

Reviews

A SECOND COLLECTION, by Bernard Lonergan, SJ. Darton Longman & Todd, London, 1974. 300 pp. £6.

All dating since 1966, the eighteen items in this further assemblage of essays and addresses, varying considerably as they do both in subject-matter and in depth of treatment, provide, as parerga to the writing of *Method in Theology*, a useful passage into that demanding work as well as a relatively accessible and even 'popular' statement of the author's mature thought.

Again and again, sometimes in almost the same words, he registers the massive shift in the practice of Catholic theology which has taken place over the last decade, and in which he has himself played an important part. In the first place, it is a general *cultural* shift, and one which he has lived through: he speaks of it as a move out of the 'classicism' which he learned as a boy at school with the Jesuits ('the one I went to in Montreal, in 1918, was organised pretty much along the same lines as Jesuit schools had been since the beginning of the Renaissance', page 209) to a new 'historical-mindedness' which he traces to a German tradition starting with Schleiermacher. The Renaissance ideal was that of the *uomo universale*, the man who could turn his hand to anything, and, in a somewhat ruefully autobiographical vein, Lonergan records how he was put with little warning or preparation to teach vast domains of theology, and how he had to tackle them with an omniscience which was 'necessary concretely', but 'totally invalid' (page 212). That theological practice only closed some ten years ago, when it finally yielded to manifold pressure from accumulating scholarship, particularly in the biblical and patristic fields, which simply left it high and so dry that it cracked. Above all, the reduction of Christian doctrine to a set of propositions to be maintained, 'theses', suddenly became absurd, and thus ended a methodology that had governed Catholic theology for centuries—Lonergan

traces it to Melchior Cano, the sixteenth-century Spanish Dominican whose stormy career included active hostility to the Pope and the Jesuits as well as the composition of his *De Locis Theologicis*, reprinted over thirty times between 1563 and 1890.

For Lonergan, Catholic theology is at last disengaging itself from the dream of being a science in Aristotle's sense. As the spell of the apodictic is broken he sees a corresponding turn from objectivity to the long neglected subject: 'they seem to have thought of truth as so objective as to get along without minds' (page 72). Be they never so objective, however, all statements have behind them 'the stating subject', and from that Lonergan concludes that there is no way for the theologian to proceed now but by reflecting on 'the ongoing process of conversion', in the hope of being able to 'bring to light the real foundation of a renewed theology' (page 67). The recognition *après coup* of the achievement in his own thought of *die anthropologische Wende*—the emphasis on the 'I' with which Karl Rahner has been credited—brings Lonergan to insist on conversion, and on falling and being in love (i.e. with God, and entirely as his gift at that), as the 'horizon' within which theological reflection on faith must henceforward be practised.

This admission of the subject allows Lonergan to make it clear, for example, that the natural knowledge of God attainable by rational argument upon which Vatican I so much insisted, and discussion of which used *once upon a time* to dominate seminary classes on Apologetics, while it is no doubt intrinsically natural, can yet never in fact be attained without moral judgments and existential decisions which occur only by God's grace: 'What was defined at Vatican I is not that anyone ever proved, or ever will prove, the existence of God' (page 225). The long neglected attention to 'the concrete subject'

—to 'the concrete person in a concrete context'—thus dissipates the anxiety and embarrassment that any reasonable Catholic must always have felt at this solemn pronouncement of Vatican I. The point (which Lonergan makes here in a paper given in 1968) was made in the apologetics course which I attended in 1959-60, and it is perhaps neither impertinent nor irrelevant to record that: Rugeley was a better place than Rome to be doing theology in then.

That the stress on objective truth at the expense of subjectivity should be yielding to a new sense of the 'I' in theological reflection must of course prove beneficial. On the other hand, at least on the evidence of these essays, it is always 'the rationally reflecting subject', 'the responsibly deliberating subject', whom Lonergan invokes (page 73). When that 'I' is examined in the

light of the discoveries of Marx and Freud, however, will it then seem so straightforward to take it as the starting-point?

When he was very young Lonergan once asked an older colleague in the Society how one reconciled obedience and initiative as a Jesuit, and the reply he received was: 'Go ahead and do it. If superiors do not stop you, that is obedience. If they do stop you, stop and that is obedience' (page 266). He has done far more than his share of hack lecturing (classes of 650 at the Gregorianum!), but perhaps there was no stopping him from breaking through what he inherited to a new age in Catholic theology. These essays testify to a reconciliation of theological initiative and faithful obedience which will stand as a model and a monument.

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PSYCHOLOGY AND COMMON SENSE, by R. B. Joynson. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, London, 1974. 112 pp. £2.50.

Because this book appeals to the man of 'ordinary good sense', and advances the thesis that he knows a good deal more about people than the professional psychologist, it will bring comfort to the suspicious layman. He will learn that he need no longer feel apprehensive in the face of psychological expertise because the experts live in cloud cuckoo land and certainly do not know what he is thinking. There are also professional psychologists and students of psychology who have been bored to tears over the years by the narrow and often sterile tenets of Behaviourism: they will find the send-up of the 'pseudo-scientists' very satisfactory. Others will enjoy the book for the vigour of its style even if they don't agree with a word of it.

The argument which Dr Joynson puts forward is, roughly, that for the past fifty years academic psychologists have wasted untold time, energy and money trying to establish Behaviourism as a hard science; and that even now, when they have belatedly come to their senses and begun to re-introduce mental concepts into psychology, they refuse to confess their sins but instead tie themselves into mental knots trying to pretend that 'experience' is really a sort of behaviour. He suggests that psychology has established no laws, discovered no facts and can make no useful predictions about what any-

one will do next: that, in short, psychologists know no more about the human condition than any sensible, educated and experienced person. The attack on Behaviourism is erudite, much of the criticism is well judged, but it is the controlled ferocity of the writing which gives the book its impact.

Such is the force with which the book is written that it takes a while for any doubts about the validity of the argument to penetrate the consciousness of the mesmerised reader; unfortunately, when the doubts do begin to suggest themselves, they are rather serious doubts. Dr Joynson in this appeal to commonsense has somehow forgotten how 'conventional wisdom' has been changed by psychological theory and practice. Just as most people alive today know that atoms can be split, so, inescapably, many of them know something about intelligence tests and unconscious motivation. There are no naive observers to whom one can appeal for a dispassionate assessment of the success of psychology. The conventional wisdom of Europe a hundred years ago would have been as outraged by the notion that heredity was irrelevant as the American conventional wisdom of today, fed by two generations of determined environmentalists, is outraged by the theories of Professor Jensen—in the face of this contrast it is difficult to maintain the