

## In The Study

**D**ARTON, LONGMAN & TODD are putting all Protestants heavily in their debt by making available in English translation a judicious selection of the best of modern Roman theology. Rome may or may not be irreformable; but Continental theologians are striking out on new paths, and surprising things are happening. Upon the broad-based renewal in biblical studies, kerygmatic and dogmatic theology is being reared. Here are three substantial works<sup>1</sup> which should not be ignored. For in their varied ways they are all of ecumenical significance.

Karl Rahner demands the most of the reader. This is not for the beginner, nor for the general practitioner. For most of us the Continental milieu is remote and the philosophy of existence a dark mystery. Nevertheless, only those completely lacking in perception will fail to sense the contemporary orientation of these studies, the boldness of their reach, the challenge of the restatement they provide. This is a fruitful labour of an original mind that is from first to last intent in bringing the modern world and "the faith once delivered to the saints" together. Father Rahner will not take refuge behind the walls of scholasticism. He must always venture out to grapple with the relentless questions of today.

The collection of theological essays inevitably lacks the coherence of the planned survey of a delimited field. The author ranges widely in discussions that include dogmatic theology, the doctrine of God, christology, mariology, nature and grace. He seeks to fill a lacuna in modern "Catholic" theology, which he adjudges to have largely failed to come to grips with the contemporary situation. A Protestant, seeking to assess the precise nature of the ecumenical divide at this juncture, is conscious once again of the ambiguity and inexactness of so much of the theological writing of his tradition when set against the precision of "Catholic" terminology. Yet, on the other hand, he is heartened by the constant recognition of familiar emphases that promise something approaching common ground. In his discussion of the development of dogma, Rahner stands firmly on the biblical understanding of revelation, as being saving happening before it can become propositional truth. And in his exploration of current problems in christology, he lays enormous weight upon the full humanity of Christ, as being more than an episodic and transitory significance. The Ascension begins to

<sup>1</sup> *Theological Investigations*, Vol. I, by K. Rahner. 63s. 1961. *The Bible and the Liturgy*, by J. Danielou. 42s. 1961. *The Meaning of Sacred Scripture*, by L. Bouyer. 35s. 1961.

assume its rightful governing position in Christian theology; and the statements of Chalcedon are used with a disciplined but historical understanding that should rebuke the unimaginative woodenness of some orthodox Protestant theologians.

Especially valuable is the interpretation of the dogma of the Assumption which seeks to illumine its real content and meaning and demonstrate its logical coherence with other accepted Christian doctrine. Yet it is just at this point that hope and despair mingle inextricably. If, in the end, the voice of the *magisterium* is decisive, then the Roman Church would appear to be free—both for good and for ill. She is free to depart from false accretions in tradition: hence partly the enormous potentialities for reform and the doctrinal flexibility that she possesses. She is free also to succumb to the intuitions of her historical consciousness: hence the limits that so often seem to fetter reformation. It is this paradox and tension that at one and the same time exhilarates and depresses.

Whatever else may be obscure, one thing is clear: that the catalyst in this confused situation is Scripture. Indeed, it is with the Bible that both Bouyer and Danielou are, in varied ways, concerned. Father Danielou's study in Bible and liturgy has been a standard work since its original publication in French a decade ago. It is an attempt to uncover the typological lines that link the Old Testament with that understanding of the sacramental rites and the major liturgical festivals betrayed by the expositions of the Fathers. The mass of patristic material collected is not the least valuable feature of this presentation. The judicious discussion of it that is provided is of still greater importance. But it is the theological acumen clarifying principles and drawing conclusions that is of highest significance. Something of the inner heart of scripture and of liturgy is here unveiled.

On the whole, patristic interpretation is rooted in and expressive of a common tradition that is biblical through and through. It is the unity of the saving history and the consistency of the God who is active in it that render so fruitful for our understanding of the inner life of the People of God the use of eschatological typology as the golden key. Persons, events, and institutions point backwards and forwards for their fullness and fulfilment. It is the figure of Jesus Christ who binds together Old Israel and New Israel, because He is at one and the same time end and beginning. So it is that the sacred history has its three phases—the time of the Old Covenant, the time of Jesus Christ, and the time of the Church; and the theological analogy is found to operate in this threefold way. The prophecies point forward as type seeking antitype not only to the person of Christ but also to the Church.

Danielou works out this approach with particular care in relation to baptism and eucharist. He argues that the sacraments must be viewed in two ways. There is the reality that they embody and

enshrine. There is also the visible sign, the sacramental symbol. To both of these we must apply the typological key, and in both these directions the Old Testament is found to be significant and controlling. In general the Fathers remain conspicuously faithful to the scriptural emphases. But typology has its own dangers. Even such an enthusiast as Danielou has at times to confess that patristic exegesis begins to run off into the vagaries of allegorical interpretation. And their problems and uncertainties are our own.

Are there governing principles and criteria to direct and steady us? Perhaps. Yet it would seem that the more fruitful approach will be by way of a continuing attempt to breathe deeply in the biblical air itself and accustom the eyes to its own characteristic perspective. This is the contribution of Bouyer, whose collected lectures range broadly over the whole content of Scripture in order to expound the unity and continuity of the saving purpose and action of God in and upon His People. The presentation is clearly simple. The plain man, baffled by Rahner and overawed by Danielou, will find himself free in these waters. But he will be wise not to equate simplicity with superficiality. For Bouyer is laying the foundations upon which ultimately so much of Danielou's structure depends.

It may be a trifle disturbing to read that 'the exegesis called allegorical is . . . only the rightful development of literal exegesis.' But closer study suggests, I think, that there is here some confusion of terms, that the concern in the main is with the method of theological exegesis that is more strictly typological. Further, it is interesting and significant to find that (apart from the spelling of biblical names) there is scarcely a feature or paragraph in the whole work that betrays the distinctive affiliation of the author. Almost all of this might have been written by a Protestant. That fact in itself proclaims something of enormous potential ecumenical importance.

To say that there are echoes of Phythian Adams here is but added commendation. But among so much that offers both inspiration and illumination, two sections stand out. One is the extended discussion of the Wisdom literature. Just here, where so many of the Protestant scholars falter and fail us, Father Bouyer comes into his own. He sets the Wisdom writings in a context and against a background which fill them with meaning and make them live. He relates them fairly and fully to the central facets of revelation. He rescues them from the periphery to which we are always inclined to banish them, and anchors them at the pulsating heart of biblical testimony. The other most notable achievement is his excursus on the Psalms. In his exposition of them as the prayer of the Church he magnificently draws out the true meaning of scriptural revelation. Here the biblical images are set ablaze and the biblical pattern is portrayed with power. An intensely moving meditation finds climax in that psalmody that draws aside the veil and provides prophetic

vision of the King come at last to His Kingdom. "When we have arrived at this point, it seems as if the surface of the Psalms has become like that sea of crystal on which stand the singing multitudes of the Apocalypse, and that from the transparence of their depths mounts the last, the ineffable revelation of the *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancte* with which the Church concludes them."

The Muirhead Library of Philosophy has a deservedly high reputation which will in no way be diminished by two recent additions to it.<sup>2</sup> Their authors may not have a great deal in common, but at least they are united in the quality of their writing, in their immediate preoccupation with ethics, and in their antipathy to Kierkegaard!

The history of Western ethics may fruitfully be seen as a continuing attempt to define and harmonise the parts played by reason and emotion in contributing to good life and action. The Greek stress on the essential connection of goodness with intelligence finds its most radical expression in Stoicism. The Hebraic-Christian emphasis upon the overriding importance of the attitude of the heart, of feeling and disposition of will is epitomised in the life of St. Francis. But for most thinking men the lesson of history is surely that "the achievement of good is a joint product of our power to think and our power to feel." The point at which controversy arises and continues to arise is the point at which attempt is made to translate the general into the specific, to assess the precise contributions which thought and feeling in fact make. It is this problem that has engaged the continuing interest of modern British moralists. It is with the examination and critique of their positions that the major portion of Professor Blanshard's work is concerned.

In general, the subjectivists in ethics have held that the assertion that an action is right is no more than the expression of an attitude on our part, while the objectivists imply that there is actually a rightness attaching to the act itself or the agent of it. Clearly there have been gradations of viewpoint, half-way houses, more extreme and less extreme positions; but on the one side we locate Hume, Westermarck, Stevenson and the emotivists with their linguistic successors Urmson, Hare, and Toulmin, and on the other hand we find Sidgwick, Ross, and Moore. And running through the dialectic of reason and feeling are related problems, of the ultimacy of the "good" over against the "right," and of the meaning of "duty." Blanshard's own position is a moderating one. He holds that the fundamental moral judgment is the judgment of the "good" not of the "right," that the goodness of an experience is objective and yet dependent upon feeling in that the truly and finally "good" is the most comprehensive possible fulfilment and satisfaction of impulse-

<sup>2</sup> *Reason and Goodness*, by Frank Blanshard (George Allen & Unwin), 42s. 1961. *The Theological Frontier of Ethics*, by W. G. Maclagan (George Allen & Unwin), 28s. 1961.

desire. It follows then that our duty is to attempt to discern the "right" and to do it, that the "right" is that act that does not produce less than the greatest "good," and that "good" is "what fulfils those impulses or strivings of which human nature essentially consists, and in fulfilling them brings satisfaction." And in the discerning and moulding of the "good" there must be granted to reason a high place.

It will quickly be apparent that Professor Blanshard fits uneasily into the outlook of current ethical orthodoxies and stands right in the path of the prevailing winds. But he is a figure of weight and influence not only in the United States, and what he has to say must always be heeded. His learning is vast, his mind is acute, and he always makes words speak simply and clearly. The reader who is prepared to deal attentively with the four hundred pages offered to him will, I think, conclude that the author is on the side of the angels; and certainly none can lay down this volume without being conscious of an immense debt for clarification in matters too often neglected now by Christian scholarship. Would that there were evident a more obvious recognition of the twisted depths of human nature to counterbalance the optimism that stakes so much on reasonableness and rationality, an injection of Augustinian realism to qualify Professor Blanshard's Platonic spirit.

The Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow is also concerned with moral values and with duty; but for most of the time he keeps at least one eye on theism and theology. Morality is independent of religion in the sense that the moral law and the moral demand do not depend for authority upon some further and more ultimate ground which is the will of God. Rather must we identify the moral law with God, and God with the moral law—though not without remainder. We must insist upon the existence of an objective order of values. But we are not led to the postulation of a personal God who stands behind that objective order as its guarantor.

As complement to this moral demand we must reckon with the moral response. And as the demand is seen as the absolute claim upon us to do our duty, so the response is to be understood in terms of dutifulness. Here what is in question is a freely dutiful response. Professor Maclagan is with the libertarians; he sides with Pelagius; he will allow divine grace only as extraneous and environmental, never as constitutive to the will.

The theses thus baldly stated are worked out with close and adroit argument that commands the attention of the theologian. The muddled illogicalities of some recent Christian thinking in this field are fairly revealed. Can we in the end impute all moral achievement to the grace of God and all moral failure to ourselves? Does not the conventional assertion that morality depends essentially on religious belief open wide the door to a debased morality springing from a debased religion? These are the sort of practical issues

that are forced into view. They are real problems that we avoid too easily and too often.

Where this book disappoints is first in the absence of that constructive formulation which its critique leads us to demand, and secondly and more importantly in its failure to come to grips with more than one emphasis in contemporary theology. Many a Christian thinker is as concerned to safeguard the rightful autonomy of ethics as is our author. No one who takes the Old Testament seriously is likely to forget the prophetic contribution on morals and religion. Indeed, it seems to me that at times Professor MacLagan has been so dazzled by the image of duty that he has wandered on to the wrong frontier, has lost touch temporarily with the seeming opponent who might turn out to be friend and ally. After all, concepts may be looked at formally or materially, and we must be careful to distinguish the two. Obligation and duty as sheer demand may have all the independence this book claims for them. But the content of duty, the obligation as filled and made concrete, is another thing.

The Library of Constructive Theology has, of recent years, given hospitality to contributions that surely fit uneasily into its original purpose and pattern, and even a revised editorial introduction scarcely prepares us for the inclusion of the recent series of Speaker's Lectures in the University of Oxford.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, when the author is "Myth and Ritual" Hooke and his work is a study in the pattern of revelation, few will worry as to the auspices under which he is presented so long as his thinking is made available to us.

Dr. Hooke's concern is with images as a mode of divine revelation, and he develops his thesis by way of selective examination of the scriptural witness and record in its length and breadth. He finds that the significant images always arise in the context of divine-human relationships within history and are given birth by a man's surrender in faith and obedience. It appears also that within the pattern of revelation we must discern three levels of reality. There is the truth of history, the historical level, rooted in conditions and conceptions of the time, and demanding from us critical attention to sources oral and written. There is the interpretative level, manifested by the reflection of prophetic participators and their successors, who understand history in terms of the activity and intervention of God, and developed and refined the images down the years. There is the divine level, concerned with the divine activity in its purity and its fulness, with ultimate meaning and eternal reality, found in the Word made flesh by whom the images are filled and broken open. And from first to last revelation is seen to be the divine response to the total commitment of faith.

All this is undeniably impressive. It recognizes the importance and necessity of analogy in our speech about God. It points towards

<sup>3</sup> *Alpha and Omega*, by S. H. Hooke (Nisbet & Co. Ltd.), 21s. 1961.

the possibility of a controlled use of typology. Yet there are elements of ambiguity and incoherence in the presentation, and the occasional sense that the range has exceeded the grasp. It may be questioned as to how far the division into three levels gives us precisely what is required. The level of interpretation is clear enough. It is the historical and divine levels that raise the problems. If at first glance we think to see what we mean, a closer scrutiny may make us wonder. For then it would appear that the level of interpretation intrudes both above and below, eating insatiably into our compartmental dividing lines. Is there to be found an historical level which lacks the element of interpretation? Is there to be known a divine level which lacks the interpretative admixture? Dr. Hooke might retort that the distinctions remain, even if they are admittedly not absolute. But we still enquire how much erosion is to be allowed before all value is destroyed.

At the more detailed points there is room for uneasiness; and it is the New Testament section that raises the queries. That the examination of the Epistles cries out for development is tribute rather than criticism. But the exposition of synoptic material does reveal weaknesses. Dr. Hooke gives most of his attention to St. Matthew and attaches most unusual reliability to the First Gospel as source for authentic material concerning the words and works of the historical Jesus. He may be right. But we shall need a closer argument of the evidence. Again, while recognizing the extent to which deliberate purposes dictate the framing and use of material by the separate evangelists, he yet shows inclinations towards an uncritical conflation of Gospel records where it will confirm his theses. Once more, in his treatment of the Sermon on the Mount he argues that this corpus of teaching is given as a parallel to the Book of the Covenant, as analogue to *Exodus* 19-23, and he instances the correspondences introduced by the "You have heard that it was said . . . but I say unto you." This sounds decisive, until we realize that in several cases the parallel is not with *Exodus* at all but with *Leviticus* or *Deuteronomy*. If this fact does not negate the argument, it rather obviously blurs the comparison.

It is important that these warning signals should be raised because of the great significance of this admirable study. It should drive us back to L. S. Thornton's majestic trilogy, *The Form of the Servant*, and encourage us to treat the work of Austin Farrer more seriously than many have been inclined to do. For this book leads into the future of biblical understanding and strikes out with incomparable power the road that those preoccupied with the crucial problem of "revelation" must take. The exposition of the Old Testament, and in particular of the prophets, is a profoundly acute and moving delineation which will surely become one of the classics of our time. And after all, the publishers were right. This belongs to a library of constructive theology.