

## REVIEWS

### RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

GOD. His Existence and His Nature. Vol. I. A Thomistic solution of certain Agnostic Antinomies. By the Rev. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. Translated from the Fifth French Edition by Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B., D.D. (B. Herder Book Co.; 12/-)

The work of which the present volume (the first) is a translation has, since its first publication, obtained, among "professionals" and private students alike, so outstanding a reputation that criticism at this date would be out of place. Père Garrigou-Lagrange is perhaps the most distinguished representative of what has been happily described as the "high" Thomist school. It is the school which maintains the classical dignity of metaphysics and where few concessions are made to the non-philosophical mind. We need not be surprised then that the non-philosophical mind has reacted accordingly. An adherence to traditional terminology and a rigour of exposition to which our English sensibility is unaccustomed can make little appeal to those who test their philosophy "on their pulses"; the more thoughtful, however, will detect beneath the "text-book aridities" the grand style of the true metaphysician. St. Thomas is the philosopher of "being" and therefore of common sense; but he is no more to be vulgarized than Plato or Aristotle, for—the theologian apart—he is of no less a company. We are perhaps a little inclined to forget that not every man that quotes St. Thomas holds communion with him; for that there is a price to be paid; to contemplate "being in so far as it is being" demands the *ascesis* of which the ancients were well aware. That the author of the present work can speak with such assurance is because his thought moves consistently on the level of the third degree of abstraction; for here, and only here, we are privileged to write, not "I think," or "it may be," or "it seems to me," but "*it is.*"

Indeed it is to vindicate this right that the major portion of this book has been written. The Kantian and general idealistic objections to the proofs of God's existence must retain their validity so long as it can be maintained that the first principles, i.e. the principles of identity and contradiction, are of the order of thought only and not of reality. The *quinque viae* are without meaning to the mind which denies the ontological and transcendental value of these primary principles. "Ontological

Realism is absurd and disastrous," wrote Le Roy as long ago as 1907, "an external something, beyond thought, is by its very nature impossible of conception. This objection will always remain unanswerable, and we shall have to conclude, as all modern philosophy does, that we are under the necessity of admitting some form of Idealism." It is this "unanswerable objection" which has to be answered before we can even present our proofs.

We may lament with the late Père Gardeil that the nature of knowledge should have come to be regarded as "the problem of problems"; but, so long as the "Copernican Revolution" is accepted at its own valuation, it is the problem which must be faced. For the Thomist the mind has direct knowledge of contingent beings and of the first principles of reasoning, and arrives at the conclusion that God exists by a method of demonstration in which the first principles are the major and created things the minor premise. But it is clear that this syllogism must be without probative force to the mind which maintains our incapacity to know the real. It is upon the validity of this knowledge that the whole debate turns.

But if the problem appears formidable when stated, it is because of the confusion arising from its very statement being based upon that unity with the real which it pretends to call in question; it is, in the ultimate analysis, a pseudo-problem which has given rise to the "critical method," and we are led to the absurdity of attempting to examine the nature of knowledge while at the same time denying the reality of the very object under inspection. As soon as we give meaning to the little word "is" we are in the order not merely of thought but of *being*. To the defence of this position and to an annihilating critique of those who oppose it Père Garrigou-Lagrange concentrates his attention. He defends and explains the ontological and transcendental character of our primary ideas; only after establishing their validity does he proceed to a consideration of the classical proofs, to which all other demonstrations of God's existence can be reduced. His work will require no recommendation to those who are interested in the problems of modern philosophy.

The present translation is, on the whole, trustworthy; although we should have preferred to sacrifice something of its undoubted readability for a stricter adherence to the letter of the original. For example, "there is no such thing as a reality corresponding to thought" (p. 37) is hardly a translation of "un au delà de la pensée est impensable"; note 31, p. 150, should read "created intellect" for "human," nor does the original have "God, as He is in Himself is *included* (italics ours) only in the adequate object of the human intellect"; the important concluding sentence of

## REVIEWS

section 32, p. 232, is misleading as to sense and without the saving grace of verbal accuracy; the word "denaturalized," note 35, p. 155, in the translation from Cajetan has no justification, and could lead to a misinterpretation of the whole passage. We draw attention to these shortcomings—along with an occasional wrong reference overlooked in proof-reading—that they may be rectified in the second edition rather than as a qualification of general praise. We acknowledge our debt to Dom Rose for presenting us with what must be the best exposition of Thomist natural theology in the language.

AELRED GRAHAM, O.S.B.

MIRAGE AND TRUTH. By M. C. D'Arcy, S.J. (Centenary Press; 6/-.)

Apologetic method demands that the upholder of doctrines originally expressed in scholastic terminology should to-day contrive to put them forward in other terms; even if there were no need of apologetic, simple exposition would make the same demand, for our manner of thought is now otherwise, and it is that which dictates the pattern of verbal expression. This is too seldom recognized, and Thomist treatises too often continue to speak the language of St. Thomas. Fr. D'Arcy's books evidence the possibility of a modern way. It would indeed be difficult to emulate the beauty with which much of this book as of his others is written; but it is good to have a model at which remotely to aim. The book discusses ideals put forward by Morgan's *Fountain* and Brewster's *Prison* as types of modern alternatives to Theism, and compares them with the ideal of Christianity. "Books of philosophy have stirred the world less than romance and poetry, and personal experience is more decisive than a hundred syllogisms in *barbara*," and Fr. D'Arcy has "chosen to mingle argument with an appeal to what we most want and to rely on some of those wants being sufficiently universal to evoke a common response and assent." The author's treatment of the *quinque viae* is especially noteworthy for its complete freedom from scholastic jargon; the chapters on the Christian ideal will perhaps not be of least value to Christians themselves. The argument must necessarily appeal to a limited class of reader, and it must be said that here and there the author's thought is far from easy to follow, though effort to continue will be rewarded.

Religion has too often been done a disservice by those who proclaim that "this world is only an ante-room to that of eternity, a kind of cold bath and physical exercise before breakfast" (p. 101); and reaction has taken the form of hedonisms of one sort