

gance and his egotism. His melancholy was undoubtedly encouraged by the almost grotesque "father complex" which clouded his whole life. There is, indeed, something not far removed from the ridiculous in his persistency in brooding over his father's early incontinence, though we must admit that this frame of mind was inculcated into him by that father himself, who treated the luckless child as bound with himself in a "solidarity of sin." But it is to egotism that we must largely attribute his indulgence in a veritable luxury of self-condemnation, by reason of a short career of dissipation which seems to have amounted to nothing more serious than a few mild drinking bouts. His arrogance, again, is but too painfully obvious. He won the love of Regina Olsen, resolved he could not marry her, treated her in the most heartless manner, displayed resentment when she married another man, and then could, with obvious complacency, give vent to the reflection that she was immortalized in history by her association with himself. Copenhagen, then as now a city of advanced culture, he described as a provincial market-town, unworthy of housing him whom it could not appreciate! Instances of the intrusions of his vanity on his most profound thoughts could be multiplied, but enough has perhaps been said to show that in the opinion of the present reviewer the book, as it is, would have been vastly improved had it dealt in far less detail with the man himself, and in far more detail with his philosophy.

H. G. HANBURY.

KIERKEGAARD ET LA PHILOSOPHIE EXISTENTIELLE (*Vox clamantis in Deserto*). Par Léon Chestov, traduit du russe par T. Rageot et B. de Schloezer. (Paris: J. Vrin, pour Les Amis de Léon Chestov; 25 frs.)

LA PHILOSOPHIE DE GABRIEL MARCEL. Par Marcel de Corte. (Paris: Téqui; 12 frs.)

"Existential philosophy" by definition defies systematisation; indeed, if it is to be consistent with its own assumptions, it defies definition itself. Léon Chestov is well aware of the handicap, and of the impossibility of presenting anything approaching a schematic manual of Kierkegaard's thought. But he has undertaken to give as concise a presentation as the subject will allow; and that in fashion which Kierkegaard would admit: "indirect expression" attained by means of "sympathy" with Kierkegaard's own experience, expressed by an accumulation of ideas, impressions and antitheses rather than by formal exposition. The result is as lucid and illuminating account of Kierkegaard's "existential" philosophy as we dare hope to find. It may be questioned whether the lucidity has not been gained by a sacrifice

of the real complexity of the subject, by a selection and rejection of features which may be considered arbitrary; but we must be thankful for what we can get, and rejoice that little sacrifice has been made of the real power we find in Kierkegaard's writing. This book at least presents us with no bloodless skeleton. If we lose much that can be gained only by reading Kierkegaard's own books, we are given something which, without being enfeebled, is more manageable; something which we can more readily check and criticise. Our gratitude should not be diminished because, under the acknowledged influence of Dostoievsky, Kierkegaard is served for us *à la russe*.

It is impossible to separate Kierkegaard's philosophy from Kierkegaard the man. But that the man quite consciously and deliberately made mountains out of mole-hills ("He suffers abominably about trifles, and his sufferings are a bore to his acquaintance," he wrote of himself), does not permit us to deny that the mountains he made are mountains indeed in their immensity and splendour. For him, as against Aristotle, the beginning of philosophy is not wonder but despair; and doubtless his despair would not have led from such depths nor attained to such heights had it been possessed of more justification, and capable of evoking human sympathy. It would be even dangerous for us to overlook the fact that he was pathological, if that will sharpen our critical faculties in reading him, but the fact does not permit us to despise the service which his morbidity may render even to those more "healthy" than himself. We may recognise that he made a false start which led to false conclusions, but a more fundamental sanity prevented the utter self-annihilation—the complete rejection of Socrates in favour of a reason-repudiating fideism which he symbolised by Abraham, Job and Tertullian—to which his apprehension of the faith demanded by despair seemed to call him. He was a thinker—a great thinker—even in spite of himself, and *because* of his inconsistency. Chestov's book may make us ask—among many other things—whether he was not also an immanentist in spite of himself: an immanentist for whom faith is demanded, as it were automatically, by the natural exigencies of despair rather than by the "given" and supernatural revelation of God. At least it will often suggest that Kierkegaard should not be too readily and unwarily welcomed as an ally of the apologist.

But the despair into which his own idiotic trifling with Regina Olsen led him has had incalculable results on the direction taken by European thought since his day. ("Existential" is now a commonplace word in most civilised languages—English excepted.) To that strange *contretemps* we owe, directly or

#### NOTICES

indirectly, much of Barth and Brunner in Protestant theology; Jaspers and Heidegger and the phenomenologists generally; much, it would seem, in the "tragic" philosophers like Unamuno; and much in contemporary German Catholic writing. And now, into French Catholicism, and into the "Thomist" camp at that, comes the "existential" philosophy of the convert playwright, Gabriel Marcel. The fact has elicited from Marcel de Corte, the brilliant young thomist professor of the University of Liège, a series of essays on Marcel's philosophy, but which are of greater importance as a critique of existentialism generally. He contends that Kierkegaard's original existentialism was due, not to a rejection of objective thought rightly understood, but solely to the specifically Hegelian pretensions which so enraged him. De Corte is profoundly sympathetic, and essays "an integration of existentialism into a realistic ontology." In this brief review it must suffice to say that it is convincingly and brilliantly done.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

#### NOTICES

LA PATRIE ET LA PAIX. Textes Pontificaux commentés par Yves de la Brière, S.J., et P. M. Colbach, S.J. (Collection "Cathedra Petri.") (Desclée, de Brouwer; 25 frs.)

A most valuable collection. The authors have assembled translations of all the passages relevant to the problems of peace in the pontifical documents of Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV and Pius XI, with notes explanatory of the historical circumstances, allusions, exegetical problems. The book is first of all a striking demonstration of the immense labours of the Popes in the cause of peace; and such interesting diplomatic documents as the letter from Cardinal Gasparri to Mr. Lloyd George (Sept. 1917) concerning the peace proposals of Benedict XV are included. The arrangement of the book is calculated to help the reader to deal easily with this mass of material: the pontificates are taken in chronological order, each is preceded by a summary of the documents which follow, the documents themselves are given headings descriptive of their circumstances and purpose. At the end of the texts an *Essai de Synthèse Provisoire* is given, summing up the general principles and conclusions which may be drawn from them. There follow, in the second part of the book, the original versions of the texts, chronological lists, bibliography, indexes. The immense labour involved in the production of such a volume is obvious; its value should be equally obvious.

G. V.