

**Ethics** A Textbook in Moral Philosophy. By Vernon J. Bourke. New York, Macmillan Company, 1951. pp. xii, 497. \$4.25.

This is the first in a set of textbooks inaugurated by the Macmillan Company under the title of the *Christian Wisdom Series*. They are to be commended for picking such an outstanding ethicist as Doctor Bourke for this work. He writes with a definite purpose in mind, attempting to give the students a pure Thomistic text. "It is no secret that most ethics texts in use in English and American Catholic colleges today are of mixed thomistic and Suarezian inspiration. . . . One cannot teach the philosophy of nature and the metaphysics of St. Thomas, then suddenly change to the ethics of Suarez, and expect an undergraduate class to understand the matter," (pp. v-vi). This is in direct fulfillment of the wish of Pope Leo XIII, that all youth should engage in the study of "the pure streams of wisdom which flow from the Angelic Doctor," (*Aeterni Patris*).

This book is divided into two parts aimed at a two semester course of three hours a week. The first section on *Moral Principles* contains eight chapters: The Nature of Ethics, The Purpose of Human Life, The Moral Act, Reason the Standard of Morality, Moral Laws and Ethics, Conscience and Moral Obligation, The Practical Syllogism, The Virtues and Moral Character.

The second part on *Ethical Problems* likewise has eight chapters: Problems within the Individual Agent, Right Action in regard to others, Justice and the Person of Others, Justice and Material Things, Man's Debt to God, Moral Problems of Societal Life, States of Life, The Supernatural Life. "What is new in Part Two is the return to St. Thomas' method of treating the problems of special morality under the divisions of the seven virtues. This results in a restoration of the obligations of prudence, temperance and fortitude to their proper place in company with the duties which come under justice. In the necessarily lengthy presentations of the problems of justice, emphasis is placed on the four kinds of justice distinguished by St. Thomas," (p. vii).

Doctor Bourke succeeds remarkably well. It would be superfluous to point out chapter by chapter the aptness of translation from the Latin, the succinct summaries of Aquinas' exposition of the many subordinated virtues, the clarity of examples, and above all, the excellence of doctrine. Of special value, however, is the chapter on the practical syllogism (pp. 222-255). Here the author shows in an eminent way the reasonableness of morality, and perhaps that, more than anything else today, needs accentuation.

There is one term to which exception can be taken. In chapter two the question is asked "Is there a "natural" ultimate end for man?" (pp. 30-35), to which a negative answer is given. The second question of the *Prima Secundae* is being discussed: "On those things in which the happiness of man consists?" Dr. Bourke substitutes the word "natural" for "created." It is important to note that here St. Thomas is asking whether there is a "created" ultimate end for man. St. Thomas does not divide his article into natural and supernatural possibilities but rather he devotes seven articles to excluding any created object and one article to defining objective happiness as resting in an uncreated object.

Father Ramirez, O.P., in his long commentary on these first questions of moral theology, spends over eighty pages developing St. Thomas' proofs on the existence and nature of man's natural ultimate end. For in the first two questions of this part of the *Summa* he is treating formally of the natural ultimate end. After citing some documents that pertain to the Vatican Council and to a Provincial Council of Cologne (1860), he concludes that "from these, it is clear, the existence of some natural ultimate end . . . is not merely a philosophical truth but also a theological one; for these documents, although manifestly not definitions *ex cathedra*, are not in the least merely private and particular documents, but are rather *quasi* official. . . ." (*De Homini Beatitudine*, Vol. I, pp. 281-282). The natural ultimate end of man would be the analogical knowledge of God naturally known in the next (natural) life. Granted that this natural end has given way to the supernatural end, nevertheless it is this natural end which specifies all of natural ethics. In this light we can see that his argument "if anything is supernatural, God is" is specious. It is certainly unfair to St. Thomas' positive, careful reasoning process. This is the only real defect in the book.

In contrast to this lack of precision, the first chapter on the nature of ethics stands in good stead. With skill the Doctor distinguishes the objects of ethics, showing its degree of certitude, its distinction from moral theology; and above all he avoids the errors of M. Maritain. Another outstanding feature of the first part is the excellent appendices containing remarkable translations of pertinent texts from all the works of St. Thomas. Excerpts from the *opuscula* and the *Ethics* abound. The quotation on page 48 concerning the essential act of perfect happiness needs careful explanation, however, because Aquinas opposes *formally* to *substantially* in saying that happiness is *substantially* in the intellect and *formally* in the will. This usage does not contradict the terminology of the *Summa* where happiness is *formally*

(substantially) in the intellect and the consequent delight of the will is as a *per se accident*. The switch of analogies might be a confusing snare for beginners.

Professors of ethics in our colleges should give this volume special consideration as a textbook. Its advantages are many. Seminarians using Latin manuals with a Suarezian bias would do well to use it as a supplementary text. In brief, it is a valuable contribution to putting right reason back into American morality. A.G.

---

**Natural Theology**—Metaphysics II. By Gerard Smith, S.J. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1951. pp. xvvi and 297. \$3.50.

This new text on natural theology, the second in the *Christian Wisdom Series*, is a well-written book. The author, who is head of the Philosophy Department at Marquette University, has a fine expository style and an excellent pedagogical technique. He uses both to good advantage in the present work.

More than half of the text is devoted to the five proofs for the existence of God, according to St. Thomas' doctrine. Following this comes a brief section on the name of God, in which the author employs a "flash-back" to cover all the entitative attributes in summary fashion. Then he treats successively God's knowledge, His will, and His virtually transitive action; the latter section is a detailed discussion of the philosophy of creation. The concluding part deals with the providence of God and its relation to the problem of evil.

With one exception, the first half of this book is excellent. Fr. Smith presupposes nothing in proving the existence of God; he lays solid foundations by explaining what knowledge is and what proof is, what things need to be proved, and the ways in which they can be proved. Then he studies each aspect of the problem of God's existence in light of this methodology, and finally explains in detail the five proofs drawn from St. Thomas. The one weak point is a twenty-five page digression on the subject of existentialism vs. essentialism. This is foreign to the text of St. Thomas and adds nothing to an understanding of the *quinque viae*.

Having laid a solid foundation for the development of a Thomistic treatment of the entitative and operative attributes of God, the author does a surprising thing. Perhaps in the interest of his particular pedagogical approach, he abandons St. Thomas' order of presentation and jumps to the problem of how God is named. From the first name, "He Who is," he establishes the primacy of existentialism and thus deduces all the divine attributes from the formula: *ipsum esse*