

RELIGIOUS AWAKENINGS IN MODERN CATHOLICISM

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THE Catholic churches in Germany are apparently being stirred by the same religious restlessness that is urging reform among the German Protestants. Evidences of this restlessness may be seen all along the line. Theologically, it is asserting itself in the form of an Evangelical Movement, as Friedrich Heiler calls it. In many places, Bible reading among the laity has become a commonplace. This has all come about within the past quarter century. Prior to that time, comparatively few Catholic laymen had any first-hand knowledge of Scripture. Heiler relates that during his youth, it would have been quite out of the ordinary to find a Bible in his father's home. At fifteen years of age, while a student in the Gymnasium, he owned a Greek New Testament; but this, he adds, was decidedly against both custom and church law. Today, in contrast to those years, the New Testament is read in the original text in the Gymnasium, and in other higher schools, the translation is read. In Catholic youth circles, and in some parishes, Bible study hours of the evangelical type are conducted, and in many places, particularly in cities like Cologne, large crowds attend.

Another evangelical tendency in German Catholicism is a form of Christocentric piety which urges that "the Gospel of Jesus," not dogma, liturgy or canon-law, shall be the highest norm for preaching and the moral life. Johannes Hessen, professor of philosophy in the University of Cologne, and one of the leaders of this movement, has set forth the basic principles of this faith in a little book, entitled, *Gotteskindschaft*, in which he says that "the child of God, in direct communion with the Heavenly Father, enjoys a complete inner freedom; a freedom which releases him from that sense of being under slavish obedience to law." When the Church assumes the form of a legal organization, imposing laws upon its people and compelling their obedience, Hessen continues, it becomes nothing more than a Cross for its people to bear. At the close of his book, Hessen includes prayers and responses that are thoroughly evangelical in spirit.

A more influential expression of this Evangelical Movement is

found in the writings of Josef Wittig.¹ In his book, *Die Erlösten*, he undertakes to set forth four basic doctrines which he believes the Roman Church has obscured. One is the priesthood of believers. The Scriptural saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst," Wittig says implies that the laity, fully as much as the official priests, constitute the church, and this fact should be made apparent in its celebrations. Another fundamental which Wittig feels should have more emphasis is the certainty and joy of salvation. On first thought, one might designate this emphasis a belated Lutheran appeal, but Wittig reminds us that it is Augustinian. A third evangelical idea stressed by Wittig is the Augustinian maxim: *Non solum christiani, sed Christi sumus*. ("We are not only Christ's believers; we, ourselves, are Christ.") Every true Christian, he says, is a representative of Christ; therefore the true Christian life must be a Christ-like life. His fourth fundamental relates to the church. For Wittig, the church is "not just an inflexible, legal institution, but an all-embracing fellowship of love." The legal conception of the church, he adds, 'tho commonly accepted as the historical one, is but a small reflection of what the Church really is. This larger view, he urges, must not be lost sight of.

Heiler says that Wittig's message has found a vigorous response in German Catholicism. "Men and women, young and old, laymen and priests, even theologians and bishops," he writes, "have shown an enthusiasm for him."²

A further reflection of the religious stirring in modern Catholicism is the Catholic Youth Movement. These Catholic youth have much in common with the other branches of the German Youth Movement; but they are distinctive, as one of their own leaders has said, in seeking "to reawaken the ancient soul of the German people, long buried beneath modern materialism and *Staatskultur*, and historically and psychologically nearer to Catholicism than to the super-imposed teaching and institutions of Luther."³ As Heiler

¹Some of his important writings are: *Die Erlösten*, Hochland, 1922; *Die Kirche im Waldwinkel*, Kempten, 1924; "Die Kirche als Auswirkung und Selbstverwirklichung der christlichen Seele," 2. katholisches Sonderheft der *Tat*, 1922, 13ff; "Das allgemeine Priestertum," 3. katholisches Sonderheft der *Tat*, 1923, 22ff; *Das Leben Jesu in Palästina*, Schlesien und anderswo, Kempten, 1925, 2. Aufl. Gotha 1927; *Das Alter der Kirche*, Kapitel und Akten, Berlin 1927.

²*Im Ringen um die Kirche*, p. 187.

³*The Mind of Post-War Germany and Other European Studies*, by C. H. Herford, Oxford University Press, London: 1927. p. 43.

puts it, the Catholic Youth Movement differs from other phases in that its members remain within the objective and supernatural fellowship of the Church. In this movement, he continues, German individualism and Roman objectivism are intermingled and harmonized. "The idealistic Romanticism of the German soul of youth is bound up with the Catholic Youth Movement through the conception of form, ennobled and clarified by the spirit of Christian antiquity, as it has already taken form in the Roman liturgy."⁴ The Catholic Youth Movement, therefore, is a peculiar blend of modern and ancient ideals: on the one hand, it joins with modern non-Catholic youth in their common aspirations for the current cultural cause of youth; on the other hand, it joins with antiquity in its appreciation of traditional forms.

This religious awakening in modern Catholicism is even more clearly evident in the new theology that is appearing among some of its prominent thinkers. "Catholic Modernism," writes Heiler, "such as appeared in the works of Loisy, Tyrrell, and Friedrich von Hügel, during the critical period, is dead today. The only phase of the great Catholic reform movement of the twentieth century that has survived is the theology of Herman Schnell, which never ceases to inspire followers."⁵ The new theology in German Catholicism can hardly be called a form of modernism; rather, it is a renaissance of the early Christian faith. In fact the entire reform spirit in all its manifestations in present-day Catholicism is inspired by an idealization of antiquity, and thus takes the form of a back to the Fathers tendency.

The reviving of Augustinianism in Roman Catholic theology is of particular significance. Johannes Hessen, one exponent of this trend,⁶ sets the Augustinian theory of knowledge and doctrine of God in opposition to the "extreme rationalism" of the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of knowledge and metaphysics. Karl Adam,⁷ an-

⁴*Im Ringen um die Kirche*, p. 189.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁶Johannes Hessen's works include: *Die unmittelbare Gotteserkenntnis nach dem heiligen Augustinus*, Paderborn 1919; *Der Augustinische Gottesbeweis*, Münster 1920; *Augustinische und thomistische Erkenntnislehre*, Paderborn 1921; *Patristische und scholastische Philosophie*, Breslau 1922; *Augustinus und seine Bedeutung für die Gegenwart*, Stuttgart 1924; *Die Weltanschauung des Thomas von Aquin*, Stuttgart 1926; *Erkenntnistheorie*, Berlin 1922.

⁷Karl Adam's important works are: *Glaube und Glaubenswissenschaft*, 2. Aufl. Rothenburg 1923; *Das Wesen des Katholizismus*, Augsburg 1924. (From Friedrich Heiler's *Im Ringen um die Kirche*)

other representative of this trend, and, in Heiler's estimation, "perhaps the most prominent Catholic theologian in Germany," introduces basic Augustinian ideas into his doctrine of the Church and in his conception of the value of the sacrament.

Not less significant than the renewing of Augustinianism is, what Heiler calls "the trend back to pre-vatican theology of the nineteenth century." A theologian by the name of Möhler seems to be the moving spirit here. His outstanding publication is *Die Einheit der Kirche oder das Prinzip der Katholizismus*. Like Newman, Möhler is *pre-vatican* in his conception of the church. Throughout he takes the guidance of the ancient church fathers. Newman, according to Heiler, was inclined against dogmatizing on papal infallibility and thus gave this dogma a very free meaning in his interpretation. Möhler goes a step further in his conception of the church by eliminating the doctrine of infallibility altogether. There is an amusing touch of irony in that fact. Heiler relates that when the publisher of Möhler's book, *Einheit der Kirche*, presented a volume to Pope Pius XI, the pope spoke with admiration of the great German theologian and regretted that he had not read that theologian's work. In Heiler's estimation, this book is the most admirable exhibition of the genuine ancient Catholic conception of the church.

Another interesting development in German Catholic circles is a growing appreciation for the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther. The dean of the Regensburger cathedral, Kiefl, published a volume declaring Martin Luther's religious experience to be the root of a new philosophic outlook.⁸ Another Catholic writer, Johannes Albani, pleaded for a Catholic understanding of Luther, saying that if the Catholic Church would accord Luther the recognition due him, a great confessional schism in Germany would be healed. An eminent Jesuit said that if one were to gather together some of the great utterances from Luther's work, he would find them to be genuinely Catholic. Friedrich Heiler, who was a Catholic before he turned to the Lutheran Church, might also be cited as an example of this interest in Luther among Catholics. For his present enthusiasm for the Reformer and his thorough understanding of Luther's teachings, indicate that he lived with the man and his works long before he formally became his follower.

⁸*Martin Luthers religiöse Psyche als Wurzel eines neuen philosophischen Weltbildes*, Hochland 1917-18.

The new religious spirit in modern Catholicism is also taking a practical turn in the form of social movements. The Catholic Church in Germany is doing a vigorous job of welfare work, particularly in the larger cities, as records will reveal.⁹ But it is also asserting its influence upon the social and public affairs of the country through its social leaders. One outstanding leader is J. Ude, professor of theology at Graz, who has shown such zeal for applying Christian principles in public, political and international life, that he has been called "the Savonarola from Graz." There seems to be a very decided trend back to a Christian Socialism among the Catholic social leaders, according to Heiler; notwithstanding various tendencies to hold fast to some form of a Christian view of property, and the very marked refusal to concur with the Marxian world view. One particularly significant social effort among the Roman Catholics is the Catholic Peace Movement, which has its greatest following among the Catholic youth.¹⁰ What the Stockholm Conference has outlined as its ideal on *Life and Work*, says Heiler, is in a large measure being actualized through the social efforts of the Roman Catholics.

One of the most remarkable of all movements in present-day Roman Catholicism, however, Heiler thinks, is the movement toward Union, which has its headquarters in the Benedictine Cloister at Amay-sur-Meuse in Belgium. This effort toward union has grown out of a strong sense of guilt over the separation between the Roman and the Eastern Church. These leaders feel that the Catholic Church can realize its perfect fulfilment only when the Eastern Church, the Evangelical Church and the Roman Church unite in becoming one Universal Catholic Church. They are opposed to achieving this ideal through proselyting methods. They seek rather to bring about a gradual reunion through inner mutual understanding and regard. The leaders of the Movement Toward Union recognize that the strong Roman character of the Catholic Church stands in the way of such universal union. They, therefore, insist that "Catholic" and "Latin" are not equivalent terms. The Catholic Church, they declare, has room for the cultural peculiarities of all nations. They appear to be consciously working toward the de-Latinizing of the Catholic Church. Their program is so cordial and forward-looking

⁹See *Notizen, Weltstadtbetrachtung*, Berlin 1924ff; gesammelt Berlin 1927, 10 Hefte.

¹⁰For a description of this movement, see *Weltkirche und Weltfriede, Katholische Gedanken zum Kriegs- und Friedensproblem*, Augsburg, 1924.

that occasionally Protestants have looked upon it as a cunning move or a snare which papal agents are directing toward non-Roman Christians in the effort to bring them under papal control. But Heiler insists that these misgivings are unwarranted. These sons of St. Benedict, he says, would not lend themselves to such trickery; they are moved by a pure love for the unity of all Christians.

Even in the mission field, among Roman Catholics, there are signs of a new spirit at work. Rome, for example, has complied with the wishes of the Eastern Catholics in consecrating native bishops in India and in China. Still more significant, Heiler thinks, is the resuming of the "method of adaptation," so vigorously condemned by Catholics in China and in India a hundred years ago. Twenty-five years ago, he says, any attempt to compromise with native cultures would have been severely condemned; but today, Jesuit and non-Jesuit mission theorists alike in the West, along with missionaries in India, have taken up the cry for an Indian Gospel of Christianity and the de-Europeanizing of Catholic Missions. A missionary by the name of Zacharias, who left the Lutheran Church to become an Anglo-catholic, later joining the Roman Church, is working toward the formation of an Indian branch of the Benedictine Order. Thus Roman Catholic Missions, Heiler concludes, are gradually breaking away from deeply-rooted methods of the past that have been found faulty.

Perhaps the most active and far-reaching religious movement in modern Catholicism is the liturgical movement. This movement began in the Benedictine Cloister at Solesme more than a decade ago under the leadership of Abt. Dom Gueranger. From there it spread to the Benedictine Cloister in Germany. For a time it remained more or less confined within the walls of the Order. After the war had ended, its influence was carried into the farthest provinces of the Catholic areas among clerics and people alike. Since then it has continued to be a vital force in the church life of the Roman Catholics.

The emphasis of the liturgical movement is decidedly inward. Its theme is that "*The Church on earth shall not be a conquering, but a praying church.*" It aims to bring the mystical conception of the Church forward. As Heiler puts it, "The Pauline-Johannine mystical fellowship that lived on in the mystical fellowship of the ancient church fathers and liturgy, is the core of the newly awakened liturgical piety." Holding as it does to this view of the

Church, it naturally concerns itself almost wholly with the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

This movement is a conscious trend away from the medieval and post-trinitarian Church and a return to the ancient Church. The leaders of the liturgical movement look upon the Aristotelian intellectualism of the Scholastics as a weakening of the ancient church mysteries, and upon the individualism of the medieval, and still more of the post-trinitarian mystics, as a weakening of the ancient church's conception of fellowship. For that reason, they aim to dissuade their Catholic contemporaries from indulging in the numerous forms of individual piety instituted during the middle ages and the post-trinitarian period, with its many forms of saint-worship and devotions to the Virgin Mary, and to call them back to the prayers of the ancient Church, to liturgy with Biblical reading, its Psalms, hymns, etc. It aims to rouse them from their morbid worship of *Pietas* to the *rex regum et dominus dominantium*, which, as they say, Christ also revealed upon the Cross. They seek to emphasize, not his Crown of Thorns, but his Crown of Victory. The leaders of the liturgical movement see in medieval piety, already the awakening of Protestant individualism and subjectivism. This accounts for the marked divergence between the Benedictines and the Jesuits. Their ideals of piety differ greatly. The Benedictines stress group worship; the Jesuit's "center of gravity," as Heiler states it, "rests in the training of the individual will." To many of the Benedictines, therefore, the Jesuits appear to be Protestant-Catholics: Catholics who propagate the Roman Catholic Church ideas by means of Protestant individualism.

This trend back to the ancient church and its form of worship, brings the liturgical movement into close accord with the Eastern Church, for the Church of the East has preserved the ancient traditions in much truer form than has the Latin Church of the West. As evidence of this common tie between the modern liturgists and the Eastern Church, Heiler tells of sending a book by the Russian Arseniew, *The Eastern Church and Mystery*, to one of the leaders of the liturgical movement. In returning the book to Heiler, he wrote: "I find in here the same ideas that I, myself, represent."

The liturgical movement does not repudiate the ideals of the Western Church entirely, for while it emphasizes the pneumatic conception of the Church in worship, it continues to hold to the Latin form of liturgy. One might say that in its worship program,

it retains the Western form while incorporating the Eastern spirit. The liturgical leaders, to be sure, have no interest in bringing about a breach with the papacy. Nevertheless, as Heiler points out, their position does tend to precipitate an irreconcilable tension, growing out of the inherent difference between the pneumatic and the juridical conception of the Church. It is hoped, says Heiler, that the liturgical movement may gradually succeed in softening the inflexible juridical Roman system. In fact, it is the boast of the liturgical leaders that in a hundred years, they will have completely transformed and reformed the Roman Church.

The liturgical movement is successfully applying its ideal to church worship in many instances, and as a result is transforming the church service from a performance in which the priest is the sole actor, to a service of worship in which the congregation actively participates. Moreover it is unifying the church service. It is no uncommon sight to see a number of little side services in Catholic Churches occurring while the priest is saying Mass for a larger congregation. The liturgical leaders hope to do away with these side services and to bring the entire company of worshipers into a common experience of worship.

The effort to make the Catholic service more of a congregational act, has, of course, necessitated educating the people for participating in the ritual. Today, Heiler says, the Mass-books, translated in the vernacular, are in the hands of thousands of the Catholic laity. In addition, recently translations of the Roman vespers as well as complete and abridged translations of the Roman Breviary have been distributed among the people. In this way the Roman Catholic worshipers are becoming more and more acquainted with the Prayer Book and likewise are becoming more intelligent participators in the service of worship. Heiler tells of a young Roman Catholic girl about nine years old who "understood all of the text of the Missal and the Commentary with astounding certainty."

But the liturgical movement is not content merely with making the text accessible to the people. It seeks to educate the congregation for worship in other ways. In many places, Heiler says, the congregation sings the responses instead of the choir. In the reciting of the Mass, particularly in student centers, a part of the text is spoken by the priest, and answered by the entire congregation. The silent prayer of the priest is either engaged in quietly by the congregation, or (except the words of consecration) is repeated

aloud in the German language by a *Vorbeter*. Frequently the German Mass is combined with the Latin service. While the priest quietly reads the Mass at the altar, the *Vorbeter* relates the liturgical prayers in the German language, and the congregation answers him. This combining of the German and Latin services is by no means satisfactory as yet, Heiler says, but it reveals an earnest effort to make the participation of the congregation in the eucharistic church service possible. The ultimate aim of the liturgical movement is to establish the celebration of the liturgy in the language of the people. When they have done so, the leaders believe, they will have created a service of worship in which the worshipers will experience direct and vital relations with God, as did the Christians of ancient times.

Congregational activity finds a particularly fine expression, Heiler says, in the resuming of the ancient Christian custom of going to sacrifice. Each participant brings his own holy wafer to the altar as his offering. Also, the *pac* (the kiss of peace) no longer remains a priestly ceremony, but is made the ceremonial testimony of Christian brotherhood for the whole congregation. Other outward forms of the ancient church are also being restored. In many places, Heiler says, the ancient Christian *mensa* is being restored. The priest who celebrates the Eucharist, stands behind the holy table with his face turned toward the congregation. Here again one sees the effort to minimize the rôle of the priest and to accentuate the place of the congregation. Above all, it is working toward achieving the communion of the whole congregation.

Many evangelical Christians, Heiler says, are beginning to see in these new Roman services a form of worship that is familiar to them, and one in which they, too, can take an active part, which is a further suggestion that worship may really be the way toward unity. Thus, Heiler concludes, "A liturgical springtime has come upon the Roman Church. In the midst of the juridical torpidity of the Church of Rome, there has occurred a Renaissance of the ancient church!"

One should not be misled, however, into thinking that these religious awakenings represent the spiritual outlook of the official Roman Church. Rome has always looked with disfavor upon change and new awakenings, and in time has registered its intolerance. So it is in the present situation. All of the various reform movements have sought recognition by the Church, or at least to be

allowed to continue their work unmolested; but to no avail. The Evangelical Movement was branded when the Roman authorities excommunicated one of its leaders, Joseph Wittig, and placed his writings on the Index. The Youth Movement has been held in constant suspicion. At one time Rome threatened to break it up. Recently a counter-movement, known as "Neudeutschland" (New Germany) has been organized by Jesuit leaders for the purpose of directing the vigor of youth into more favorable channels. The theological awakening is being strictly watched. Recently two books written by Johannes Hessen were forbidden to be read in Cologne and Münster. The social movement is continually meeting with misunderstanding and opposition at the hands of Church authorities. Professor Ude, leader of the movement, has been forbidden by the Bishop of Graz to teach theology or to engage in public address, and an appeal has been sent to Rome to confirm the bishop's decree. The Movement Toward Union has received a set-back through the *Encyclica Mortalium animas*, its dictum being that the *patres unionis* is to be confined to Russian exiles. Work among the Orthodox Russians, Anglicans, or Protestants has been strictly forbidden. And the program of the liturgical movement has been greatly curtailed. For example, the German Diocese has forbidden combining the Latin and German services, and the Benedictine leaders of the movement have been invited to Rome to defend themselves.

Thus it would seem, Heiler laments, that all of these movements, so potent with vitality, are destined to die under the intolerance of the Roman system. But this dare not happen, he continues, for in this conflict, there is something more than orthodoxy versus heresy at stake. It is a mighty struggle between two great forces: an all-inclusive universal Catholicism on the one hand, and a cold, narrow Roman imperialism on the other. Non-Roman Christians cannot be mere spectators of this great struggle. Heiler warns. For all that occurs in the Roman Church affects the other churches. And furthermore, all the movements now stirring in Roman Catholicism exercise a strong, altho indirect, influence upon Anglicanism and Protestantism. Thus non-Roman Christians cannot be indifferent toward their fate. Their attitude can only be one of sympathy and concern. They must seek to make contact with them and to encourage them in their plight. But they must not encourage them in their protest against Rome, nor urge them to "Break from Rome,"

Heiler warns. Were these methods successful, Protestantism long ago would have brought about the undoing of Rome. Rome will not be conquered through protest, Heiler declares: but only through an appeal to a larger Catholicism. The spirit of love, so actively asserting itself in these religious movements, must combine with the spirit of love manifest among non-Roman Christians to promote this appeal. Under the persisting influence of this interceding love, Heiler is confident that the Roman Walls of injustice cannot stand, for, he says, love always finds its way into the hearts of Christian brethren. With this spirit of love steadily at work within it, the transformation of the Roman Church is inevitable. Even it will in time, he concludes, yield to the dictum of the Apocalypse: "Behold I make all things new!"