

JOHN J. MOORE, S.J.

ADVENTURES IN FAITH

A PRIEST IN RUSSIA AND THE BALTIC. By Charles Bourgeois, S.J.

Introduction by Sir David Kelly. Translated by the Earl of Wicklow.

Dublin : Clonmore and Reynolds, Ltd. 9s. 6d.

WHEN I read some of this book as it first appeared in *Etudes*, I was struck by the air of stillness and quiet that pervaded the pages. The same atmosphere is to be felt in this excellent translation by the Earl of Wicklow. It is mirrored in but not explained by the landscape through which Fr Bourgeois travelled and in which he lived : the landscape of Esthonia, grey seas and frozen lakes, bordered by the great dark forests stretching back over Russia almost to infinity. It is an atmosphere of austerity, poverty, renunciation and of very close union with God : the atmosphere of the man who wrote this book. Fr Bourgeois and men like him, who have changed the Latin for the Eastern Rite to work among Eastern Catholics, have made what must be the ultimate sacrifice asked of a missionary. In a way it is harder than martyrdom. They leave not only their native land and native culture but also, and of necessity, their very mentality ; and that at the most intimate level where it regards their approach to God. They must put on instead a mentality that is entirely slavonic. For this sacrifice they are rewarded, not merely with a joy in and love of the beautiful and venerable eastern Liturgy, but with a share and an understanding of that mystical love of Christ and the Blessed Virgin that is one of the glories of Eastern Catholics. The atmosphere is everything in this book. The story, in my opinion, counts for relatively little in comparison. When the Russians joined the Allies in the last war Fr Bourgeois, who had waited on the threshold for twelve years, at last managed to visit Moscow and meet his beloved Russian people. He was disappointed in his hopes for them. He found the Eastern Catholics, forbidden the use of their Liturgy, spied upon and restricted. The great Orthodox Church, which he is forced to adjudge servile in its relations with the State, he found unshakeable in its prejudices against western Catholicity. He makes two interesting judgments here : that servility is easily imposed

on the essential passivity in the Russian temperament ; that the Iron Curtain would have been an impossibility without the strong anti-occidental prejudice in the Orthodox Church. Fr Bourgeois is now working for Russians in Brazil. I recommend this little book very strongly not only for its own sake but because it will stimulate readers to pray for Eastern Catholics and the priests who work for them ; to pray also for the Orthodox, so near us and yet so far away, that they may be united to us in the One Christ Whom we both worship.

JOHN C. KELLY