



# BATTLING FOR CONSCIENCE

## The Cross vs. the Swastika

by Rev. Dr. Owen B. McGuire



During the past month the daily press has had abundance of "copy" in its dispatches from Europe. Mussolini, Ethiopia, the League of Nations, the Soviets and all "the other Great Powers" involved in the effort "to preserve peace" in a world of their own making and resting on a trembling balance of selfish interests and ambitions where permanent peace is well nigh impossible, fill the columns of our day press and afford a veritable journalistic Bonanza to reporters, editors, news agencies and other "fine writers." For Catholics the most important of these dispatches have been those from Germany; and among these first place in importance must be given to the Pastoral Letter addressed to their people by the German Bishops assembled in Fulda at the Shrine of St. Boniface, "the Apostle of Germany."

In that Pastoral the Bishops denounce the new Paganism of the Nazi and deplore the propaganda carried on by its apostles in the press and on the platform. They deplore this new fetish of "exaggerated nationalism" and racial pride whose first commandment is that there is no god but the one we make; and the second, if not similar to the first, is certainly its logical sequence: that we should hate and destroy every "neighbor" who does not agree with us. It would be well for all of us to read that Pastoral attentively, for Germany is not the only country affected by this cult of exaggerated nationalism and "racial" self-sufficiency. Both are a direct and logical product of the religious revolt of the 16th century. It is only yesterday that we had a school of prophets in this country to tell us that whatever we have of good has been inherited from "Nordic" stocks. The Gospel of Christ which taught us to love God above all things and our neighbors as ourselves, in God and without distinction, had contributed nothing to our superior civilization.

For the mass of the people in any nation the danger of these doctrines is found in their insidiousness. They flatter and deceive by appealing to a sentiment that is noble in itself and, when rightly understood and kept within its own sphere, is entirely laudable. Charity begins at home, though it should not end there. We love our parents more intensely at least than we do others. And it is but an extension of that human and God-given sentiment that we love the motherland. Patriotism is an extension of pietas. Every political scoundrel who appeals to the national and racial pride understands that. Hence, when Doctor Johnson wrote that "patriotism is the last resort of the scoundrel," he expressed what is not only an ever recurring fact but what is also a deep philosophical truth. Hence, too, when the Nazi leaders wish to destroy Christianity in Germany and establish a Pagan tyranny on its ruins, they appeal to this natural and, in itself noble, sentiment and brand as traitors to race and nation all the Germans who do not agree with them and who certainly constitute the majority and better part of the Reich. But, say the Bishops, they will not succeed, and let us see some of the reasons why they cannot succeed.

Germany is usually referred to as "a Protestant Country." If Protestantism means a belief in Christianity, or indeed in any form of revealed or supernatural religion, it should be apparent that not one half of the population in the third Reich can be called Protestant. The population of the Reich is in round numbers, 60 millions. Of these one third are Catholics. It is evident, however, that non-Christians are numerous. The people of German speech in Switzerland, Austria, Poland and the new States, created or enlarged by the treaty of Versailles, are in the vast majority also Catholic. That the Nazi movement even if there were no other sincere Christians to oppose it, can finally induce this population to return

to the barbarous Paganism of the Teutonic tribes before their conversion to Christianity, is a supposition that no reflecting mind can harbor. Don't you believe it either. The Catholics of Germany are undoubtedly confronted by a very serious situation. There may be much persecution. There may be a fierce, and, perhaps, prolonged conflict. But the Church in Germany will finally triumph. That is the conviction of the Bishops. On what is it founded?

Leaving to one side for the moment the supernatural assistance always given to faithful souls, and the divine promises made to the Church in her ever-recurring conflict with the powers of evil, the Bishops' confidence is well founded. In the first place, this is not the first conflict in which German Catholics have had to engage, and from previous conflicts they emerged triumphant. In the next place, in no other country are Catholics better, or even as well, prepared to do battle for conscience's sake. They are, in the mass, the best instructed Catholics in Europe. Systematic catechetical instruction had long ago in Germany been reduced to a fine art. Our best manuals in that line were produced in Germany, and are still the models that guide writers on the same subject in other countries. The leaders also of Catholic Germany had been well prepared for the role they had to play. In their course through school and "gymnasium" and university, they were, either in these institutions or in supplementary courses apart from the State curriculum, well grounded in what may be called distinctively Catholic culture; that is, in the principles of Catholic philosophy, theology, sociology, history, historic criticism. This was true not only of those intended for the priesthood, but of laymen intended to take part in public life. This fact did not escape the notice of the reigning Pontiff when, as a young priest and already a distinguished scholar, he traveled in Germany. In an address to a German Catholic pilgrimage three or four years ago, he remarked with what surprise and delight on a visit to Germany he found the private libraries of the lay leaders of the Center Party well stocked with books on philosophy, theology, history and controversy. Several of these lay leaders had taken the Doctor's degree not only in Philosophy but in Theology also. And this is one reason, perhaps the chief reason, why the German Catholic Press was superior to the Catholic Press in any other country. In my own time over there, the layman Editor-in-Chief of the Catholic "Volkszeitung," published at Cologne, was a Doctor in Theology. And until we have in this country such

laymen journalists, we can never produce the Catholic press that is needed here. But that is another question.

The Catholics in Germany are therefore not Catholic merely in name. High and low, learned and humble, they have been well instructed in their religion, and they have been trained and kept to the practice of their religion. These are in the long run the two matters that really count in times of persecution. They know the treasure they possess in their Catholic faith; and they know the means by which it must be pre-



served and defended. They have not been taken by surprise and unprepared. They have also been thoroughly organized, now for two or three generations; and while their organizations are for the moment forbidden to manifest themselves in public activities, the spirit that created and actuated them, will find means eventually to assert itself and will finally triumph over its upstart, pagan, adventitious enemies.

There is another aspect of the question that must not be lost sight of in estimating the forces that German Catholicism has in reserve in such a struggle as that which now confronts it. I have said that Germany is usually spoken of as a Protestant country. But it should be remembered that there is a Catholic Germany. And that does not mean merely that there are 20 million Catholics scattered throughout the Reich amongst a non-Catholic population of 40 millions. It is not in Germany as it is in this country, for instance, or in Great Britain. There are whole provinces in the Reich which remained Catholic in the religious Revolt of the 16th Century. In these provinces, once independent or at least autonomous States, the Catholic tradition has never been broken. It survives today as vigor-

ous as it was in "the Ages of Faith," more alive, I believe, than it can be found in any other country of Europe. And by Catholic tradition I do not mean merely a belief in the doctrines of the Catholic religion or even strictly religious practices, I mean life in its widest sense; the various and multifarious activities that combine to give color and distinctiveness to the daily life of a Community permeated by a living faith and constantly invigorated by the daily practices of that faith.

Spain and Italy are Catholic countries. In their daily life and customs they were not directly and immediately affected by the Revolt that shattered the unity of Europe in the 16th century. They have also a great advantage that we lack in the world of English speech. "The golden age" of their national literatures was thoroughly Catholic. Their great writers of that period were Catholic. They still remain the models, the classics of the two languages. Subsequent writers, even when atheist or anti-Catholic, do not and cannot escape that fact so important in the intellectual life of a people. And yet, if you ever go to Europe and wish to get some idea of what the life of the common people was in "the Ages of Faith," I would not advise you to search for it in these two countries. I would rather advise you to seek it out in the Catholic provinces of German speech. You could begin in the Rhineland, follow on through the Black Forest, on through the Eastern Cantons of Switzerland, through the Bavarian Highlands, the Tyrol, Upper and Lower Austria.

In making this statement I am not depending on hearsay or even on books, although books on the subject are not to be despised. For instance, Hilaire Belloc's "Path to Rome," which Arnold Lunn says he reads twice a year. Even Guide Books are not to be despised—in all their parts. But on this subject I can speak from personal experience and observation. While students at the University of Innsbruck we tramped, during the "long vacations," over the mountains, hills and valleys of those German countries that I have just mentioned. We mixed with the people. We saw them at work and play. We put up at their hospitable houses, or in their clean and happy Gasthauser. Passing along the village street of a summer evening we heard the murmur of the family prayers come out through the windows of every home. We saw them stop at their work in the fields when the village church bell rang out the Angelus. And we saw those same "horny hands of toil" that we had seen during the week

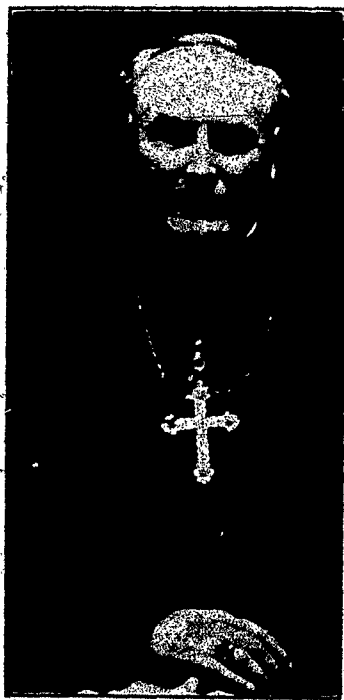
working in the field, at the Mass Cantata on Sunday, hold the Graduale from which their owners sang in Latin the various parts of the liturgy. It was all a revelation to us and seemed an unbroken stream of tradition coming down from the "fountains of the Ages of Faith." You have probably read of Oberammergau during the years of the Passion Play. What I wish to tell you is that Oberammergau is not an isolated or exceptional village of the Bavarian Highlands. It has a Passion Play (as have several other villages of the German countries). But in everything else it is typical of any village of the provinces I have just named. In their daily life there is no more happy people on earth and their religion permeates every activity of their daily life.

Were I to tell you all that comes back crowding to memory on this subject, I should keep you all night. I will let you go after making two remarks. First: These people cannot be all killed by the Nazis. Neither can this tradition that has lived through the trials and vicissitudes of centuries. To the souls and ears of those people the blatant blasphemies of the Nazi propagandists will sound as hateful as the clatter of a rattlesnake. The Bishops' confidence is well grounded.

Second: The vast majority of the German Catholic immigrants to this country in the 19th century came from those Catholic provinces. They brought with them this centuries-old Catholic tradition. It included many elements with which the Catholics of this country had, in the mass, been hitherto unfamiliar. These elements have entered into the development of our Catholic life and customs to an extent which today we hardly recognize. This aspect of the question under discussion would also require a special conference. For the present I would advise you to read, if you can lay hands on it, the magnificent sermon preached by Bishop McGuire at the second national Council held in Baltimore in 1884. He traced therein the distinctive contributions made to Catholicism in this country by the Irish and German immigrants respectively, then the two chief Catholic elements, and showed that the German immigrants, from those provinces where the Catholic tradition had remained unbroken in its social and public manifestations, had brought to the "melting pot" many things that Irish immigrants could not have brought; and that for the simple but sufficient reason that after three centuries of persecution they did not have them to bring. There is not in Ireland today one church dedicated to Catholic worship that was standing at the opening of the 19th century. The Faith survived the prolonged storm; but its public and social manifestations had been driven underground. If these came to life again in Ireland, they will survive the Nazi heathenism in Catholic Germany. And this period of persecution may possibly open the eyes of non-Catholic German Christians to what should be a patent fact to every sincere open-minded Christian: That it is only that unity which the Catholic Church insures which can save the Christian religion itself from its new enemies, new only in their tactics and strategy. And these enemies see that. Rome, Catholicism: *Viola Ienemies!* "Writers," says the Pastoral, "who have never studied Church history, boldly proclaim the need of a church free from Rome, and these, while foes of Christianity and divided among themselves on many issues, are agreed on one point—the war of annihilation on which they have embarked is primarily directed at Rome and the Catholic faith."

Quite so. And the kind of church they would set up, when they had destroyed Catholicism, and the kind of liberty that church would enjoy, is made quite plain in the spectacle of the church which they have established under the puppet prelate Moller.

### Cardinal



MICHAEL CARDINAL FAULHABER, staunch defender of Catholicism in the present German "Kulturkampf," has long been a foe of the Nazi party. His arrest for anti-Nazi activities has been reported on several occasions but his answer has always been "I am free and well." An attempt to kill him was made in January, 1934, but he escaped serious injury. A student of Spanish and English literature, he is noted for his writings. He visited the United States in 1923. (Left)

REV. DR. OWEN B. MCGUIRE is already known to our readers through his weekly column "Believe It or Not" appearing in the Catholic Courier. Doctor McGuire treats of the situation in Germany and the German people from the standpoint of one who has spent years in Europe and has lived among the German people. Doctor McGuire attended the University of Louvain and Innsbruck prior to his professorship at St. Bernard's Seminary, where he was a member of the first faculty as teacher of mental and moral philosophy.

### "Columnist"

