

## REVIEWS

### THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. By John Baillie, D.Litt., D.D., S.T.D. (Oxford University Press; Humphrey Milford; 8s. 6d.)

This book is concerned to convince the reader of but one thing, the ever-presentness of God to the human soul in all its experiences, and argues for the fact of a knowledge of God which is mediated indeed by those experiences, but is immediate in the sense that it is not inferred from them. The Thomist tradition is constantly attacked, not, we must admit, without a certain reverence, as excluding the possibility of any such intimacy with God. We shall have occasion to see that such a complaint is greatly exaggerated through a pitifully partial (we use the word with no moral connotation) presentation of the views of that tradition.

Chapter I, entitled Confrontation with God, sums up the dispute between Drs. Barth and Brunner, and proceeds from the latter's distinction between general and special revealed knowledge, to a section in which a *rapprochement* is attempted between natural and revealed knowledge. 'Such moral and spiritual knowledge as may seem to be "unaided" natural knowledge is in the last resort also a revealed knowledge.' Such a position is all very well—does not St. Thomas himself declare that in order to know any truth a man needs the divine assistance for the intellect to be moved to its act?—but the real and essential difference between the two modes of knowledge must also be kept in mind. That difference is based on the limited character of the created intellect and its incapability when confronted with the surpassing mysteries of the Godhead. The author, however, doubting the fixity of human nature, not unnaturally disposes therewith of the determinate and specific limitations of the human intellect, apparently because of his fully justified dislike of a faculty psychology so crude as to be unworthy of notice in his book.

The chapter on Ways of Believing contains some pages showing much discernment on 'solipsism towards God' and 'conscientious unbelief,' states of mind perhaps commoner in our time than ever before. But just as the difference between natural and revealed knowledge was shaded off excessively, so it is with the distinction between being and not being in a state

of grace. It is said that to be wholly out of fellowship with God would imply total corruption; that would seem to indicate that there is no gift of God which is *per se* supernatural to man, and arises not so much from a depreciation of God, as from that nebulous idea of human nature already noticed. It is accordingly no surprise to find the discussion of the nature of our knowledge of God characterised by a rejection of the duality of the ways of faith and knowledge. The attempt to show a divergence between Scriptural teaching and the scholastic tradition takes no account of the difference between the revelation of the inner life of the Godhead not naturally attainable by any created mind, and the knowledge of the existence and attributes of God to which we can attain by our natural, though not 'unaided,' powers. Also there are many passages designed to minimise the value of the inferential method, even supposing it to be conclusive. Yet its purpose is precisely to bring *knowledge* of those things pertaining to God which we can *know*. The absence of differentiation, however, between knowledge and faith as modes of apprehension lessens the clarity and evidence of the former and the supernatural loftiness of the latter.

The value of mediate revelation in the supernatural order and of inferential knowledge of God in the natural order would not be so under-rated if it were seen that it is the theological virtues, supernatural and gratuitous gifts, which make one capable of personal and direct communion with the God who uses social means to declare himself. More than anything else it is perhaps the non-appreciation of that fact which biases the author in favour of a single and immediate way of apprehending God. A whole strain in the scholastic system has here been overlooked, and that is reflected too in the treatment of some other points. In the contrast between St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, for instance, on p. 197, the view expressed might have been much modified if it were stated that St. Thomas taught that grace '*nihil est aliud quam quaedam inchoatio gloriae in nobis*' (II-II. 24.3). We may say the same of the statement on p. 231 that St. Thomas will not allow that man 'in any sense' participates in God's nature, or that the soul is 'in any sense made divine by the infusion into it of divine grace.' 'There is no *participatio divinitatis*.' Yet St. Thomas expressly says that grace is '*participatio quaedam divinae naturae*' (I-II. 110.3, cf. 2 Pet. i, 4). It would scarcely be possible to contradict a man more directly while trying to expound his thought. In the passage quoted by the author from ScG. II. 85, St.

Thomas is of course simply not concerned with divine grace at all.

Some questions are asked of Thomists in a more reasonable spirit. Are we not creative in originating free action? No, we are principal secondary causes, actuating pre-existing potencies. How can we say that one thing is more perfect than another (in the *Quarta Via*) unless we already know what perfection is? Surely because the transcendentals, as properties of being, itself the object of the intellect, are apprehended with some degree of evidence or clarity. For there *is* an element of intuition in knowledge, though it is not directed to the immediate apprehension of God. One feels that if Dr. Baillie had studied more in the Sacred Theology of scholasticism, and less in sources, both primary and secondary, dealing with Natural Theology, he would have found both a wider view than he has seen, and an evangelical tenderness and directness of approach to God which he has regretfully missed. That approach is not the less ardent and 'personal' for being presented in an exact and scientific way.

IVO THOMAS, O.P.

**LA CHRISTIANISME ET LES PHILOSOPHES.** By R. P. Sertillanges, Membre de l'Institut. (Aubier, Editions Montaigne; 70 frs.)

'Le ferment évangélique était de telle nature qu'il permettait à l'Eglise chrétienne de se donner une philosophie propre, de récupérer en les redressant et en les achevant toutes les philosophies du passé.' That is the idea which Père Sertillanges has conceived and executed with no little brilliance. The great lesson that emerges is of all that philosophy owes to the Faith, and such is the dynamism of the work that the reader is carried on to exact a tribute of thanksgiving even from the most rationalistic philosophers of modern times, although the scope of this book does not extend beyond the mediæval period. In fact, we are promised a sequel which will make this later stage more explicit, showing the influence of Christianity on later thinkers.

There are three main sections, entitled *Le Ferment Évangélique*, *l'Elaboration Séculaire*, and *La Synthèse Thomiste*. By the leaven of the Gospel is not meant merely the Gospel record as we have it in the Bible, nor even the person of Our Lord there shown to us, though He is presented as the permanent source of energy behind philosophy in all ages, even when its human authors ignore Him. By the Gospel is rather meant 'the sum of those ideas with which the first disciples are seen