

With Us: creation and the cross: dependence and freedom: intellect and faith: tradition and renewal: action and contemplation—(the atom bomb appears here)—these are the points of conflict upon which Fr Bouyer brings to bear his deep understanding of the travail of the contemporary mind and his fund of scriptural and patristic scholarship.

He admits that there is no simple solution, and his final chapter on self-development and asceticism shows that there is no solution at all save through the cross. Christianity did not create suffering and death, as admirers of paganism would have us believe: it found them there, the result of sin. But Christianity alone has 'dared to persuade man to look his destiny in the face without fear, because it has placed in his hands the means to master it' (p. 104). Through the cross, suffering and death which are the inevitable consequence of sin become the object of free and deliberate consent, 'the act of a love abandoning itself wholly in response to the act of divine love giving itself without reserve' (p. 105). Like Christ we must be 'conditioned for the cross' and our life will be a succession of renunciations which are the only real fulfilments.

But in the last resort there is no real dilemma. There is only one choice—self or God. To opt for self, given this fallen world, involves man ultimately in frustration, disintegration and slavery to the devil. To opt for God is to will to be made anew to the image of God and to reach the fulfilment of that abundant, endless life for which man was created. It is to accept the 'mystery of the cross which baffles the intellect to restore it in the end, as it afflicts mankind to bring it healing and salvation' (p. 82). This is the stark choice before each one of us: there is no middle way. And in the words of Cardinal Suhard which Fr Bouyer may well have had in mind when writing this book: 'the stakes are both the everlastingness of Christianity and the survival of civilization'.

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

... BUT NOT CONQUERED. Edited by Bernard T. Smith. (Browne and Nolan Ltd, Dublin; 1955.)

This book comprises the accounts, by four priests of the Society of St Columban, of the last years they spent in China before their expulsion in 1953. They are simple and objective accounts; factual and informative about conditions under the communists. Because their authors have been content to recount only what is known to them through personal experience or contact and to do so with as little embellishment of the facts as possible their stories are both convincing and moving. They are also terrifying. It is hard to imagine anything more appalling than the picture that emerges of communist methods

in China, where experience is supported by a dreadful subtlety and perverted wisdom. Not even Orwell devised anything so frightening as their prison system which makes of prison life a travesty of monastic life and is so effective in achieving its objects.

That it was not effective in the case of these priests is due to their own faith and courage and, as they so freely admit, to the prayers of Catholics inside and outside China. This simple acknowledgment, backed by the modest account of the ordeals that lay behind it, makes the book a most eloquent appeal for prayer for the brave priests and faithful still suffering persecution.

M.T.

PIERS THE PLOUGHMAN. By William Langland: a new translation by J. F. Goodridge. (Penguin Books; 3s. 6d.)

Mr Goodridge set himself the task of making the full meaning of Langland's poem intelligible to the general reader, and he has made a very good shot at accomplishing it. He has used a prose which in spite of (or perhaps because of) retaining a fair sprinkling of the alliteration of the original and even, in places, catching something of its rhythm, reads easily and makes clear sense. A very cursory and random comparison with the original shows the meaning to have been pretty accurately caught and though the version is modern in the structure of its sentences it still has much of the directness and immediacy of imagery that are such a feature of the poem.

The introductions to the individual books together with the notes help considerably in making clear the meaning: possibly many of the latter would be found even more helpful by non-Catholic readers. The weakness of the introduction (and since the remarks are intended to introduce the general reader to the subject it is a grave weakness) lies in the account of allegory and allegorical writing. Mr Goodridge rejects with short shrift the idea of there being 'levels of meaning' in Langland and believes that he 'generally confines himself to saying one thing at a time'. He offers no real alternative interpretation of allegory and at least once in his remarks he appears himself to discern several meanings in a single passage—so perhaps he is jibbing at the phrase rather than at the reality. Had Langland really only been saying one thing at a time then I hardly think that his poem would have remained so absorbing as this latest edition proves it still to be.

M.T.

THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT. By St John Climacus. Translated by the Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, with an Introduction by Dr M. Heppell. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

St John Climacus became a monk on Mt Sinai. Later he adopted the