

always at home within himself; and in him who lives at all times in an eternal 'now', God is ever bearing his Son anew.

God lets nothing befall us which is not meant to entice us to himself. I will never thank God for the fact that he loves me, for he cannot do otherwise. His nature forces him to love; I will thank him because in his goodness he does not *stop* loving me.

The highest that the human spirit can achieve in this body is to have in all a steady dwelling place which lies beyond all. To dwell beyond all, is to dwell in recollection and in mere sufferance of one's self and of all things. To dwell in all, is to dwell in constant stillness, that is, in an intuition of the eternal image, where the image of all things glows in simplicity and in oneness.

REVIEWS

WHATSOEVER HE SHALL SAY: The First 'Theophila' Correspondence.

By Fr F. Valentine, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 5s.)

Those who so easily say: 'Such things are too high for me!' will thank *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* for making known this encouraging book. It all grows out of the first letter. 'Theophila' writes that she has no 'spiritual difficulties'—but perhaps because she has no spiritual life at all! 'Deep down', she wants to give everything to God—but how? Not in a convent! (She is indeed just now explaining to St Joseph exactly the kind of husband she wants . . .) 'To *give*'? Just now she wants to *get*! Is she merely 'using' our Lord and our Lady? Our Lady called herself God's handmaid: Theophila fears it may be she who wants to be waited on. Her parish priest, preaching on: 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth', said that perhaps most Catholics pray: 'Hear, Lord, for thy servant speaketh'! Happy the soul whom Fr Valentine indeed 'directs': he is no mere inquisitor, or dissector, nor 'manages' a soul as they propose, today, to 'manage' the masses who can't do it for themselves!

He goes to the root of the matter. 'God has made us'—so says the Catechism: but God *is making* us, and from within, and the more powerfully when we let him have his own way. (See Fr de Caussade.) But this means not merely 'do not interfere'—it means 'loving co-operation'. (St Francis de Sales; St Jeanne de Chantal.) This certainly implies Prayer: but *how* pray? Prayer is not talking to, or even thinking about, *Self*. Fr Valentine, far from despising 'vocal' prayer (inadequate epithet, really; but by now stereotyped), regrets the disuse of prayer-books (and shows how spiritual reading must *feed* prayer): he stresses the value of 'petition' and the need of protecting 'loving spontaneity' by Reverence (Abbot Marmion), itself often to be safeguarded by the use of 'formulas'. (A Roman chauffeur, pleased that I had spoken to an even poorer man in polite formulas, said to

me: 'The poor have only respect to offer to one another: but human nature having its weaknesses, *respect* requires *forms* in order to maintain itself'. How an English taxi-driver would have put that, I am not too sure!) Fr Valentine, gently leading Theophila away from misuse of imagination and 'reasoning', yet does not over-stress the difference between 'meditation as such' and prayer—that 'as such' on which the abbé Bremond, good French logician, always insisted! Do we ever make a meditation-as-such? Is not the most discursive meditation 'shot through' by prayer, or at least desire for prayer, which is already a union with God? Thus Benedictine *laborare*, being 'prayer-ful', is already *orare*. W. G. Ward, enthralled by an opera, making 'never so many' acts of pure love! The saint, ecstasied by a flower, forgetting neither it nor God! The prophet, seeing the whole world and its ending in a city and its sack! While thinking, to be aware of and to be rendering homage to That which is beyond all thought, let alone imagination. Happily this book is not controversial, but leads Theophila sweetly, firmly and gaily to the happy point where prayer, 'the lifting of mind and heart to God', is due rather to *God* lifting it, than to herself pushing from underneath, and to the 'Carmelite' love for the Trinity, evidently present and active in the soul. The lucky young lady is to receive two more books of letters.

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IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? By Father James, O.F.M.Cap. (The Mercier Press; 7s. 6d.)

Father James answers yes, and adds explanations to convince the still sceptical 'no-men' and to encourage the still faint-hearted 'yes-men'. Not everyone, probably, will find the explanations entirely satisfying; philosophers who are 'specialists' might protest that too much is assumed and too little analysed; and from their specialised point of view they would be right. They would be wrong however to disparage Father James's book for not laying all their doubts about existence; for it does not pretend to that, but only 'to suggest the broad outlines of a Christian philosophy of life' and so to give 'the plain man' what he so badly needs, namely intelligible principles to serve him in the task of making his life more intelligible and intelligent. Even this is no easy thing to do; if Father James has not failed he owes it quite as much to his enthusiasm and to his gentle generosity of spirit as to any power of thought or expression.

Two points touching his general approach may be noted. First, Father James insists on the continuity of wisdom: beginning with an implicit philosophy, an 'instinctive faith' in the order and meaning of reality as a whole, it ends with the vision of God. He deplores the *separation in practice* of philosophy from theology, while admitting the *distinction* of their domains. Here, surely, he is, in the main, right; and these words are well worth attention: 'No amount of analysis or discussion can get rid of the fact that there is, and has been, a Christian philosophy of life. That the Thomistic *distinction* of reason and faith . . . useful when it was a question of meeting adversaries