

What is tackled by philosophers on the Continent is left to literary critics in the English-speaking world. This is not without grave disadvantages. For instance: Dr Steiner's decision to prefer the philosophy of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* to that of *Investigations* is never argued for; he contents himself with saying that 'it is an open question whether the *Tractatus* is not the more powerful and consistent statement. It is certainly deeply felt.' That does not seem a secure enough basis to hold up a whole interpretation of 'the retreat from the

word' in our culture: Wittgenstein, Jackson Pollock, John Cage, the 'new illiteracy', and so on. But there are some important things, if they are to be said at all, which have to be said badly; and one of the most important of these is how we are to state what is happening in our culture, particularly in terms of the opposition, if it really is one, between *Geist* and *Natur*. In the absence of more coherent attempts, for those who have ears to hear Dr Steiner and Fr Ong are among our most telling and provoking prophets.

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

CREATIVE EVANGELISM, by Harry Sawyerr. Lutterworth, London, 1968. 183 pp. 37s. 6d.

MISSIONS AND RELIGIONS, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. Sceptre Books, Dublin, 1968. 163 pp. 21s.

Canon Sawyerr is Professor of Theology of Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone. His exciting new book is sub-titled 'Towards a new Christian encounter with Africa'.

Missions and Religions prints the Vatican documents on Missionary Activity and the non-Christian Religions. Penetrating essays tracing the history of their discussion in the Council draw out their implications for the Church today. The volume ends with the Pope's Letter to Africa in October, 1967.

That Letter had spelled out again the areas in which the animistic background of the African should provide bridges towards the faith. It said (p. 137) 'the African who becomes a Christian does not disown himself, but takes up the age-old values of tradition in spirit and in truth', and (p. 145) 'today more than ever, the motive force of new Africa comes from its own sons, and in particular from (those) . . . in schools and universities'.

Creative Evangelism shows the truth of both these statements. It underlines how vital it is going to be that Christians engage together on the task of our generation 'to interpret the meaning of the non-Christian religions in the light of the universal history of salvation' (*Missions*, p. 43).

Canon Sawyerr surveys critically the interpretations of existence, evil and the universe with which he is best acquainted in West African societies. He points to the areas where sympathetic presentation of the Gospel as fulfilment will stand most chance of acceptance by the

non-Christian. He shows how at the points where the effort to do this has been least, the impact of the Gospel has been shallow. Above all (and here again our divisions as Christians stand condemned), he believes that Christianity is the expression of God's will for man's unity. Where it already transcends colour, tribe and clan divisions, it earns the right to be heard in these days when the secret of unity eludes so many newly-independent states.

Perhaps the most striking chapter in *Creative Evangelism* outlines 'a fresh liturgical approach'. Building on his understanding of priesthood as an Anglican, and on his traditions as an African, Sawyerr avers, 'only a sacerdotal ministry can meet the emotional and spiritual demands of the African if he is to feel at home in the Christian family. . . . Only a Christian priest can provide for the African convert to Christianity the complete release from anxiety, worry and depression which he formerly sought at the cultic shrines.' Bound up with all this is a frank study of ancestor beliefs, so that 'the communion of Saints' can come alive in African society.

Only as African theologians delve like this into the details of their two selves, and allow the Spirit to state quite simply where truth lies, can a new period of *deeply* creative evangelism happen in Africa. We have lived through the end of the 'missionary era', however long expatriates may or may not still be welcome to serve God's people there.

JOHN POULTON

THOSE DUTCH CATHOLICS, ed. by Michel van der Plas and Henk Suër. Chapman, London, 1967. 164 pp. 21s.

This book is concerned with dialogue. Desmond Fisher says in his Preface: 'I became convinced of the necessity of having it written when I

heard criticisms of the Dutch Church from some leading English prelates. I had just come from Holland where the atmosphere of genuine

concern for the future of the Church and sincere and honest effort to do something about it was in great contrast with the situation in England.'

The six writers are all involved in the development within the Church in Holland and write clearly and without exaggeration of the historical, social and theological situation in their country. They are ready to recognize the problems and possible dangers of such rapid development as is taking place. But most important, they show that these developments are not the result of anarchy but are instigated and encouraged by the Dutch hierarchy who, rather than suppress thought and experimentation, carefully encourage it. As van der Plas puts it: 'It is nothing but ostrich policy to suppress the publication of what is going on among fellow Christians—and nothing is more frustrating.'

Three factors stand out in this book. The first is the concern of the Dutch Church for factual information and frankness in asking questions, rather than vague assumptions and avoidance of questions. The second is the broad front of communication, through press, radio and television—there can be no adequate formation without information. Finally there is the part played by the Dutch Bishops, during the Council and in implementing the Conciliar Decrees. This, after the Preface by Desmond Fisher, one suspects, is the main purpose of the book. The hierarchical commitment to change is further emphasized in a thumb-nail sketch of Bishop Bekkers, which ends with a final telling sentence: 'Bekkers turned a Church that thought she had but to command, into a Church that listened, and changed a religious and ecclesiastical command into an invitation. The result was that the number of people who listened to him grew every day and the more he himself learned to ask questions the more his authority increased, both inside and outside the Church.'

The Church in Holland had the advantage

that development in thought and changes of pastoral approach and structure were already taking place before the Council. The Dutch Bishops were the most efficient source of information during the Council. It is hardly surprising that after the Council they were ready to move forward more firmly and responsibly.

The future developments within Holland are being co-ordinated through the Dutch Pastoral Council. The problems and risks involved in this are the embodiment in the local Church of the problems and risk of the Vatican Council, but if these problems are not faced the real possibilities of the Council of Bishops will never find their actual fulfilment.

No doubt six people do not constitute the Church in Holland, and all six are concerned with development, so that there is no voice given to those who do not agree; nevertheless, they fulfil the purpose for which the book was written. This is not anarchism and irresponsibility among a minority group—which is the impression one sometimes has from the press in England.

This book seems to indicate that dialogue *does* exist, not only within the Church, but also dialogue of the Church with the actual situation within which it is called to experience and witness to the Gospel of Christ. The factual knowledge stemming from centres of social study ensures that the Dutch development is realistic. Facts need to be interpreted, however, and this is done on the basis of a very definite style of theology. It is this theology, sometimes unacceptable in England, which conditions the changes being made. The changes themselves are controlled and encouraged by the bishops—in a manner startlingly independent of Rome, maybe, but which is itself based on a theology of the local Church and Episcopal authority.

SIMON MCNALLY, O.S.B.

SPIRITUALITY FOR TODAY, edited by Eric James. *S.C.M. Press, London, 1968. 175 pp. 12s. 6d.*

The Church of England has proved itself sensitive to the challenge of making Christianity relevant to Modern Man and this symposium of papers from the 1967 Parish and People Conference will, therefore, be read with interest. Spirituality is where theology touches the average believer, so there should be an even greater interest in this book than in the more technical studies on which it depends. This

symposium covers most of the ground one would expect—theology, psychology, liturgy, the modern mood. There is, however, one notable gap. As is noted in the final comments, the social dimension of spirituality was not dealt with adequately; it needed at least one paper to itself, especially as the psychology of personal development got two excellent ones.

Standing out from the others is an imagina-