

## BLACKFRIARS

and for these reasons one would hesitate to agree wholly with M. Gilson when he writes: "If our traditional philosophy does not to-day find the audience we could wish for it, it is by no means because it is suspected of being upheld by faith, but rather because, being so upheld, it pretends not to be" (p. 161). The idea still lingers that Christian philosophy must be merely ingenious *a priori* deductions from dogmatic propositions; it is the necessity of getting rid of the idea which makes the name Christian philosophy at present ambiguous in this country. Clearly one of the best ways of remedying such a situation is to make it clear, as this book does, that philosophy is upheld by the faith only extrinsically, that it retains and must retain its autonomy, though grace will have its restorative and strengthening effect on reason and on reasoner, and that the Christian philosophy is not an apologetic for what reason will not establish, and has no use for glib but unassimilated text-book arguments.

This book is mainly the enlargement of lectures given to Protestant theological students. It puts very clearly the opposition between Catholic and Protestant positions, making no attempt to gloss over lack of unity of thought among Catholics, but elucidating the teaching of the Church and the opinions of the great theologians. Its aim is thus to establish a clear understanding of differences, and is therefore of inestimable value in the work of reunion; for it is in so far as we try to realize clearly and sincerely where and why we differ, instead of being content to find arguments against one another, that the possibility of closer agreement begins: "a clear disagreement is often more fruitful and in the last resort more charitable, than the vague civilities of misunderstanding."

GERALD VANN, O.P.

DAS WESEN DER PHILOSOPHIE UND DIE PHILOSOPHISCHEN PROBLEME. By Hans Meyer. (Hanstein, Bonn; RM. 6.)

Though this is the seventh to appear out of sixteen fascicules, the author explains in his foreword that it is meant as an introduction to the whole series. Each fascicule is a complete essay, and the whole series, which can claim in some sense to cover the entire field of philosophy, is to be bound into some four volumes. When the series began to appear, nearly three years ago, the names of fifteen contributors were advertized; the list now shows that eleven authors are to be responsible for the sixteen essays, the present essay having been substituted for one by Prof. von Hildebrand which was already in the press in 1934. As these men are Catholics it is unpleasant to speculate on the reasons for the change.

In a subtitle Professor Meyer indicates his intention to make his essay an introduction to the philosophy of to-day, and considering

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the small space at his disposal it is astonishingly complete. There are only four chapters, the second occupying more than half the book, the last two together about a fifth of it. In the first chapter he discusses the definition and task of philosophy, pointing out that the definitions given by philosophers have been no more than formulas for their own systems; consequently he searches history for the common character that distinguishes philosophical from non-philosophical writings, on the principle that a philosopher recognizes philosophy when he meets it, much as Flecker appealed to the Poet a Thousand Years hence. He decides, however, for a science of ultimate principles which is essentially a scientific *Weltanschauungslehre* with consequences for human conduct, noting the shortcomings of more partial modern notions of the task of philosophy. Yet throughout the essay he nowhere presents his own opinions in a way that should dissuade the reader from forming an independent judgment, but keeps strictly to his work of introduction believing that until we see problems we cannot see solutions, even though we already possess them; he does no more than indicate the lines he thinks solutions should take.

The long second chapter almost completely covers the field of philosophical problems to-day. This is achieved by means of a quasi-Platonic distinction between problems of knowledge, metaphysical problems, and problems of value (ethical, aesthetic, religious), where metaphysics is conceived in such a way as to keep the science of total reality anchored to empirical reality. At the end of each section a considerable bibliography is given, though as he is writing for German students—it is essentially an introduction to a serious study of philosophy—the modern works recommended will mostly be inaccessible to English readers.

Chapter Three concerns the relation of psychology to philosophy. After outlining the historical development of psychology, for which he reserves no place among philosophical sciences, he indicates its importance for all branches of philosophy by pointing to the subjective element in all knowledge.

Lastly the idea of a *philosophia perennis* is discussed in Chapter Four. It cannot be characterized philosophically by reference to a non-philosophical criterion, nor attached to the name of any individual philosopher, and so Professor Meyer examines the conditions required for the belief in a coherent body of eternal truths capable of organic development. The rational structure of reality and the capability of the human mind to make continual progress in its grasp of this structure are primary requirements; among the secondary are teleology, Ideal-Realism, and a theistic metaphysic. Our knowledge is finite and can only draw asymptotically nearer to an ideal, never even being aware of the whole range of the problems confronting it. Thus no one system can

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contain the whole of acquired truth, and progress is demanded whenever new objects or methods of knowledge are discovered, or a thinker penetrates beyond the powers of his predecessors. The *philosophia perennis* will be the living foundation of tradition on which to build. It is doubtful whether any philosopher has cut completely loose from tradition; even where he leaves it he enriches it by his opposition.

Inevitably there must be points which we cannot praise. That the author seems to us to overestimate Newton's influence on Kant, that he almost ignores the existence of Logistic, are examples. His references to St. Thomas are unsatisfying, though as a rule his footnotes are valuable; his cross-references to other sections of his essay are particularly helpful. An introduction should indicate where to seek material for further study, and Professor Meyer has done this very fully; he has also put the student on the way to study profitably.

QUENTIN JOHNSTON, O.P.

## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

PEACE AND THE CLERGY. By a German Priest. Translated by Conrad M. R. Bonacina. (Sheed & Ward; 5/-.)

"The teaching of moral theology in regard to war," Cardinal Faulhaber has said, "will speak a new language. It will remain true to its old principles, but in regard to the permissibility of war it will take account of the new facts." The Pope, taking account of the new facts, has condemned modern war as a "monstrous crime" and "mass murder." Difficult to get round these terms. Moral theology has to remember that, to take one point only, "it is absolutely certain that actual war to-day is directed consciously and *directa intentione*, and so not *per accidens*, also against the civil population" (p. 156)—a thing which it has always condemned as immoral. What are we Catholics doing about it? "If the Churches forbid war," said the Minister of War in Wilson's Cabinet, "the Governments cannot carry it on" (p. 120). The Pope in calling it murder has forbidden it; but we have not followed his lead. This is sometimes said to be due to the fact that "when Catholics are in the minority . . . there frequently prevails a positively unworthy, almost pusillanimous fear of being regarded as insufficiently 'national'" (p. 108). If this is so, it is ill-considered as well as unworthy. For it is the idea that the clergy are militarist, not that they are pacifist, which has helped to bring about what the Pope has described as "the greatest scandal of the nineteenth century": the fact that the "Church has lost the working classes." "The proletariat feel their existence