

Georgia) by one Nathan Bailey, president of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, after Jimmy had made a militant declaration of his faith at their international General Council. 'I'm sure none of us want to mix politics with this occasion', said Mr. Bailey, 'but regardless of our party affiliation, Governor, I hope if the Lord tarries, that all of us will have an opportunity to vote for you for some national office sometime in the future'.

Perhaps it is a sign of the spiritual advancement of the United States that there, somehow, 'religious' and 'secular' languages do not collide in mere mutual embarrassment—that the 'this-worldly' and the 'other-worldly' seem to sit easily together, with none of that absurd dualism so rife in traditional theology. The very language of this book itself reflects such a felicitous blending: Mr. Kucharsky writes fluently of Evangelicals 'giving thanks to God for past occurrences and asking prayer support for upcoming opportunities and problems'. He himself is certainly no stiff-necked bigot with a smug monopoly on truth, as one of his more probing theological insights reveals: 'Was Jesus Christ really resurrected? At these junctures many great intellects balk'. A refreshing humility indeed—and one echoed in the figure of President Carter himself, who with his characteristically sensitive discernment of the many-sidedness of situations, 'has won wide recognition as an evangelical without making any extensive statement that reproduces accurately what evangelicals would regard as an absolutely authentic testimony of regeneration'. But, Mr. Kucharsky concludes, he has come 'close enough' to satisfy many Evangelicals that he is one of them.

**A PRIEST'S PSYCHIC DIARY**, by J. Dover Wellman. *SPCK*. 1977, pp. 156 £1.95

The main section of this book is a collection of autobiographical anecdotes concerning psychic phenomena, ranging from demons to dead cats. They are presented simply and, at least if one is prepared to entertain such possibilities at all, convincingly. Most of them could fairly easily be paralleled from elsewhere. The author, who is an Anglican priest, concludes with a few not very exciting reflections on the soul, trance, Jesus, demonic possession and

It is this book's belief that the election of Jimmy Carter to the Presidency might herald a tide of spiritual regeneration in the United States. Perhaps, so far, it can only be a matter of isolated examples—the well-nigh miraculous rebirth of Charles Colson, for instance, who 'invited Christ into his mind and heart early one Friday morning when he sat alone staring out at the ocean'; or the testimony of that 'pair of clean-cut Mormon teen-agers, Donny and Marie Osmond', who are surely one straw in the wind blowing us back to the early church. Above all, there is the eloquent witness of Jimmy Carter himself, whose 'own forgiving spirit was manifested in employing press secretary Jody Powell, who was evicted from the Air Force Academy for cheating'. Or think again of Martin Luther King Senior's stirring 'benediction' to the 1976 Democratic Convention, with its slogan of 'Bring back America to where she belongs'—a benediction which, probing the very soul of the States, was (as Mr. Kucharsky emphasises) televised on all three major networks.

Small things, some will say. But out of peanuts grew a President, and who knows what can happen next? Certainly Carter will prove no fuzzy-minded libertarian: Mr. Kucharsky tells us that 'The one recorded instance of applied anarchism (see Judg. 17:6) is reliably reported to have ended in failure'. Carter has promised us that, if ever his religion and politics come into conflict, he will resign. My own faith in Jimmy Carter may be best expressed by saying that I cannot believe for an instant that any such conflict will arise.

TERRY EAGLETON

spiritual healing.

The author's aim is, it seems, twofold: first, he is concerned that the church should not be too negative about the psychic dimension of human experience. As he rightly says, this is part of our humanity, and the church must be concerned with humanity as a whole. Secondly, he reckons that psychic experience confirms faith, giving a kind of experiential evidence to modern doubting Thomases. This

is a more debatable claim. It all depends on what is meant by faith. Psychic experience can obviously confirm some kinds of faith, but will they necessarily be christian faith? I know that some modern exponents of the Resurrection narratives seem to reduce them to psychic experience on the part of the disciples, but the traditional christian doctrine makes a much more audacious claim, which raises a very important question about the essential content of our belief. Unless we are going to opt for some kind of Gnosticism, we shall have to maintain a very serious distinction between the way in which the risen Lord is "other-worldly", and the way in which psychic experience, whether of dead aunties dropping in for a little haunt, or of the inner radiance of the spirit-soul, might be said to be "other-worldly". It seems to me that Wellman is too sanguine in his hope that people can move from the "supernatural" (meaning the psychic) to the "supernatural" (meaning faith, hope and charity). I am not entirely sure that he even sees the problem.

I am quite convinced, as Wellman is (and as St. Thomas was), that there is some natural basis in us for the exercise of spiritual gifts, and I make no objection if this natural basis is taken to include psychic powers. But this is not sufficient reason for regarding prayer as the way in which we tap the seemingly unlimited resources of healing and well-being that are, in principle, available to us, according to Wellman, within the created order. There are at least two difficulties in this. First, it seems unduly optimistic. If the whole

**CHARISM AND SACRAMENT** by Donald Gelpi S.J. *SPCK*, 1977, pp. 258 £3.95

Donald Gelpi's new book *Charism and Sacrament* is an attempt to interpret conversion in the light of a theory of experience, and in such a way as to do justice both to Pentecostalism and Catholic sacramental theology. To do this, he finds it necessary to create some singularly ugly jargon, which he wields in a heavily 'scholastic' way. His patronising reinterpretation of medieval scholastic theology of the gifts must surely provoke any Thomist, at least; when he complains that "their theological language did not allow them to speak of the process of infusion (of the gifts, etc.) in terms that have any discernible experi-

creation is subjected to futility, because of original sin, and can only be redeemed by the drastic measures outlined in the New Testament, it seems improbable that there is this great reservoir of spiritual power. And secondly, surely the essential point of prayer is to ask God to do something. His answer may or may not involve the use of my occult abilities, but either way, that is not what prayer is about. Similarly it may indeed be the case that my "spirit-soul" can reach out and comfort somebody else's, but that is not what Christian ministry is about. There is a much more profound principle of "bearing one another's burdens" situated in the uniting of all men in Christ, not in the psyche.

Nor am I convinced, as Wellman is, that there is healing for everyone here and now, if only we know how to get at it. That is a dangerous and persecuting doctrine, turning the true eschatological hope of the church (and this is a hope which does not disappoint) into a kind of psychic optimism, which all too easily disappoints, and, if it does not, leads to a trivialising of the Cross which the church must carry till the end of time.

Wellman is very probably right to remind the church to take the psychic seriously. But I fear that he seems to be taking it too seriously. For people who like this kind of story, it is a very readable book that he has produced; but I would not recommend it as a work of christian thought or spirituality.

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ential correlate", one can only retort that Gelpi's own theological language seems not to allow him to recognise that experience has important pre-experiential roots, and that the medieval theologians were quite deliberate in not treating infusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as experiential in itself. That experience is modified by them is as clear in medieval theology as it is in Pentecostal.

A Dominican critic can also not help noticing the remarkable re-appearance of Molinist principles in a modern Jesuit theologian. Efficacious grace is seemingly equated with "a vague emotive impulse"!