

in these pages, but no serious student of 'spiritual' theology could neglect the work of so shrewd a philosopher who has been able to rescue the Thomism that lies behind most of our theology from becoming an ossified system, regarded in some quarters as a sort of mechanism for producing answers to all problems. Dr Hawkins reveals how it can enter into living thought, which is quite another matter.

LA FIN DES TEMPS, translated from the German of Josef Pieper (Desclée de Brouwer; 60 Belgian francs), is also set forth in a philosophical series, but as a 'meditation on the philosophy of history' it is a very different type of philosophizing. Pieper was concerned with the coming of the Antichrist and his eschatology is concerned with the working out of prophecy in the history of mankind. He insists that the philosophy of history will be sterile and without seriousness unless it takes into account the teaching of theology on the last end of man.

THE DANGER of insisting on the perfection, or at least the perfectibility, of man here on earth lies in the fact that we easily forget that we are a people on the march. We have to look forward to our fulfilment and real happiness. True humanism can only be found where the theological virtue of hope stirs the spirit and urges the Christian on towards the future life. Present life and future life—these must always produce a tension, but Père Carré, O.P., the famous French *conferencier*, shows in his *Espérance et Désespoir* how this may be worked out in the Christian life. One might almost call this an 'essential' book (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars).

GEORGES THÉROUARD in his *Sainte Marie, Mère de Dieu* (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars) takes the references to, and the words of our Lady in the Gospels, and draws out their meaning and significance. This is not another piece of 'theologizing', but a simple and direct consideration of the text of the New Testament—and a very refreshing contribution to the literature of the Marian year.



EXTRACTS

MOUNT CARMEL, the Carmelite Quarterly published from the Priory, Kensington (1s. 6d.) dedicates a special August issue to our Lady and among its bright articles by such people as Douglas Hyde and Miss Hilda Graef, there is one devoted to 'Our Lady's Place in the Russian Soul'. The author, Fr Thomas of the Cross, O.D.C., remarks on the

similarity of all the ikons of the Madonna, and argues a reason thus:

It is not that they were mass-produced, but that they were the outcome of a similarity of motive and simplicity of idea in the artists who produced them. That is why the icon is so dear to the Russian soul. For this reason, too, the icon of our Lady, more than any other, is the expression of the religious feeling of an entire community and the symbol of its devotion and its soul. . . . The icon—the picture of our Lady—is not a work of art: it is a mystical inheritance, an attempt to lay hold of and express the supernatural. This line of argument could be pushed too far, for surely the best works of art are precisely those that enter most deeply into the mystical inheritance of men, cultural and religious. But there is a great deal to be said for it. And it reminds us that when St Bernadette was shown an album of pictures of our Lady she was horrified by those of the Masters of the Renaissance; she thought Fra Angelico's Madonnas were 'pretty' but not like the Lady; and only in the old Byzantine painting called 'St Luke's Madonna' did she find something which corresponded with the object of her visions. The most formal was the most real. In art, in many ways, we seem to have lost touch with our true heritage of the Christian sculpture and painting of our Lady; can it be that we lack something of that heritage too in other aspects of our Marian devotion?

IN AN ENQUIRY ON Confession and Spiritual Direction in the *October Integrity* Dorothy Dohen puts forward a very balanced view of the question. She insists on the need and usefulness of Direction, but also sees the danger of an over-dependence on the director.

Many people are turned away from spiritual direction because they see over-dependent people using direction as a means of escaping responsibility, of avoiding the necessity of using initiative, and of getting out of making their own decisions. The self-reliant then think that direction implies 'requiring advice for every little step'; when, quite the contrary, the purpose of direction is to enable the person receiving it to become spiritually adult. To be able to take responsibility, to be able to decide in the million-and-one tiny circumstances of everyday living what action would be according to the mind of Christ, to obey promptly the inspirations of the Holy Spirit—

That, of course, is the true purpose of the spiritual director—to lead his protégé on to the direction of the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is the true director in our every action and the human director must decrease as he increases, so that the directed grows in freedom as well as responsibility.