

For too long the Old Testament has remained remote from the child's angle, and its connexion and essential link with the gospel and the modern world has been far out of grasp.

The Bishop of Strasbourg says in the Introduction: This is by no means an easy task, for he (the teacher) has to deal with a text composed in an oriental style and certainly not intended for children. But since in the progress of civilization, so many avenues of knowledge have been opened up for children why should we not make the necessary effort to open up at least those passages of Holy Scripture which the Church has integrated into the liturgy? This is the aim of the Book.'

Now, in this edition, the teacher can discover for himself a clear and concise method of integration between the Old Testament and the New: each lesson is concluded with a practical and apt application to the child's spiritual and actual life.

The book is principally divided into three scholastic terms: and therein divided into the following sections: the last weeks of the Liturgical Year; Advent; Christmas and Epiphany; Septuagesima; Passiontide; Easter and Pentecost; Pentecost to the end of the School Year, and concluded by a study on the Beatitudes which contains some excellent and clarifying matter, especially: Blessed are the Peace-makers, p. 358.

There is an index of scriptural references, p. 367, and also another, at the very end of the book, on the subject matter contained within, p. 371.

The scriptural quotations are taken from the Jerusalem Bible.

There is a thorough and comprehensive introduction by the Bishop of Strasbourg, in which he states the purpose of the translation and the aim of its co-authors.

Each lesson is divided up into five sections: Introduction; Religious Content; application of the lesson to the life of the child; extension of the lesson to prayers and activities. Each

section is planned clearly and compactly, taking in every aspect of the religious lesson. The age range is principally between 11-14; I would venture one criticism here. I feel that several of the approaches and exercises expected from the children do not quite measure up to the majority of today's 14-year-old's attitudes towards life. In my experience they mature earlier than the book allows, and therefore the lessons would in some cases have to be adapted accordingly.

An example of this is to be found on p. 116, where the children are asked to fill in spaces in a text, with appropriate words listed above. Whereas on the other hand, I found the exercise on p. 310, concerning episodes in the New and Old Testament when God miraculously fed his own, is most absorbing and purposeful.

The actual texts used are normally taken from the gospel of each Sunday in the Liturgical Year, and this certainly enables the children to make each lesson their own. I found also that this method makes the Mass more real, and brings the children closer to its actuality and understanding.

Every new question and idea pertaining to the particular gospel in question, whether in the New or Old Testament, is well indexed for reference thus enabling the teacher to read round her subject matter.

One more aspect of the book which I found most constructive was the broadening of the child's mind to prayer. Hardly ever are the conventional, and sometimes (from the child's point of view) meaningless, prayers used, but instead they are encouraged and stimulated to bring their prayers from the heart and soul, as well as from the head; thus achieving a more personal and spiritualizing contact with God.

Altogether, I found this book well worth reading, and would most certainly class it as one of the essential handbooks a religious teacher should possess; a most valuable addition to modern catechetics.

VERONICA MITCHINSON

EXPERIENCE AND GOD, by John E. Smith. *Oxford University Press*, New York, 1968. 209 pp.

EXPERIENCE DU MONDE: EXPERIENCE DE DIEU? by Philippe Roqueplo, O.P. *Les Editions du Cerf*, Paris, 1968. 409 pp.

RELIGION IN A TECHNICAL AGE, by Samuel H. Miller. *Harvard University Press*, Cambridge, Mass., 1968. 146 pp.

Do we have any experience of God? Both philosophers and theologians are likely to be interested in this question. One might expect a philosopher to be concerned with such general features of experience as contingency, or

causality, and a theologian to concentrate on specifically religious experience. These three books reverse this expectation.

The first concern of Professor Smith, of Yale, is to refute the narrow empiricism which ends

up uncertain as to the existence of other persons. Experience is not to be thought of in terms of discrete sensations, separated by an uncrossable gap from the 'external' world, but rather as the result of a gradual build-up of numerous encounters with persons and things. So encounter becomes his model. When a man encounters another man, he has no immediate insight; he has to interpret the media—language, gestures—used by the other. Similarly God is encountered not immediately but through the relevant media, such as holy persons, historical events, or the power and order of nature, which likewise need to be interpreted. (One misses here the orientation to the *future* of Judaeo-Christian religious experience, an orientation matched by the element of expectancy now recognized in our everyday encounters.) Thus God is disclosed in religious experience, and even the asking of the God-question is prompted by the awe felt at such crisis situations as birth, marriage or death. On this basis Professor Smith can regard the traditional 'proofs' of God's existence as being in fact reflections on religious experience: 'if the religious element is not present at the outset it will not be present at the end' (p. 132). Hence he can claim a certain 'validity' even for the ontological argument. St Anselm did not start in vacuo but in a religious tradition, within which he identified his experience as an encounter 'with God', with the Absolutely Exalted, who has the highest of all conceivable characteristics. Reflection on this experience shows him that 'having necessary being' is higher than 'having contingent being'. So the God he experiences must have necessary being. This interpretation of St Anselm, Professor Smith claims, is one against which Kant's well-known objection is not conclusive. But he does take Kant's point about the cosmological arguments depending on the ontological one in the sense that the former as well as the latter depend on the 'ontological principle'—namely that 'whatever is demanded by thought for explaining a fact is itself to be counted among the real'. Were one to suggest that to assert this principle in the required sense presupposes a religious attitude, he would probably agree. He is concerned with 'living reason', not purely formal reason. Job interests him, as an example of the emotional aspect of religious doubt: 'the doubt from which science is born guides the quest for information; the uncertainty that haunts religion is stilled only by inspiration and confidence' (p. 103). The successful marriage

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'The value of this series is that it not only familiarizes the reader with the texts of the Bible itself, but also gives a context to some of the burning issues of today, such as the place of pacifism and revolution in the Church; attitudes to authority and sexual morality; also sacramental questions—what is the value of infant baptism, how should the idea of community fit into our regular liturgical worship. Most important of all, in my opinion, the community aspect of sin is stressed time and again: throughout the commentaries one is being asked to clarify for oneself what sin means. The questions arising out of meditative and critical reading of the Bible are thus placed in a context, not asked purely arbitrarily in a void, unrelated to anything.'

Bellarmino Commentary

 Sheed and Ward

of this existential standpoint to lucid analysis is the main achievement of the book.

Fr Roqueplo writes as a theologian seeking the religious value of our everyday lives. The kind of thinking attempted by thousands of lay apostolate groups is here done with academic, almost pedantic thoroughness (it is in fact the substance of a doctoral thesis), but at the same time with an engaging zest. He starts by noticing the lack of articles on topics of human experience in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. His index includes Leisure, Sport, Revolution, Nostalgia . . . and, yes, 'Contestation'. Has theology nothing to say to modern man in his daily life? The question becomes more urgent in the light of a brief survey of secularization (only since Galileo) and of a letter quoted by J.-M. Aubert, which brings out the way Christians can find their religion, in theory a way of coping with alienation, itself an intensely alienating experience. Three attempts to solve the problem he rejects: (1) to try to build up religious values in set times and places apart from 'the world'—a monastic piety diluted for laymen; (2) a spirituality of intention; (3) a spirituality of consecration, such as that outlined in Teilhard's *Messe Sur le Monde*. None of these attitudes reaches the intrinsic value of everyday activities. He sees his task as 'discovering the spiritual meaning of our profane activities considered in themselves, in their own substance' (p. 77). The reason for this is that since *all* men are related to the Kingdom and called to salvation, in the case of unbelievers this relationship and call must be through their profane activities (which are by definition their only activities). Thus unbelievers perform the function of a control group in the enquiry. But the result is such a highly wrought theory of their salvation that Fr Roqueplo's ultimate task is to explain: What then is the point of being a believer?

His central thesis on everyday life taken objectively, i.e. as what men experience, is that it is sacramental of God. Not simply that it is to be regarded as sacramental. It is in fact sacramental, whether we realize it or not. The scriptural basis offered is mainly the Judgment parable of Matthew 25. (The political implications are well noted: 'La façon moderne de visiter les malades, c'est de tout mettre en oeuvre pour supprimer la maladie. La façon moderne de nourrir les affamés, c'est de bâtir une économie valable. . .', p. 182.) He also analyses John 8 to suggest that we make our basic option for good or evil prior to any

encounter whereby religious faith might be inspired. Thus our relationship with our parents has this sacramentality: not only does it provide a language through which God can reveal his fatherhood to us, but we are in fact related to God through this human relationship. The trouble is, of course, that parents can treat children in a rejecting way, and their idea of God can be correspondingly twisted.

On the subjective side, Fr Roqueplo holds that all human existence has a paschal structure, i.e. evinces life and death as inseparably linked and death as leading to life. This vast claim is scarcely justified by his rapid phenomenological glances at scientific research, growth, the passage of time, etc. But these are offered merely as illustrations. What he is really maintaining is that the sacrificial rhythm of life-through-death is common both to man's experience of self-fulfilment and to his following of his supernatural vocation. The Beatitudes therefore represent not only the revolutionary morality of the Kingdom but also the truth of man.

Thus his basic model for understanding the comparison of the unbeliever's and the believer's attitude is: the implicit vs. the explicit. The Eucharist explicates our human condition as it already is, thus enabling the believer to live it 'lucidly'. He draws the obvious conclusion regarding the motivation of evangelism, but makes the further point that evangelism is strictly scandalous if the apostle is not involved in the day-to-day concerns of those whom he hopes to evangelize, loving them disinterestedly and thus being in a position to reveal the meaning of the love they already possess.

This book is not a French *Secular City*, because the view taken of secularization is different, and there is no great attempt made at developing the specifically contemporary forms of experience. But for what it is, it is rich and illuminating.

Samuel H. Miller offers us a number of occasional addresses he has given since being appointed Dean of Harvard Divinity School. In his awareness of the irrelevance of a merely churchy Christianity he comes close to Fr Roqueplo: 'We have now reached the point where theology must do more than elaborate the nature of Christian faith within the Church; it must interpret the religious significance of God's non-ecclesiastical action in the world' (p. 102). But his main concern is pastoral, specially as regards the function and training of clergy. He prefers to sketch problems rather

than to suggest facile solutions, but he is scathing in his attacks on 'delegated compassion' and on a 'quantified' ministry where the standard is success. 'Almost anything can be forgiven if (the minister) increases the size of the church, adds to its budget, expands its plant and manages to be popular' (p. 110).

Dean Miller is given to listing the new and disturbing features of American civilization. One misses the analysis which would indicate how far he sees the problem as one of ecclesiastical adaptation and how far as one of changing the system itself.

NIGEL COLLINGWOOD

EXPLODING CHURCH, by Frederick Franck. *Sheed and Ward*, London, 1968. 309 pp. 50s.

The subject of a book with the title *Exploding Church* can only be the Catholic Church in Holland. The Dutch-born American Frederick Franck, famous because of the fine drawings he did during the first session of the Vatican council, met representatives of the Dutch Church at Rome and sensed that something had changed in the country of his youth. So he came to Holland and wrote this book.

An unusual book: the first part is formed by the answers of 37 representative 'avant-garde' Dutch Catholics to a questionnaire, made up by the author. Questions about the papacy, abortion, premarital sex, intercommunion, Jesus Christ, the immaculate conception, schism and so on. Along with the reactions of the respondents, parts of papal documents and statements are quoted so as to show the difference in style and approach between Rome and the 'avant-garde'. The second part of the book consists of short interviews with people from Belgium, England, Germany, Sweden, France, Spain and the U.S.A. People such as Chenu, Davis and Amery give their opinion about the replies of the Dutchmen. Actually this second part is more interesting than the first one, where the short answers to the questionnaire disclose hardly anything of the person of the respondent.

This book is not meant to be a description of the situation in Holland, it is not a Church History or a theological essay. The author only registered the personal and spontaneous reactions of the respondents. He asked them for free and unpremeditated thought-associations, and not for theological expositions. The psychological reaction in each of the respondents, not the contents of their sayings, was what interested Franck. The reader is offered the fragments of an exploded shell. The sort of bomb and the cause of the explosion are not the subject of the book. The reader is confronted with short and pithy answers which are emotional rather than intellectual.

The book makes one feel that something has indeed exploded. The Church in Holland has

moved out of her ghetto in which she lived so happily for a long time, into a solidarity with the rest of mankind. This process has not as yet come to an end and is attended with much pain. The answers are often emotional because people are still fighting against the past of the Church which is also their own past. They experience nearly every day that the ghetto mentality is still strong, particularly outside Holland, and that it tries to maintain its hold. The respondents are not afraid of the conflict with this ghetto but nor is it something which leaves them untouched.

The answers of the respondents are not very coherent. This is partly a result of the author's request to give their thought-associations. It is evident, however, that the respondents themselves have not as yet been able to find a new synthesis. It would have been strange if they had found one in such a short time. They are also a bit afraid to establish a new synthesis because this could mean a new 'system' and perhaps a new intolerance.

The Church in Holland is a 'progressive' Church, moving into the world, liberating herself from a defensive attitude towards the world. One is taken by the atmosphere of freedom. Not one of the Dutch respondents was unwilling to say who he is. Franck could not find anybody in Italy who was willing to give his opinion on the Dutch replies, and one of the American respondents preferred to remain anonymous. This is one of the basic discoveries of the book: the 'avant-garde' Church exists outside Holland as well. The difference is that while the 'avant-garde' mentality is becoming that of the majority in Holland, this general climate does not as yet exist in other countries. What can happen in openness in Holland, happens in the 'underground' outside Holland.

The Church in Holland, moving into the world, has not as yet found what makes the Church differ from the present world. The language of the respondents is not very eschatological. Most respondents are averse to symbolism and any kind of structure. The