

sinned through passions and often unholy fanaticism. But never had they sinned through the icy cold and lethal lovelessness which characterizes the so-called Christian of our days.'

There is a Kierkegaardian and Barthian mood in Thieme's book. Not only his language and the dialogue form reminds us of these great Protestants. What Heiler has called 'prophetic' Christianity is here. Fr. Johannes Pinski's book on the role of the Germans in the Body of the Church comes back to my mind too. I think this book is worth translating.

We Catholics are inclined to regard an examination of our consciences as an affair of a dark confessional shrouded by the sacramental seal of our priests and in our constant 'state of siege' we feel such open words as illoyal and against our esprit de corps. But esprit de corps breeds hypocrites. Most of us need awakening before the bridegroom comes. This is a stern voice. But is it not better to be awakened this way than through the roaring flames of burning churches and the rifle volleys in political police cellars or worse than that: the disappointed and suffering features of the Judge?

H. A. REINHOLD.

LA SOUFFRANCE. (Reflexions d'un chrétien). Par M. Nédoncelle. (Bloud and Gay; 5 frs.)

The Abbé Maurice Nédoncelle is already well known to many English readers, Catholic and Protestant, for his studies on English religious life during the nineteenth century and for his essay on Baron Frederic von Hügel. We trust that he may soon be appreciated by them and many more of them through the translation of his recent small, but deep and intense, work on Suffering, a topic of permanent and now especially keenly felt actuality. As the title of the book announces, we are invited to consider not the problem of evil, but that, in itself sufficiently grave and challenging, of suffering and of the Christian attitude to it. The first chapter states the problem by discriminating first of all among the different kinds of pains: (a) the comparatively light ones, which are among the very conditions of normal life and essential to its strengthening; (b) the average ones, physical and moral, which are the occasions of growth in magnanimity of soul and generous loving; and (c) the most intense ones. In regard to those, our author frankly condemns the tendency of many to speak of pain as good in itself or as sent by God, and takes up the attitude that

¹ *Christianity and Race*, Sheed and Ward, 1937.

it is better to confess our ignorance and to hold that the only helpful sufferings are those that *can* be mastered, and that, apart from love, pain can only be fruitful of evil; not pain in itself, but manliness and charity in the face of it are good. In the face of such pains Jesus should be our pattern: He neither hastens the test nor hesitates to make of it an occasion of self-offering on behalf of all when it comes. The only good suffering, sent by God, is that of the Saints engendered by their awareness of their own and our spiritual misery, a suffering that comes from and leads to God. On this point our author has deeply moving paragraphs suggested by personal experiences occasioned by the long and terrible agony of a friend who was also a priest. These paragraphs alone would justify the translation of the whole book and make of it a living reply to many objections from even deep-thinking unbelievers.

The second chapters deals with death, both our own as well as of others, with this transition from being someone who *has* (body, friends, wealth, etc.) to someone who merely *is*. In the nature of things it is only of the death of others that each of us can have experience, and the chapter turns on all our attempts to restore the lost presence and on the value of our prayers for the dead, and especially of Masses for the departed, through which we achieve the greatest degree of our communion with them in God here and now possible. No possible summary is conceivable of the richness of spiritual experience herein marshalled. We would recommend it to the many still unaware of the depths of spiritual wisdom added by Christianity to the depths of Hellas.

The third chapter deals with the sufferings which, already during life, come to us by moral separations, by the loss of friendships, by derelictions often more unbearable than the loss of the visible presence. When confronted with such griefs we must first of all recognize that it is extremely likely that we ourselves were the first to sin by not having loved enough, and secondly to shrink from hate as well as from yielding to indifference and, rather, to go on loving. Thus it is that the problem of the silence of creatures takes us to and flows into that of the silence of and of the approach to God, dealt with in the fourth and final chapter, the most hopelessly resisting any attempt at synthesis and the most soul-entrancing. We must leave it to the reader. Incidentally, the author is obviously well versed, as we see from his quotations, in the deep spirituality of English literature and poetry.

ANGELO CRESPI.