

THE SPIRIT OF MEDIAEVAL PHILOSOPHY. By Etienne Gilson. Translated by A. H. C. Downes. (Sheed and Ward; 18s. net.)

This reprint will supply a long-felt need. During the past fourteen years interest in mediaeval philosophy has greatly increased and the characteristic positions of M. Gilson are now widely known. But there is still a keen intellectual delight in seeing him defending his view of Christian philosophy and bringing out the revolutionary change in the direction of thought brought about by meditation on Exodus iii, 14; and for those who are becoming acquainted for the first time with the outlook of the great Christian philosophers—provided they are prepared to read very carefully—this attractively translated and very full introduction remains without a peer. The simultaneous or previous study of a straightforward history may be recommended to the student or general reader, but even without this aid *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* will provide many hours of sheer joy and ample enlightenment about the progress of philosophy from the Apostolic age to the dawn of the Reformation.

E.Q.

THE SUPREME IDENTITY. An essay in Oriental Metaphysics and the Christian Religion. By Allan W. Watts. (Faber and Faber; 12s. 6d.)

It would be unjust to overlook the fact that this book contains many wise observations, none the less it must be said that it betrays a wider knowledge of Zen Buddhism than of the Christian faith.

In his general outlook Mr Watts is what might be termed a neo-Gnostic, for he advances a variant of that view against which St Irenaeus wrote. This is mirrored in his depreciation of the historical, in his relegation of religion to an analogical sphere of merely negative propositions and in his emphasis on a 'beyond' for which religion has no name. He stresses what he calls an immediate non-analogical knowledge of the 'beyond', which transcends both reason and feeling. Properly this is, he considers, intellectual knowledge, a characteristic of which is that it is not individual. It is the ultimate knower in man, never the known; a notion which recalls the *intellectus agens* of the Arabian Philosophers.

Quite apart from the difficulties involved in this notion, of which the great Indian thinkers were not aware, but which Mr Watts slides over, the most serious defect in the book is the way in which Catholic doctrine regarding the 'nescience which knows' is neglected. For a Catholic the real interest of the book lies in the fact that it is a witness to the growing tendency of non-Catholic religious thinkers to appeal to the East—a fact which the modern apologete must take into account in his studies.

I.H.