

than in language which appears paradoxical to the point of contradiction; but our faith is that such contradiction is linguistic rather than actual. The event being one which demands interpretation, and our standpoint one which perpetually changes, we experience a continual dialectic between authentication and conviction: the former belongs to scripture and theology, the latter to literature; the former asks of an interpretation if it is true, the latter if it is convincing. But directly we allow our theological interpretations to be brought under the judgment of literature, we realize the extent to which one language has a higher breaking-point than the other: all religious statements claim to authenticate, but literary ones do not always succeed in convincing and may more frequently merely suspend our disbelief. Just how fragile a process literary realization is can be seen if we take two examples from this book and ask if they are, in fact, of equal power to convince.

The first, from Eliot's *East Coker*, is of the hospital 'endowed by the ruined millionaire', in which 'The wounded surgeon plies the steel That questions the distempered part.' The theological references here have always seemed too explicit to be convincing, and the paradoxes or 'conceits' too obviously contrived. In the companion poem, *The Killing* by Edwin Muir, we notice what is gained by a more limited ambition and range of theological reference: with an unlaboured immediacy the words convey what we might feel *now* if we had

stayed throughout the Crucifixion when, at the end, 'all grew stale at last,
Spite, curiosity, envy, hate itself.
They waited only for death and death was slow
And came so quietly they scarce could mark it.
They were angry then with death and death's deceit.

Muir's question is limited, but its limitation shapes our conviction by determining that area precisely which actively engages us *now*:

'Did a God

Indeed in dying cross my life that day

By chance, he on his road and I on mine?'

It is only as the poet with a subtle accuracy enables us to feel how our self-estrangement collides or 'crosses' with this historical event that we are prepared to entertain its interpretation: authentication must wait upon conviction. To act otherwise is a dangerous business, as we Catholics know better than most Christians; and the book is at its best where this sense of danger is at its strongest. After the monotony of post-encyclical Catholic writing it is like coming across a spring in the desert and if proof were still needed of what English Catholic theologians might gain from entering into the life and concerns of our universities Dr Dillistone provides it in abundance. The originality of his book consists as much in the kind of sensibility which, in recommending it reveals, as in the depth of scholarship by which it is sustained.

JOHN COULSON

BEFORE THE DELUGE, by Sebastian Moore, O.S.B. and Anselm Hurt, O.S.B. *Chapman*, London 1968. Deacon Books. 124 pp. 10s. 6d.

It used to be said, in a district of mixed religion, 'You can always tell the Catholics—they look so cowed'. Dom Sebastian Moore is a cure for such lay Catholics and their priests. For instance: 'Let us courageously apply the following test to all that we have been taught to believe: if it makes us fearful and doubtful of ourselves, if it makes us small and timid, then it is not of Christ.' A convert reviewer may be at a disadvantage ('You can always tell the Protestants—they look so smug'). She cannot always accept the sweeping generalizations, of which there are many, about the pusillanimity of Christians up to now. For instance the phrase, 'Who takest away the sins of the world' does not make her feel sad and guilty, but immensely grateful. Never mind. It is what Dom Sebastian has to say that matters. 'God loves us, which is that God finds each of us a

fascinating and exciting person. And God's taste is excellent.' And 'To forgive sin is to give the sinner hope. It is to make it possible for him to thaw out. It is to say to him: "Life awaits you again, you are accepted... there's something you can do that no one else can do".' Dom Sebastian writes with refreshing insight about our falsities in the confessional; the confessing of something 'just in case', the childish conceit of sin as bad behaviour according to the rules and the habitual reference to 'a kind of standard Catholic soul'. A great deal of what he writes reminds us of the occasion when God told Ezekiel to stop grovelling and stand upon his feet. And still more vividly and repeatedly he describes Ezekiel's 'heart of flesh' in place of the 'heart of stone'; the love of God and neighbour as the one life of a Christian, without any conflict being possible between the two

and the way our religion goes dead without the quickening power of genuine personal relationships. There is a passage in which he asks us to see the Eucharist as the presence of Christ, 'the luminous centre of a community itself filled with new life and light', and says that this idea of presence is more powerful than if it is seen as an 'isolated miracle'. Here, as in a similar passage by Dom Anselm (p. 104), I would only ask that the same principle may be applied to the Eucharist as we are asked to apply to the love of God and neighbour; there can be no dichotomy between its supernatural holiness and the fellowship of those who are in its presence.

Both writers are full of the revolutionary nature of Christianity, and the necessity for Christians to rise to a humanity fuller than that of the humanists, not in order to win, but because that is Christ's truth. Dom Anselm writes, 'there are a great many (in the Church) who don't really see what Christianity is about at all; their religion means something to them which is not Christianity'. The Catholic nursery is gone, and we are all faced with the nakedness of our non-adult position in the world. Dom Anselm emphasizes the principle of growth into human maturity through the operation of the Holy Spirit; and he affirms, in a way that used to be unfashionable, the need for experience as a basis for faith. This experience he finds in community, which 'for many people, perhaps most, means becoming one, in love, in a common purpose. . . "When two or three

are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". This leads naturally to some good chapters on the unity of Christians.

In a book of this type, which is full of the urgency of the last days (a note on the jacket tells us that 'the deluge is coming . . . let us get back to fundamentals while we may'), there is a tendency, not central but perhaps not wholly peripheral, to devalue the treasures of the past along with that which is worn out. In the contemporary reaction against what is called the 'Garden of the Soul' type of piety (I am ignorant of that book) some of us may feel a little breathless, wondering whether the Church of the future is only for active and gregarious extraverts. This, of course, is not what is meant; but, in this book as in others, there is a marked omission of anything metaphysical or mystical. I suggest that we shall not cure superstition by neglecting metaphysics, and that we shall not meet the spiritual hunger of mankind without mysticism. To give a small instance from this book: is it a fair picture of things to describe the first aim of a monastery as 'community', without at the same time mentioning that this search 'for the all-inclusive society' is dependent on the practice of silence and interior prayer?

But this book is appropriate spiritual reading for our time, and we may be grateful for the sound theology and dedicated pastoral experience which has gone into it.

AGNES YENDELL

PERMANENCE ET TRANSFORMATION DE LA MISSION, by Pierre Jean de Menasce, O.P., preface by Cardinal Journet. *Editions du Cerf*, Paris, 1967. 187 pp. 13,80F.

L'OFFRANDE DES PEUPLES, by Jacques Dournes. *Editions du Cerf*, Paris, 1967. 288 pp.

These two volumes of missiology, recently published by *Editions du Cerf*, have a very different character. The first is a collection of essays written, with one exception, between 1939 and 1947 by a professor of missiology in a European university who was never in ordinary missionary work. The other is an entirely post-conciliar study of mission and liturgy by a man twenty years younger, who has moreover completed twenty years in the active missionary field in Viet-Nam.

To publish a collection of shortish essays written twenty-five years ago is a temerarious action. Of course, this sort of thing is being done a good deal at the moment. Much of the work of Frs Rahner and Congar, for instance, published in English for the first time in the last few years dates from the same period. Such

action can, of course, be perfectly justifiable, but it necessarily imposes a much more exacting test upon the work involved. It may also be enlightening as stimulating a judgment upon the thought movement of these years. How far is the theological thought of the sixties really different from, or an advance upon, that of the forties?

Fr de Menasce has never been a 'vulgarisateur' of his own views. His articles were mostly published in very little-known publications. Even so, they were extremely influential. He stands behind much of the best mission thinking of these years. It could indeed be claimed that, apart from P. Charles, S.J., no one has had a deeper personal influence on Catholic missiology in the last half century. These essays stand up remarkably well to the test of time.