

The judicious and skilful use of colour is an essential adjunct to a church which can only be fully appreciated if the background formed by the walls is white and plenty of light is admitted through clear glass. White walls give an impression of spaciousness which is largely lost when the plaster is drab coloured, or decorated with stencilling and dadoes reminiscent of a Nonconformist Bethel.

There is no reason whatever why many of our over-ornate Victorian churches should not be reduced to a more comely appearance. With clear glass, white walls, open spaces, correctly arranged altars and the elimination of tasteless images and other paraphernalia the dullest nineteenth century Gothic church can be made devotional and even a thing of beauty. If we seek to make our churches more liturgically and aesthetically correct we shall help to increase the devotion of the faithful and promote the conversion of England.

T. E. LONG.

OBITER

ESPRIT ET VIE, a quarterly published by the Benedictines of Maredsous, might be described as a Belgian *Month* (new model). The August number includes William Law, Arnold Toynbee and Gertrud von le Fort among its authors, and Existentialism, Lewis Carroll and the Psychological Causes of Juvenile Delinquency among the subjects considered (though not, of course, by the authors already mentioned). Of special interest in a number that runs to more than a hundred and fifty pages (which provides concrete evidence of Belgium's economic recovery) are the 'Letters from Prison' of Helmuth von Moltke, executed by the Nazis in 1945, which have appeared in English in *A German of the Resistance*. Father Thierry D'Argenlieu, who was for many years Superior of the Dominican Mission in Sweden, gives an authoritative account of the Catholic prospect in that most Protestant of countries. He concludes:

What a source of strength it would be for the Catholic Church if she had at her service the boldness, the endurance, the gift for organisation, the technical resources, the sense of human dignity and the true susceptibility of the peoples of the North.

* * * *

THE WIND AND THE RAIN prints further extracts from the Autobiography of Christopher Dawson in its Summer number. He writes of his childhood in Yorkshire and of his learning of the past 'not so much by the arid path of the *Child's History of England* as through the enchanted world of myth and legend'. He continues:

No doubt this initiation into the past had its disadvantages from

the practical utilitarian point of view, but it was education in the true sense of the word. Whatever form of education is inflicted on children, they will always find mythical or heroic figures to satisfy their imagination. If they do not have King Arthur and Peredur or Sigurd and Regin, they will content themselves with Donald Duck and Dick Barton. It may even be argued that the latter are healthier because they are more spontaneous and near to contemporary reality than Branwen the daughter of Llyr or Burnt Njal. But are they more real because they are more at home in our impoverished world? I believe the old myths are better not only intrinsically, but because they lead further and open a door into the mind as well as into the past. This was the old road which carries us back not merely for centuries but for thousands of years; the road by which every people has travelled and from which the beginnings of every literature have come. I mean the road of oral tradition. It may be that the changes of our generation, the increased speed of life and the mechanisation of popular culture by the cinema and radio have closed this road for ever. But if so, those of us who remember the world before the wars have witnessed a change in human consciousness far greater than we have realised, and what we are remembering is not the Victorian age but a whole series of ages—a river of immemorial time which has suddenly dried up and become lost in the seismic cleft that has opened between the present and the past.

* * * *

RISE OR DECLINE OF THE CHURCH, the most characteristic and certainly the most influential of the late Cardinal Suhard's pastoral letters, has frequently been referred to in these columns. We are glad to recommend a new English translation, published as a special number of *New Life* (the monthly review of the Workers' Apostolate) for 2s.0d. post free (106 Clapham Road, London, S.W.9).

* * * *

ST CATHERINE OF SIENA was the subject of the Seatonian Prize Poem for 1948 at Cambridge, and the winning poem by E. K. Ellis has now been published by the University Press (1s.6d.). Like most poems, it is competent rather than inspired, but it is a fair enough picture of St Catherine's work and the source of it:

'She sees what all the world at length must see'.

* * * *

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS have passed since the publication of the Pontifical Letter *Equidem Verba*, in which Pius XI appealed to all the Benedictine Abbots of the world to assist the work of Christian Unity, and especially the reconciliation of dissident Eastern Christians, through the establishment of Benedictine abbeys (one for each Congregation was the Pope's desire) which should through

their liturgical life and specialised studies form centres of ecumenical activity. The letter is reprinted in *Irenikon* (Vol. XXII, 2), together with an account of what has been done to implement the Pope's wishes—in fact the Priory of Amay was the only monastery founded for the purpose. The Benedictine spirit and form of government are scarcely adapted to the centralised activity commended by the Pope, but *Irenikon* sees in this twenty-fifth anniversary an opportunity 'to renew this appeal to the whole of the Benedictine Order, and to ask of all its sons to help us in the realisation of this great ideal to which they have all been summoned'.

* * * *

MAISON-DIEU, in its eighteenth number (Blackfriars; 5s.), considers the sacramental significance of the meal. Père Daniélou writes on 'The meals of the Bible and their meaning', Père Bouyer considers 'the first Eucharist in the Last Supper', and other articles—including contributions from St Albert the Great and Rabelais!—pursue the theme of a 'sacramental humanism' in terms of family meals, the created goodness of bread and wine and the deep meaning of eucharistic symbols. The previous number of *Maison-Dieu* (No. 17) had included material more usually associated with *Art-Sacré* (which, defunct for a while, is now to appear in a new form), namely 'The present-day sense of the Sacred'. Discussions on such topics as where in a church confessionals should be placed alternate with essays of high aesthetic significance, mostly under the signature of Père Regamey, whose acuity of analysis and unflinching wit are, for those in the know, one of the chief pleasures of contemporary Catholic writing in France.

* * * *

THE THOMIST (July) abandons its somewhat forbidding field of scholastic debate, or rather extends its territory, with an article on 'Beauty in Aquinas and Joyce' by Frank Kunkel (a name almost worthy of *Finnegan's Wake*). But a promising title is scarcely justified by an essay which is as indigestible as are most efforts of Americans who have studied scholastic philosophy. It might be an interesting occupation for a candidate for an American doctorate to consider the problem of presenting a philosophy, whose terminology is rooted in a European and Latin tradition, to the world of Hemingway—or for that matter of *The New Yorker* and *Life*.

* * * *

'Faber is, on account of his acuity, his minuteness and subtlety of analysis, as it were the Marcel Proust of Catholic spirituality.'—
La France Catholique, 12 August.

ALDATE.