

## REVIEWS

**PHILOSOPHIE DES NOMBRES.** By R. Le Masson. (Paris. Desclée De Brouwer. Pp. xii, 84; 10 fr.)

In this essay, belonging to the *Questions Disputées* series, M. Le Masson links the conceptions of modern mathematics to the Scholastic notion of transcendental multitude; transfinities, imaginary numbers and the rest, can be derived from that fundamental concept by successive dichotomies without any unjustified leap of extrapolation. The author claims to show how easily and congenially these modern conceptions take their place in a Thomist synthesis; and his use of the Act-Potency antithesis in solving questions debated by mathematicians would seem to support his claim, though it might lead the 'tough-minded' to suspect his conclusions.

That M. Maritain, who contributes a preface, should confess to recoiling from the author's view of certain mathematical entities as 'third degree' abstractions is, as that philosopher remarks, no more than the reaction M. Le Masson would wish to provoke from the true-blue Thomist. The essay takes for granted a closer acquaintance with mathematical questions than is the property of every Thomist, but this does not lessen its value as a contribution to the literature of Thomism; as well in provoking questions as in his own solution of them M. Le Masson has done us a service.

Q.J.

**BEGEGNUNGEN UND TRENNUNGEN.** Essays über Christentum und Germanentum. By Sigrid Undset. (München: Kösel und Pustet; RM. 4).

Readers of *The Burning Bush*, which appeared in English last year, will have recognised that Sigrid Undset is something more than one of the greatest of living novelists. The book revealed her in a new light as a profound religious thinker, gifted with an essentially objective and 'untemperamental' understanding of the implications of Catholic life and dogma, all too rare among Catholic litterateurs. This same quality, joined with that acute analytical psychological insight, known to all her readers, is revealed again in the three essays which comprise this volume. The first is a fascinating historical study of St. Olave, the pirate-chief who became the Apostle and Founder of Norway, whose life here serves as the basis for a study contrasting Christianity with the Nordic paganism which it supplanted. The second essay is a valuable comparative study of Catholic and Protestant conceptions of the phenomenon of conversion. It was Sigrid Undset's response to the outcry with which her conversion and that of Lars Eskeland was greeted by her countrymen; and it is typical of her that she should respond with so

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impersonal an Apologia. The last essay, perhaps the best of all, is another study in contrasts, this time between Catholic Christianity and the 'Neo-paganism' which in its turn supplants the Protestantism which ousted Catholicism from Northern lands. It is the most sensible contribution to the subject from a Catholic standpoint that we have read.

*Catholicism and the 'Nordic Soul.'* Such is the subject underlying these seemingly disconnected essays. It is the German translation, to which a special preface has been added, that we review. There should be an English translation too, for the subject, so admirably handled, is of no less interest to the Anglo-Saxon.

V.W.

OU EN EST LE PROBLEME DE JESUS? By F. M. Braun, O.P. (Editions de la Cité Chrétienne, Bruxelles; 36 fr. belges; 24 fr. français.)

Fr. Braun's is by no means the first book to pass in review the solutions given by modern critics to the problem of Jesus Christ. Such books often prove tiring and of little use, and we began reading Fr. Braun's with no bias in its favour. But we had not read far before it was clear that here was a book that would render real service to students in their study of the Gospels. In addition to such older solutions as those of Harnack and Schweitzer among others, Fr. Braun has chapters on those most recently propounded, the important *Formgeschichtliche Schule* of Dibelius and Bultmann and the fantastic theory of Robert Eisler. As he remarks at the end (p. 411), the principal systems of Gospel criticism put forward since the beginning of the century, though in contradiction with one another, do not simply cancel one another out; each has thrown light on a part of the truth, and these parts, taken together, constitute a nearly adequate solution of the problem. A study of those systems does enable the student to realise more vividly the partial truths which they emphasise, and at the same time, since those systems do correct one another, leads him on to that balanced synthesis which is so necessary. The student could have no better guide than Fr. Braun in this clearly written and well printed volume.

L.W.

DIE DREI ALTEREN EVANGELIEN, übersetzt und erklärt von Dr. Petrus Dausch. (RM. 19.50; bound, RM. 22). *Die Katholischen Briefe*, übersetzt und erklärt von Dr. Max Meinertz und Dr. Wilhelm Vrede. (RM. 6.60; bound, RM. 8.60). Bonn: Peter Hanstein.

These two works form the second and ninth volumes in the new edition of the well-known Bonn Catholic Commentary on