

REVIEWS

THEODICY. By G. W. Leibniz. Edited, with an introduction, by Austin Farrar. Translated by E. M. Huggard. (Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science: Routledge and Kegan Paul; £2 2s.)

HUMANITY AND DEITY. By W. M. Urban. (Allen and Unwin; 23s.)

REASON AND COMMON SENSE. An inquiry into some problems of Philosophy. By R. G. Mayor. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 35s.)

SIX EXISTENTIALIST THINKERS. By H. J. Blackham. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 15s.)

The *Theodicy* of Leibniz has an important place in the great controversy concerning freedom and necessity which his age found so enthralling. It is a work that is characteristic of Leibniz, though not of Leibniz at his best. It is full of digressions and unimportant side references, it is weighed down by the learning of a man who was intensely, and expertly, interested in everything, and yet it is full of his charm and unequalled clarity of expression. Dr Austin Farrar has written a brilliant introductory essay on the general position of Leibniz centering round the cardinal notion of 'representation in unity', which is a contribution to the study of the philosopher. In spite of this, one feels that several criticisms must be made. The edition has no critical notes, and such notes are indispensable for understanding a work so allusive as the *Theodicy*, and there is no bibliography, a peculiarly unfortunate omission in the case of Leibniz. From the strictly philosophic point of view one feels sorry that Dr Farrar has provided us with no help towards the solution of a problem that underlies Leibniz's position in the *Theodicy*. 'Freedom', Leibniz tells us, 'is exempt from real' [i.e. metaphysical] 'necessity', but is dependent *a priori* on the general reasons of good. It is clear enough what Leibniz means by *a priori*, viz. pure and simple knowledge which is independent of particular experience, but what he means by 'inclining' reasons, by perfection as the principle of existence and by his famous principle of sufficient reason is a point that remains obscure. Dr Farrar's criticism that the philosophy of Leibniz is blasphemous in tendency because it is a physical theology which treats divine action as one factor among the factors which together constitute the working of the natural system is perhaps extreme, but it is a consequence of his own view that 'the only acceptable argument for theism is that which corresponds to the religious consciousness, and builds upon the insufficiency of finite existence throughout'.

W. M. Urban's latest work might be taken as a commentary on this last phrase. He holds that there is a language of religion which expresses

an original and fundamental type of experience. This language is not merely expressive of emotion, for the sense of infinitude which it involves has a cognitive element or objective reference. He seems to maintain that we have an awareness of God, which is intuitive in character and which is the necessary pre-supposition of the traditional proofs. There is a great deal of valuable matter in this book, and some trenchant criticism both of extreme supernaturalism and of rigidly narrow definitions of 'fact' and 'literal meaning'. Prof. Urban seems to hold that we require a language which is symbolic, but not fictitious, in order to describe (or interpret) the state of affairs in which we find ourselves, but beyond that it is rather difficult to see what he is trying to say. He is not a positivist, nor is he a Barthian; he seems rather to be attempting to reconcile thomistic forms of argument with a rather obscure theory of intuition.

The third book on our list is a very long statement of the philosophic position of the late R. G. Mayor. In spite of its quite unnecessary length the theme of the book is quite simple. Reason can construct a whole series of complete explanations by resort to principles of coherence, economy and so on, but all of these conflict with common sense. The first two parts of the work deal with these explanations; and though the positions are familiar enough, some of the exposition is helpful. The third part comprises the author's attempt to escape from his conflicts by an appeal to 'knowledge given in emotion and feeling' and in no other way. His argument appears to rest on the senses of sympathy and of self or self-love. The solution is symptomatic rather than revolutionary. The same tendency, though expressed in a very different language, is to be found in H. J. Blackham's *Six Existential Thinkers*. Mr Blackham's book provides an excellent and clear introduction to the thought of the most influential existentialists for those who cannot consult their main works. Mr Blackham is concerned to emphasise the necessary incompleteness of any rational system and the necessity for personal responsible decision in order that man may authentically be. Here once again we have, put in even stronger terms, the repudiation of reason as a means of arriving at anything more than trivial propositional consistency. We have travelled very far from the confident rationalism of Leibniz, whose problems are always so lucid, until it seems that the aim of philosophic inquiry is to introduce us either to the mild emotion-beliefs of English dons or to the more catastrophic anguish affected on the Continent. All this is easy enough to say, but the saying of it does not imply that the cause of this state of affairs is simple or rectification easy. What it just involves is that we should set our metaphysical house in order and secondly that thomists should awake from their dogmatic slumbers to engage in the task of re-constituting

the *philosophia perennis*. If they don't, we are all liable to have 'existentialist' nightmares.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT. A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers. By G. W. H. Lampe. (Longmans, Green; 35s.)

The author makes no secret of his intention to criticise a definite theological position, that of those Anglican theologians (of whom Dom Gregory Dix is at present the most distinguished representative) according to whom Confirmation should properly be regarded as the 'Baptism of the Spirit'. In this way Confirmation would assume a greater importance than 'Baptism of water' which would thus become merely a prelude. Against this theory Mr Lampe has ranged a formidable mass of arguments taken from history, exegesis and philology. To meet Dom Dix's reconstructions, inferences and hypotheses he brings the overwhelming weight of his erudition. This he does with a perseverance which is sure of what it maintains, with calmness and almost without allowing himself a unifying hypothesis. His book will thus be found to be both the classic authority and the indispensable tool of every scholar (be he historian or theologian) who wants to establish a sure basis for his information on the subject of Baptism, of Confirmation, or for his ideas of the 'seal' and of the 'Gift of the Spirit'. Moreover, the three chapters XII-XIV, 'The Seal of the Divine Image', 'The Seal of the Cross', 'The Seal of the Name', show an originality which is indeed remarkable. The Catholic theologian, unless I am greatly mistaken, will support the criticism of Dom Dix's theories; he will find himself in particular agreement with Mr Lampe over the connection between Baptism and the work of the Spirit, and the 'perfective' character (not that of perfecting as regards its essence) of Confirmation in regard to Baptism. Where he does find himself less satisfied with Mr Lampe's exposition, it will be because of the latter's failure to put forward a clear and definite theological opinion on the important points of doctrine on which he touches. I am not surprised that he so often speaks of 'disintegration' or 'confusion'; indeed, he treats everything on the same plane and, dealing as he does with the history of dogma, he ignores the key which is provided by dogma itself. It is not a question of an undue transference of theology into the realm of history; what is wanted is history sufficiently realist to be able to derive inspiration from its constant factors and able to bring out its different elements in their fullness. It would, however, be difficult to find in Mr Lampe's book unequivocal views on grace and on the sacramental system, still less on the 'character' and the 'divine missions'. But it is these realities which underlie the scriptural and patristic teaching