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Heading: “German-Volkish”

Subhead: Antisemitism, Fascism, National Socialism

Byline: Dr. Fr. Erhard Schlund, a Franciscan priest, excerpt from his book “Catholicism and Fatherland”

Text: In the German-*Volkish* movement lies a good kernel, which possesses a strong inner right-ness: That is the striving to preserve the purity of the German race. But around this good kernel lies a bad husk. That is the character of extremism. The German-*Volkish* movement proceeds in its praxis and in its theoretical demands often too sharply and thereby unjustly. It often allows a reprehensible hatred to arise against everything non-German and especially non-“Aryan.” Thus the *Volkish* movement or many of its temperamental representatives sometimes try to bring back pure old-German morals and religion, which makes Catholics seem all the more suspect. Good German and good Christian are just as much non-contradictions as good German and good Catholic; to the contrary. The old-German religion has disappeared and will remain disappeared, and the old-German thought-world, however much we would love to regain it for historical and nationalistic reasons, can no longer be brought back to life. It is through Christianity that German blood first became what it is now; with Christianity the German race achieved its greatest cultural accomplishments. We are proud of it if we are good Germans and good Christians; but we never again want to become German pagans. We may seek to learn to know and love the morals of our forefathers, but we do not make a futile effort to roll back the clock by thousands of years. Honor the morals and customs of ancient forefathers; but no old-German un-culture. Our blood is and remains good and pure and German; but our culture is Christian.

The *Volkish* movement is closely associated with antisemitism, thus with those efforts that really go back in time and seek to take power and wealth away from Jewry, and actually long to remove the legal and political equality guaranteed to the Jews. Also in the antisemitic movement, the Fatherland-loving Catholic must again make clear distinctions. He will share with antisemites the pain over the ever-increasing influence of Jewry, particularly in Germany, and the desire to see this influence ever more diminished. He will above all regret and combat the avaricious quest for money and material possessions, the predominance in the financial realm, the destructive influence of Jews upon religion, morals, literature and art, and political and social life. He will certainly remain ever conscious that the Jews are racially foreign. But he will not go so far as to want to combat and dislodge the Jews solely on account of their race, and even less will he reject the Old Testament on account of its having been imparted to the Jewish people. He will much more always remember that the Jewish people were God’s chosen people and that he as a Christian has a duty to be just toward Jews as toward other people.

The thoughts expressed here arise concerning a movement that we also think we can identify as an outgrowth of patriotism, Fascism, or in Germany National Socialism. Many spirits allow themselves to be taken up by this movement, since among us the socialism of the Revolution brought such bad consequences and since in Italy Fascism remains victorious with hardly any shedding of blood. We can safely understand it as a counterstroke against socialism, or better stated, against Marxism, which through its conquest in Russia and Germany has become a danger to the world. “Person vs. Masses” is the slogan of Fascism, and thus it sets up an antithesis to every thesis of Marxism. Marxism recognizes the international, Fascism recognizes the nation. Marxism proclaims the dictatorship of a class, Fascism proclaims the freedom of the person. Marxism conceives of the state mechanistically and lets it be determined by the majority; Fascism conceives of the state organically and demands the rule of the head, the reason of the Fuhrer. Filippo Meda, the leader of the Catholic party in the Italian parliament, recently assessed the relationship of Catholicism and Fascism in his article “Il facismo e I cattolici” [Fascism and Catholics], and expressed it in this way: “Though there may be good in its goal of defending the Fatherland against destructive forces, and the revival of patriotic virtues – its violent means are not good. For the end does not justify the means. Fascism wages war against anti-state forces. But waging war may be done only by the state, not by individuals or groups. Fascism combats revolution. That also is an affair of the state. If the state is too weak to maintain order, then self-help is allowed only temporarily.” We can agree with that and add to it: Among us National Socialism has arisen, much less Fascism in Italy, out of a more critical stance against Social Democracy and Marxism. It certainly says what should be put aside, but it does not say how it can be made better, or what should arise in place of what is put aside. We see that it lacks a positive program, namely a declaration of how National Socialism stands on religion and the Church, and what it means by the term “socialism” in its name. In any case, it frightens Catholics when occasional invective of a rather derisory nature is expressed toward the Church and Church institutions, while on the other hand the necessity of religion is still affirmed; then there are the terroristic methods and the strong antisemitic admixture, namely when one wing in Munich completely “rejects” the Old Testament, and finally the restoration of ancient pagan practices like, for example, the Yule-fest. In all events a Catholic must be careful and reserved, for the aforesaid reasons, toward this movement, which can yet develop much differently than perhaps it has appeared to date. Moreover, Church authority has not yet spoken.