

On p. 133 we read of a desire on the part of some physicists to systematize 'the rough home-made metaphysics which is implicit in modern scientific writings'. This book may be intended as a contribution to that process, but we can only see it as a piece of the destructive tinkering which is the issue of so many attempts at home-made science.

Ivo THOMAS, O.P.

O B I T E R

'THE TASK OF THE CHURCHES IN GERMANY' (S.P.C.K. and Sword of the Spirit, 6d.), the report of the delegation of British Churchmen which visited the British Zone last autumn, is in many ways a heartening document. It is generally recognised now that the Catholic and Evangelical Churches in Germany were the only consistent core of opposition to the deeper evils of Nazidom. Einstein's testimony is quoted, in which he describes how he turned in vain to the Universities, to the press, to men of letters, for the defence of freedom. 'Only the Church opposed the fight which Hitler was waging against liberty', he concludes.

'The problem of physical survival is a predominant problem for all Germans, and is naturally a main preoccupation for churchmen. Further, in addition to the lack of food, of coal, of housing, of clothes, schools and transport, the lack of any tolerable and discernible future, and the haunting fear of arrest or re-arrest on an unspecified charge of Nazi activities in the past, are said to have produced widespread despair and an attitude of cynical indifference to all moral considerations'.

Such is the background, and the burden of the delegation's recommendations is that the Christian bodies should be given every help to continue and expand their work for the material and spiritual recovery of the German people. They stood firm in the evil hour, and should now be given the fullest liberty if, as was so frequently said by propagandists during the war, Britain really stands for the maintenance of Christian civilization. The crucial questions of the economic future of Germany, the policy of denazification (the commission urges that an end should immediately be put to the iniquitous re-creation), the repatriation of prisoners of war, the provision of proper facilities for education—in all these matters Christians are obviously deeply involved. But in such lesser matters as the allowance of paper for books, of coal for heating and the restrictions on travel, Christians *as such* should not be penalised. The future of Germany—and that is to say the future of Europe too—is largely in their hands.

And even on the most utilitarian level the politics of grace bring richer dividends than the policy of revenge.

* * * *

THE WOMEN of Germany are the subject of another report, issued by the Women's Group of Public Welfare (N.C.C.S.; 1s.). In a foreword R. C. K. Ensor emphasises our moral obligations to Germany:

'In 1940 the challenge was to British courage; it was met, and the nation lived one of its finest hours. Now that challenge is to our humanity, and if we meet it successfully, we shall place another finest hour to our credit. . . . If we miss the call and fail miserably (as we have gone dangerously far towards doing in the past twelve months), our honour will incur a stain before history something like that which it incurred a century ago over the Irish Famine; only deeper, more damaging and more indelible. Nor will the discredit hit us as a nation only; it will bring into disrepute the free institutions for which we stand'.

Women have a great part to play in Germany today, because of their great numerical preponderance and their role as the heads of shattered homes. On them fall the heaviest burdens: the management of inadequate rations, the improvisation of clothes and housing, the care of children inevitably deprived of proper control. And any hope that women may take their part in the rebuilding of a 'democratic' Germany must depend on a recognition of the priority of the basic things—food, clothes, coal, reasonable security—without which talk of 'free institutions' seems, and is, a mockery.

* * * *

ARE parochial missions out of date? Cardinal Saliège, quoted in *La Croix* (January 23rd), suggests that their traditional form no longer corresponds to the 'climate' of our times. A mission intended for believers scarcely attracts the unbelieving majority. And the conversion of what the Abbé Michonneau calls the 'pagan parish' demands that the Christian core should be solid, instructed, the point of departure. Liturgical missions have recently been given by Père Pichard, O.P., in several parts of France. At the Cathedral of Meaux, the mission was based on the Sacraments, since the heart of the Christian parish is precisely *sacramental*: the Mass, Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage were seen in action, as it were, as the channels of the divine life by which the parish has its very being. It is only through our deep and responsible understanding of what is essential to the life of the Christian *ecclesia* that we can make ready that spiritual home which should await the wanderer. In other words, *pro eis sanctifico meipsum*. The liturgical life is not a devotional extra; it is the normal

life of the Church. Only when its implications are realised by the faithful themselves can we dare to speak of 'conversion'.

* * * *

DIEU VIVANT (No. 7) publishes an article by Fr Henry Tristram on an unpublished letter of Newman, addressed to F. A. Faber, elder brother of the famous Oratorian.

THE MONTH (January) gives Fr Frederick Copleston's answer to the question: What is Existentialism?

THE latest *Cahier de l'Art Sacré* (obtainable from BLACKFRIARS PUBLICATIONS, 3s. 3d.) is devoted to 'The Artistic Education of the Clergy'. It is far from polite, but its reasoned argument and practical proposals should make this an acceptable gift for priests and seminarians.

COMMONWEAL (January 3rd) prints Chancellor Schuschnigg's own account of what happened when he was summoned to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden in 1938.

LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE (January) has a valuable article by A. Cras on 'Western Culture and the Missions'.

LA REVUE NOUVELLE (January 15th) has a 'Portrait of Erasmus' and argues that Erasmus's fidelity to the Church was not a fraud nor a piece of strategy, but 'a necessary consequence of his love for Christ and of his humanism'.

ALDATE