

## BLACKFRIARS

TOWARDS A RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY. By W. G. de Burgh.  
(London: Macdonald & Evans; 10/-.)

Considering that neither the discredited tradition of secularist humanism nor a religion of personal experience, destitute of objective justification, can offer any solution to the troubles that beset our age; grieving too, though with sympathy, at the modern flight from reason, Professor de Burgh has written some prolegomena to a religious philosophy. This is a theocentric humanism of a type which he holds can alone do justice to our experience, satisfy our reason and provide a framework for the harmonization of our purposes. His book is not intended, he says, mainly for academic philosophers, but for the wider philosophical public, as an example of how to set about "thinking things out." Nor is this an introduction to any existing religious philosophy; he rejects philosophies of immanence (there are two chapters on Spinoza and Gentile) as not providing an object meet for worship, and declares that "Back to St. Thomas" unless it be *reculer pour mieux sauter*, is a counsel of despair.

But how is it proposed that religion should contribute to philosophy? The author considers that philosophy requires, alike in metaphysics, cosmology and ethics, a transcendent Being, namely God. But while requiring such a Being it cannot satisfy this need for itself. The traditional proofs of God's existence he holds to be inconclusive or at best not conclusive to the God of theism, though valuable as lending support to it. But religion can give us such a being, for in religion, it is stated, we know by experience the existence of a personal God. Professor Alexander is quoted with approval: "God is apprehended through the religious emotion by the assurance we call religious faith." The author himself writes: "The specific character of religious faith is determined by its object. It is faith in God, revealed directly in the response of love and worship. That is to say, it is primarily faith, not in a proposition, but in . . . a presence with which the worshipper is in immediate contact." "Men . . . find themselves in the presence of a reality, and know it to be God in the response which it evokes" (pp. 15, 16). It goes therefore without saying that Professor de Burgh believes Roman Catholic theologians to have ever-intellectualized faith by interpreting it as belief in the dogmas of revealed theology. He is aware of St. Thomas's doctrine of the co-operation of intellect and will in the assent of faith, and pays tribute to the constant accuracy of his psychology, but holds that to say that faith presupposes the apprehension by the intellect of an explicit proposition, and thus to make it rather belief in a dogma than trust in a person, inverts the natural order of religious experience.

Many who can by no means be classed as "deity-blind"

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will utterly disagree with his interpretation of normal religious experience, but granting it, two questions occur which he rightly asks. How can this experience be guaranteed as objective, and how can it be conceptually interpreted for the purposes of philosophy? To the first question he answers *Experto crede*, and, apply the criteria of coherence and comprehension. The religious life is a notably harmonious one and is capable of including in the harmony it effects even those elements of experience which are otherwise most jarring. With regard to the second, "the time-honoured way of escape (the *via analogiae*) developed with great precision by St. Thomas and generally accepted by Christian theologians, leaves me with a grave sense of dissatisfaction." But while there are several passages in the same strain, there are others which show that he is inclined to accept the method none the less; e.g., in answer to the question, "How can you conceive a reality that lies beyond our temporal experience?" he says, "I appeal, first, to the historic argument, set forth so impressively and with such infinite caution by Aquinas, i.e., to the *via analogiae* and to a *posteriori* interference from the facts . . . But chiefly I appeal to the evidence of the religious consciousness" (pp. 109, 110). Apart from a general, perhaps, more practical than theoretical difficulty, which is oft-repeated, he also objects that "analogical argument derives its value from identity of relation . . . But what identity of relation, what determinate proportion, can there be between finite and finite on the one hand, and finite and infinite on the other?" We may say first that the use made of the *via analogiae* by St. Thomas is not as a way of inference but as a way of predication; and secondly, that St. Thomas explicitly distinguishes between that kind of analogy in which a determinate proportion is required and that where it is not, and duly maintains that the former is not applicable to creatures and God. In the former way, the terms are in the same genus of quality or quantity (cf. the numerical proportion given on p. 123), in the latter they are not, but are made comparable by some order of one to the other such as maker and made, knower and knowable. That takes us back to the question of the similarity of cause and effect which the author also notes for further examination, but advances us beyond the genuine and insuperable difficulty involved by that type of analogy over which he hesitates. He thinks, however, that it is actually possible to find a univocal concept which can be applied to man and God, namely love. Not the love of finite for finite, and infinite for finite, these are only analogous, but the love of finite for infinite and infinite for finite, because in this mutual love man experiences "not the effects of God's causality but of the transcendent God himself dwelling in the human soul." He appeals for confirmation to a passage from St. Bernard's

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*Sermons on the Canticles*, but there is no reason why the words quoted should not have been used with the orthodox view of charity as a *created* participation of the divine subsistent charity in mind. Indeed when St. Bernard says that in love alone can the creature "respond to its Creator, though not upon equal terms, and repay like with like," and goes on to explain that while we cannot return God anger for anger, but can return Him love for love, it seems more natural to understand these words of an analogical than a univocal similarity. Moreover short of an unusual mystical state it is hard to see how what the author asserts could be an experimental datum. Given, however, this univocal concept we are to predicate of God *eminenter*, but only "by way of economy or metaphor," all such predicates and no others as are consistent with his creative and binding love. Hence comes the possibility of interpreting God's timeless causative act as creation *ex nihilo*, and of asserting the presence of divine purposive order in the world.

These points of fundamental importance for a philosophy of religion come up repeatedly all through the book. Other subjects treated of are the argument from design, the relations of morality and religion, a survey of humanism, secular and theocentric, and the virtues and faults of modern ways of life and thought. It will be seen that Professor de Burgh has given his readers plenty to "think out." The numerous alternatives left open do no more than fulfil the undertakings of the title and preface, while the bold confidence with which he sets out to vindicate the fundamental intelligibility of all that is (though somewhat neglecting the necessary distinction of *in se and quoad nos*) and of the validity of faith and revelation as cognitive ways (though they seem to suffer grievous distortion in the process) is very welcome.

IVO THOMAS, O.P.

## MARIOLOGY

THE CULT OF OUR LADY. A defence, an explanation, and an appeal. By Rev. W. E. Orchard, D.D. (Williams & Norgate; 2/6.)

Not a few of those who look at the Catholic Church from without have a vision obstructed by a symbolic image of the Blessed Virgin rather like a vast Byzantine mosaic, in which the Child is quite dwarfed by the majestic figure of the Godbearer. Unlit by faith, the image so often seems distorted, and we hear complaints of an inversion of the right order of things, an undue exaltation of the human mother over the Divine Child. An apostolic realization of this has led Dr. Orchard to put this vision in its right perspective; "to use his knowledge of a popular misunderstand-