

family which he loved so much. He might have told us in his own inimitable way the meaning of 'sibling rivalry'.

So long as it is thought that a good purpose is served by not only showing but emphasizing Fr Vincent's faults and the efforts he made to overcome them, no objection can be raised. There seems to be no doubt that he was at times self-opinionated, intolerant and headstrong, and these faults of character, together with his efforts to overcome them, may have been a partial cause of the external idiosyncrasies which made him what is commonly known as eccentric.

In spite of his theories, the particular application of which is absurd, in the original sense of being without root, we can be grateful to the author for his painstaking collection of letters and personal impressions of Fr Vincent.

The inclusion of personal affairs of other members of the family which had no bearing on the character and work of Fr Vincent distracts the reader and is in questionable taste. It caters only for that prurient curiosity concerning the private affairs of other people which is so marked a feature of our own time.

We can only hope that some day so much that is worth preserving from this book will be enshrined in another book written by someone who knew Fr Vincent McNabb well and who will not use him as a peg on which to hang their own pet theories.

DAVID DONOHUE, O.P.

THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. By Jean Mouroux. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

Our life is hid with Christ in God, and therefore lies beyond our human apprehension, in God who can be reached only through faith. The Christian life is a life in Christ, and only in him is it found in its true perfection; all we have on this earth is an imperfect sharing in his life, deriving from him but lived in the obscurity of faith and the anticipation of hope; of the three foundation virtues of the Christian life only charity will abide for ever. We are pilgrims on a dark road, for though Christ is the Light of the world, his light cannot be seen but only grasped in faith. How then is a Christian experience possible, in the sense of a conscious experience?

This is the problem Fr Mouroux is concerned with in his book. He begins with a short discussion of terms, and a chapter on the Council of Trent, pointing out that it is not the possibility of a Christian experience but the necessity of a clear-cut infallible knowledge of being saved that the Council rejects. Then he comes to the crucial question of the possibility of a conscious possession of faith. Faith is a

supernatural gift of God, and supernatural realities cannot be seen but only believed: how then can we know that we have faith? Fr Mouroux replies, following St Thomas, that we are necessarily aware of our act of faith, our act of belief in Christ in submission to the teaching of his Church, but are not aware of its supernatural character; this is itself a matter of faith. Our life remains hid with Christ, even our own share in his life is not perceived directly, but only inferred from signs interpreted in the light of faith.

Then follows what is probably the most useful part of the book for the ordinary Catholic reader, a description of the Christian life as we find it in St Matthew, St Paul and the first Epistle of St John. This leads naturally to a theological analysis of the Christian life in the Church and in Christ. This would be the obvious place for a discussion of the part that the sacraments have to play in the Christian life: instead the book ends here with an examination of the function of emotion and feeling in the Christian experience, and a final emphasis on the primary nature of faith.

This is an important book, even though it is written in an idiom strange and perhaps at times repellent to English readers. And it must be said that Fr Mouroux has not been happy in his translator; there are many clumsy sentences, numerous non-existent or rare and ungraceful English words ('paranases', 'the face to face' as a noun, 'dehiscence', 'obnubilates'), and there are some mistaken or misleading translations. Mistranslation touches on the farcical with Jeremiah's 'shattering conversation' with Yahweh on page 328. The references cannot always be relied on, though this is also true of the French edition. The meaningless *Christos theou soirian* of page 124 should be *Christon theou sophian*, and Father Damien on page 189 is actually St Peter Damian. In addition to these and other irritating mistakes the printing on the mat side of the pages is often weak or blurred in my copy.

There are, of course, technical points of detail or expression on which one would like to question Fr Mouroux. It is doubtful how far statements like: 'His (the newly-baptized Christian's) most animalistic instincts—aggressiveness and sexuality—are not subject to grace, or penetrated by it, in their specific activity' will fit into St Thomas' scheme of thought, followed on the whole by Fr Mouroux; and doubtful whether the idea of a legitimate 'ontological misery' (page 307) will fit in with what St Thomas has to say in the *Summa* Ia. 63. 3.

But nevertheless we are deeply indebted to Fr Mouroux for a deeper apprehension of what is meant by the name of Christian, and to Sheed and Ward for having made it available in English.