

the Vatican decrees, and in particular in his famous letter to *The Times*, November 24, 1874, there quoted. Acton expresses in this letter the same meaning as the quotation from Manning, but his words are those of the sober historian and not, as Manning's were, a preacher's rhetoric.

Singularly little tolerance is accorded by Dr Whale to the consciences of Catholics in their belief that there is, and can be, only one Church on earth, through which Christ our Lord effects the salvation of mankind. He dubs it 'an exclusive claim repeated year by year and century by century with the monotonous repetition of a gramophone'. This is only one of many instances where loaded language is made to do duty for language that will appeal to reasoned thought. What would be Dr Whale's judgment of a rationalist who stigmatized his own preaching of the Gospel in these terms? It is a pity, from an eirenic viewpoint, that Dr Whale's book, which reaches a high standard in his estimate of Luther's and Calvin's positive contribution to the Protestant Tradition, should fall below that standard in his estimate of the Catholic Tradition with which he sets his chosen subject in contrast.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

THE MEANING OF THE MONASTIC LIFE. By Louis Bouyer, tr. by Kathleen Pond. (Burns & Oates; 21s.)

This is a disturbing book—disturbing in a good sense; it should play havoc with the reader's self-complacency, whether he is a monk or other religious, priest or layman. The author is quite uncompromising in his statement of the end and the means, the purpose and the obligations of the monk's profession, which he does not regard as a special vocation, but as the ordinary vocation of the baptized person 'carried to the furthest limits of its irresistible demands'.

But the reader is also likely to find this book disturbing in a more regrettable fashion. There is throughout an undeniable flavour of fanaticism. This finds expression in the uncalled-for polemical tone against 'modern Christians' and 'sham monks'; and when these are mentioned, you can almost hear the aside, 'like many I could name'. The author seems temperamentally incapable of qualifying his more 'out-and-out' remarks. This, for example: 'for the monk there is no middle way between sacrilege and sanctity'. He does not mean, one may hope, that every monk who is not a saint is a sacrilegious fraud; but one is left hoping, because he does not say so.

In the first chapter his patristic and biblical learning gives promise of a very refreshing treatment of spiritual things. But the freshness is turned sour and fizzy by a certain intemperate harshness of tone. He launches out, in the second chapter on 'the angelic life', into a heady

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