of a nation and a family. Finally, he recalls him from his attempts to furnish a rational explanation of the universe to the humility of a child's acceptance of divine revelation. Existence, in the true sense of the word, can be no other than imitation of the life of God upon earth, in the weakness and obscurity of the divine *kenosis*, and is identical with life within the Church. It is only by taking part in the great mysteries celebrated during the ecclesiastical year that man can reach the fulness of the Christian life—the 'Christ within me.'

Guardini approaches the problem of Christian existence in a very different way. His inquiry is determined by the question, 'What are the characteristics of a man who is a believer?' He finds his answer by studying a concrete historical personality of exceptional spiritual vigour. He chooses a man whose theoretical interest was as great as his power of expression, who was driven to render an account of the spiritual situation of his age, which was essentially an age of transition—between the medieval world and the modern. This, as we have seen, is Pascal.<sup>5</sup> After a careful analysis of Pascal's writings, Guardini comes to the conclusion that, since in a sinful world, God can only reveal himself in parts—'There is enough clarity to enlighten the elect, and enough darkness to make them humble. There is enough darkness to blind the damned and enough clarity to judge and condemn them' (Fragment 578)—since this is so, it is only possible to reach God by a venture of Faith. The question has at all times been this: Will the heart of man close in upon itself and refuse to listen to the divine call, or will it give up its self-sufficiency, risk the final plunge, and find a home and real life in loving submission to its Creator? In the concrete instance the answer remains wrapped in the mysteries of human freedom and divine grace.

In his book *Der Mensch Job redet mit Gott*, Peter Lippert adds another canto to the monologue which man addresses to his Creator. At all times the monologue has been the form of the soul's intercourse with God, for God is a hidden God, and it is only in the venture of faith that man can possess him. He who speaks in this

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<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*

book, now surrendering to the fascination of the Divine Beauty, now shrinking back from the mystery of pain, now seeing God in all things, now scouring the world for him in vain, he hangs as it were suspended between light and darkness, good and evil, angels and demons. He is not a single individual, but simply MAN, the creation of God's hands, who cannot cease questioning and seeking, till he has found God, found him in that silence of love and adoration, when all words have dropped away like the petals of a wind-blown flower.

The second great subject which has occupied Catholic thinkers in Germany is the relationship between man and his fellows. Here, again, the present crisis offers unique possibilities. There can be no doubt that since the secularisation of the world, man's attitude towards his fellows has undergone a profound change. Having lost the place on earth which was his by right as a child of God, he also lost all possibility of a true relationship with his fellows, as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. To-day what might have been the Communion of Saints is shattered into a million atoms. There are groups which, carefully segregating themselves from the rest, are held together by common interest, but this only as long as strong pressure from without neutralises their centrifugal tendencies. The difficulties of the situation are aggravated by the fact that, for the first time in history, the mass as such has acquired a new significance, the mass, the dead weight of numbers, which offers one of the chief problems to the constructive thinker. Yet, at the same time, there is to-day a strong movement towards community. Of this the existence of 'false' communities, whose bond of unity is not the 'Bond of Truth,' affords ample proof. Communism and National Socialism are cases in point. How is it possible to unite these masses into a real community, not in chaotic disorder, but in order and harmony?

The mass, Guardini observes in one of his shorter essays, is an apocalyptic entity. It is only in the Apocalypse that we meet the *turba magna*. The task of the individual at the present moment is to realise that the existence of his fellows, not merely of a chosen few, but *en masse*, is necessary, if God is to be worshipped rightly. It is necessary to see that the worship of the community ranks higher than the worship of the individual. Thus, within the Church, the Liturgical Movement provides an answer to the question raised above. In three studies, *Vom Geist der Liturgie*, *Vom Sinn der Kirche*, *Liturgische Bildung*, Guardini shows how true community can be realised through liturgical prayer. He points the way out from the individualism and subjectivism, which has crept from the

world into the Church. He shows how it can be overcome and the Church recognised as the Christian ALL—the fulness of mankind as it stands before God. In this realisation of the true nature of the Church, man will not only learn to worship God rightly, but will attain to a new and fruitful relationship with his fellows.

The possibilities of this relationship are shown by Peter Lippert in his book, *Einsam und Gemeinsam*, which is addressed to his known and unknown friends, who are all seated at a round table. They are friends, though they may have never met, because they have three things in common: their belief in an infinite yet mysteriously intimate God, their love of that freedom which is from God, and the readiness with which they accept their fellows. They are very near in spirit and at the same time very far. For in the depths of God each soul finds itself alone, and yet is in communion with all other souls.

Within the last twenty years Catholic thinkers in Germany have covered a considerable ground. They have provided a clear picture of the present situation with all its possibilities for good and evil. They have set to work on the most urgent problem: the re-presentation of Catholic truth in a language intelligible to our contemporaries. To-day they and those whom they have trained are undergoing the supreme test of persecution. The spirit in which Catholic Germany is facing this ordeal is in itself proof, if proof were needed, that their labours have not been in vain. May God bless them abundantly.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Within the scope of one article, it is impossible to do justice to so vast a subject. The works of distinguished men such as Cardinal Faulhaber and Karl Adam have not been mentioned, nor has attention been paid to publications of a doctrinal, devotional or strictly didactical nature, though in this field, too, the German contribution to European thought is by no means small. The choice was determined by the writer's desire to state the spiritual problem of our generation, and show the lines along which its solution may be found.