

## EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

HUMANIST AND MARTYR. At a time when the relation of Grace and nature, of Christian and pagan humanism, is a problem of particular urgency, the canonization of Sir Thomas More has a special significance of not merely local and national importance. It is fitting that a Saint should be put before us who personified the ideals of Christian humanism and makes them more than a topic of mere academic discussion. It is true that he has been canonized not for his humanism but for his martyrdom, not for his life but for his death. But the excellent studies of that life which appear in our contemporaries help us to realize that his death, so far from being a departure from the principles which governed and enriched his life, was their logical conclusion and consummation. Especially noteworthy are: *Thomas More—Lord Chancellor* by Lord Russell of Killowen, *The Patron of Laymen* by Dr. David Mathew (both in the May CLERGY REVIEW), *More and Scholarship* by Mr. G. A. Fressanges (which stresses the fact that the Sacrifice of the Mass was the pivot of his life and learning) in the May MONTH, *Blessed Thomas More* by Mr. R. E. Noble in the BUCKFAST ABBEY CHRONICLE and *Un clerc qui n'a pas trahi* by M. E. Dermenghem in the May ESPRIT. This last article, short as it is, perhaps brings home to us best the importance of St. Thomas More's work, life and death to our own time, and especially his importance in foreseeing our social problems and the main lines of their solution. But each of these studies impresses us in different ways with the Saint's extraordinary *balance* and *completeness*. His martyrdom is seen to be the very fruit of his love of life, letters and laughter; and conversely his life to have gained its richness and poise from his spirit of sacrifice. His satirical "derision of all human things" was saved from the cynicism and *ennui* of the pagan humanist by his Christian *contemptus mundi*, the principle which at once integrated the multitudinous interests and activities of his life and enabled him finally to sacrifice them all cheerfully and willingly. "Il prouve que la sainteté n'est pas exclusive d'une certaine excentricité aimable, qu'elle exige même la plus complète liberté d'esprit et d'expression." As a

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humanist (though he would have been too good a humourist to call himself such) who lost his life to find it, St. Thomas More is indeed a saint for the twentieth century.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIALISM. A lengthy and important article under this heading appeared in the April number of *LA NOUVELLE REVUE THEOLOGIQUE* by Père Boigelot. He reminds us that, if the Church condemns doctrinaire socialism, *Quadragesimo Anno* nevertheless pronounces that "above all those deserve to be condemned who, by their inertia, neglect to destroy or to change a state of things which exasperates the masses." He continues:

But at all costs, if we are to avoid confusion and error, we must distinguish between the socialism of the doctrinaires and the socialism of the workers. Authors who fail to do this, while they validly condemn doctrinal socialism, lead their readers to condemn off-hand everything that goes by the name of socialism. Such indiscriminate condemnation is illegitimate and unjust. There are socialist claims which are Christian, and there are denials of socialist claims on the part of Catholics which are anti-Christian. These immoral denials by Catholics who fail to recognize their own doctrine of justice and charity in certain points of their adversaries' programme are due in great measure, we believe, to the persistent confusion among Catholic writers between the theses of doctrinaire socialists and the claims of socialist workers.

*Quadragesimo* expressly leaves the door ajar for a rapprochement between non-doctrinaire, workers' socialism and Catholic social workers. The opposition between Catholicism and socialism "is not, generally speaking, in the social or economic, but in the religious sphere." Cardinal Bourne, Père Boigelot points out, expressly excluded the socialism of the English Labour party from the condemnations of the Church on the grounds that it avoids basing its position on philosophical or religious premisses.

*Quadragesimo* also declared that "It would seem as if socialism were . . . drifting towards the truth which Christian tradition has always held in respect." It is a welcome augury that socialists are themselves coming to realize their debt to Christianity. Not least among these is the new Belgian Minister of Public Works, Henri de Man. A useful thumbnail sketch of this remarkable personality appeared in *THE CATHOLIC HERALD* (May 11). But of de Man's plan

for a "regime of mixed economics," it is declared in black letters that "No Catholic conscious of his responsibilities could approve this socializing tendency." So dogmatic and sweeping a pronouncement seems premature. It is a mistake to suppose that the Church is opposed to all nationalization on principle. A passage from an article in the *OSSERVATORE ROMANO* (quoted in the current *ESPRIT*)—itself a paraphrase of a passage in *Quadragesimo*—deserves notice:

There are certain categories of goods concerning which one can rightly say that they should be reserved exclusively to the collectivity, since they are of such economic consequence that they cannot, without endangering the public welfare, be left in the hands of private individuals. Demands and claims of this kind are just and in no wise contrary to Christian truth; still less may one say that they are peculiar to socialism.

Doubtless, de Man envisages something more sweeping than the *OSSERVATORE* explicitly mentions, but the category of goods which cannot be left in private hands without endangering public welfare is, in an industrialized society, extremely comprehensive.

THE DOUGLASITES are enthusiastically at work on an electoral campaign which may prove a powerful factor at the next general election. The procedure is explained in a special Electoral Campaign Number of *SOCIAL CREDIT* (April 19) and subsequent numbers of the same. The slogan is Abolish Poverty-in-the-midst-of-Plenty and Give National Dividends to all; this should not be an unpopular objective. The tactics are: "You must tell your M.P.s there are certain things you want done—and done first. Say to them, 'We say it can be done; we do not know exactly how, and we do not say you must put into operation the Douglas Credit System. All we want is results, and we will have results.' " Major Douglas will have to flatter the intelligence of the electorate better than that if he is going to dispose of the something-for-nothing bogey. Another of the Major's framed pronouncements is: "We tried reasoning, but we did not find it successful, so we are going to become a militant division; we are mobilizing the electoral power of British electors." This has been done before, but never stated quite so frankly. The Douglasites are doing undoubted good in exposing real evils and waking people out of acquiescence in them; a pity to spoil it with ballyhoo, utopian promises and a quasi-fascist *mystique du chef*. In

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the S.C. utopia "on every Easter Monday there is a pontifical High Mass of Plenty in all cathedrals and a Eucharist of praise and thanksgiving in every parish church. Verily Easter is the great Social Credit festival." Utopias are all very well if like the Major you can pronounce "I do not believe in original sin." But a campaign on such a basis is likely to have an unhappy ending. Advertisements include: "An Historic Portrait by a Famous British Artist. Major C. H. Douglas, A.M.I.Mech.E., by Augustus John. A limited number of Medici reproductions in colour . . . Portrait by H. R. Purchase. Signed copies of the lino-cut of Major Douglas can be supplied at £1 is. od. . . . Identification Badge . . . The Device is a thistle within a half-inch diameter circle of Douglas tartan green . . . If you don't like wearing a badge why not wear a Douglas tartan tie? It is becoming more fashionable daily!" The Major may or may not have a remedy for our economic ills, but his followers will have to stop making him ridiculous before he will convince the British electorate of it.

CONTEMPORANEA. Under this heading we shall list articles in our contemporaries likely to be of particular interest to BLACKFRIARS readers but which, for one reason or another, cannot receive fuller analysis:

ACTA APOSTOLICAE SEDIS (April): *Decretum de catechetica institutione impensius curanda et provehenda*. An important pronouncement deploring contemporary ignorance of the Faith and re-emphasizing the responsibilities of priests, parents and layfolk.

AMERICAN REVIEW (May): *James Joyce* by Paul Elmer More. "In this art I see at work not the conviction of sin (*pace* T. S. Eliot) but the ultimate principle of evil invoked as the very enemy of truth." A startling conclusion of what is nevertheless a thoughtful and discriminating study; pornography and obscenity being incidentally distinguished and defined.

BEDA REVIEW (March): *The Loneliness of Vision* by Fr. Vernon Johnson. A vivid description of the spiritual difficulties which face the devout individual convert.

CATHOLIC GAZETTE (May): *The Mass in English* by B. K. Windscheffel. The movement for a vernacular liturgy, familiar on the Continent, spreads to England in a reasoned if one-sided Letter to the Editor.

CHRISTENDOM (March): *Reform without Religion* by Rev. C. S. Gillett. "The theory that you can reform a 'human' natural

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- civilization without a divine *supernatural* religion is entirely false." The principles of Catholic sociology viewed by an Anglo-Catholic.
- CRITERION (April): *War, Democracy and Peace*. Mr. Hoffman Nickerson reaffirms his theory that democracy is the cause of the removal of the limitations of war; dictatorships make for peace; but only Christian reunion can permanently establish it. *In the Wounds* by Ezra Pound. In memory of A. R. Orage and in praise of Social Credit.
- DUBLIN REVIEW (April): *Francis Cardinal Bourne* by G. Elliot Anstruther. *Christianity and Paganism*, Card. Faulhaber's Altötting sermon. *The Back to the Land Movement* defended against the charge of retrogression by Mgr. James Dey. *The Future of National Government* by Christopher Dawson. Lessons to be learned from Right and Left if it is to have a future at all.
- LIFE AND LETTERS (April): *The Revival of Lying* by W. Force Stead. Oscar's injustice to America; the stuff of Art appears in Kentucky. "Shucks, look at the stuff these bums are selling."
- MONTH (May): *Why Eucharistic Congresses?* by Fr. C. C. Martindale, S.J. A convincing justification of a criticized feature of modern Catholicism. *Why not Parish Councils?* T. W. C. Curd bravely re-opens a sore.
- NEW REVIEW (Calcutta—May): *The Degradation of the God-concept in Occidental Thought* by C. O. Vollert. "The modern God of the West has become an intolerable absurdity"; how and why.
- NOUVELLE REVUE FRANCAISE (May): *Pages de journal*. André Gide continues his diary. *La clef des chants* by Jacques Maritain.
- ORATE FRATRES (April 20): *Renewal of the Social Order in Christ* by Fr. Rembert Bularzik, O.S.B. The Mystical Body as the basis of Catholic Social Action, and the liturgy as conducive to the mentality for collective activity.
- S.S.M. QUARTERLY (Kelham—March): *The Crisis in the German Evangelical Church* by Regin Prenter. The profound religious revival in contemporary German Protestantism. "It is because of this revival alone, not because of Hitler, that there is conflict in the German Church."
- VIE INTELLECTUELLE (April 10): *La figure rayonnante de Pie X* by Père M. S. Gillet, Dominican Master General. An admirably balanced study of a misrepresented personality: some wise incidental remarks on the relative importance of "Catholic blood" and Baptismal water.

PENGUIN.