

Book Reviews

EVANGILE SELON SAINT MARC, par le P. M.-J. Lagrange des Frères Prêcheurs. Quatrième édition corrigée et augmentée. (Paris : J. Gabalda et Fils ; 100 francs.)

It is nearly twenty years since the first edition of this book appeared. It was a truly great work, for the study of the Gospels a really epoch-making work, and its influence is apparent in all commentaries of value that have appeared since. Indeed, in some cases, 'influence' is hardly the right word. No one, for instance, who is acquainted with Père Lagrange's work, can read far in such volumes as those on Saint Mark and Saint Luke in the series of commentaries, entitled '*Verbum Salutis*,' published by a group of French Jesuits, without realising how very great their debt—by no means duly acknowledged—is to Père Lagrange.

The second and third editions were hardly more than reprints of the first. In this, the fourth edition, the commentary and the introduction have, the author informs us, 'been completely revised and partly corrected: I do not say "*completely corrected*," for what author is clear-sighted and impartial enough to do that?' He modestly adds that he thinks a deeper study of the other three Gospels has helped him to a better understanding of Saint Mark himself. If we cannot describe the present edition as epoch-making, that is only because it is the fourth and not the first. It still remains what it was acknowledged to be on its first appearance by competent judges of widely different schools, supreme among all commentaries on Saint Mark. It is supreme, first of all, by reason of its unmatched learning, scholarship and acumen. But it is supreme, most of all, for the way in which those qualities subserve the end which alone matters ultimately. What that end is Père Lagrange tells us at the end of his preface: 'In trying to understand what was written by Mark, the echo of what was spoken by Peter, the witness of Jesus, I have had no other intention than to hear better the words of life.'

L.W.

THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY. By Paul J. Glenn, Ph.D., S.T.D. (B. Herder ; pp 383 ; 10/6.)

This work is expressly intended 'as a class text for undergraduate students whose knowledge of philosophy is, *ex hypothesi*, neither extensive nor profound.' One is bound to add that those students who use it will, *de facto*, attain extension of knowledge (the first proper name mentioned is Noe !), but certainly not profundity. Writing under the shadow of the grey

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walls of Balliol, one wonders who these 'undergraduate students' may be.

The fundamental objection to such a work as this is that it is not only a 'manual' but a 'complete manual,' and such are to the destruction of learning. The subject-matter is admirably arranged, divided and sub-divided with a commendable brevity and clarity reminiscent of St. Thomas himself. The author has adopted an excellent combination of the chronological and topical methods. At first sight it is an attractive work. But the student is not permitted to think for himself. In the introduction there are laid down seven cogent reasons to establish the importance of Philosophy for all men, but the author does not leave one loop-hole through which the caged student may escape to think, and so perchance become a philosopher. It is not merely that the facts are potted: that is not without excuse and even merit. But everything is potted and served ready for consumption, notably summaries and condemnations of most of the systems, in the cut and dried criticisms from the author, labelled 'Remark' or 'Remarks.' Canned meat is always terribly dull, and often not even good food.

This history is compiled explicitly from a Scholastic (*i.e.*, Thomist) point of view. One judges *a priori*, therefore, that it is likely to be bad history, for history should not be written from 'a point of view.' *A posteriori* the judgment is upheld. Witness how Plato is dismissed with short shrift (p. 79). Aristotle is praised superlatively, but the praise is nowise justified by the exposition of his system. The author is determined at all costs to make him Thomist. St. Augustine is excused! 'Most of St. Augustine's errors are traceable to his Platonic training; had he known Aristotle well, we should have had an Aquinas before the thirteenth century' (p. 167). Finally, not to multiply examples unduly, one wonders whether the 'defects and absurdities' of Kantianism are really so obvious, even to a learned Scholastic, as the author would have us believe.

But, after all, the work is meant to help students to pass examinations in the History of Philosophy; it is not meant to educate them in the history of philosophy. It will no doubt be found to subserve the purpose for which it was intended.

H.C.

THE ENGLISH MARTYRS. Edited by Dom Bede Camm. (Heffer & Sons, Cambridge).

The price of this book is 7/6, and not 5/-, as was stated in a review of the book in these columns.