

the book, Miss Sayers does touch on the paradisaical vision she still seems to miss Dante's intention, as I think she missed it in her other volume of 'Papers'. That intention was not, I think, to give a symbolic transcript of the spiritual life of ordinary Christians on earth, but to represent, symbolically of course, the extraordinary state known to mystical theology as *raptus*, of which the prototype was the experience described by St Paul in 2 Corinthians, 12—'whether in the body or out of the body, I know not, God knoweth . . .'. Preoccupied (as a disciple of Charles Williams) by the 'Way of Affirmations', Miss Sayers tends to underrate the 'naughting' of images in the *Paradiso*, the passing beyond all creatures to a reality and an experience which the poet, writing after the event, cannot distinctly recover, still less put into words. To say this is not of course to assert that Dante had such an experience, but only that it is this experience which he represents himself as having. The *Paradiso* describes a voyage into the heaven of heavens, not an ideal pattern of life on earth. Magnificently affirmative and image-laden as it is, it is ultimately a rejection of images. But to pursue this further now would take us too far.⁴

4 As a post-script, and with reference especially to Miss Sayers's excellent chapter on Dante's cosmos, I must heartily recommend the new edition of *Dante and the Early Astronomers* by M. A. Orr (Wingate, 30s.). This work, first published in 1913, is the best historical account in English of Dante's astronomy; and without some such account much of the meaning and beauty of the *Comedy* is missed or blurred. It has been carefully revised for the new edition by Dr B. Reynolds of the Italian Department at Cambridge.

A CASTING OUT OF BEAMS

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

THE casting out of beams is inevitably a more ponderous process than the discerning of motes. It has about it the heavy-handed inelegance of fly-swatting, in contrast to the darting agile dancing of dragon-flies in the sunlight. God forbid that anyone should wantonly swat a dragon-fly, or that I should attempt to toss a caber at the dexterous mote-discernment of Fr McCabe.¹ I would, in any case, almost certainly miss. But dragon-fly antics, while they delight our gaze, are liable to leave us a trifle dizzy; and the virtuosity of Fr

1 'A Discernment of Motes' by Herbert McCabe, O.P., in *BLACKFRIARS*, July-August 1957.

McCabe's logic, sound and brilliant though it is, may easily reduce the holders of the opinion he attacks to a sad confusion. Now the confusion of the enemy is a legitimate object only of military, not of didactic, attack. Accordingly, in the hope of disentangling some of this possible confusion, I intend to poke about among a few of the fine threads of Fr McCabe's weaving with my clumsy beam.

He establishes the wholly blameless position that it is possible to judge people's morals by their actions, that we can say not only 'That was a wicked thing to do', but also 'It was wicked of you to do that', and even, though less often and with less assurance, 'You are a wicked person for doing such things'. He does so in terms of two gospel texts, 'Judge not, etc.', and the one about discerning the mote in thy brother's eye. Let us set out in full the passage from the Sermon on the Mount in which these texts occur. I give them in an unauthorized translation in order to avoid the incantation-like quality the well-worn words have acquired, which so insidiously blurs their meaning. 'Do not judge, in order not to be judged yourselves; for by the judgment you judge by shall you be judged, and the measure you measure out shall be measured out to you. But why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, while you do not notice the pole in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother "Let me get the speck out of your eye", and just look at the pole in your own eye! Hypocrite, first get the pole out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to get the speck out of your brother's eye' (Matt. 7, 1 ff.).

It seems clear that the judging which our Lord begins by talking about, and the discernment of motes or the removal of specks from your brother's eye which he goes on to, are not the same sort of action, though obviously they are closely related. After all, we are told quite simply not to judge, or we will be judged in turn; but we are not forbidden to remove motes from each other's eyes, we are only told to dispose ourselves properly for this delicate operation. In itself it is a virtuous and charitable thing to do, it is only hypocrisy that vitiates it. And my first criticism of Fr McCabe is that together with the people he is attacking he identifies these two distinct activities. He takes judgment to be an act of knowledge, or more precisely the expression of an act of knowledge, and his whole purpose is to show, quite correctly, that we can have this sort of knowledge about each other. Now the discerning of motes is indeed a judgment, in this common meaning of the word 'judgment' as an act of knowledge, by which we form and express a more or less accurate opinion about other people's characters. But if we take judgment in this sense, then I maintain that his article did not go nearly far enough. For not only

is it possible for us to make such judgments, it is scarcely possible for us not to. Indeed we could not possibly live together in society unless we were constantly making some sort of assessment of other people's characters, virtues and vices. The widespread feeling that we ought not to do this, does not make it any the less impossible for us not to do it; and the effect of such an erroneous feeling is a self-deception or hypocrisy, less culpable indeed than the brand our Lord was chiding, but no less blinding.

Fr McCabe, then, assuming that the judging we are told not to indulge in is the same as the discernment of motes which he is at pains to show we can indulge in, gives it a straightforward moral obliquity by identifying it with slander or calumny or back-biting. But this is yet a third form of behaviour, distinct both from the freeing of each other's eyes from specks, and from the judging that is forbidden us. It cannot be the same as discerning motes, which as I have suggested is in itself a laudable activity, what the moralists call fraternal correction. And I would state its divergence from the judging our Lord was talking about in this passage, by saying that in a legal context slander and calumny are vices proper to witnesses or counsel, while the forbidden judgment—whatever it may be—is the vice proper to the judge.

The word 'judge' in fact has in this passage, as in most of the places where it is used in the New Testament, the restricted meaning of 'condemn'. What our Lord is forbidding us to do, in the spiritual or religious sphere, is to pass sentence. When we do so, we are usurping a divine prerogative, one that Christ himself did not presume to wield. And the way, I suggest, in which we most commonly practise this usurpation is by despising others, by contemptuously putting them aside as of no account. That at least seems to be how the Pharisees treated the publicans and such like. Now this is something which we are clearly very prone to do, and we are led to do it by our rash, hasty, and partial judgments (in the wide sense) on other people, by going for the motes in their eyes hammer and tongs. So our Lord tells us that the best way of avoiding the very serious sin of judging, in the narrow sense of condemning or despising, is to be more cautious and clear-sighted in our judgments, in the wide sense of assessing character and motives.

Our Lord knew the truth of Fr McCabe's thesis that the morals of other people are not invisible. He also, I believe, knew the truth of my thesis that other people's morals are of necessary interest to us, and that we cannot help forming judgments about them. So he pointed out that in order to judge them rightly, we must first be able to see them straightly. A thing, after all, may be invisible to you for two reasons, because of its own inability to be seen, or because of your

inability to see. It is this extrinsic invisibility which other people's morals most commonly have. It is the poles in our own eyes that give us a very distorted view of the specks in the eyes of our brothers. And so criticism, like charity (and it can be a form of charity), must begin at home. And while we cannot help noticing the specks in other people's eyes, we can only too easily avert our attention from the poles in our own, and shirk the primary but boring duty of casting out the beam.

REVIEWS

THE IRISH DOMINICANS. By Daphne D. C. Pochin Mould. With a Preface by the Most Rev. Michael Browne, O.P., Master General. (Dominican Publications, Saint Saviour's, Dublin; 21s.)

Miss Mould has given us an invaluable and at the same time delightful book, for although her subject is such an extensive one, no less than seven centuries of Irish Dominican life, she has not offered a mere précis of historical events but a vivid and arresting narrative. She traces the story from the year of the friars' coming to Ireland in 1224 until the present day, telling how they established thirty-eight priories before the close of the fifteenth century, pointing out however that these houses officially formed a part of the English Province as did also those of Scotland, making that Province the largest in the Order, comprising as it did in the fifteenth century one hundred and fifteen priories inhabited by well over three thousand friars. Scotland and Ireland had a large measure of autonomy but had a vicar placed over them by the English Provincial, a state of things the Scottish friars would not agree to after Bannockburn in 1314 so that the Master General had perforce to take the nomination of the vicar into his own hands. In Ireland the friars were allowed to choose three names from which the English Provincial was bound to select one. Scotland obtained recognition as a separate Province in 1481, but Ireland was not granted that privilege until 1536 by which time England was in schism and two years later had all its fifty-three priories dissolved. This suppression extended to those parts of Ireland under English domination, namely the Pale and the more important cities and ports, where the Dominican houses were closed. These included Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Youghal, Athy and Arklow, but after Henry VIII's death and that of his son Edward VI, the Dominicans under Mary got some of