

is a more debatable claim. It all depends on what is meant by faith. Psychic experience can obviously confirm some kinds of faith, but will they necessarily be christian faith? I know that some modern exponents of the Resurrection narratives seem to reduce them to psychic experience on the part of the disciples, but the traditional christian doctrine makes a much more audacious claim, which raises a very important question about the essential content of our belief. Unless we are going to opt for some kind of Gnosticism, we shall have to maintain a very serious distinction between the way in which the risen Lord is "other-worldly", and the way in which psychic experience, whether of dead aunties dropping in for a little haunt, or of the inner radiance of the spirit-soul, might be said to be "other-worldly". It seems to me that Wellman is too sanguine in his hope that people can move from the "supernatural" (meaning the psychic) to the "supernatural" (meaning faith, hope and charity). I am not entirely sure that he even sees the problem.

I am quite convinced, as Wellman is (and as St. Thomas was), that there is some natural basis in us for the exercise of spiritual gifts, and I make no objection if this natural basis is taken to include psychic powers. But this is not sufficient reason for regarding prayer as the way in which we tap the seemingly unlimited resources of healing and well-being that are, in principle, available to us, according to Wellman, within the created order. There are at least two difficulties in this. First, it seems unduly optimistic. If the whole

CHARISM AND SACRAMENT by Donald Gelpi S.J. SPCK, 1977, pp. 258 £3.95

Donald Gelpi's new book *Charism and Sacrament* is an attempt to interpret conversion in the light of a theory of experience, and in such a way as to do justice both to Pentecostalism and Catholic sacramental theology. To do this, he finds it necessary to create some singularly ugly jargon, which he wields in a heavily 'scholastic' way. His patronising reinterpretation of medieval scholastic theology of the gifts must surely provoke any Thomist, at least; when he complains that "their theological language did not allow them to speak of the process of infusion (of the gifts, etc.) in terms that have any discernible experi-

creation is subjected to futility, because of original sin, and can only be redeemed by the drastic measures outlined in the New Testament, it seems improbable that there is this great reservoir of spiritual power. And secondly, surely the essential point of prayer is to ask God to do something. His answer may or may not involve the use of my occult abilities, but either way, that is not what prayer is about. Similarly it may indeed be the case that my "spirit-soul" can reach out and comfort somebody else's, but that is not what Christian ministry is about. There is a much more profound principle of "bearing one another's burdens" situated in the uniting of all men in Christ, not in the psyche.

Nor am I convinced, as Wellman is, that there is healing for everyone here and now, if only we know how to get at it. That is a dangerous and persecuting doctrine, turning the true eschatological hope of the church (and this is a hope which does not disappoint) into a kind of psychic optimism, which all too easily disappoints, and, if it does not, leads to a trivialising of the Cross which the church must carry till the end of time.

Wellman is very probably right to remind the church to take the psychic seriously. But I fear that he seems to be taking it too seriously. For people who like this kind of story, it is a very readable book that he has produced; but I would not recommend it as a work of christian thought or spirituality.

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ential correlate", one can only retort that Gelpi's own theological language seems not to allow him to recognise that experience has important pre-experiential roots, and that the medieval theologians were quite deliberate in not treating infusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as experiential in itself. That experience is modified by them is as clear in medieval theology as it is in Pentecostal.

A Dominican critic can also not help noticing the remarkable re-appearance of Molinist principles in a modern Jesuit theologian. Efficacious grace is seemingly equated with "a vague emotive impulse"!

It is up to us to react to it and make something truly efficacious out of it. One can see how this goes with the author's radically experiential bias.

Further confusion is caused by the author's use of "charism" to cover almost any pneumatic effect; in so far as he does define it at all, it seems to be puzzlingly identified with the medieval theologians' "gift of the Spirit" (which they rigorously distinguish from charisms).

THE PERFECT GENEROSITY OF PRINCE VESSANTARA, edited and translated by Margaret Cone and Richard F. Gombrich. OUP. 1977. pp. xlvii + 111. £11.00

Margaret Cone and Richard Gombrich have produced here an attractive English version of one of the most popular Buddhist tales, as found in the Pali scriptures. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the translation, but it is eminently readable. And the copious illustrations, many in colour, reproduced from Sinhalese paintings, almost all of them not previously known in the West, together with the excellent printing and binding, make this in every way a delightful book to use. The introduction gives a brief account of the role of the story of Vessantara in Buddhism, and an outline of the different extant versions of it. Vessantara is the type of the perfectly generous giver, embodying one of the basic Buddhist virtues, in a spirit not unlike that of the Christian precept, "give to anyone who asks" (which is also related to perfection in Matthew 5:45ff).

THE DAMNED ART, ESSAYS IN THE LITERATURE OF WITCHCRAFT, edited by Sydney Anglo. RKP. 1977. pp. 258 £8.50

This is a fascinating collection of essays on the major learned treatises on demonology from the *Malleus Maleficarum* in the fifteenth century to Bell's *The Trial of Witchcraft* in the early eighteenth century. Although most of the contributors evidently have but scant sympathy for the idea of witchcraft or any other kind of spiritual power, most of the essays are interesting and informative, often providing a needed corrective to popular 'rationalist' views. Stuart Clark's essay on James I is a particularly interesting attempt to show the rationality (on its own terms) of demon-

And finally, the reader should be warned that this book is not written in English; now that American is more or less officially recognised as a distinct language, it is surely time that English publishers gave thought to the desirability of sometimes getting American works translated into English (and, I dare say, vice versa).

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As in the Book of Job, his virtue does not go unrewarded even in this life, and Vessantara ends up, if anything, even better off than he was before, after his various trials and tribulations. Spiritual doctrine has not been allowed to spoil what is essentially a very human and humanly told tale.

The editors say that their book is intended for the general reader as well as the specialist, and they have indeed made available to the English world a delightful specimen of Pali literature, which requires hardly any previous initiation into Buddhist or Indian beliefs. Though there are one or two minor points of detail which might have been elucidated by brief editorial comment, there is never any serious difficulty in understanding what is going on.

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ology, but most of the contributors go at least some way to making sense of the writers' own intellectual world. The one serious exception is Sydney Anglo's contribution on the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which is nothing but abuse of a work which, whether or not he understands it himself, he certainly makes no attempt to help us to understand, on its own terms or on anyone else's. The essay on Cotton Mather leads into a very fascinating discussion, all too brief, of the role he plays in more modern American self-awareness.

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