

Alford is too preoccupied with the idea of the antagonism between Christianity and paganism, or rather the surreptitious influence of paganism on Christianity, to be able to view the customs very constructively. It is in fact almost impossible for the students of folklore, which we are told here only became a word and a subject in the middle of last century, not to rationalise the irrational and so to kill what is vital in these customs. The revival of folk-dancing and the like in suburban 'village' halls holds some of the elements of sacrilege.

C.P.

RECENT THOUGHT IN FOCUS. By Donald Nicholl. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

A recent reviewer has said of Mr Joad that he has 'the rare gift of popularising philosophy without misrepresenting what he explains'. This is also true of Mr Nicholl, who has the even rarer gift of seeing with Christian eyes the relevance of philosophies so that he truly represents them in their bearing on life. Students who are used to the purely academic approach to existentialism, logical positivism, psychology and the other modern intellectual fashions may find the approach confusing. A man who spends hours staring through a lens at some tiny object is confused when he raises his head suddenly and is confronted by the vast and beautiful world of God's making. This is very much what Mr Nicholl does; gently but firmly he calls the thinker of today to think *wisely*, that is to think his thoughts in the light of the Eternal Cause. 'It is an attempt to see through modern thought—not to "see through" in the sense of debunking it but literally to see through it to the world.' It was not possible to do justice to the whole of modern thought in 250 pages, and many readers will regret the short review of Freud who surely deserves as much attention as his quondam disciple, Jung; but the reader is instructed on how to read and understand modern thought. His awe and fear of the 'specialist' is cast out by the love of the men who specialise and of the God who gives all men the power to specialise, and with this new confidence he is led to appraise the contributions of these modern 'heroes' to the life of man. Some may find a suspicion of the moralising tone here and there, but this will be because they do not at first sense the deep theological significance of what is stated, for example, about the need for complete surrender if one is to attain true knowledge. This is a book to give confidence and wisdom to the great number of people who would like to know what all this talk of Kierkegaard, Jung, Marx, is about.

C.P.