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EDITORIAL

IT is not often that BLACKFRIARS has the honour of welcoming among its contributors eminent non-Catholics, though the late Archbishop Temple and Dr Coomaraswamy were both outstanding examples at once of such authors' generosity and of our policy. On this occasion we have been given the opportunity, through the kindness of the translator and of the literary executors, of publishing a paper of the late Russian Christian Philosopher, Nicholas Berdyaev. The paper, as is evident from its phraseology, was written sometime before the war when the persecution of the Jews in Germany was at its height. But the substance of his thesis, put forward with his usual vigour, has equal validity for today when affairs in Palestine accentuate the Jewish problem. Indeed his views would be pertinent at any epoch; they are remarkably akin to those of

the French Catholic writers with whom he must have been in touch, or whose writings must have influenced him at the time. Readers will recognise an affinity with Péguy and Maritain; and they will find too the prophetic note of Bloy. Certainly some of the 20th century French writing on this topic is so insistent on the evident need of Christians to examine their consciences concerning the Jews, that their denunciations are poured without reserve and in a spirit almost of contempt on the miserable specimens of Christianity which infest the earth. We sometimes wonder whether people like Bloy and Péguy really counted themselves among the number of blind and erring Christians. But that is the inevitable lot of all prophets; they are bound to appear to be riding a high horse. It is interesting to find the Orthodox Berdyaev so similar in this matter with the Catholic Péguy. And all Christians who read his words should be ready to have their consciences examined by so powerful a writer. The Catholic priest, himself a convert from Judaism, whose striking sermon we publish in conjunction with Berdyaev's paper, shows one aspect of the true Christian conscience in regard to God's chosen race.

The modern problem of the Jewish race has been complicated by affairs in Palestine, and people are apt to take sides as violently as they did during the civil war in Spain. This sudden stirring of unreasoning passion about people who perhaps are no direct concern of the one taking sides is a strange phenomenon. Berdyaev refers to a mystic fear of the Jews; and yet the same mysterious fear, or at least anger, was stirred up by Franco, while at the very same time everyone was complacent about Hitler and Mussolini. Certainly the Jews have constantly touched this mysterious chord and brought forth tones of hatred and anger. Today, even after they have been decimated by persecution, those tones are sounding clamorously. It is of special interest that Berdyaev, despite his defence of the race, does not hold with the idea of the nation—he is no Zionist. For this reason in particular his message is vital just at present. It does not matter how opposed any Christian may be to the Settlement of Jews in Palestine, he must as a follower of Christ love and respect the Jews. If he allows himself to be carried away by this strange and bitter passion against the Jews he will not be able to think or act as a Christian in the matter. When passions are likely to be stronger than usual, then the Christian must be more self-restrained, more ascetic. To meditate and act upon Berdyaev's essay will provide just the asceticism which is required today. True, supernatural love must be allowed a wide scope to protect us at a time when anger and enmity are threatening to carry us away.