

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.

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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-

tive paper on the 'Contribution of Monasticism to Spirituality in the World Today' by Fr Charles Boxer, O.P., in which he sketches this to be the provision of a sign for the Church and the World of the future course for Christianity, viz. to undergo a disintegration of its institutionalization and rediscover its purpose in involvement in the world. Just as in the past monasticism acted as a magnet drawing even the non-monastic parts of the Church away from the world, so now its task is to lead in the opposite direction. In the most theological paper the Bishop of Durham applies himself to the question of models for God and spirituality. He concludes that 'the best theology will be that which arises from most models, and is always open-ended to receive discourse from new models'. He sounds a welcome note in saying that the central problem of spirituality is the problem of the objectivity of God. Without that, spirituality too easily degenerates into a sort of psychologism and chases its own tail. The Archbishop of Canterbury supplies a short but mature contribution on 'The Idea of the Holy and the World Today'.

One of the comments on the conference printed at the end of the book criticizes the conference for being unreal. This is the way with conference papers because they have to be general and can only deal with that abstraction Modern Man (a faintly middle class and leftish character). It is not so with the discussions which follow the papers at conferences. They are usually very real because they deal with men and women known to the talkers. (They are also sometimes unprintable.) This general fact is envisaged in the book which modestly describes itself as a stimulus to discussion and no more. It should be read with this in mind.

As a stimulus to discussion one would have liked to see more explicit emphasis on the apophatic element in Christian spirituality. The point is made by three different speakers in the book that today contemplative prayer is the experience of beginners not of 'advanced' persons. If this is so, everyone should be having a living experience of the deficiency of the human mind before the divine and its consequent obligation to deny as well as to affirm things about God. Affirmation by itself leads

away from God. *Un dieu défini est un dieu fini*. We should all, then, have a lively sense of the relativity of our ideas and models for God. This means learning, in the Bishop of Woolwich's phrase, 'to sit loose to the image', reflecting among other things that the new, relevant, up-to-date models for God are as relative as the older ones now being superseded. In other words, we should be receiving an insight into the apophatic element in Christian spirituality. It is not the stock in trade of the monks and hermits only, but the tool which will help day-to-day Christians to have a dynamic approach to living in a changing world, and also to help others to do so. Modern Man is easily stereotyped, but modern men and women defy categorization. Those who try to help them need the Bishop of Durham's wise advice to have as many models as possible. All Christian models are aids to union with God, from the Sacred Heart to pantheism. Some are better suited to modern times than others. No one model suits all men, nor even one man in all his moods. What saves us from fruitless relativity in this is the realization that we can be led beneath our affirmations to the ineffable Reality which they both reveal and hide at the same time. There is a Mystery given in and through our experience of the world. We miss this Mystery not only when we are unaware of it but also when we are aware of it but tailor it to suit our modern needs.

This purging of models is what living spirituality must be about today. Fr Boxer's abrasive article points to a possible way in one sphere. Readers could well pray to have the courage to do the same in their lives. Hope lies in the fact that, whereas it is difficult to do this in the abstract because of the intangibility of Modern Man and Modern Problems, when you meet men and women (including yourself) your love for them finds a way. Which leads us to the not very new conclusion that we can't think our way through problems in spirituality, but we can somehow love our way through them. 'By love may he be gotten and holden but by thought never.' Isn't this how Pope John did it?

JOHN DALRYMPLE

ABELARD AND ST BERNARD: A STUDY IN TWELFTH CENTURY 'MODERNISM', by A. Victor Murray. *Manchester University Press*, 1967. 168 pp. 35s.

Beware of two things: the last labours of love of a very old man, and the forays of an inadequate reviewer. Here you have both! One

remembers Dr R. F. Treharne's dying effort to make the Glastonbury legends do what they would not; and one knows that possibly only