

REVIEWS

BREAD IN THE WILDERNESS. By Thomas Merton. (Hollis and Carter; 15s.)

One has the impression that this short book of reflections has perhaps grown out of conferences delivered to the novices or students of Fr Merton's own monastery. It is, as it says, a book about the psalms, though rather round about them. The last part of the book especially, and the part which is much the best, is mainly concerned with the dispositions of mind and heart necessary for reciting the Divine Office fruitfully. This is the section which incorporates in general terms the approach of St Augustine to the psalter, and it is a pity that it was not made the starting-point of the volume and developed with some quite particular examples. For the first part of *Bread in the Wilderness* is disturbed by arguments with imaginary opponents of a kind one could never meet outside the covers of a textbook. There is indeed one passage (p. 39) in this section which gets so bewitched with those beguiling words 'immanence' and 'transcendence' that it makes very little sense. Perhaps less harmless is the attempt (pp. 13-14) to distinguish between contemplation and what is called 'mere faith' by putting faith outside the field of experience altogether. If ever one is to be able to maintain that contemplation is a deepened and heightened awareness of what is initially given in faith this kind of distinction must be avoided. Doubtless it is suggested by a wish to safeguard an orthodox position on the objective character of faith. But it fails to note that the faith which is presupposed whether to the most humdrum meditation or to the loftiest of the infused gifts, is faith *as a virtue*, and hence something legitimately spoken of as within the field of experience, albeit there may be nothing very exciting about it. It may again be questioned whether the distinction between symbol and myth made on page 55 is really very satisfactory.

None of these criticisms, however, should blind us to the book's many virtues, not the least of which is Fr Merton's communicative concern for spiritual things. It is no small matter to have made many people want to pray or try to pray better.

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AGAINST THE STREAM. By Karl Barth. (S.C.M. Press; 16s.)

DU PROTESTANTISME A L'EGLISE. By Louis Bouyer. (Les Editions du Cerf. Paris; n.p.)

Both these books are important. The former is a collection of papers written by Barth between 1916 and 1952. Once again Barth