

## REVIEWS

just a few words of theology. It is a moment for contemplative consideration of the bare realities. Lagrange had never sinned by dispensing others from the duty of fundamental thinking and feeling for themselves; he does not do so now—refuses to be popular in that sense.

It offers a great practical advantage that Lagrange so ordered this work that it follows paragraph by paragraph the divisions of his own *Synopsis Evangelica*. The reader if he pleases can procure that compilation<sup>1</sup> and keep one eye steadily on the texts that are in process of being rendered.

The work of translating a French style so condensed and allusive, so doggedly individualistic, often so informal, must have been cruelly difficult. And it is the most notable weakness of the English that it often reflects the anguish of it. It also seems to reflect in a certain unevenness of quality its composite, collaborative origin. Nevertheless it would be extremely ungenerous, or rather unjust, not to praise the work for the far and away higher than average level of workmanship that it has attained.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

INTRODUCTION TO ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY. By Archbishop Goodier, S.J. (Burns, Oates; 7s. 6d.)

These most valuable lectures delivered at Heythrop College have the unmistakable ring of authenticity and bear a gravity of world-wide experience. In an introduction the importance of such a study is stressed. "First, there is need to resist, and to counteract, the merely materialistic outlook which is about us everywhere. . . . Even among those who still call themselves Christians . . . there commonly prevails a very distinct Pelagianism: a belief that the whole of a man's perfection depends on the man himself, on his own efforts and no more; . . . a repudiation of man's dependence on the grace and help of God that he may do anything good." Secondly in order to guide others there is need of accurate knowledge of Ascetical and Mystical Theology. Thirdly, the marked revival of interest even outside the Church in asceticism and mysticism demands an ability to meet it and direct it aright. Fourthly, "even for an understanding of the pagan world a knowledge of Ascetical and Mystical Theology is absolutely necessary" and without it "all the great Asiatic religions are almost unintelligible."

The difference between asceticism and mysticism is accepted though in real life the two are concomitant. There is no true

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<sup>1</sup> *A Catholic Harmony of The Four Gospels*. Adapted, with an introduction by Mgr. J. M. T. Barton, D.D. (Burns, Oates; 7s. 6d.)

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mysticism without asceticism and no true asceticism without at least some deep insight into the vision of God. "One might distinguish them by saying that Ascetical Theology deals with what a man must himself do that he may attain spiritual perfection, while Mystical Theology deals more with perfection as it depends on God."

We are wisely warned that the three "Ways" dwelt on by ascetical writers are little more than a conventional and convenient division useful for the purpose of study. "In actual diagnosis of the state of a particular soul, they will seldom be found completely distinct. Many souls, indeed most that have made any progress at all, and no earnest soul has not, may be said to be in two 'Ways' at once. Some are in, or have experience of, all three 'Ways'; others will have moments of experience in one 'Way,' higher or lower, while habitually in another."

The work as a whole falls into three parts, the first historical, the second doctrinal, and the third on the "Ways." The historical part opens with an interesting and original introductory lecture on asceticism and mysticism as found outside the pale of Christianity. Here we learn something of natural mysticism among non-Christian peoples. We would have been glad to have been taught something further concerning the vexed question of the possibility of a supernatural mysticism among such peoples.

In the lecture on the history of asceticism in the early middle ages there is the very timely reminder, beneficial to those given to the contemplative life, that the perfection of charity comes before contemplation. Our Lord did not say "Blessed are they that see God, for they shall be clean of heart." "Yet there is a tendency to substitute this order, and practically all false mysticism rests on this substitution."

The diverse influences of the saints and founders of religious Orders is well worth special study. St. Benedict's significant motto, *Pax*, "summed up the spirit of monastic life as he understood it." His asceticism and prayer are both toned by the calming spirit of peace. At a time of monastic decline St. Bernard appears as "the apostle of personal humility."

With a new christianised world a fresh need arose which was supplied by St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Dominic. The activity of St. Dominic within his adopted field was destined to a permanency made possible through his great sons St. Albert and St. Thomas. "For the giant in learning, St. Albert the Great, and his disciple, St. Thomas Aquinas, were only the natural outcome of the spiritual of St. Dominic. They no longer confined themselves to experimental interpretations, they studied

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spirituality as a science." "From the time of St. Dominic, great as was the influence of the Order of Preachers on European learning, their spiritual influence was, if anything, still greater. They organised the whole teaching of spirituality from that time. Illustrations are abundant, and the list of their saints is their crown."

The teaching in the doctrinal sections is most helpful and illuminating. "Virtue is the strength, put to use, to live aright, in regard both to God and to man, the making a man the best that he can be." And speaking of the Unitive Way it is emphasised that "every other 'way' is a true degree of perfection, capable of producing the highest sanctity." And all may aspire after this sanctity, since "in principle, at least the Way of Union is open to all."

We have only been able to give the briefest account of some of points treated of in this book which is rich in wisdom and learning. But perhaps enough has been said to recommend it highly to all who are desirous of a better understanding of spirituality in its history and in the Christian life.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

INTRODUCTION AU "LIVRE DE RUTH": TEXTE INTEGRAL DE L'OUVRAGE DE L'ABBE TARDIF DE MOIDREY. par Paul Claudel. (Desclée de Brouwer; 21 frs.)

The Abbé Tardif de Moidrey must already be familiar to many as a figure who appears in Léon Bloy's writings and takes a place among the very few who are there allowed to be on the side of the angels. To Bloy it seemed that he *was* an angel, an angel of light. For it was from him that Bloy learned the art of the mystical way of understanding the Scriptures, which thereafter provided him with the chief instrument of his thought. A first-hand specimen of the Abbé's art is here made accessible. Claudel has taken over Bloy's role of champion and interpreter. He likewise is an adept in this mystical art: he has practised it directly in a number of scattered essays, and its influence has long been apparent in his whole outlook and artistry. His present Introduction is a vehement defence of its practice and principles and at the same time a brilliant example of its use.

It is perhaps the theological postulates and implications of this essentially Catholic art, even more than any particular biblical findings to which its practice may lead, which establish its great value. It cannot be intelligently brought into play without refreshing and deepening a man's belief in the divine authorship of the Scriptures and in the reality of God's creatorship and providence. The Mystical sense of the Scriptures (otherwise