

takes an unpopular, let us suppose a radical, line, but what about his secular occupation? If he confined his mission to matters of liturgy or even personal morality his employers, union or colleagues would probably not notice. But this, we are told, is precisely what he must not do. So then, if he is being truly prophetic it will not be long before he confronts the world in terms of his chosen secular environment.

I think that here we confront once more one of the more insidious modern heresies—the Church in the image of the educated middle-class. The idea that we are free to opt out of our environment—to choose the Church with the most congenial liturgy or the school with the right education or the job which sets us

free—is as foreign to the gospel as it is ludicrous to suppose that the majority of mankind are free to choose where they will live, the work, if any, that they will do or what they may eat. A choice that all can make, however, is to put on Christ. This will make us free, free to transcend our environment instead of to fly from it, free to proclaim the gospel despite the pressures of a world which will hate us. The fact that nearly all of us find it so difficult to sustain this choice indicates a continuing need to rethink the Church and the priesthood. The essays under review can offer little assistance in this matter.

MARTIN WARD

**THE VIEW FROM THE BORDER. A Social-Psychological Study of Current Catholicism**, by John L. Kotre. *Gill and Macmillan*, 1971. 268 pp. £3.50.

In writing about the symbolism that religious adherents use to convey their experience, the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz has remarked that 'it makes, as Kenneth Burke once pointed out, a great deal of difference whether you call life a dream, a pilgrimage, a labyrinth, or a carnival' (*Islam Observed*, Yale, 1968, pp. 2-3). John Kotre describes at the beginning of his book how he began to see the Catholic Church as 'a macrocosmic ink blot, a completely ambiguous stimulus, like the stationary dot of light that, in a totally darkened room, appears to move in an irregular fashion' (p. 6). He was concerned in his study of 'the border around Catholicism' to discover how different groups on the fringes of Catholicism perceived the dot to move. He presents the results of a study he carried out among 100 men and women, graduates of Catholic colleges, who were at the time of the investigation graduate students, for the most part at the University of Chicago or Northwestern University. Half considered themselves inside the Church, half outside. The definitions of 'in' or 'out' were those given by the respondents themselves. Although a sampling procedure was not used, respondents passing on contacts to Kotre, he tried to match the major social characteristics of his 'ins' and 'outs' in terms of ethnic background, parental education, occupation and income, number of children in the family, etc.

Kotre relates the experiences and opinions of a number of respondents in each category, as well as presenting the analysis of material from his interviews. The replies make for

interesting reading. The documentation of the differing perceptions of the Church held by the 'ins' and 'outs' is particularly worth studying. It is hardly surprising that in general terms those who are 'in' perceived the Church as less dogmatic and more flexible than those who are 'out'. The chapter on the link between family experiences and self-definitions in relation to the Church is also notable.

This study is essentially an exploratory one, and the imagination of the writer in conceiving and executing such an investigation has to be appreciated. It is certainly an investigation which should provoke further research into some of the hypotheses generated. But Kotre does not entirely succeed in his efforts to convey understanding of the borders of membership of the Church. This is probably because he walks another border himself. He has opted for the use of some questions which are more suitable for large-scale surveys of the kind carried out with such success at Chicago by the National Opinion Research Centre's investigators, while using psychological techniques which are relevant to more detailed personality studies. The eclecticism of the writer in this regard is clearly admirable on the whole, but it does mean that there are times when he introduces more than he can apparently handle. For instance, he is clearly aware of the problem of in-put and out-put in studies of this kind, but he does not always indicate that there is not enough data from this study to back up the interpretations he suggests.

Nor does the author follow up properly what he has to say at the beginning of the book

about parallels between borders in other types of experience. There is a bibliography at the end of the book; most professionals would have found it more valuable to know where the

writer considered his work interrelated with that of other researchers.

JOAN BROTHERS

**THE OPENNESS OF BEING.** Natural Theology Today, by E. L. Mascall. Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1971. 278 pp. £3.50.

In his Gifford Lectures for 1970-1971, Professor Mascall returns to the field of natural theology. His main intention is 'to vindicate, against the generally positivist attitude of Anglo-Saxon philosophy in recent years, a fundamentally and unashamedly metaphysical approach to theism' (p. vii). In particular, he seeks to introduce the work of the Transcendental Thomists (Maréchal, Rahner, Coreth, Lonergan) to his English-speaking audience.

The importance of the TTs, says Mascall, is that they show that an argument for the existence of God can be constructed on the basis of the inbuilt urge of the mind to take all beings as its object and to press beyond the horizon of the material world towards the realm of subsistent being itself. This is the starting-point for Mascall's own thesis, which depends very much on Gilson's Thomist theory of perception. The primary objects of perception are what Mascall calls 'extra-mental beings', which have two basic characteristics: reality and contingency. When these are approached with 'wonder', 'we are able to recognize both their own contingency and also the presence of necessary being as the only intelligible ground of their existence as concrete and contingent realities' (p. 116). It is by means of 'contemplative wondering' rather than 'discursive argumentation' that the move is made from extra-mental beings to the transcendent self-existent being to whose creative activity they owe their being. No exaggerated claim is made for this purely natural knowledge of God; it is only one element in our approach to God. Like St Thomas, Mascall is not trying to prove 'what God is' but only 'how he is related to his creatures'. He is arguing against those theologians who claim that reason can give us no genuine knowledge of God and that we can only know him by his intervention in revelation, for what this view implies is that there is no real point of contact between the human and the divine. Against this Mascall reaffirms the Catholic truth that man has a receptive capacity for the supernatural, a *potentia oboedientialis*. He tries to show that, by their very dependence on God,

all finite beings are inherently open to God, and that man is capable of actualizing his openness to God, or rather capable of having it actualized for him.

It is to be regretted that this argument takes nearly 100 pages to get started, and that the TTs are so uncritically reviewed. Indeed, much of this book is little more than a summarizing of other people's views: this is especially true of the chapter on the ontological argument, which has no substantial connexion with the rest of the book. Furthermore, Mascall does not take his account of openness very far. He never makes clear its connexion with the historical nature of man apart from a few words about openness being 'the concern of revelation and history'. Perhaps the Gifford Trustees would have pounced if he had said more.

Nevertheless, this book is an important achievement at a time when other Anglican theologians remain stupefied by analytic philosophy (its 'challenge' or whatever), and Mascall's anti-positivist stand is to be commended. In arguing his case for natural theology, Mascall is reaffirming a perspective on man which has too often been obscured. Theology has sometimes operated with an inadequate understanding of the creator/creature relation 'in terms of a comparison of the respective natures or essences of God and man, to the neglect of the concrete existential activity uniting them' (p. 150). Man is not destined for enslavement to some 'wholly other' creator God, with whom he can have no point of contact, but for that self-communication of God in which divinity becomes the true meaning of man, where grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.

*The Openness of Being* also contains a good critical chapter on Leslie Dewart. Mascall is concerned to expose the latter's delusive radicalism, which is concerned with 'the adjustment of the Christian religion to the contemporary world, the latter being taken as exempt from criticism' (p. 126). This adaptatory stance completely neglects the fact that 'it is one of the duties of any religion claiming a basis in the transcendent order of reality—