

THE MIND OF AFRICA, by W. E. Abraham; Weidenfeld and Nicholson; 21s.

Confronted with the impossible task of writing a book on the 'Mind of Africa' Professor Abraham has wisely confined himself to giving us the treat of an excursion through his own mind. The first African to become a Fellow of All Souls, and now Professor of Philosophy in the University of Ghana, he has uncompromisingly displayed to the reader the richness of his European cultural attainments and his tribal African inheritance.

It is, therefore, not a particularly easy book to read, for the Professor insists, quite rightly, that the mind of a person, let alone of a tribe, a nation or a continent, cannot be appreciated without considerable knowledge of its cultural background. And what, he asks, is culture anyway? In the first long section of his treatise he takes this problem firmly by the horns and if his wrestling with it leaves one in some doubt as to who is the winner, he does at least show himself a very worthy contestant. It is a difficult introduction but is leavened with a number of salty remarks which prove that the author is no 'ivory-tower' academic. One may criticize, however, his knowledge of history; Leo XIII was not concerned with the Council of Trent; and the Professor should brush up his theological information about polygamy.

The second section of the book, mainly concerned with a description of the culture of the Akan tribe, which has so strongly influenced the modern development of Ghana, is extremely valuable and much of it could be included with profit in the course 'De Anima' in a seminary. We tend in this country to dislike many of the manifestations of Dr Nkrumah's policy, as the one-party state has for us unpleasant overtones; but the African feeling in general for 'mystical bodies' is far stronger than that which is naturally possessed by our West European individualistic societies and one day we must come to terms with this. The Professor has not altogether succeeded in setting the Akan culture in the general perspective he planned in the first portion of the book; but, as he is able to do so much at the age of 28, we may with confidence look forward to a later expansion and clarification of his theme.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

SPENSER'S SHEPHEARDES CALENDER, by P. E. McLane; University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana; \$5.00.

In this carefully documented work Professor McLane undertakes to prove that Spenser's *Shepheardes calender* is a political commentary in allegorical form on two themes which were topical in the years 1578 and 1579. These themes are the marriage which Elizabeth I apparently purposed with the duc d'Alençon, a bride of forty-six and a groom of twenty-three, and the predicament of the state-controlled Church of England. In pursuance of this thesis the writer uses