

REVIEWS

the *bonum* and *malum* which are the objects of the passions are mistaken for ethical qualities); and an uncritical acceptance of Descartes' prudential identification of his *habitude* with the scholastic *habitus* (the former is hardly even a *pli* or *dispositio*, and has almost nothing in common with the latter). As for the physiological data of the *Passions*, and the mumbo-jumbo which explains the union of body and soul by the local displacement of a gland, it is difficult to understand the almost complacent detachment with which Mesnard here follows the thought of the Master. A more serious suppression of the critical faculty appears in the treatment of the third text. Most of this part of the *Correspondance* is verbiage, and while Mesnard seems to have recognized this (since he sees fit to use block capitals for such words as *générosité* and *sagesse*), he writes as though he did not. None of the questions which would test the validity of this "Cartesian ethic" are asked; no remark is made of the absence of any consideration of moral criteria, conscience or law.

Among a number of tiresome misprints one of the most unfortunate is "nous appétons" for "nous appelons" (p. 75); but the use of the terms "intellectuelle" and "spirituelle" for a cerebral reaction (p. 100) must proceed from some more serious inattention. A somewhat laboriously picturesque form of the academic type of French prose does not make this *Essai* particularly readable.

NIGEL ABERCROMBIE.

LE LAÏC THEOLOGIEN. Introduction à l'Etude de la Théologie.

By Denys Gorce. (Auguste Picard, Paris.)

Evangelical poverty of spirit is separate from mental vacuity and feebleness of will. Between becoming like to a little child and intellectual infantilism there is not the most tenuous link. The antithesis is true. For the Christ-way of childhood is one of receptiveness, docility, the wilful turning of the human mind towards the self-defined givenness of real things.

The mind inclines towards all being, in its infinity of possible forms. It realizes this inclination by a recipient-becoming of a finite number of actual beings, knowing them, not under this or that aspect, but for what they are in themselves. And it always holds this innate power. It is as incorruptible as the soul it nourishes. Wherever there is a human soul, it is present. A human soul means a human mind. And a human being means a human soul.

In short (reintegrating and applying), any member of Christ, by reason of his membership, is most emphatically and fully human, and consequently, however remote from academic altitudes, needs bread, needs intellectual unfolding into the content of his faith, that he himself may grow fully in the things of Christ, loving them and Him.

BLACKFRIARS

Theology, this is to say, is not an acrostic diversion for the clergy. It is not even a convenient machinery for keeping them occupied and ensuring their pacific association.

Theology is the precious vessel of the Church's heart's blood, the bast of the Vine of Christ, drawing away life to every branch. And without it the sap turns back, and the branches die.

For the entire structure of grace rests ultimately on the specific nature of the human soul. It is rationality that makes the human soul capable of grace in the first place. And it is the competent retention of sane balance in the things of faith—intelligent apprehension of their inward relationships and co-ordinations—which preserves faith, strong, reliable, and deepening, throughout the entire life in Christ.

From one point of view, that is. From our point of view.

But an essential point of view. God cannot pour out the water of life into non-recipient vessels. For it cannot be done. And if they leak, it is not His fault. Upon the specific rationality of the human soul depends that "sheer possibility" out of which God's spirit fashions the total structure of grace. And upon the continuance of that activated rationality the permanence of that divine artistry also hangs.

That is to say, minimize the rôle of reason in that grace-life which is a Catholic one—again however remote from academic eyries; throw doubt on the need of prolonged, indeed perpetual, "instruction," in the things of faith, from an inner, unitive, mutually correlative, theological, standpoint. And you introduce inevitable decay into the subsoil, and very scaffolding, of that supernatural organism which is a Catholic life. For the recipient principle loses its habitual ductility and power of receiving whatever forms God wills to infuse, and there is a leakage.

And that, perhaps, is the exact interest of Dr. Gorce's book for us English Catholics. It means an adaptation and an application of his thesis. But it is an inevitable one. For there is, after all, a "leakage." And his analysis is searchingly suggestive.

That is why we have isolated this essential trend of Dr. Gorce's masterly instructions. For it emphasizes a bias endlessly precious for us, far more precious than all the scholarly care and exhaustiveness with which he has delineated a possible way of practical approach. This, indeed, would need complete recasting for application in England, however admirable and suggestive the essential method. For we English have not that great continuous Catholic literary tradition, from whose luminous threads Dr. Gorce weaves his instructions, through them reaching back into the innermost sensibilities of mediæval Christendom. On the practical side, our problem is, in a sense, very different from his.

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