

fundamental question as to the nature of theology as such and of the intrinsic demands of theological method. But our difference is, I think, mainly one of emphasis. My point is that we should not look primarily for relevance to the present situation. The principle work of theology is to join an integral synthesis. Then this synthesis will of its very nature be relevant to our situation. Fr Karl Rahner gives the clue when he says 'But in fact the strictest theology, that most passionately devoted to reality alone and ever on the alert for new questions, the most scientific theology, is itself in the long run the most kerygmatic'. Fr Davis in fact recognized the first claim on the theologian when he quotes from Mgr Guardini (p. 9). 'The deepest significance of dogma lies not in its practical applications but in safeguarding the fullness and freedom of sacred truth'.

ODO BROOKE, O.S.B.

THE NIGHT BATTLE, by J. M. Cameron; Burns and Oates; 25s.

If one took the author's epigraph and the publisher's blurb together, as indicating the nature of this book, one might conclude that it was primarily a contribution to a private Catholic controversy 'where each fights for himself and friend and foe stand together' (Newman) and in which the author ('a Catholic of the Left') indulged a common habit of left-wing Catholics: namely bishop-baiting and the flogging of horses best left to die a natural death. It is therefore important to discuss how, in this book of essays, Professor Cameron handles controversial Catholic questions. For him, such controversy is simply the natural outcome of a firm grasp of what Catholic faith involves. In so far as it is evident from these essays that the author is a 'Catholic of the Left', it is also evident from the same sources that there is a strong *prima facie* case to be made out for holding that to be 'of the left' is the *natural* consequence of a faith which is deep, learned and alive to contemporary problems. How is this case made out by these essays? In combining items of an unmistakably radical and controversial kind (e.g. *Catholicism and Political Mythology*) with others of a more academic and literary kind (*The Justification of Political Attitudes, Mr Tillotson and Mr Pope*) Professor Cameron exhibits in his own work those things most worthy of praise, he believes, in The New Left. The New Left policies and attitudes, 'because they aspire to a complete vision of our social condition are not strictly comparable with the policy and outlook of the supporters of the traditional parties' (p. 66): similarly Professor Cameron's breadth of view and interest and the stability of his fundamental convictions naturally lead him to positions very different from those held by more conformist or traditionalist Catholics. He is uncompromisingly unilateralist; he is a strong supporter of the contemporary style in philosophy (see *Words and Things*); he believes that the view of Communism held by most prominent Catholic publicists, especially in the U.S.A., is both false and dangerous; he recommends a dispassionate study of Com-

munist language as a means of finding out what Communism is really about (*Problems of Communist Language*); he thinks it both misguided and unnecessary to make Newman into a kind of Thomist in order that Catholics can safely digest him. But in spite of holding all these subversive opinions, he does not fall into the trap which many left-wing Catholics cannot avoid: namely to succumb to the desire which, as Professor Cameron observes, right-wing Catholics often nourish 'that there should be, as it were, a counter-Church' (p. 11). For the latter, this counter-Church is to be identified with the diabolical Communist conspiracy headed by Krushev, Mao, Castro and Tito. For the left-wing Catholic it often seems necessary to regard all bishops, parish priests, Irishmen and Catholic stock-brokers as constituting the psychologically necessary 'counter-Church.' The one result of this kind of mythical thinking is that 'a spirit of contempt for the profoundly unrevolutionary mass of the people' is engendered, and this in turn leads to a spirit of violence, or 'vestigial Bolshevism'.

For those who share the author's general point of view, this book should serve as a model of how best to secure the victory of the Catholic left: by an unmistakable sense of commitment, but also by a quite unhysterical sense of stability, which can only come from a deep personal grasp of theological, philosophical and moral principles wholly acknowledged and transformed by individual experience.

One example of how such a grasp can have its effect in an indirect way is to be found in the essay on *The Justification of Political Attitudes*. This essay consists in the 'description and analysis of concepts' concerning the relation of political attitudes to moral principles, moral obligations, and matters of empirical fact. (The description and analysis of concepts, it is argued in *Words and Things*, is what the philosopher's job always boils down to). It is argued that, while no general political attitude - Liberalism, Socialism, Conservatism - can as a whole be a matter of moral obligation in the strict sense, there are certain issues which may oblige us to take a certain political course - such as voting against any party which tried to introduce an industrial colour bar. All the same, political attitudes are not unconnected with the 'structure of the world of fact' - as though opposite attitudes could equally well and equally reasonably be justified on the basis of the same estimate of the facts in question. Thus the Nazi moral system, simply as a 'universe of discourse' did not, indeed logically could not, entail that their racial theory was actually true. But it had to be asserted as true, for 'it is a minimum requirement of any moral system that its primary moral judgments should seem to follow from the structure of the world of fact' (p. 95). This shows that there is something wrong with the 'polyarchic' view, which affirms only the need for logical connectedness within a system based on certain moral principles, but denies that there can be any arguing for or against the fundamental principles themselves. Such a view rests upon the idea that we choose our moral principles: but as Professor Cameron shows, it makes no sense to use the language of choice in this connection. Moral principles are things we accept or reject, not things we choose. This is proved by the fact that, for example,

sometimes we accept a moral principle as authoritative only with extreme reluctance', which would be inexplicable if we were able to choose another one instead. Again, moral attitudes are 'so connected with our beliefs about actual and prospective states of affairs that our attitudes can be said to be appropriate or inappropriate, correct or mistaken' (p. 93). Now all this has a relevance, not insisted upon by Professor Cameron in this essay, but brought out in *Catholicism and Political Mythology*, to a commonly accepted attitude by Catholics to politics. I have in mind those who in effect accept the presuppositions of the polyarchic view, but instead of leaving everything open ultimately to choice, deny that there is really any choice at all, not because the facts rule out certain choices, but because there is only one good principle, or set of principles to be chosen: namely Catholic principles. Then, in order to avoid saying that we are, on this account, morally obliged to support (say) a Christian Democratic party (assuming we want to avoid this dangerous but not unprecedented conclusion) Catholics of this mentality are forced to cut off real political attitudes from moral principles altogether. The thing is to be a good *Catholic* Conservative, or a good *Catholic* Labour-party socialist. The Catholic principle is what counts here, and the commitment to Conservatism or Socialism is only a kind of froth on top of it. Fundamentally if we are good Catholics, conscious of having chosen the Catholic principles, our political differences are not so much unimportant as irrelevant to our deepest convictions. They just reflect our class or social status, the inevitable distinction of (say) capitalist and worker - which is not something open to challenge, but a datum of social existence.

The above consideration of a conceptual problem shows how a sober analysis can quietly abolish a whole area of what is often held to be 'Catholic' thought, not deliberately, but just by the way, as a by-product of ordinary reasoning about a fundamental issue. This is not done in order to score controversial points, but simply in order to expose the real problem, and to bring out into the open the important differences between Catholics and others, instead of being preoccupied with pseudo-problems. But it should not be thought that this book is primarily political in emphasis. The first five essays are on political themes; the sixth is a refutation of Professor Gellner's attack on contemporary philosophy; the seventh is the author's inaugural lecture *Poetry and Dialectic*. This lecture combines, in a manner which must be unique in English philosophy today, the insights of conceptual analysis with the living experience of poetry both from the angle of the critic and that of the creative artist. Poetry is not just for delight, nor is it a species of philosophy or religion. Yet by its own method - that of making fictions which are themselves 'instruments of knowledge' - poetry achieves, or should achieve, its right to recognition as a central human activity. The poet must reclaim his place among the most honoured groups in society instead of, as at present, being classed along with the 'tumbler and comedians'. Essays eight and nine are studies of the poetry of Pope, and of academic criticism of his work, from which Professor Cameron draws the more general conclusion that it is an unsatisfactory situation when literary criticism becomes 'eccentric

to the main concerns and interests of our civilization' (p. 171). A short piece on Berkeley is followed by two important concluding chapters on the philosophy of Newman - especially interesting because they are not just studies of the *Grammar of Assent*.

In a collection ranging over so wide a field, there is always a danger of superficiality. In general, these essays are superficial only in the sense that they are in no case exhaustive treatments of their subject. What Professor Cameron has to say on all these very varied topics is always worthwhile and often illuminating: one's only regret is that he has not been able to develop them all more comprehensively. This is the most *civilized* book I have read for a long time.

BRIAN WICKER

SELECTED ESSAYS: 1934-43, by Simone Weil; Oxford University Press; 30s.

This collection of essays, admirably translated by Sir Richard Rees, very nearly completes the task of translating Simone Weil's varied works into English. Although this present collection is very much a miscellany - an omnibus of articles, published and unpublished - there is a connecting thread holding them together. This is the extraordinarily nimble, almost ethereal personality of this twentieth century mystic, whom T. S. Eliot described as 'a kind of genius akin to the saints'.

Simone Weil, the outstandingly brilliant daughter of a French Jewish doctor, combined in her writing the traditions of French analytical logic and Jewish compassion with suffering. Had she lived, she would have developed the maturity to synthesize the two into a balanced philosophy of life, but she died, her task only partly achieved, at the age of thirty-four. Her essays, some of which were written when she was in the middle twenties, suffer from excessive severity of judgment and the characteristically sweeping generalizations of youth. She lived in a world of lengthening shadows, of which the longest, that of Hitler, was to cast its shade over her whole race. Her fundamental belief in the goodness of man led her into many different attempts to explain away the wickedness of the society in which she lived. By refusing to accept the existence of evil as an active agent, she found herself obliged to postulate a number of historical forces which were responsible for perverting the true course of civilization. The force with which she is principally concerned in these essays is that of 'Romanism', by which she is not referring to the Catholic Church, but to the large-scale, centralized, irreligious, bureaucratic, totalitarian state of which the Roman Empire was the prototype.

In contrast to 'The Great Beast' of Rome she counterpoises the pure character of Greek civilization with its emphasis on the down-trodden, ill-fated hero, of whom Odysseus is perhaps the most famous. Her attempt to interweave the Greek emphasis on blind fate with the Christian concept of divine destiny