

Reviews

The Spirit of Solzhenitsyn

by Olivier Clément, Search Press, 1976, 234 pp., £5.95.

M. Olivier Clément is a French intellectual, educated in unbelief, who first met the Christian faith in its Eastern Orthodox form, and has now become one of the Orthodox Church's most distinguished lay theologians. His book is a work of literary criticism or rather "spiritual criticism", if the phrase may be coined, which analyses the whole of Solzhenitsyn's published work. It was published in French in 1974 and is now issued in English with the addition of a long chapter bringing the story up to date with an analysis of *The Gulag Archipelago* and *Lenin in Zurich*.

Solzhenitsyn expresses his thought through fiction, which is a discursive and unsystematic medium. I will admit that I was surprised how well it stands up to rigorous analysis by an intelligent Frenchman. What Solzhenitsyn has to say about the relations of the sexes is more constructive and better observed than I had taken in from reading the books separately, and it is much more Christian. And his critique of Marxism goes deeper than I had perceived.

It is obvious that Solzhenitsyn uses imagery. The cancer of *Cancer Ward* represents a disease of society as well as a disease of the body. What I had not realized is that his whole work is penetrated with imagery and that most of this is Christian imagery and typically Orthodox. He sees everything, even perhaps the camps, in the light of the Transfiguration. Clément's observations are as interesting as those of Solzhenitsyn and it is sometimes hard to know where one ends and the other begins. This is partly because the views of the critic and the vision of the author are in close harmony. "The death of man must follow the death of God", as Berdyaev saw. Yet "the experience of the camps reveals (or can reveal) . . . 'the weak little spark of God (once) breathed into them'." And "how can one explain that certain unstable people found faith right there in camp, that they were strengthened".

The translation reads well, but I have not had an opportunity to compare it with the original French. The dust cover is superb with a 14th century Greek icon on the front, and a back cover that reproduces a design from the early years of Soviet power, celebrating the victory of mechanized man. There are far too many misprints, and the use of "evangelism", where the meaning is evangelical truth, obscures the meaning of a whole chapter. In M. Clément's view the Baptist faith is the way into Christianity for many Soviet men and women, but it is not the end of their journey. "The Baptist ferment could mark an overall renewal of Russian Christianity", but the Orthodox faith is always drawing the Baptists on further into the living truth, so that "in the last few years" there have appeared "Baptist communities who celebrate the traditional Orthodox feasts of Mary".

JOHN LAWRENCE

Protestants in Russia

by J. A. Hebly, Christian Journals Ltd., 1976, 192 pp., £1.50.

Dr. Hebly devotes almost half of this book to a study of the historical roots of Protestant sects in the USSR. It is fascinating to discover how varied are those roots. Dutch immigrants played a part as well as the Stundists in the Ukraine, led by Lutheran and Mennonite pastors of German origin. The English evangelist, Lord Radstock, exercised a considerable influence in Russian aristocratic drawing-rooms in the 1870s and made numerous converts. His work was carried on by Colonel Pashkov who spread the movement among the peasantry and working class. The difficulties which faced such sectarians were great indeed and can be compared to some of the problems which now face many religious denominations in the Soviet Union.

Dr. Hebly demonstrates that sectarianism was not imported from abroad. It is a common mistake to suppose that in the 19th century Protestantism was implanted in soil until then free of deviation from the Orthodox faith. In fact, many sectarian groups sprang up actually within the Orthodox Church after the schism with the Old Believers in the 17th century. To unravel the many different types of Old Believer sects is a difficult task; their variety shows how Russia was a rich breeding ground for sectarianism.

In the second part of his book, Dr. Hebly examines the history of the Baptists and Evangelical Christians (ECB) from the Revolution to the present. He uses mainly secondary sources and in particular the work of Michael Bourdeaux on the conflicts of the ECB Church in the '60s and '70s. Unlike the Russian Orthodox Church, sectarian groups at first experienced less hostility from the Communist Party after the Revolution. But with the