

A kind of aesthetic quietism seems to be Mr Ussher's last word, but for the details he asks us to look forward to another book. It should be worth reading.

Although Dr Newman of Maynooth is well aware that existentialism is not a complete philosophy or an adequate substitute for the perennial tradition, he has sympathy with it as a reaction against both positivist materialism and rationalist idealism. He is chiefly concerned with its French representatives, Sartre, Marcel and Merleau-Ponty, and provides a useful introduction to their ideas for the student and general reader. Apart from an essay on Marxism as being more of an ideology than of a genuine philosophy, his other studies are of contemporary British thought. Here he betrays an occasional lack of familiarity. Wittgenstein was not 'ultimately driven . . . to take refuge in mysticism and religion'; his feeling for the mystical is already present in the *Tractatus*. Nor can his essentially independent position be at any time equated with logical positivism. And, as a minor detail, his posthumous volume is called not *Logical* but *Philosophical Investigations*. Dr Newman also seems to miss the note of mild irony in Lord Keynes's confession of the 'immoralism' of Moore's followers in ethics. In spite of these and similar blemishes, however, the student will find in this book a clear summary of the main lines of British philosophy in the present century. It is good to see that work of this kind is being done at Maynooth.

D. J. B. HAWKINS

SEEDS OF THE DESERT. The Legacy of Charles de Foucauld. By R. Voillaume. (Burns Oates; 16s.)

This very important book should be widely read. The drama of Charles de Foucauld's life is already well known, but the real value of his work has not been sufficiently understood, at least in England, as Archbishop Mathew points out in the preface. *Seeds of the Desert*, written as it is by the Prior General of the Little Brothers of Jesus, speaks with authority about the life of Charles de Foucauld and the spirit of the Little Brothers whom he founded. People often ask what the Little Brothers set out to do, and it is difficult to explain that they only try to *be* something and would be untrue to their vocation if they engaged in active works of religion *ex officio*. A Little Brother understands that his baptism has given him a share in the life and power of Christ, and for that reason alone he sets out to live the life of Nazareth *in the normal surroundings* of the twentieth century in order to bring Christ further into the world. So Father Voillaume insists strongly on the need to share the economic and social insecurity that most people experience today because that was part of our Lord's own experience and should therefore be a link between us and him. So he repeats

again and again that 'the world has no need for us to present it with any new "formula" or any new "state of the religious life"; people are dying of hunger and thirst because they are so far away from him who is Life, and what they want is a presence—the presence of Life; unknowingly, they are seeking a person—a divine person.'

If you think this vague and are tempted to label it 'mystical', read on and learn how a Little Brother must always be available to anyone who needs him, how he must seek a life of real poverty among people who are unknown and obscure, how his life of prayer and disciplined austerity must penetrate his work as a stevedore, clerk, farm labourer, engineer or anything else, how he must be content never to see the fruits of his labours and die an apparent failure. His aim is to live exactly as our Saviour lived and because he himself is part of Christ this will redeem people from the tedium and despair of their lives. It is hardly necessary to say how important this is in a world oppressed with fruitless speeding hither and thither. It is a very moving experience to read this book—and that is a thing one can rarely say about a 'spiritual' book—because all the old ideas come to life, and because of the quite outstanding humility with which the head of a religious congregation writes to his subjects. We should read this book not only to learn something about the Little Brothers but because it will tell us many invaluable things about our own lives whether in the cloister or the world. No Dominican will miss Father Voillaume's deep love for and complete understanding of Blessed Martin, and no one else should miss what he has to say about prayer, poverty, chastity and obedience, vowed or otherwise. And lastly, the translator, Willard Hill, must be thanked for putting this into English where it is much needed.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

**HISTORY AND LIBERTY.** The Historical Writings of Benedetto Croce.

By A. Robert Caponigri. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 18s.)

Benedetto Croce was for fifty years the dominant figure in Italian culture, and his death in 1952 seemed to many the end of an epoch in the history of his country and indeed of Europe. To call him the last great European liberal is to beg the question whether Europe will ever see the last of liberalism; but in the course of his long life Croce so persistently, variously and brilliantly expressed the liberal outlook as to become perhaps its outstanding symbol in the eyes of all Europe. And this was just, for although the theoretical basis of that vast literary output is open to question, it is at least comprehensive and profound, and it was worked out with astonishing energy and erudition in the fields of history, biography and literary criticism. Croce never proved