

of these is there any doubt as to what meaning the words they used was meant to convey. And yet a lifetime might be too short to exhaust the implications of the *Timæus*. There is no contradiction here. The noblest piece of writing is little better than a stammer when set against the background of Truth itself. But it is a human stammer, faithful and aware of the ultimate intelligibility it must lack. Perhaps in writing, as in much else besides, humility is a deeper virtue than we suspect.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

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#### O B I T E R

THE EDITORIAL with which Mr Bernard Wall introduces the first number of *The Changing World* (Harvill Press, 3s. 6d.) speaks for every independent periodical in its plea for the vehicle of opinion which stands outside the 'managerial' demands of what is commercially profitable or politically expedient. The function of such periodicals has never been so vital as now, when the threats to freedom are organised and, moreover, are growing all the time. Totalitarianism is never more dangerous than when it uses the language of democracy. Lady Rhondda, in a notable series of articles in *Time and Tide*, recently drew a gloomy picture of the effect of our current totalitarianism without tears, with its bureaucratic contempt for minority opinion, its multiplication of laws and its simultaneous corruption of the principle of law itself.

Gabriel Marcel, writing on 'Technics and Sin', analyses the 'Blackmail on a planetary scale' which is threatening the world:

'Modern war presents these two striking aspects; on the one hand it involves the annihilation of whole populations without distinctions of age or sex, and, on the other, it is conducted on an ever-increasing degree by a small number of individuals, supplied with powerful weapons, who direct operations from the depths of their laboratories. As a result . . . the future of war and the future of technics appear to be indissolubly linked; and it may well be said that, at any rate in our own historical cycle, everything which promotes technics tends to make war radically destructive and inexorably inclines it towards that ultimate end which is nothing less than the suicide of the human race'.

What is the answer?

'It is in recollection alone that the powers of love and of humility can come to birth, powers which alone can ultimately form the counterweight to the sightless pride of the technician imprisoned in his technics'.

PERHAPS THE BASIC PROBLEM of our time is that of propaganda. The differentiation of opinion that is essential to a healthy society is threatened by the monopolist power of the few who have the money and the means to indoctrinate a whole continent. What was the special iniquity of 'Fascism' yesterday may yet become the common form of 'democracy' today, and—this is the danger—the cynicism and weariness bred of years of war can't, or won't, cope with the invasion. *Made for Millions* (Contact Publications, 10s. 0d.), a critical study, edited by Frederick Laws, 'of the new media of information and entertainment', analyses the present situation.

At first sight there is no comparison between the influence and methods of a Goebbels and those of the film barons, the press lords, the advertising chiefs and the rest of the oligarchy who control opinion and popular taste. But

'The relation between a dictator and the objects of his propaganda is not very different from that which exists between a successful advertiser and the millions he has induced to comply with his wishes'.

In the case of the films, the press and radio, the danger is perhaps less that of pursuing a specific ideological purpose than of providing for what is conceived to be the lowest common denominator of intelligence. The remedy, suggests Mr Denys Thompson, lies in 'more and better education and a clarifying of its aims', for

'A good education will produce responsible individuals, capable of drawing up their cultural heritage, not moulded to a type, but refusing to allow their aspirations, thoughts and feelings to be manufactured for them by the Press and advertising and the cinema'.

Certainly an education which fosters the capacity to discriminate, or—in plain English—which teaches children to think, is the best means of counteracting the evils of propaganda. But is education in this country itself free from the managerial assumptions of a mass-minded culture?

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RUSSIE ET CHRETIENTE (obtainable from Blackfriars Publications, 5s. 6d.) provides, in its second issue, 120 closely packed pages of articles, translations of documents and up-to-date commentary on religious affairs in Russia. Nicolas Arseniev, writing on 'Some characteristics of Russian religious thought', emphasises the importance of Soloviev, whose prophetic vision saw the crisis that was to come and looked serenely for the deliverance that would as certainly come after. A selection of texts helps to disentangle the complicated state of the various Russian emigré churches, and particularly valuable is a month-by-month record of Russian ecclesiastical periodicals for 1946.

LA VIE SPIRITUELLE used to publish Supplements, bound in with the main periodical, to deal with more specialised aspects of spirituality. There has just appeared the first number of a new quarterly *Supplément de la Vie Spirituelle*, an independent publication which hopes to provide 'scholarly studies, documents, bibliographies etc. especially intended for theologians, historians and biblical scholars interested in spirituality'. The first number is very varied and much more readable than the preliminary note would suggest. Does the emancipation of women demand a modification in the life of women's religious orders? asks Père Plé in a frank and well-informed article. 'The atheism of Christians' is the subject of a profound study of 'minimal' religion by Père Paissac. A section of the Supplement is devoted to psychological questions, for 'we have to direct men and women, not "souls", into the way of sanctity, that is to say complex beings who are neither angels nor animals, whom the very heights of spiritual life will not release from the humblest human necessities'.

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THE WORLD CHRISTIAN DIGEST (Summer 1947) is faithful to its comprehensive title, and has articles on the Young Christian Workers and the persecution of Catholics in Eastern Europe as well as features more customary in periodicals with so wide a range.

THE DUBLIN REVIEW (Spring) appears in a new form and at a new price. Professor Brierly contributes an authoritative article on Vitoria, and T. S. Gregory enlivens an extended review of Arnold Toynbee's *Meaning of History* with much distinction of style.

LA VIDA SOBRENATURAL (Salamanca), now in its twenty-seventh year, reflects the solid Spanish tradition of spirituality, and with *La Vie Spirituelle* and—we hope we may add without vainglory—*The Life of the Spirit*, reflects the modern Thomist contribution to the deepening of the contemplative life among the laity.

LA NOUVELLE RELEVÉ (Montreal), which suspended publication in January, has been reorganised, and the June number gives encouraging evidence of the vigour of the cultural life of French Canada.

LE ZÈLE DE LA MAISON DE DIEU is the title of the latest 'cahier' of the *Art Sacré* series (obtainable from Blackfriars Publications, 4s. 0d.) and has the usual wealth of illustration and incisiveness of comment. It includes an interesting selection of letters called forth by the controversial number on 'The artistic education of the Clergy'.

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