

It is a difficult task, as any student confronted with their work discovers. Their poetry is impregnated with Catholic thought; it is now pious, now blasphemous, but never indifferent; they can attack their heritage but they cannot get away from it. This same truth is apparent in all of their life; in Baudelaire's aspirations for a way of life he never achieved; in Verlaine's outbursts of humble contrition for offences of which in another mood he would boast; in Rimbaud's final silence as poetry, which he had made his religion, proved its inadequacy as a means to an ultimate knowledge of life. It is a difficult picture to present justly and clearly. Selected quotations and incidents could present an almost saintly Verlaine, or a Verlaine blasphemous and depraved beyond words. But, giving as full a picture as so short a book allows, the writer has in all honesty presented both fair and foul in the poetry and life of these men who struggled so long with the faith in which, finally repentant they died.

X.Y.

MORALS AND INDEPENDENCE: An Introduction to Ethics. By John Coventry, S.J., with a preface by D. M. MacKinnon. (Burns, Oates; 4s.6d.)

A moral judgment of the type 'I ought not to do this' is essentially a conclusion—the conclusion of a syllogism of which the major premiss is 'good ought to be done (by me) and evil avoided', and the minor 'and this is evil'. Fr Coventry's book is chiefly concerned with the latter proposition, and with establishing some criterion with reference to which we can assert of any particular action that it is good or bad.

The traditional explanation of ethical theory also concerns itself with the minor. We begin with a postulate from Natural Theology that man is ordained to an end; free acts are morally good or bad according as they are or are not helping towards the attainment of this end. Natural Law, becoming in the present context Moral Law, engraved in our minds by God, penetrating and illumining them, enables us to pass judgment on any particular action, and to state whether it is good or bad. If we reject this traditional teleological theory *ipso facto* we reject the traditional doctrine of Natural and Moral Law. On the grounds that the modern world rejects teleology as 'unfashionable' Fr Coventry tries in his book to solve the problem from another angle. The result, and he admits it himself, is unsatisfactory. He is forced into stating in the last few pages that 'some such theory as the teleological is needed if the imperative factor in moral judgment is not to be left as a loose end, sticking out and unassimilated by our general systematic view of reality'. The problem of the 'imperative factor', the word 'ought' in any particular moral judgment, is the problem Fr Coventry sets out to solve. We cannot help thinking he has missed the point. His terminology is very confusing; he applies the term 'moral judgment' indiscriminately to all three propositions in the 'moral'

sylogism we have given above, and it is of the utmost importance in any ethical treatise that they be clearly distinguished one from another. He admits the major, and he implies that it must be admitted as a preliminary to any discussion. This is perfectly true; a man who denies that 'good ought to be done and evil avoided' must be adjudged morally, and therefore mentally, deficient. Once this is granted there is no longer any problem of an 'imperative factor'—it is there, and there's an end on't. It enters the concluding particular moral judgment directly from the major premiss. The minor merely states the moral character of the particular action. With this in mind it is hard to appreciate Fr Coventry's difficulty. He gives as his aim 'to make an honest enquiry into the sphere of ethics; to state the sense of dissatisfaction which hedges this study about' and he has accomplished this latter purpose to a much more vivid degree than he perhaps intended; he has certainly stated the 'sense of dissatisfaction' more vividly than the subject warrants. If it was the author's purpose to show the ethical chaos consequent upon the rejection of traditional teleology he has succeeded; but he should have stated this purpose in more explicit terms. It is hard to know when he is giving his own views, when those of others, and finally whether he agrees or disagrees with the latter.

The most that can be said for this rather confusing work is that it stimulates at times, and in opening the problem serves, though inadequately, as an 'introduction to ethics'. The chapter on freedom, and his treatment of the moral argument for the existence of God, are valuable. We feel that we cannot agree with Professor McKinnon's remark in the preface that '*Morals and Independence* seems an example of . . . the good introductory book' nor can we recommend it to students embarking on a study of Ethical theory. It is more liable to confuse than introduce. JULES BONSAN.

KIERKEGAARD'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION. By Reidar Thomte.
(Oxford University Press; 18s.)

The limelight of popularity recently thrown upon Jean-Paul Sartre and modern atheistic existentialism has indirectly darkened the arena which anyone who intends to embark upon a study of Kierkegaard must enter. Existentialism has been elevated into a philosophy and Kierkegaard and Sartre have been bracketed as its exponents. About the only thing they have in common is the denial that it is a philosophy. Kierkegaard is essentially a religious writer, deliberately and explicitly, and Mr Thomte has supplied the need there is for an introduction to his thought. It would be a mistake to expect an easy book: Kierkegaard's own thought was not easy and any condensation must increase the difficulty. In a sense Kierkegaard makes a Protestant approach to a Protestant problem. He does not question the validity of Christianity but he examines the personal relationship of the Christian man to Christian doctrine.