

MY FRIENDS THE SENSES. By Charles-Damian Boulogne, O.P. Translated by Jane Howes. (Kenedy, New York; \$3.00.)

In a world which has largely rejected the infallible authority of the Catholic Church, it is inevitable that the traditional discipline of Christian morality should be increasingly discarded. Without the guidance of an authority recognized as divine, any moral teaching that demands self-denial will sooner or later lose its hold on the public conscience; for why should anyone accept a difficult moral code if he is not sure that it comes from God? The modern drift towards pagan sensuality is the logical outcome of the Reformation. In reacting against it, the Catholic is in danger of going to the opposite extreme and of adopting an attitude not far removed from Manicheism. As Fr Gerald Vann says in his Foreword, 'this book must surely come as a revelation to those who think of the Church as ruthlessly Manichean, an enemy of the flesh and of the senses'.

The author writes neither as moralist nor as anatomist. His main concern is to achieve equilibrium between rank sensualism and the Platonic notion of man as 'a soul dragging a corpse around'. He insists (with the Church) that man is a union of body and soul, and that the material creation, as we perceive it through our sensory faculties, is a glorious thing. 'Of all the tools we can use', he reminds us, 'the one we could not do without, the closest one to us, is the body. It is also, alas! the least understood. Even many people who are experts in mechanics are ignorant of the workings and the possibilities of the body that companions us in all our doings. And yet the work the body does for each one of us is more important than the work of any lifeless machine can be. There is nothing in us which has not entered through the gateway of the senses, and which the senses have not transformed into living sensation. The senses introduce us to everything, provide us with everything. Let us leave to scholars and moralists the sad work of underlining and emphasizing their drawbacks; the Church accepts and respects the senses. Knowing the place they occupy and the primal part they play in the development of personal life, the Church wants us to be their friends' (p. xiii). In the pages that follow, Père Boulogne opens our eyes to the wonders that surround us and impinge unceasingly upon our senses things that only too often we take for granted and therefore seldom appreciate and enjoy. No reader can fail to be nourished and enheartened by this stimulating book; its scope is as wide as the world and it embraces every aspect of our sense life. Sharing the author's wide-awake wonder, we are the better enabled to understand the significance of the words: 'And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good'. With increased wonder comes more abundant joy and ever deeper gratitude.

A. GREGORY MURRAY