

## THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

### Is there direct experience of God?

IN RECENT times catholic theology has spoken affirmatively of the experience of God in the liturgical context, describing it as experience mediated through word and sacrament.<sup>1</sup> It has been more reticent in the past on the question of direct unmediated personal experience of the divine. However, even within critical realist theological tradition in recent decades there has been an increasing readiness to acknowledge the possibility of direct conscious contact by the human spirit with God. It is these developments I wish to outline.

In this article I will present the views of three contemporary schools within critical realist (or neo-thomist) thinking which affirm the possibility of direct experience of God. For critical realism, man has many different ways of knowing.<sup>2</sup> First, man knows in a sensory way through his power of seeing, hearing, touching, feeling, smelling, etc. Moreover, man has the power of memory which enables him to recall past sense experience and indeed other recorded knowledge. Finally, there is intellectual knowledge which according to critical realism is derived from what the senses present to the imagination. The mind expresses in definitions, as it were, what it has already grasped intuitively in the data of sense experience.

Scholastic theology has tended to identify knowledge, that is intellectual knowledge with conceptual knowledge. It has tended to imply, without explicitly saying so, that that which cannot be defined conceptually is not knowledge. This excludes other types of awareness or experience from the concept of knowledge. It is for this reason that I use the term 'experience of God' in the title of this study. The term 'experience' is usually restricted by empiricists to sensory knowledge. I use it in this essay to designate a broader, undifferentiated kind of knowing. In this sense it can include the knowing which is involved in sense experience, as well as the intuitive act of the mind by which I grasp the underlying form of material things and the relationships between them. It can apply to the practical knowledge of the technician or craftsman who knows 'instinctively' how the parts of his machine fit together and knows how to assemble them in order. This latter is indeed a form of intellectual knowledge, though not necessarily conceptual. It can be used of that mysterious 'connatural' knowledge of the other, given in the act of other-centred love.

The term can also apply to another manner of knowing which has been analysed in detail by modern philosophy, and among critical realists notably in the work of Bernard Lonergan.<sup>3</sup> I refer to the knowledge involved in conscious awareness of the self, its states and its activities. Putting it rather simply I can say that whenever I am doing anything —

whatever activity I am involved in — there goes with this activity a conscious awareness in the mind of what I am doing. It is evident in the phrase 'I know what I am doing'. In an obscure way I am aware both of my own activity and of its object. This kind of consciousness can be termed 'concomitant' consciousness as it accompanies all my waking activity and indeed some acts done in sleep such as dreaming. It is with this 'concomitant' consciousness that I am concerned here.

At this point, therefore, I should like to put this non-reflexive, ongoing self-awareness in the foreground of the discussion. It is a way of experiencing, a way of knowing, and it is intellectual. Hence, although scholastic theology tends to restrict intellectual knowledge to conceptual knowledge, the human being in fact, enjoys other intellectual ways of experiencing which are not conceptual.

This particular conclusion will not be drawn on for the moment, except to clarify in a better way the terms of our question concerning direct experience of God, by which I mean direct, intellectual, conscious awareness of God but not conceptual knowledge of God. One finds the same question posed explicitly by Dom Cuthbert Butler:

Can we touch God in this life by an immediate contact, and have of him an experience truly direct and substantial? The saints affirm it, and their descriptions of the prayer of union, of ecstasy, of the spiritual marriage, are all full of this sort of quasi-experimental perception of God within us.<sup>4</sup>

*The negative evaluation of religious experience in critical realist tradition*

When one reviews the history of mystical theology,<sup>5</sup> in the scholastic tradition one finds that the possibility of direct knowledge of God is generally excluded, that religious experience is looked at with a dubious eye, while religious feeling or emotion is looked on at best as an overture to the deeper encounters of blind faith.<sup>6</sup> This trend is at its strongest in its denunciation of the lutheran tenet of justification through 'feeling (experiential) faith',<sup>7</sup> of the claims of the eighteenth-century quietist movement,<sup>8</sup> and of the assertions of some writers condemned for modernism that the religious sense, the intuitive knowledge of God, is the primary starting point for theological reflection.<sup>9</sup>

There is not sufficient space here to examine the complex issues raised by each of these movements. Each in turn went to extremes and was deserving of criticism. Over and above each of these issues, however, there is a scepticism in scholastic theology concerning experience of the divine. As far as the present writer can judge this has two sources. The first of these is the tendency among critical realists to identify knowledge with intellectual cognition and to restrict intellectual cognition to conceptual definition and propositional formulation. Such writers tend to leave unexplored the

possibilities opened up, if stock be taken of the intuitive knowledge of the practical mind, the 'knowing' potentiality of the human heart, as well as the intellectual element in conscious awareness.

A second weakness in this school of thought derives from this restriction. If intellectual knowledge is restricted to conceptual knowledge, then the range of one's direct knowledge is limited to material things. This is so because the formal or normal object of my conceptual knowledge according to critical realist theory is the same as that of my senses, namely material beings. I can know conceptually only the underlying form, essence or 'quiddity' of material things. How then can I know God? According to critical realist tradition I can have only indirect conceptual knowledge of God. If I say God is one, good, true, beautiful, infinite, eternal, my concepts of all of these attributes are derived from my knowledge of the material world. They are applied analogically to God.<sup>10</sup> The same applies to my knowledge in faith of God. This is one reason why the general tradition of scholastic theology has refused to admit direct knowledge of God in any form while in this life.

*Mystical awareness of God as quasi-experimental, connatural knowledge*

Since the time at least of the Spanish mystical movement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a number of Thomists have recognized a form of direct knowledge of God in the higher stages of mystical prayer. One recent exponent of this school, Fr Garrigou Lagrange O.P., in his *Three ages of the spiritual life* speaks of a quasi-experimental and almost continuous knowledge of God which is given to those who have reached the third age of the spiritual life, the age of the perfect. He writes: 'We thus taste the mysteries of salvation and presence of God in us a little as the disciples of Emmaus did when they said: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the way?"' What the disciples experienced was a quasi-experimental knowledge superior to reasoning, analogous to that which the soul has of itself as the principle of its acts.

If one asks why this knowledge should be called quasi-experimental, Lagrange replies 'because it does not attain God in an absolutely immediate manner, as happens in the beatific vision, but in the act of filial love which he produces in us. . . .' Furthermore, it is called quasi-experimental ' . . . because we cannot discern with absolute certitude these supernatural acts of love from the natural impulses of the heart that resemble them'. It is a direct experience of God at an intellectual level, at the level of the mind. Lagrange says that it is analogous to that which the soul has of itself as the author of its acts and therefore he seems to describe it in terms of self-conscious awareness. However, he says more. God makes himself felt by us as the principle of our interior life. He does this in the act of filial love which God produces in us. Here Lagrange seems to be saying

that the love which the mystic has of God brings with it a quasi-experimental knowledge of the God who makes our love possible, who produces it within us.

Lagrange adds a qualification to this by saying that we do not have absolute certitude in this kind of knowledge because we do not have absolute certitude that our acts of love are supernatural. This is related to the common catholic theological position that we cannot be sure we are in the state of grace any more than we can be sure we are predestined to salvation. Nonetheless, Lagrange, in common with one mainstream of tradition in scholastic theology recognizes, at least in the higher forms of prayer, a direct intellectual knowledge of God — not conceptual but nonetheless intellectual, based as it is on the act of filial love which God produces in us.

More recently some theologians have begun to question the restrictions which scholastic theology has placed on our direct experience of God. Augustin Léonard, writing in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* in 1961, put together a comprehensive survey of christian thought on this issue.<sup>13</sup> Léonard went on to wrestle with the statements of modern philosophers such as Blondel and Marcel who seem to approach an affirmation of direct experience of God. Although his own philosophical position is not too clearly defined, Léonard came to the conclusion that direct intellectual knowledge of God is possible. His position is somewhat similar to that of Lagrange except that he extends this intuitive knowledge of God from the state of mystical union to the general state of christian faith.

Léonard appears to attribute to the power of love given to the Christian a certain power of knowing God. Here he is making use of a rather obscure formula to be found both in Aquinas and in his tradition concerning connatural knowledge. Like knows like intuitively. It is a kind of knowing born of love, non-conceptual, non-judgmental. Nonetheless, it is truly knowledge of the mind.<sup>14</sup>

Theologically, it is interesting to note Léonard's affirmation that there is direct intellectual knowledge of God, though non-conceptual, in this life. It marks a step forward from the negative stance taken up by catholic theology following, in particular, the modernist crisis. However, philosophically speaking, his way of explaining this kind of knowledge is not altogether satisfactory. The nature of this intuitive, connatural knowledge remains obscure. Léonard in fact appears to draw his ideas from Maritain except that he applies them to the more general experience of christian life and not merely to mystical experience. This extension of direct knowledge of God to all in grace is quite consistent with a modern theology of grace.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Awareness of God as the a priori ground of all conscious experience*

Since Vatican II catholic theologians have been more willing to make affirmations concerning our direct knowledge of God. A number of these

have been working in traditions outside the critical realist school of thought.<sup>16</sup> However, even if we confine ourselves to the critical realist school, one finds that one of its latest and greatest masters, Karl Rahner, makes the rather startling affirmation that direct knowledge of God is one of the most common things in the world.

It is impossible to do justice to the complexity of Rahner's thought in this brief space, so I refer here to J. Norman King's study for a comprehensive review.<sup>17</sup> However, even in a brief treatment such as this, one must say something concerning Rahner's perspective on the human person. Two basic positions have to be highlighted. The first concerns God's universal salvific will. Rahner makes this assertion one of the cornerstones of his theology. If God wants all men to be saved, he must offer to all men saving grace. This saving grace is not merely the possibility of entering heaven at the end of one's life. It includes the offer of God's redeeming presence throughout this life, a presence which touches every particle of being in the person and actively influences all operations of mind and heart.

A second key position in Rahner's thought is his assumption regarding the human person's fundamental orientation, particularly with respect to mind and will. For Rahner, even the most ordinary human acts of mind and will have a direct orientation towards the transcendent. This unlimited, unrestricted horizon towards which the human being is drawn is the *a priori* unreflective ground of experience. It is present to the person as the basis and ultimate term of every human act. Rahner makes this fundamental point of reference, this limitless transcendence towards which man tends, the pivot of his argument. In fact he identifies this transcendent mystery, the limitless being, towards which the human being tends, with God. Behind the apparently limited goals of human striving and understanding of human life, Rahner believes, there is an unlimited goal which is God.

In practice, one may not both consciously and conceptually recognize the mystery of God in the content and direction of one's other activities. At decisive moments of life, however, it breaks in irresistibly upon one's awareness. In these situations, the individual, normally taken up with affairs and tasks of daily life, is turned in upon himself by some personal crisis such as serious illness, family or personal tragedy. His fundamental values are called to the bar and he is confronted with a decision regarding the meaning of life as a whole, of reality as a whole. In his reaction to this crisis, he may well become formally conscious of the transcendence of God underlying the decisions he takes. He will certainly refer himself to it implicitly or informally.

Rahner sees four main options as concretizing for present-day man this more acute conscious awareness of the transcendent. This can happen, first, when he experiences himself as a free and responsible being and assumes responsibility for himself and his actions. He becomes aware of himself not as existing in himself but as directed towards something greater

and better than himself. Full self-consciousness including a fundamental commitment to values, according to Rahner, involves an implicit awareness of the transcendent ground and goal of one's being and of the good one is called to seek out.

The pre-eminent embodiment of this assumption of responsibility is in love of one's neighbour. This is the second moment of encounter with the transcendent:

The original relationship to God is love of neighbour . . . the love of neighbour is the only categorized and original action in which man attains the whole of the categorically given reality and thus experiences God directly, transcendently and through grace.<sup>18</sup>

The third moment occurs when one is faced with the ultimate reality of death. If one turns towards this in an attitude of unconditional hope, one is implicitly recognizing an ultimate reality beyond the limitations of this material world:

I call the ultimate ground of my hope, in the act of unconditioned acceptance of my existence as meaningful, 'God'. God must be the ultimate reality which supports and embraces everything if his is to be the ground and goal of my hope as expressed in the confident, radical acceptance of existence.<sup>19</sup>

The experience of dying places man before this ultimate option; life makes sense; even in death it is hopeful. Or it is totally absurd. The ground of such hope even if perceived by the subject in pre-conceptual awareness is transcendent being — namely, God.

The fourth area in which man's affirmation of transcendence becomes most conscious is in his attitude towards the future, in his experience of 'the infinite openness of the future which is inexhaustible promise'.<sup>20</sup> It is in seeking to construct a future which is worthy of man, conceived as something implicitly transcendent, that man tends towards an absolute future. The future man builds includes two factors which reflect the two polarities of man's experience of the absolute future. It is fashioned both out of finite realities and in the light of creative vision. The former reveals the finite limitations which fail to satisfy because they are seen in the light of the infinite. The latter itself is an intimation of the infinite towards which one is ultimately reaching. Hence, in man's striving towards the realization of a utopian vision of the future, he is implicitly striving to create an absolute future, a new earth which is also the new heaven, in itself identifiable with the transcendent being of God.

Thus in his analysis of the human person and of his ultimate striving,

Rahner recognizes an experience of God which is given in the transcendent direction of man's being and in man's preconceptual awareness of himself. Rahner does not see this as something springing from the created nature of man in the first instance but rather from the self-bestowal of God. In other words, when he asks how this is possible to man, he sees it as the conferring of salvation upon man which comes through the presence of God in his innermost heart.

Putting Rahner's view more simply, there is, as it were, a divine aura surrounding the future which I seek to build as a place of unlimited gladness for myself and the human race. Put even more simply, I create masks to which I give names such as personal responsibility, love, hope, utopia. The masks hide the face of God which appears to me in that mysterious region of self-awareness which is alive and active before ever my analytical and theoretical intelligence gets to work.

In a recent treatment of religious experience in the pentecostal context it is not surprising, therefore, to find Rahner speaking in favour of the intrinsic possibility of such experience being a valid conscious contact with the divine Spirit. Naturally he does not sign a blank cheque for every claim to mystical experience coming from this source. Nonetheless he acknowledges charismatic prayer as one possible locus for the explicit revelation of the divine Spirit in conscious awareness. Rahner is less than enthusiastic about the enthusiasts and does not hesitate to comment on the naïveté of participants in such assemblies. There is a slight note of regret that the experience of transcendence in everyday life is not more widespread and even a suggestion of 'sour grapes' that religious feelings can be so easily stirred by enthusiastic prayer. This does not prevent him following the logic of his epistemological position and underwriting the possibility of divine experience in the assemblies of enthusiastic worshippers.<sup>21</sup>

For anyone who wishes to affirm the reality of direct experience of the divine, Rahner's views are encouraging. He is obviously moving in the same direction as those who hold this position. More than this, he makes unambiguous statements concerning his conviction of the reality and nature of this direct experience of the divine. Negatively, however, one must say that these affirmations are only as strong as the metaphysical affirmations on which they are based. Rahner belongs to a particular school of philosophy. In terms of epistemology he can be described as a transcendental thomist of the maréchal school, though, of course, there is immensely more to his thought than this.<sup>22</sup> If one were to reject the *a priori* assumption of transcendent horizon as the goal of man's spiritual striving in mind and will, his argument falls to the ground. Rahner's deductions are as strong and as weak as this premiss. Hence to those who do not adopt this particular philosophical stance his arguments have little weight apart from the authority of a powerful mind's conviction.

*Concomitant consciousness of divine love*

There is a third approach which appeals to me more than Rahner's, based on the mind's awareness of its own states and actions. This approach rests on two assumptions: first, that divine love is present and active within us; secondly, that this divine love is present to our consciousness as our own act of love is present. What grounds are there for these two assumptions?

It is a commonplace of christian teaching that our supernatural acts of faith, hope and love are only made possible by God's gracious gift. God himself who is love comes to dwell in our hearts in response to our act of justifying faith. This indwelling God raises the powers of our spirit to the point where they can reach towards him in faith and hope and touch his very being in love of God or neighbour. In the systematic treatment of this mystery in scholastic theology it is commonly postulated that supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity are infused into our souls and that through these virtues we are able to perform actions which have God himself as their objective (or formal object in scholastic terms).

What is sometimes overlooked in this neat categorization of the mystery of personal salvation with its distinction of uncreated and created grace, sanctifying or habitual grace, supernatural virtues and acts, is the unique character of charity. For while charity like faith and hope is only one aspect of our total response to God's self-communication in grace, it represents a different level of participation in the divine mystery. Faith and hope will give way to the vision of God in the next life. Charity will abide. And then its true nature will appear as participation in that eternal love with which God loves himself and all he has created as a reflection of himself.

Nor does the concept of participation fully express the whole mystery involved. For we are talking of an activity on our part which goes in tandem, so to speak, with a divine activity. Obviously not a tandem of equal partners but rather a concurrence of two loves one of which is infinite and the other finite. Nonetheless the partnership is real, for the aim of divine indwelling is to draw our loving into ever closer harmony with the divine love itself.

In short God who is love does not merely trigger off, as it were, three sets of supernatural activities and then lie dormant. He is present with us and to us in the dynamic activity of his own self-knowing and loving — a knowing and loving which comprehends the whole of creation both in its cosmic totality and microcosmic detail. Most specifically, it relates to the persons who inhabit our world. Whenever, therefore, I turn in love to God or to another person, not merely does God produce this love in my heart but God himself is already loving this person to whom I give my love, and loving him through me because God is in me. His Holy Spirit produces this love in my heart so that I can be drawn ever more deeply into the circle of love which is his divine life. So much for the first assumption.



The second assumption is based on a particular reading of St John. If St John's first letter is read in the light of this theology, a particular interpretation suggests itself. It says '... love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God ... because God is love' (1 Jn 7,7-8).<sup>23</sup> The least this can mean is that love of neighbour is a precondition for knowing and acknowledging Jesus in faith. But if knowing for St John is taken in the sense of some form of direct knowledge of another, as when the shepherd knows his flock or the Son knows the Father, then something more is implied. That something more could be a mysterious way of knowing the dynamic movement of God's love working in us and through us and with which our own love moves in step.

In other words the love of which I am aware in my own being and which can sometimes move towards God or neighbour with giant strides is not merely the product of divine action. It is concurrently the divine movement of love working in me and through me, the Spirit of God himself. How then can I know this act of divine love since on the one hand no one has ever seen God (1 Jn 4,12) and on the other, according to the neo-aristotelian schools the formal object of the human mind is not spirit but the underlying, metaphysical form or essence of material things? I make appeal here to the fact and theory of concomitant consciousness.

The first mention I have found of this approach occurs in a work published more than fifty years ago by the dominican theologian Ambroise Gardeil.<sup>24</sup> Writing on Aquinas's theology of mystical communion Gardeil notes:

... of two kinds of knowledge or consciousness, and of these two only, St Thomas uses the term 'perception' (from *percipere*); namely of the soul's consciousness of itself — a matter of every day psychology — and of the mystic's consciousness of God present in his soul.

Gardeil's theory is based on the similarity of these two kinds of perception or awareness to which he refuses the term 'cognition'. He reserves the term 'cognition' for the intuition of the essences of material things together with the discursive knowledge which flows from this intuition. On the other hand the perception of God given in mystical experience is compared to the awareness of self and its activities given in consciousness — 'concomitant consciousness' as I have been naming it. Hence he posits a direct experience of God in mystical prayer and explains it in terms of concomitant consciousness of divine presence and action in the believer.

More recently a similar thesis was put forward quite unequivocally by the late Karl Truhlar S.J., former professor of spirituality in the Gregorian University, Rome.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, he extended this consciousness of the divine to the three supernatural acts of faith, hope and love.

His interpretation does not focus directly on the infusion of divine love and of one's awareness of this. Nonetheless the main thrust of his case is the affirmation of direct experience of divine action, not as an object, but as subjective, concomitant consciousness of one's supernatural acts and of their objects. Or as he puts it, 'as a concomitant experience linked with the objects of faith, hope and charity'. Truhlar's views seem to bear the stamp of influence from his former colleague, Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan, however, in his work *Method in Theology*,<sup>26</sup> where he discusses religious experience, evades the issue of direct experience of the divine.

These views expressed by Gardeil and Truhlar may require some further explanation. I have already dwelt on the type of awareness given in 'concomitant consciousness'. When I dream, move, feel, remember, think, choose, act, I am aware of what I am doing — concomitantly aware of what I am doing. I know the acts given in my consciousness. I am aware of myself acting. There is as well a second form of self-consciousness, reflex consciousness, but that is not in question here. I am talking of the self-conscious awareness given in concomitant consciousness.

Gardeil and Truhlar seem to suggest that the clue to a better understanding of direct, religious experience is to be found in this notion of concomitant consciousness. It can be summarized in this way. I love other persons; I love God. This is something I am sure of. If the act of genuine other-centred love is not merely my own act but primarily God's working through me, in being aware of my own act of love, I am also aware of God's love because the two are now inextricably mingled. Or to paraphrase St John, 'I know God's love' in my own act of love. And of course if I know God's love I know God, because as John also says 'God is love'. Hence in my own act of love I experience God directly in my own consciousness.

The knowledge we are talking of here is not conceptual knowledge or judgmental affirmation. It is that vague, diffuse, self-awareness given in the first act of self-conscious awareness. Hence the objection made by moderate realists and theologians that we cannot know God directly in this life because we can only intuit and conceive of the essences of material objects does not hold good. We are not concerned with the act of insight into material being and the formulation of concepts. We are concerned with that other activity of the mind, the active consciousness of the person of his own states and acts. However, in this case we are talking of being aware not only of our own mental activities but principally of the act of God's love working in us and through us. In other words if it is true that the genuine love I have for another person or for God is in reality intimately linked with God's love operating in me and through me to others, then I am truly aware of and truly know in this awareness not only my own act but also God's. I know God who is love.

The main difficulty with this view can be put like this. How can I be reasonably sure that in being aware of my own act of love I am also aware of the divine act of love working through me? To this it must be said that

only subsequently, in reflex consciousness can this assurance be given. Only through revelation can I know that my act of love is not primarily mine but God's working through me. This reflex understanding is offered most clearly in the first letter of John, 'Everyone who loves knows God'. If taken in its more obvious sense and as revealed truth, then I can accept on faith that in my awareness of my own other-centred love, I can know God.

From the epistemological viewpoint it is only strictly speaking in the second form of consciousness, reflex consciousness, that I can intellectually grasp the fact that my awareness of my own act of loving is also awareness of the eternal love of God himself. This in no way weakens the assumption that what is given to consciousness, concomitant consciousness, is not only my human act of love but also God's divine act of love. It is merely saying that the conceptual understanding of what is given in consciousness and of what consciousness attains belongs to the second, reflective level of consciousness.

All of this must sound somewhat complicated. One could put it a good deal more simply in terms of the story of the old man who discovered late in life that he had been talking prose all his days and had never known it. One might think of other people who discover late in life that they have been talking poetry all their days and have never known it. Something similar seems to be true of our christian understanding of our knowledge of God. Perhaps it is only at this stage of saving history that the christian community is coming to learn that man has always known God directly in this awareness of his own divinely produced other-centred love. Our personal, human love is nothing less than the ark of the new covenant carrying within it the unfathomable treasure of the infinite love of God himself.

In the light of current interest in oriental mysticism and the debate concerning the efficacy of its techniques, it is worth noting that this power of love is not exclusive to Christians but is shared by the whole of humanity through God's offer of saving grace to all men. Hence, this knowledge of God is available to all men, something which makes sense of the prophecy of Jeremiah 31,31. What perhaps is proper to Christians is that they are the ones who know what they know, or rather whom they know, when they know their own act of love.<sup>27</sup>

*Brian Gogan C.S.Sp.*

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), 7.

<sup>2</sup> For the moderate or critical realist theory of knowledge, see Lonergan, Bernard: 'Cognitive Structure', in *Collection*, ed. F. E. Crowe (London, 1967), pp 221-39. For a more traditional scholastic description see Maritain, J.: *The Degrees of Knowledge* (London, 1959), pp 71-244.

<sup>3</sup> Lonergan, Bernard: *Insight, a study of human understanding*, (London, 1958), pp 319-28, also pp 613-15, 623-704.

<sup>4</sup> Butler, Cuthbert: *Western mysticism, neglected chapters in the history of religion* (London, 1926), p lxvi. He is quoting from Père Gardeil, *La structure de la connaissance-mystique*, p 64.

<sup>5</sup> For a positive evaluation of claims of divine experience in the christian platonic tradition, see Butler, Cuthbert: *op. cit.*, *passim*. See also *Charism and sacrament* (New York, 1976) and *Experiencing God* (New York, 1978) by Donald Gelpi for modern affirmative stand on the issue.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Tanqueray, A.: *The spiritual life. A treatise on ascetical and mystical theology*, 2nd edn (Tournai, 1930), pp 436-41.

<sup>7</sup> See for example the early english Protestant, William Tyndale, *An answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* (1531; repr. Cambridge, 1850), *passim*. Also the Decree of Justification of the Council of Trent (ch IX) in H. Roes, etc.; *The teaching of the Catholic Church* (Cork, 1966), p. 390.

<sup>8</sup> See Conzemius, Victor: 'Quietism', in *Sacramentum Mundi*, pp 169-72.

<sup>9</sup> See Boland, André: 'Modernisme', in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 10, fascicules lxxviii-lxxix, (1979), 1415-38.

<sup>10</sup> See Maritain, J.: *op. cit.*, pp 418-21 and also pp 218-44.

<sup>11</sup> See Legrange, R. Garrigou: *The three ages of the interior life*, vol 11 (London 1951), p 428.

<sup>12</sup> Legrange, R. Garrigou: *op. cit.*, p 428.

<sup>13</sup> See Léonard, Augustin: 'Expérience spirituelle', in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, fascicules xxx-xxxii (1961), 2004-26.

<sup>14</sup> Léonard, Augustin: *op. cit.*, 2022-24.

<sup>15</sup> See Maritain, J.: *op. cit.*, pp 260-61.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Gelpi, D.: *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> See King, J. Norman: 'The experience of God in the theology of Karl Rahner', in *Thought*, 53 (1978), pp 174-202, also Rahner, Karl: *The Spirit in the Church* (London, 1979), a reprint including a fresh popular treatment of religious experience.

<sup>18</sup> See Rahner, K.: 'Theology of freedom', in *Grace in freedom*, trans. H. Graef (New York and London, 1969), p 218.

<sup>19</sup> See Rahner, K.: *Christian at the crossroads* (London, 1975), p 23.

<sup>20</sup> See Rahner, K.: 'Experience of God today', in *Theological Investigations*, XI (London, 1974), p 158.

<sup>21</sup> See Rahner, K.: 'Religious enthusiasm and the experience of grace', in *Theological Investigations*, XVI (London, 1979) pp 35-51.

<sup>22</sup> See Roberts, Louis: *The achievement of Karl Rahner* (New York, 1967), pp 7-51; 81-158.

<sup>23</sup> For a rare admission by an exegete of the possibility of unmediated, intellectual experience of God see J. McKenzie in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London, 1970), p 754, no 105. For the possibility of unmediated experience in johannine thought see Bultmann, R.: *gignosko*, in *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, vol 1, pp 711-13; and Brown, Raymond: *The Gospel according to John* (London, 1971), vol 1, p 514.

<sup>24</sup> See Butler, Cuthbert: *op. cit.*, p lxxvii and *passim*, citing Gardeil, P.: *La structure de la connaissance mystique*, a reprint of four articles in *Revue Thomiste*, 1924.

<sup>25</sup> See Truhlar, Karl: 'Holiness', in *Encyclopedia of theology*, ed. K. Rahner (London, 1975), pp 636-37.

<sup>26</sup> See Lonergan, Bernard: *Method in theology* (London, 1971) pp 105-07. I am indebted to Fr Brendan Purcell of University College, Dublin, for this reference.

<sup>27</sup> This paper was originally given as a talk to the Association of Irish Liturgists.