

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

Maritain: "Poetry is knowledge, incomparably . . . To use it as a *means* for acquiring knowledge is to pervert it."

SCHILDGENOSSEN (Jan.-Feb.) includes *Towards a Christian Conception of the Universe*, a masterly essay by Romano Guardini; *Modern Marriage in Crisis and Revolution* by Josef Emonds; *Shakespeare the Christian: A New Interpretation of the Sonnets* by F. C. Rang; and an Introduction to Pascal's *Pensées* by Guardini.

SCHOENERE ZUKUNFT (Feb. 6): Dr. N. Grohauser's *Fragen um das englische Weltreich* concludes: "Only a 'moral revolution' can give England the strength to overcome the perils that beset it. We believe that such a spiritual and intellectual revolution in England is quite possible if only she can find the right leaders. Nobody in Europe could hope otherwise—the downfall of the British Empire would mean the collapse of the hegemony of Western man."

VIE INTELLECTUELLE (Jan. 10): *La conception chrétienne de l'ordre international* by L. Le Fur, Professor of the Faculty of Law of Paris: a clear and magisterial exposition, with practical conclusions regarding a Catholic's attitude to the League. (Jan. 25): *On doit se soumettre aux pouvoirs constitués* by C. Spicq, O.P.; the early Christian attitude to civil authority and the present-day applications of the same governing principles.

PENGUIN.

REVIEWS

THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

VON CHRISTLICHER EHRENHAFTIGKEIT, von Dr. Richard Egenter. (Kösel und Pustet, München; RM. 3.20.)

In recent years there has appeared in Germany a number of books which all display similar tendencies. They lay particular emphasis on the active as distinct from the merely negative virtues, on the power and dignity of man as seen through Christian eyes, and on a full recognition and affirmation of all "natural" values when co-ordinated with, and subordinated to, Supernature.

Are we to see in this merely a strategy of assimilation to current ideologies, a tactical move in apologetics? Or does it indicate a genuine process of self-examination and the appearance of a new realisation of the Christian consciousness? A non-German may be tempted to suspect a morbid symptom; but if it be such it is as a fever is not only a symptom of disease but also a process towards a new condition of health. The heresy which to-day, and not only in Germany, afflicts the Body of the Church and is testing its powers of resistance is not, as were the great heresies of history, a heresy in dogma which compels the more exact

formulation of the content of the faith. Rather is it a moral heresy which calls in question the whole *way* in which the Church claims to lead man, and which consequently challenges her very *raison d'être*. The moral heresy of to-day will compel the faith to give new proof of its practical power, its reality and validity.

Modern man no longer sees Nature and Supernature as a unity. Having lost his ability to apprehend this complete unity of truth, he is suspicious of all that claims to be not of this world. Failing to see the unity of Nature and Supernature, he is hostile to the man who claims to believe in a supernatural, and believes that he must be rent by the opposing claims of two worlds. He is inclined to make this dichotomy of the religious man responsible for the present and past failures of human striving and endeavour. He will even imply that the religious man has no justification for existence in this world. "Heaven belongs to you; the earth to us," it has been said. Such men are idealists; but while they transcend mere individualism and egotism, they do not transcend purely earthly aims and objectives. They will mobilise all the powers of spirituality and idealism in their search for a purely naturalistic morality in order to realise the dreams of recent centuries of a heaven on earth. For this they have no use for men who owe a divided allegiance to "two worlds," for they seek to harness religious fervour itself in unreserved devotion to this ideal. Much of such fervour is needed to-day in order to deliver the world from its agony.

It would be an indecency for us Christians to chide for their loss of faith men who are suffering from the evil inheritance of recent centuries. The man who is possessed by the love of Christ cannot acquiesce in the divorce that has been made between the "two worlds." But not only must he, from a sense of Christian responsibility, be in the front rank of this struggle to establish the "natural" foundations of earthly order; he must bridge over the chasm that has been made between Nature and Supernature. We must resist the temptation to be insensible to natural values on the ground that they are overshadowed by supernatural values. Nor must we so view things through the eye of faith, and so speak the language of faith, that the great mass of our fellow men can no longer understand us. In so doing we should betray the universality of our apostolic mission; though we may attract a few isolated individuals to the truth, we shall not touch the mass of mankind in its own interests and preoccupations. A Christian may not offer merely negative opposition to this idealism without putting something better in its place; he may not despise a good thing because it is not the best. There are indeed nobler and holier things for our moral theologians to think about than what is accounted noble and holy by the naturalistic man of to-day. If in this new German Catholic literature natural values form

the subject-matter, they are chosen of set purpose, from a sense of Christian responsibility, for their writers are conscious that these values are yet greater for the Christian than they can be for the non-Christian.

The scientific value of these books lies in the fact that they unite the richness of modern, and especially psychological, discovery with the clearness, solidity and comprehensive unity of St. Thomas. Their writers feel responsible for the ideals and values which they have in common with those outside the faith, and these ideals and values they so elaborate that they may become for unbelievers a prolegomenon to the knowledge of the eternal Truth itself.

Dr. Egenter is a leader in this apostolic method of procedure from Nature to Supernature. In his present book he treats of the problem of Honour (*Ehre*) which is to-day particularly acute, and most decisive in its consequences, for Germany, and is, in the deepest sense, *the* problem of the present time. Honour is not understood in a merely superficial, juridical sense, but in an essentially antropocentric one, corresponding to the spirit of Nordic man as the consciousness of human dignity and the inner force urging to the full development of human vitality and self-assertion. It is viewed as something in irreconcilable opposition to the Christian spirit of Love and self-surrender, humility and self-denial. Such qualities, it is now being urged, make man unfit for the realisation of earthly order.

But the Christian conception of Honour is something spiritual, something which surpasses the urges of instinct, and hence something incapable of producing spectacular effects by mass-suggestion. Yet Dr. Egenter shows it to be, from the integral Christian standpoint, something so charged with power and beauty, that we may say with Paul in his enthusiasm for Christ, "Seeing that many glory according to the flesh, I will glory more." But such sentiments are not just a self-complacency suggested by the printed word; they must arise from the consciousness that we owe all to the gift of God in us and to the overflow of the life of Christ whereby alone the world can live.

The struggle of Christ's people in Germany is not just a local affair. It is but part of the struggle which Christians throughout the world to-day must wage for the position which they are called to occupy for the preservation and redemption of the whole order and well-being of the world. "X.", O.P.

CHRISTLICHER EDELMUT ZUR UNGEBORGENHEIT. By Linus Bopp.
(Herder, Freiburg i.B.; boards RM. 2.60; cloth RM. 3.20.)
DIE LITURGIE ALS QUELLE ÖSTLICHER FRÖMMIGKEIT. By Julius
Tyciak. (Herder, RM. 2.80.)

If a true Christian life is a dedication of our own life and not a substitution of a life not our own, a sanctification of our daily