

## BOOK REVIEWS

THE NATURE OF BELIEF. By M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., M.A. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931; pp. 336; 7/6.)

At a time when religion is too frequently justified by an appeal to sentiment, this examination, conducted in a spirit of balanced rationalism, is very welcome. The prevailing lack of confidence in the validity of the intelligence is at once the cause and effect of the decay of truth. Caution is one thing, pusillanimity another. The author begins by laying a good foundation for his enquiry by a sustained description of the nature of knowledge, a vindication of the primacy of the mind and of its character as a power made to live in reality. Although restricted in its scope and hampered in its proper workings by the incident of its present state, it is still able to nourish us with things from outside. Belief, or an assent prompted by the will to things which are neither self-evident nor internally demonstrable, is a normal and perfectly rational part of its present activity.

After an analysis of the *Grammar of Assent*, two chapters are devoted to a critique of its teaching. They are a model of criticism, sympathetic, sure, and constructive as well. Fr. D'Arcy has done what St. Thomas did to the predecessors he revered. For the true worth of Newman's conclusions is delicately lifted clear from any suggestion of nineteenth-century romanticism. The illative sense is taken under the charge of the intellect and established in the Thomist dialectic as a type of judgment by interpretation: a variety of impressions fusing into a determinate whole, of which the common-sense certitude is guaranteed by a unity of indirect reference. This is reinforced by the findings of *Gestalt* psychology.

The dependence of faith on a competent authority is marked out, as also its relation to religious experience. There is a great difference between the Catholic position and that of those who relegate religion to the realm of experience and empty it of rational verification. The practice of these apologists in intention is rather like pouring the baby out with the bath water. The intellectual assent of faith, of course, is not remote from experience, for action based on truth usually produces the appropriate emotion. Yet it is distinct, and may even exist apart, as may be seen from the confession of a writer in the recent *Enquête sur les raisons de croire des Croissants*: 'I cannot say that I feel in my everyday life a particular pleasure in the fact that I believe in God.' Religion must be grounded on intellectual truth; to attempt religious experience without this is like trying to boil an empty coffee-pot. There is some excellent

criticism of the attempt to supplant the rational core of religion by a mysterious faculty of awe in face of *das Heilige*. Here, too, the criticism is constructive, for the author shows how this line of approach can be a virtual statement of St. Thomas's metaphysical proofs for the existence of God. 'Schleiermacher let the cat out of the bag when he defined religion as "a feeling of dependence."' The experience which modern writers on religion uphold is not a direct awareness of God but the consciousness of their own state as creatures.' As a culmination, we are given an admirable account of the Catholic faith as the way of entry into complete life.

This is an important book, well-informed, well written. There are a few inaccuracies. Doubt is imperfectly described (p. 70). A free act surely does not necessarily demand a simultaneous consciousness of a capacity to act otherwise (p. 85). Animal desire is not merely awakened by a physical stimulus, there is an element of knowledge (p. 89). *Phronesis* seems to be departmentalised in a manner contrary to the Aristotelean teaching on the connection of the virtues (p. 142). 'St. Plotinus' (p. 232) is a printer's error. The chief general criticism is that the book hardly lives up to its title. Like the famous Duke of York, it secures the approaches, invests the place, but does not take it. The interior psychological structure of an act of faith is not laid open. Suggestion, however, is sometimes a better instrument than plain statement and exposition. Materials abound for a judgement by interpretation. Nevertheless a continuation into rational psychology of the treatment of belief according to empirical psychology which is to be found in the second chapter, in other words, a section expressly devoted to the nature of belief, would have enhanced the permanent value of the book.

T.G.

THE PASSION OF SS. PERPETUA AND FELICITY, MM. Translated by W. H. Shewring. (Sheed & Ward; 3/6.)

Mr. Shewring's *Passion of SS. Perpetua and Felicity* is a book we welcome. The translation into English appeared first in the last *Fleurion*, chiefly for the sake of typographical presentment. The choice of it seems to have been due to Mr. Stanley Morison's suggestion; and the best available text was used for the occasion.

The editor has since studied all known sources, and now presents such a Latin text as scholarship has been able to restore; a slightly emended English version; four sermons of Augustine for the first time in English, and a useful introduction.