

The volume stimulates many questions. In practice, for instance, what can be done to implement a hierarchy of truths when Catholics disagree so much about their content and significance, or do not recognize the same faith professed by each other? Is it enough to expect that creeds and sacraments not too closely defined will provide adequately for unity? Not much is said of praxis. Fr. Brinkman suggests that on certain issues, especially of the moral sort, the magisterium should simply plead ignorance (p. 35). Magisterium is certainly a thorny matter. I recall the thunderous applause which the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches accorded to the Secretary General, Philip Potter, when he declared for the total abolition of 'the heresy of magisterium'. That was at Vancouver in 1983.

Fr. Brinkman recommends that the current slogan 'renewal' be changed to 'progress' or 'advance' to avoid the idea of a return 'to an ideal world which never existed' (p. 273). In fact the Council did not use *renovatio* and its cognates in any way suggestive of that. The word conveyed the idea of reinvigorating the Catholic mind, regenerating the faith of individuals and communities through a change of heart, purification from sin and prejudice, with openness for change while maintaining continuity. This is very biblical. In the concrete the recent questionnaire distributed in the pope's name to facilitate greater participation in the coming Roman diocesan synod should gladden the heart. It makes a real effort to tap religious experience, and to discover the desired 'open-ended anthropology which bears some resemblance to the thinking world of today ... and the demands of the gospel' (p. 274). Modernism or its most recent spectre has not quite chased *aggiornamento* away; perhaps, with Roosevelt, 'all we have to fear is fear itself'!

The seven chapters constituting this volume are often hard reading. They are more like individual pieces around a theme, reminiscent of Rahner, than systematic development. Neologisms abound. The *Sitz-im-Leben* seems to be the lecture room with Fr. Brinkman's students well acquainted with his vocabulary and style, conversant with all the languages he uses so easily for conveying the classical tradition. It is a paradoxical illustration of the difficulty of rediscovering 'the gospel within the shifting forms of the West-West dialogue' (p. 23). But it is clear that without St Augustine there would be an impoverished dialogue. For Fr. Brinkman his influence is mighty yet.

RICHARD J. TAYLOR

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION 1875—1980 by Alan P.F. Sell,
Croom Helm. 1988. P. 252. £35.

This is an interesting and informative history of the philosophy of religion, mainly in Britain, during the period in which it deals, and will be a useful work of reference for those who do not know the field, but it does not attempt to tackle the difficulties there are in writing history of philosophy, whether it be of the philosophy of religion or of any other part of the subject. For that involves interpretation of a past philosopher's views and interpretations will often differ so that there is no general unanimity as to

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what they were.

Towards the end of his book Professor Sell refers to certain Calvinist philosophers (pp. 235–240) who ‘are thus far beyond the pale of philosophical discussion in Britain’, who, nevertheless, he thinks ‘are raising genuine *philosophical* questions—concerning the possibility of a Christian philosophy’, which prompts him to ask: ‘Can there really be a Christian philosophy? What would such a thing be like? Can it be devised in such a way as to avoid Clement Webb’s implied accusation: “I can honestly say that nothing is to me more unlovely, when detected, than apologetic masquerading as philosophy”’. The answering of these questions is a task for another day’. (p. 240) But only two pages later he claims that ‘the relations between Christian and secular philosophy in Britain in our period have fluctuated widely’. (p. 242) So, presumably, he has already answered the question: ‘Can there really be a Christian philosophy?’ in the affirmative, and that is the general impression one gets from the book as a whole.

But what can be said about the question itself? What one thinks of it is bound to influence any historical writing about what is called the philosophy of religion. Professor Sell (p. 1) thinks that ‘the philosophy of religion is a many-sided pursuit. Some of its practitioners have set out to propound a Christian philosophy of life’. So we are left with questions about a Christian philosophy and a Christian philosophy of life. Are they the same or different? He tells us that ‘the Calvinistic philosophers engage in a considerable amount of in-fighting. This centres in the question: “How far in making Christian truth claims, may we appeal to evidence which is genuinely available to all?” Is there such evidence? Does the Christian share any epistemological common ground with the unbeliever? Is the image of God in man utterly obliterated or merely defaced?’

We need to ask whether it makes sense to ask whether there is any epistemological common ground for Christian truth claims. Do Christians only claim that Christ rose from the dead or do they believe it? Christians now, it seems, disagree about this and other Christian doctrines. (Think of what Professors Dummett and Lash have written in these pages.) Do Christians have any epistemological common ground for believing in the Resurrection of Christ from the dead? Is it or isn’t it a mystery of faith? What if some people say it isn’t? How would or could anyone convince them that it is? Someone might claim that there is evidence. But is the evidence something that anyone can understand or not? If not, then for some it might just be something they do not believe, because they are unable to believe anything they do not understand; for others it will be a mystery of the faith. If someone does believe, what does the person believe? That Christ was raised by the glory of the Father (St. Paul, Romans 6.4)? What more can be said? And who understands that?

Professor Sell (p. 4) quotes a number of quite different views about philosophy and theology, e.g. Gilbert Ryle’s: ‘In our half century, philosophy and theology have not been on speaking terms’; Dom I. Trethowan’s: ‘Theology cannot conflict with philosophy, because, in a sense, it is based on philosophy’, and he thinks that there are and can be quite different kinds of philosophy of religion—atheist, secular humanist, Marxist, amongst others who are ‘followers of world religions including

Christianity' and 'philosophically-inclined Christian theologians'. What we hear almost nothing about are the moral and political demands of religions and how these affect the lives of people. That is an issue of deep philosophical concern in Britain and many other places (e.g. Tibet!) to which philosophers of religion have paid little attention. When Christ was crucified by the Romans what was happening then? The gospel of Nicodemus tells us:

Pilate: What is truth?
Christ: Truth is from the heavens.
Pilate: Is there no truth on earth?
Christ: You see how those who speak the truth are
 judged by those who have power on earth.

HUGH PRICE

DOMINIC: THE PREACHER by Barbara Cahill OP. *Darton, Longman and Todd*. London, 1988. Pp. 114. £3.95.

Although this new biography is intended for a wide readership, Sr. Barbara Cahill both carefully and accurately describes, in a book of easily accessible length and style, the progression of St. Dominic from a conscientious and charitable student in Palencia, to a missionary and preacher in the strife-stricken region of Languedoc, where, with his bishop Diego in the early stages, he set about the task of founding the Order of Preachers.

Even though Dominic was a man of vision, as Sr. Barbara writes, he was always a man of total obedience both to the papacy and to the needs of the wider church. Furthermore, his innate grasp of the diplomatic skills necessary, particularly in the papal curia, and of the correct use of power in his fledgeling order, is brought out well in this biography, and as Sr. Barbara notes, 'He never did things by halves; "all or nothing" seems to have been his personal attitude to every form of challenge.' Dominic was above all self-giving and unobtrusive; a man of profound faith, charity and hope.

It is this personality that Sr. Barbara concentrates on with such good effect. My only reservation is the author's interpretation of Dominic's spirituality. Almost certainly influenced by the writings of William Hinnebusch, Sr. Barbara, from time to time, describes Dominic's spirituality as in some sense internal, which only subsequently flowers in his founding work. It seems to me, however, that the great strength of Dominic lies in the unity of his character. In Dominic, there is no division between the man of prayer, and the founder. His spirituality, if such a term is in fact relevant, is not to be found specifically in his nocturnal vigils, for example, but in his life's work as a whole.

Nevertheless, Sr. Barbara gives such a light and attractive account of Dominic that this reservation is perhaps somewhat nitpicking. I warmly recommend this biography.

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