

angelology for which he claims, without further specification, the authority of the early fathers. It would call for a learning which equals the author's own to assess the justice of this claim. But any reader, after looking at this chapter and the one on 'death and new life', would be tempted to exclaim, 'Thank God for the angelic doctor, and his very down-to-earth moderation'.

These blemishes are the more unfortunate, since P. Bouyer has so many really excellent things to say. They could not fail to provide a retreat giver with plenty of stimulating material. But we would hesitate to recommend this book to a retreat maker for spiritual reading, since a person who does not share its author's enthusiastic temperament is only too likely to find it discouraging.

THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. By Jean MOUROUX, tr. by George Lamb. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

So important a book as this deserves to be discussed thoroughly in an article, instead of merely receiving the brief notice we are limited to here. Religious experience is perhaps too readily dismissed as the special preserve of mystics on the one hand and the more enthusiastic sort of Protestants on the other. The author vindicates it for the ordinary sincere Catholic. He takes experience in its fullest sense as simply the co-efficient of life. And since the Christian religion is a life, it entails its own proper experience. Since, moreover it is a whole life—or rather a context containing a man's whole life—it follows that its corresponding experience cannot be pinned down to any one particular feeling or sensation or awareness. Can. Mouroux criticizes the Protestant (Lutheran) idea of religious experience for trying to do precisely that, and so reducing the experience to what he calls the empirical level, by which he means a sort of brute awareness of things happening to you. But the genuine Christian experience must be something much more than this. It must develop on what he calls the experiential level, which is a personal awareness of self as involved in a network of relationships with one's environment; so that the authentic religious experience is an awareness of self, a grasping of oneself as the author puts it, in relation to God, within the religious context established by God, i.e. in Christ and the Church.

This experience is not confined to 'feeling', but includes feeling as an important element, since it is an experience of the whole person. We are meant to enjoy our religion, to have strong feelings about it. And feeling, or affectivity, is not limited to the emotional side of man, but has its place also in the functioning of his rational appetite, the will.

The author is concerned with making a theological survey of the Christian experience, not a psychological analysis. There are consequently some highly technical chapters of theological discussion in the

first part, which the reader who is not familiar with theology is likely to find very tough. But the three central chapters which review the Christian experience as presented in the New Testament, while they demand no little concentration from the reader, will have a more general appeal. The chapter on 'the experience of the Spirit in St Paul' is particularly good. The characteristic mark of the Christian experience, suspended as it is between 'the security that comes from God and the insecurity that comes from us', is no imagined feeling of assured salvation, but 'a hope that is both fully confident and at the same time goes in fear and trembling; we are saved by hope'.

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BLESSING UNBOUNDED. By Harry Blamires. (Longmans Green & Co.; 12s. 6d.)

Here is an entertaining and original book, a satire of our religious times. We open it to find the hero of the tale, newly dead, walking along a road towards Heaven. What will he find at the top of the road? we ask, our curiosity aroused. What is it going to be like in this world beyond the grave?

The first thing to be discovered is that Creation is all of a piece, that 'there is no severance, no final discontinuity between the world of Nature and the Kingdom of Heaven'. Our hero is walking towards The City (Heaven) but it might have been Kettlewell.

In a way that seems entirely natural, he runs into angels and old friends. He learns that in order to reach Heaven, he will have to *choose* Heaven fully. He will have to relive much of the past recapturing what was good and repenting of the evil. He will have to enter as a member of a worshipping body and not in individual isolation, 'for that would not be Heaven at all'.

We follow him from group to group of pilgrim bands as he searches for one to whom he may attach himself. We become slightly irritated by the many hesitations and deviations which delay the progress of the story (to that extent the book fails as good allegory) but interest is always kept alive by the shrewd comments that the author has to make on the different religious bodies. No one is spared. The Ritualists with their 'phoney Gadzooks', the Modernists with their 'earthbound chatter about carburettors', the Evangelicals with their zealous biblical piety, all come in for a thrust but it is one of the charms of this book that there is no bitterness here, no sneer. Something of value is discovered in them all, and when at the end of the journey we arrive at the Ark, we find that all of them have, by their devious routes, arrived.

The hero's journey is a serious one but it is far from solemn. We have plenty of laughs. We turn aside with him from one group of pilgrims