BLACKFRIARS

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EDITORIAL

TO prevent possible misunderstandings, perhaps it is as well to say that we do not pretend that the articles in this number specially devoted to Communism represent points of view that must necessarily be accepted by Catholics. We do not ark our readers to agree with them. We do not even imply thrt on ever) point these writers agree amongst themselves. But we do maintain that there articles will help OUT readers to clear their own minds on the subject of Communism by doing two things; first, helping them to understand what Communism is; secondly, helping to understand why and in what sense it is condemned by the Holy Father. Moreover, we shall hope to have done a third and more important thing, namely explain why the Church pronounces solemnly on matters concerned with politics and economics. That she has so pronounced by encyclicals and action is manifest. She has in consequence been told by outriders and even by some of her own children that to do this is outside her sphere. She is right, say the rich. to have sympathy with those in distress but the possession of sympathy is not enough to enable her to solve the complicated problems of the commercial and industrial world of to-day. The poor, on the other hand, bid her leave alone the wealthy patrons in whore interest she seems to them to be speaking and walk with them as Christ her master walked. Bath tell her that she knows nothing about the details of human life. ' Business is bwinesr.' say they

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both; and she is not trained or commissioned to deal with it, In a similar vein has Medicine spoken to the Church when she has denounced some of its proposals in the past, like the now-diminished practice of craniotomy. *So* speak the eugenists, or so they did, about the practice of birth-control of which however already they have become **a** little ashamed, *So* have spoken politicians, so economists. Finance say these last **is** no concern of hers for it is founded on nature; though not on the nature of coins but the nature of man, and what concerns man's nature lies indirectly at least under the Church's guidance for she was commissioned to lead men to God. And in doing this she must have the power to rule out what is contrary to His teaching of which she alone is the authoritative custodian and interpreter.

Hence history is full of clashes between Church and State. Are we obliged as Catholics to uphold the Church in all her quarrels? No, we may sometimes think that in their policy or in their contentions popes were at fault. But what we shall certainly find is this, that in the main quarrel the popes were always right, namely in their contention that the spiritual is above the temporal. For if the popes had not fought at great odds to maintain this, the freedom of the human conscience from external compulsion would have disappeared; freedom would not now be accepted in the political world as at least in theory it is to-day.

But while we defend the papacy in its long fight against the strongest rulers of the past from Constantantine to Napoleon, Bismarck, Mussolini and the lesser tyrants, we do not claim that it is the business of the Church as such, to draw up a programme of industrial regeneration **or** commercial rebirth or political idealism. The popes have criticised the industrial conditions of to-day, most forcibly. But they have not proclaimed a Catholic political or economic programme. They have denounced whatever conflicts with the moral rights of man; for this reason the present Holy Father has condemned both the capitalism and the communism **of** our time, but they have not

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asserted a social scheme of their own. They watch the cause of man's spiritual liberties and will defend these against the world, but they will not interfere with the right and duty of the civil power to determine within the limits of Christian morality what is to be the programme of its social and economic organization.

Moreover, when advocating Catholic Action, the pope does not mean merely the action of Catholics on the outer world but the action of Catholics on their own body. He is not thinking first of all (as he has subsequently told us when addressing the J.O.C.) of any mass movement but of individuals bringing themselves into closer relationship with Christ. He is not planning a political crusade of regeneration but a spiritual one. By Catholic Action he means essentially the action of Catholics who are living on their Catholic faith. He desires indeed to transform the world but only by first transforming Catholics themselves. When their faith has begun to permeate them and work through them the world will be eager to listen to them and learn from them. Little groups here and there are to be brought into the full life of their faith. Through their transformed lives only does the Pope hope to transform society. We have the principles of right living and the life too; but the life in so many of us is dead. When the working classes and the employers have been brought back to the Catholic life in its fullness, we shall then be able to draw up our programme of social and economic reform.

We need groups of young men first to devote themselves to their own sanctification; and then to help the unemployed to follow their faith better by interesting them in Catholic ideals, in liturgy, in all the many things that can be done to show them the meaning of their Catholic religion. What a unique chance now with their enforced leisure to do this! Then these days of pain will have borne the excellent fruit for them that God has intended.

In this sense read the articles that follow: the statement of the purposes of Marx, the strange alteration of these under practical experience by Lenin and his followers, our need of a revolutionary spiritual awakening,

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the papal call to Catholic action, the deep needs of Catholic people, their requirement for apostolic priestly leaders, the hostile atmosphere of industrialism to the full Catholic life expressed in a poignant sentence in *Quadragesimo Anno,* and the true Commune, as we Catholics see it, **set** out and achieved by the meek victory of Christ over worldly power.

In these articles we have unrolled for us the future conflict, not perhaps in the temporal but in the spiritual order. It would then be foolish querulously to complain that no one tells us what we can do to help. What we can do is manifest. We can and must aim at nothing less than holiness for ourselves: ' Only one modern revolution could shake modern society to its foundations, a general outbreak of asceticism amongst the masses of the people.' That is the object the Pope has in mind. Begin now with yourself.

Is this a sermon? It is the sermon that the Pope wishes to have preached everywhere.

EDITOR.

REMARKS

IMAGE OF GOD. The dignity of personality holds the centre of the Catholic position in face of Communism, and the theology of the Blessed Trinity lies in close support. **A** man is more than a unit in a scheme, even though the scheme be a human commonwealth. There **is** something in him not subordinate **to** the collective good, not related to its purpose only through a place in the scheme of things. Created to the image of God, destined to share in the **in**most life of the Blessed Trinity, man's noblest and most characteristic interests set him above any arrangement of creatures among themselves, economic, political or social. He is a person, *sui juris,* an absolute in his way, relative only to God. He is a man before he is a citizen; he has rights before he has uses; he is free to determine himself before he can be treated as a producer.

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