

Wesleys. The Catholic reader should note the constant insistence on experience which to him is so very intimate an affair but in Methodism plays such a central part in the social aspect of religion. Of Whitefield's first conversion Dr Belden writes: 'There and then he experienced an accession of moral power whereby he overcame his secret sin'. It was towards such experience that Whitefield's tremendous open-air apostolate was directed. While admitting the danger of an exclusive reliance on such experience, it might be suggested that Catholics have grown over-suspicious of such elements in their religion and that a sympathetic study of this in the Catholic faith would bring a greater possibility of understanding the Methodist standpoint. For this reason the study of this and other similar books should prove of value.

C.P.

LIVING CHRISTIANITY. By Michael de la Bedoyere. (Burns Oates; 15s.)

This is a transposed autobiography, written in a style which is a cross between the editorial columns, and 'jotter', of *The Catholic Herald*. It is not a calm and careful thesis; it is bitty and sometimes rambling. But it has two great virtues: it is honest, and it deals with real problems. The autobiographical element is useful here. The problems of the layman's status in the Church, and the problems facing the layman wishing to live up to his vocation as a christian, are still so all-embracing that they may perhaps be best suggested in a description of individual experience.

To some extent the book is out of date. The author's own experience has been determined by the education he received between thirty and forty years ago. It seems impossible that quite such a radical divorce survives between the Christian mysteries and 'religion', as then taught; however we still encounter its shades and sometimes meet the near-Manicheanism, which was associated with it; the author's description of his experience may therefore be useful. In his chapter 'The Missing Link' he refers to the absence, simply, of 'God'. So much attention was paid to 'morals' from a point of view almost ludicrously far from the moral reality of the child's life that little of God's ultimate reality got through. However, the result, in the author's case, has been to strengthen his own yearning, by reaction, to understand the 'isness' of God. This desire widens out into a desire to understand the whole of 'living Christianity' within the unity of man himself, indeed as the expression of man himself.

The details of the book are generally speaking what one would expect; they comprise an intelligent review of current problems in the

Church. The chapter on Mass and the People happily echoes Father Howell, S.J. The references to sex and marriage suggest—they do no more—the enormous field which is waiting to be explored by theologians, lay and clerical. Hell and Limbo are surveyed and the references are given to recent treatment of them in *The Downside Review*. There is a piece about the danger of the impersonality of Confession being abused by a purely automatic approach, but not much development of the other positive possibility of a personal approach leading to a more fruitful use of this sacrament.

One of the most telling themes which runs through the book, and one of the most searching criticisms of recent Catholic practice, concerns the Bible. The author tells us of the extraordinary lack of biblical reading in his own education, his total ignorance of the Old Testament, and his very substantial ignorance of the New Testament. He indicates also how the Bible can be the foundation of a living christianity.

As far as it goes the book is useful. But I am left with the impression that the author of Von Hügel's biography could provide us with a more important book, and one that is not necessarily more difficult to read. Two quotations will indicate the sort of themes which could be developed. 'The underlying sense that the laity enjoys associated membership of the Church, as opposed to full membership, is not dead. . . . No man gives of his best and works up a full keenness of interest unless he feels he is trusted to share genuine initiative and responsibility. . . . There is one field of activity which is often apostolic in character where the layman plays a leading part, namely in writing and journalism. . . . Has not the lay contribution in this field been a very valuable one and has it not been carried out in a loyal informed and responsible manner? The fact makes one wonder whether a similar trust in other fields, in parish work, in societies and organizations, in Catholic Actions, would not bring remarkable results?

The second quotation is from Von Hügel, quoted by the author, words which could inspire him to a deeper, more sustained and carefully worked out contribution to our problems: 'The soul finds that its sheet anchor is its interior (i.e. formally willed) truthfulness—its humble faithful loving seeking of material objective truth by an ever-growing purity of disposition and intention, and an ever-increasing attempt to become and to be all it knows. And it would rather keep on thus, seeking truth sincerely and with self-humiliation, and thus unconsciously itself grow more like the truth which it seeks and which is already inwardly impelling such a soul; than hold truth in such a static and self-complacent manner, as to arrest its own further approximation and apprehension of that truth.'