

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

THE TRAGIC WELTANSCHAUUNG. In a brilliant article in BLACKFRIARS (May, 1935) Fr. W. McCabe, S.J., maintained that Thomism "provides the true Divinity of tragedy . . . enlarges the scope of the tragic vision . . . equips tragedy with a true and final theodicy including the mystery round which tragic poetry revolves." To the merely superficial reader of the *Summa*, and still more to him who knows his Thomism only from hearsay, such a thesis will appear in the highest degree paradoxical. The neat, orderly Thomist *Weltanschauung*, it is supposed, is no setting for the conflict of man with his destiny which is the essence of high tragedy, nor can the stuff of tragedy be found in its slick, cut-and-dried, rationalized view of man's place in a universe emptied of every element of mystery and tension. Thomist rationalism, it has been maintained, is antithetical to "the tragic sense of life," and therefore, some have gone on to argue, to the essential Christian ethos.

Such a view, made all too plausible by complacent simplifiers and would-be popularizers of Thomism, needs to be corrected by thinkers who can penetrate to the deepest implications of the Thomist view of reality and man's place within it. Hence the value of such studies as that by Père Robilliard, O.P. in the current number of LA REVUE DES SCIENCES THEOLOGIQUE ET PHILOSOPHIQUES. "Nul mieux que saint Thomas n'a compris la grandeur et la misère de l'homme, le tragique de la condition humaine." This he exemplifies in an erudite and profound study of a single, and at first sight most unpromising, article of the *Summa* (IIa, IIae, clxxxiii, 1) wherein St. Thomas analyzes the concept of *status* or condition. The writer shows how this concept was taken over by St. Thomas from an obscure definition of Visigoth law which had been preserved in a corrupt form by the jurist Gratian, was emptied by him of its specifically juristic content, applied analogically to the various levels of existence, and so given a cosmic significance and depth of meaning. *Status* implies adaptation to environment in all living things; in man it implies the maintenance of equilibrium between the personality with its innate aspirations for liberty, spontaneity and autonomy

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and the claims of submission to external necessity embodied in the physical and social law which is the condition of his finite existence. This tragic *status*, involving perpetual stress and readjustment, is the unescapable destiny of men here below, and is heightened by grace—the *status gratiae*—which liberates the spirit, imparts a new *vouloir-vivre*, and enhances man's yearning for the Absolute, who alone is sovereign liberty. And besides aggravating the tension between the claims of liberty and servitude, of the individual and the social self, the advent of grace creates a new inner tragedy of its own. It is impossible to summarize or do justice to Père Robilliard's four closely-written pages, still less to draw all their manifold implications. We call attention to them as an indication of a line which should be followed up if Thomism is to be not merely regarded as a system to be studied but also to be assimilated as a personal Christian philosophy of life.

THE PEOPLE AT MASS. The principle of active participation at Mass—the first principle of any authentic liturgical movement—is still very imperfectly understood, and we are still very far from the day when the average congregation is given much encouragement, or even opportunity, to put the principle into practice. There is an excellent discussion of the question by Père Bouëssé, O.P., in *LA REVUE DES JEUNES* (January 15). The central element of all worship—the idea of sacrifice—has become dimmed in the modern consciousness; and with it, inevitably, has gone the sense of the majesty, the sovereignty, the transcendence of God, of which sacrifice is the recognition. To this fact can be traced “the relaxation of morals, the softening of character which tends to deaden, even among believers, the sense of sin, of expiation, of redemption.” Preaching has become, too commonly, “irréelle et débonnaire”; there is a crying need for a “nouvelle évangélisation” which will tell what the priest is doing at the altar. “Si l'on ne s'intéresse pas à la messe, c'est qu'on ne sait pas trop ce que le prêtre ‘trafique’ à l'autel.” And not only what the priest is doing, but what Christ is doing there, and what He is doing for the worshippers, and what they are, or should be, doing.

A la messe, le Christ nous donne, pour ainsi dire, de le rendre au Père: Lui, le grand Don de Dieu à l'humanité.

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A la messe, le Christ nous donne d'offrir, inclus vitalement en son sacrifice de Chef de l'humanité pécheresse; en ses sentiments d'adoration et de reconnaissance, en ses demandes de pardon et ses supplications; nos propres sentiments de religion, à nous ses membres: ce sacrifice intérieur, cette soumission religieuse de tout soi-même et de toutes choses par où l'homme s'élève jusqu'au Très-Haut et l'univers fait retour à son Auteur.

Mystère de foi pour l'homme en route. Messe de la terre.

Au ciel, dans la lumière de l'évidence, subsistera le sacrifice du Christ et le nôtre en lui; mais le sacrement aura disparu, comme tout voile et tout intermédiaire.

EVENING MASS? But the obstacles in the way of active participation are still immense (as most laymen who try to follow the words and actions of Mass as commonly celebrated painfully realize): the rapidity and/or inaudibility of the celebrant, the frequent impossibility of knowing until after the Gospel (if then) what Mass is being celebrated, what prayers being said, what feast commemorated. Then there is the old difficulty of "a tongue not understood of the people." This is frankly faced by Père Bouëssé, who finds, nevertheless, that the advantages of Latin outweigh its disadvantages. A difficulty less frequently considered is the hour at which we are accustomed to celebrate Mass. Has the ancient custom of the Church of fasting from midnight, and so offering Mass and giving Communion only in the morning, become an anachronism in the world of to-day? Does it not prevent many from attending Mass and receiving Communion altogether?—compel others to attend only seldom, hurriedly, distractedly?—encourage the process which tends to make Benediction a substitute for the Sacrifice and Sacrament?

Nous demanderions volontiers aux jocistes et à leurs aumôniers, aux différents groupes de notre jeunesse catholique, si la messe le soir, au moins de temps à autre, ne satisferait pas leur désir de vivre toujours plus du Christ Jésus pour le faire rayonner davantage dans la nuit de notre siècle.

La messe après le poids du jour. L'Eucharistie et sa table dressée à l'heure où on se presse dans les bars et aux tables de jeu. L'Eucharistie et sa grande prière, à l'heure où l'on s'amuse dans les théâtres et les dancings. La messe at la communion. Dans l'assistance, des chrétiens de toutes les classes. Leurs habits ne sont pas ces vêtements du dimanche qui donnent aux offices une allure légèrement empruntée. Mais les cœurs sont en fête.

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Pour qui assiste à la messe chaque jour, n'est-ce pas tous les jours dimanche?

Rêves ou désirs d'enfants?

La messe du soir à Lourdes n'a choqué personne. Les fidèles n'ont pas perdu le souvenir du "dernier souper" où le Maître institua l'Eucharistie. Beaucoup se rappellent que nos frères les premiers chrétiens se réunissaient le soir pour célébrer le mystère eucharistique, en mémoire du sacrifice du Calvaire offert le soir.

Le jour où notre jeunesse serait tellement éprise du Saint Sacrifice de la messe qu'une journée sans elle lui paraîtrait sans soleil; le jour où notre jeunesse aurait faim de l'Hostie jusqu'à souffrir de ne la pouvoir manger, ce jour-là l'Eglise en serait probablement émue.

Nous aurions jugé imprudente une telle suggestion, si nous avions craint l'audace des jeunes et leurs désirs de nouveauté. Mais, quelle que soit leur fougue, ils sont obéissants. Par-dessus tout, ils sont passionnément attachés à leur Chef: le Christ; et c'est lui qu'ils voient dans le successeur de Pierre. Du Christ, de l'Eglise, du Pape, ils sont et veulent être indissolublement.

CASSOCKS VERSUS TROUSERS. There is much solicitude in the correspondence-columns of THE CATHOLIC GAZETTE concerning the raiment of the clergy and wherewithal they should be clothed. But it does not arise from any idea that the raiment is more than the body and the life; the protagonists on both sides are chiefly and sincerely concerned for the good of souls. Indeed, the present discussion arose out of one on Catholic Inaction; this was traced to the shortcomings of the clergy—who are apparently absorbed in "tennis, golf and motoring, cinema and radio, cards and social visiting"—and these shortcomings were in turn traced to our demoralizing English clerical suitings. A champion of trousers pointed out that Mgr. Ratti did not wear a cassock when he climbed Monte Rosa, and a champion of cassocks retorted that he *did* wear his cassock when he was not climbing Monte Rosa. But, on the whole, the controversy is being conducted on a higher level. The principal case against cassocks is that they tend to divorce the priest from the people, and the principal case against trousers is that they tend to make the priest too much one of the people. An unhappy dilemma, inherent in the very nature of the priestly office. As mediator of God's gifts to the people and of the people's offerings to God, the priest must be at once distinct from without being remote from the people he represents,

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and his costume should at once facilitate and symbolize his office. In our commercial age in which, as Mr. Eric Gill has pointed out, the business-man sets male fashions for kings and coal-heavers, and in which the long skirt is anathema and anachronism, the dark suit and Roman collar is perhaps as good a compromise as can be expected—combining both the advantages and disadvantages of extreme ecclesiastical and extreme secular dress. At least it is distinctive, without making the wearer *too* freakish and unapproachable. A trouserite observes that the soutane and habit have fostered anti-clericalism abroad, and the reply is made that trousers have made us in England too inconspicuous to be worth persecuting. But anti-clerical feeling of this sort is commonly something very different from persecution for justice's sake. The soutane tends to mark off the clergy as an independent, if not parasitic, caste in civil society, and this enflames a resentment which is not always unpardonable, and may often be profoundly religious and Christian; it *does* in fact (though it should not) too often cut the priest off from that personal contact with his flock, let alone with those outside the fold, which is essential to parochial life as we understand it in this country. The perpetual terror of "giving scandal" is apt to paralyze soutaned clerical activity—good as well as bad—and to reduce the wearer to that inertia which is a powerful justification of much Continental anti-clericalism. While recognizing the unloveliness and the disadvantages of our Vanheems compromise, the heavy cost of donning the more correct and traditional garbs of so-called Catholic countries should be very carefully weighed. The Englishman has indeed a just contempt for the worldly cleric, but he has also a healthy suspicion of overconspicuous phylacteries.

CONTEMPORANEA. CATHOLIC WORLD (February): *Catholics and the Modern State* by Ross J. S. Hoffmann: an excellent study showing the need for political-consciousness among Catholics and their obligations to and in the modern state.

CLERGY REVIEW (February): *The Future of Anglicanism* in relation to the state, by Derek Harbord, Barrister.

FORDS AND BRIDGES (February): A promising new magazine which is "an attempted fusion of two great and distinct traditions," those of Oxford and Cambridge. Mr. Joad buffoons in a self-contradictory effort to restate extreme liberalism.

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- HOCHLAND (February): *Lord Acton* by Dr. Ulrich Noack—his lessons for our time. *Die Kirche Christi als Kirche der Völker*: a valuable constructive criticism of a theory of Catholic culture and civilization.
- IRENIKON (November-December): *Les voies vers l'Eglise unifiée, Appel d'un orthodoxe russe*: by Prof. N. Arsenjev: the way to reunion through active suffering and the sharing by the West of the cross of the East.
- LITURGY AND SOCIOLOGY (February): The first issue of the new mimeographed organ of the vigorous Campion Propaganda Committee, an American "Catholic Youth Organization for the purpose of spreading the social teachings of the Church and putting them into practice" by means of Prayer, Action and Sacrifice. (10 cents a copy from 269 Avenue A., New York City.)
- ORIENTATIONS (February): *Les vrais serviteurs* by I. Draime, O.P.: a very practical article on putting first things first in religion.
- PAX (February): *The Presence of the Absent: Thoughts on Apologetics* by "Apostolus" of *La Vie Spirituelle*: "The Church must be ready for the convert as well as the convert for the Church," for she exists not only for her actual visible adherents but for all mankind.
- PYLON (January): Another excellent issue of a first-rate missionary magazine. (2/6 annually from 10 Via Boncompagni, Rome.)
- REVUE DOMINICAINE (Montreal) appears this year in an enlarged format, with an alleged "couverture de luxe" and a very unfriendly mien towards American Catholicism.
- VIE INTELLECTUELLE (February 10): *Pour l'unité du monde chrétien*: some account of the important theological addresses delivered at Montmartre by Père Congar, O.P., during the Unity Octave.

PENGUIN.