

about parallels between borders in other types of experience. There is a bibliography at the end of the book; most professionals would have found it more valuable to know where the

writer considered his work interrelated with that of other researchers.

JOAN BROTHERS

**THE OPENNESS OF BEING.** Natural Theology Today, by E. L. Mascall. Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1971. 278 pp. £3.50.

In his Gifford Lectures for 1970-1971, Professor Mascall returns to the field of natural theology. His main intention is 'to vindicate, against the generally positivist attitude of Anglo-Saxon philosophy in recent years, a fundamentally and unashamedly metaphysical approach to theism' (p. vii). In particular, he seeks to introduce the work of the Transcendental Thomists (Maréchal, Rahner, Coreth, Lonergan) to his English-speaking audience.

The importance of the TTs, says Mascall, is that they show that an argument for the existence of God can be constructed on the basis of the inbuilt urge of the mind to take all beings as its object and to press beyond the horizon of the material world towards the realm of subsistent being itself. This is the starting-point for Mascall's own thesis, which depends very much on Gilson's Thomist theory of perception. The primary objects of perception are what Mascall calls 'extra-mental beings', which have two basic characteristics: reality and contingency. When these are approached with 'wonder', 'we are able to recognize both their own contingency and also the presence of necessary being as the only intelligible ground of their existence as concrete and contingent realities' (p. 116). It is by means of 'contemplative wondering' rather than 'discursive argumentation' that the move is made from extra-mental beings to the transcendent self-existent being to whose creative activity they owe their being. No exaggerated claim is made for this purely natural knowledge of God; it is only one element in our approach to God. Like St Thomas, Mascall is not trying to prove 'what God is' but only 'how he is related to his creatures'. He is arguing against those theologians who claim that reason can give us no genuine knowledge of God and that we can only know him by his intervention in revelation, for what this view implies is that there is no real point of contact between the human and the divine. Against this Mascall reaffirms the Catholic truth that man has a receptive capacity for the supernatural, a *potentia oboedientialis*. He tries to show that, by their very dependence on God,

all finite beings are inherently open to God, and that man is capable of actualizing his openness to God, or rather capable of having it actualized for him.

It is to be regretted that this argument takes nearly 100 pages to get started, and that the TTs are so uncritically reviewed. Indeed, much of this book is little more than a summarizing of other people's views: this is especially true of the chapter on the ontological argument, which has no substantial connexion with the rest of the book. Furthermore, Mascall does not take his account of openness very far. He never makes clear its connexion with the historical nature of man apart from a few words about openness being 'the concern of revelation and history'. Perhaps the Gifford Trustees would have pounced if he had said more.

Nevertheless, this book is an important achievement at a time when other Anglican theologians remain stupefied by analytic philosophy (its 'challenge' or whatever), and Mascall's anti-positivist stand is to be commended. In arguing his case for natural theology, Mascall is reaffirming a perspective on man which has too often been obscured. Theology has sometimes operated with an inadequate understanding of the creator/creature relation 'in terms of a comparison of the respective natures or essences of God and man, to the neglect of the concrete existential activity uniting them' (p. 150). Man is not destined for enslavement to some 'wholly other' creator God, with whom he can have no point of contact, but for that self-communication of God in which divinity becomes the true meaning of man, where grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.

*The Openness of Being* also contains a good critical chapter on Leslie Dewart. Mascall is concerned to expose the latter's delusive radicalism, which is concerned with 'the adjustment of the Christian religion to the contemporary world, the latter being taken as exempt from criticism' (p. 126). This adaptatory stance completely neglects the fact that 'it is one of the duties of any religion claiming a basis in the transcendent order of reality—

a duty which, alas, religious bodies have often failed adequately to perform—to criticize and assess the assumptions, aims and methods of contemporary society. What shocks me most about most of our so-called radical theologians is their social conformity, though it is the last thing of which they conceive themselves to be guilty' (p. 126).

The book has four appendices, most interesting of which is 'Grace and Nature in East and West'. Here Mascall summarizes some of the contributions to the 1953 Chevetogne ecumenical conference on grace. One of the most intriguing questions considered is the relation between St Thomas Aquinas and St Gregory Palamas. There are many possible lines of inquiry, and Mascall does little more than list

them. For example, it is significant that Palamas's opponent, Barlaam the Calabrian, was a professed nominalist and appears to have been horrified by the intellectual realism of Thomist scholasticism. Likewise, St Thomas's principle of existence (*esse*) may have more in common with the Eastern view of the divine energies than at first sight appears; both Aquinas and Palamas were anxious to counteract an essentialist trend. It is a pity that Dr Mascall confines this discussion to a few pages of an appendix, even though, of course, it falls outside the scope of the Gifford Lectures. Perhaps in his next book he will take the investigation further.

JOHN SAWARD

**CONSCIENCE VERSUS LAW.** Reflections on the Evolution of Natural Law, by Jeremiah Newman. *The Talbot Press, Dublin, 1971. 193 pp. 90p (pb).*

Those who would dismiss the spectre of Rome rule in a 32-county Ireland as nothing but a creature of Dr Paisley's imagination, should read ch. 11 of this otherwise only slightly instructive book; which may help them to appreciate one real fear affecting Protestants—and not only Protestants—in that part of Ireland which rejoices under the palladium of Britannic liberties (e.g. gerrymandering, indefinite postponement of local elections, imprisonment without trial for being believed to harbour bad thoughts, 20 per cent unemployment, as in Derry . . .). For in that chapter the President of Maynooth, holder of one of the highest academic posts in Ireland, puts forward in all seriousness the following case for the maintenance of the *status quo* and the continued illegality of divorce in the courts (and contraceptives for sale in the shops) of the Republic of Ireland. 'In a society in which the great majority of the people prefer a social fabric in which divorce is not recognized, to introduce it in the name of a minority seems extremely close to legislating directly for the good of the part' (175). 'Divorce legislation and secularization have gone hand in hand' (as in the Code of Canon Law, which contains divorce legislation?) and 'the state has a political obligation to resist the secularization of a Christian society' (176). (No argument is offered for this highly dubious assumption, which leading Christian theologians might wish to dispute.) 'As far as contemporary Ireland is concerned, . . . it is equally clear that

politicians, *qua* politicians, have a very grave duty to exercise care if by introducing divorce legislation they would find themselves "rocking the boat" in the direction of secularism' (181). ' . . . a time may come when the clear majority of the population will positively call for the introduction of divorce. Can today's politician say that this time has already come? If not, why should he stimulate its coming? Would it not be time enough to cater for it when once arrived? Indeed should not the wisdom of the politician be employed in seeking ways and means—in so far as lies within his province—of staving off that day as long as possible?' (181). *Mutatis mutandis*, this is the sort of thing we might have expected from a Mr Faulkner, or at least from a Lord O'Neill; and it may serve to remind us of why consistent civil rights fighters like Miss Bernadette Devlin have campaigned for civil rights in the Republic too.

For the rest, this rambling history of natural law doctrine is neither very original nor very instructive; yet there are tantalizing glimpses of a book Dr Newman might have written, to see what sense could be made of 'conscience' in a totalitarian or authoritarian society, and how such conscience might function in that kind of society, when the stock liberal escapes to 'individual conscience' and 'a pluralist society' are (commendably, in Dr Newman's view, as in that of this reviewer) excluded. Read 'Kantorowicz' (78) and 'Kavanaugh' (193) for the mis-spellings in the text.

LAWRENCE MOONAN