

## REVIEWS

THE RENEWAL OF MAN: A Twentieth Century Essay on Justification by Faith. By Alexander Miller.

MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. By William J. Wolf. (The Christian Faith Series, Gollancz; 12s. 6d. each.)

These volumes are the first two of a new series from America, under the editorship of Dr Reinhold Niebuhr. They belong to the 'Evangelical' tradition, and are designed to make the 'age-old faith meaningful to modern people'. This faith, as they understand it, is Calvinist or Lutheran. They share with Calvinists a distrust for philosophy, pure nature, and unaided reason; and they show an attraction for the method of paradox. Mr Miller rejects every kind of non-Christian ethics, and Mr Wolf rejects all natural-theology proofs for the existence of God, except, strangely, St Anselm's ontological argument.

Biblical ethics, we are told in the first volume, is 'neither rational, nor experimental, neither idealist nor pragmatic', but is simply 'community ethics'. How the latter fails to fit into any of the former categories is not clear. For either it is revealed ethics, and then one wonders why it is specifically 'community' ethics; or it is ethics based on the good or the tradition of the community, and then it is rational or experimental. These writers like the paradox that faith and Christian ethics are 'irrational', when they appear simply to mean what we should call 'above reason'.

Both writers are characteristically Protestant in basing our personal religion ultimately on a kind of 'irrational' faith which they identify with private revelation. Yet they do not think this private revelation is possible without a public revelation in history, known through biblical interpretation, or through the interpretation of the prophets and Christ as recorded in the Bible. Mr Wolf would be horrified at the suggestion that reason might prepare the way for faith. Faith is reasonable, but only because it supplies its own reasons!

To a Catholic, there seems much ambiguity in the second volume between faith as trust and faith as belief. We agree that faith is eminently personal, but fail to see how this does not involve right belief. The author shares the modern dislike for creeds, yet admits that Christian faith must accept Christ's divinity, his death for us, his resurrection, exaltation, and return. Is he not trying to have it both ways?

Among the strange statements found in these volumes (or are they

just paradoxes?) are the following: St Thomas thought faith necessary for the acceptance of his proofs for God's existence (this is, of course, absurd, and is due to a confusion); the end always (*sic*) justifies the means; Christianity is the religion that is no religion; rational ethics has no argument against torture, or in favour of heroism.

The Christian truths that both books stress are the necessity of grace and faith, and the insufficiency, for the Christian, of reason or nature without these, whether in matters of belief or conduct. In this we are in agreement, and it is, of course, important that this aspect of Christianity should be proclaimed. But why must they exclude God altogether from the nature and human intelligence that he has made? We all know that, outside of Christianity and Judaism, God has never been adequately known and served. We agree that, outside of these revelations, there was no *personal* knowledge of God, and no *personal* love, in the sense that Christians understand it. Yet the fact remains that it was this same identical God that made all the world of nature, with all the beings in it; and that all mankind are called to be his children. Could it really be a necessary part of the Christian message to say that there is *no sign of God, no power of recognizing him*, until he speaks to us through Christian faith?

Incidentally, Mr Miller is wrong in thinking that St Thomas excluded the use of reason in the ordering and understanding of Christian revelation. He is also wrong in thinking that Roman Catholics judge rulers by their 'piety' rather than by their justice.

For Catholics, the only value of these books will be to give them a picture of an evangelical approach to grace and faith. They do not greatly help the dialogue between Catholics and Protestants, as they do not build upon Scripture interpretation. In fact, Mr Miller's book illustrates 'justification by faith' more from Arthur Koestler, Graham Greene and Robert Penn Warren than from St Paul or St John. I am sorry, then, to have to report that these volumes will not be of great importance for Catholics.

H. FRANCIS DAVIS

HARDNESS OF HEART. By Edmond Cherbonnier. (Gollancz; 12s. 6d.)

DOING THE TRUTH. By James A. Pike. (Gollancz; 12s. 6d.)

THE STRANGENESS OF THE CHURCH. By Daniel T. Jenkins. (Gollancz; 12s. 6d.)

THE NEW BEING. By Paul Tillich. (S.C.M. Press; 10s. 6d.)

The first of these books attempts to analyse the ethical presuppositions of biblical theology. The main contention of the author is that sin consists in idolatry or misplaced allegiance and that an indirect