

THE PRIESTHOOD AND PERFECTION. By Fr R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.
(Dominican Publications, Dublin; 9s. 6d.)

The author sees in the sanctification of the priest the true means of presenting faith and the supernatural to an age remarkable for its unbelief and naturalism. In preparing the apostle he insists that there must be no deviation from the supernatural, or concession to naturalism, as though the sanctification of a priest were merely the natural development of a personality.

The author treats first of faith as the basis of the supernatural life. He then treats of the general obligation to perfection and analyses this obligation in relation to religious, priests and bishops. The obligation for priests he establishes mainly from the nature of priestly ordination; the duties of the priest towards the sacramental body of Christ; his duties towards the Mystical Body of Christ.

This is a practical businesslike little book. Its concise brevity will come as a surprise to those familiar with the author's writings. To those who are not, its brevity might be the cause of obscurity, on occasions. It is not light reading and will not attract those who dislike the technical expressions of the theologian, or his preoccupation with determining just what is obligatory. But it is a clear statement of the theology of priestly perfection. It will be invaluable to those who have not read a great deal on the subject, and yet will be almost as useful to those who have. The layout of the book, and the different types used, are aids to clarity and quick reference, and add considerably to what is already excellent value.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. By Joseph de Guibert, S.J.
(Sheed and Ward; 18s.)

This is a translation of the author's *Theologia Spiritualis Ascetica et Mystica*. In any scientific treatise the order decided upon is of the greatest importance. Fr de Guibert has departed from the customary order based either on the distinction between ascetical and mystical, or on the Three Ways, or on the practice, growth and consummation of contemplation. He has done so because he thinks several questions of spiritual theology do not fit easily into such schemes, and that they belong to both the ascetical and mystical order, and must be treated when dealing with each of the Three Ways.

Fr de Guibert treats the more general questions first. He deals with the nature of perfection, its causes and the means of acquiring it. Then follow the more specialized questions of the Three Ways; the active and contemplative life; infused contemplation, and its relation to perfection and extraordinary phenomena. The last chapter is one of practical conclusions.

The author did not intend this to be a complete treatise, but one dealing only with the more important points of the subject, and those meriting fuller treatment than they usually receive. But his refusal to dwell on questions, strictly belonging to dogmatic and moral theology, enables him to cover considerable ground, and makes this a true manual of Spiritual Theology. One does not expect originality in a work of this kind, but the treatment of spiritual direction, and mental prayer, is particularly valuable. In controversial matters, such as acquired contemplation, he is prudent, patient and precise. In short, we have here an authoritative, theological, logical and practical treatise, calculated to interest, instruct and inspire.

THE POETIC DRAMA OF PAUL CLAUDEL. By Joseph Chiari. (Harvill Press; 15s.)

Much of this interesting book is for readers who know their Claudel well and like to hear other people's views about him. It is not for those who need assistance in making their way through his works, still less an introduction to it. Dr Chiari knows much of Claudel thoroughly and has reflected on the poet's work, and his judgments on most of the plays are sound. He enlivens his study of each drama with general considerations and never loses sight of the broader background.

He calls Claudel's vision the fresh and natural way of looking at things which belongs to primal man or to childhood;

'he sees things in images, and he sees things as they are, without any intellectual sophistication, and as part of the immutable ways of Nature'.

Instead of describing or analysing he aims at

'making us share with him the coming to consciousness of certain emotions and ideas'.

Dr Chiari calls him 'an uncouth primal being' (one thinks of Gide's comparison of his physical appearance to a sledge-hammer) and likens him, in his capacity for awe-inspiring grandeur and appalling platitudes, to Victor Hugo, with whom he shares also 'an exuberance of language and a visionary power unsurpassed in French literature'. It is indeed true that sometimes, like Hugo, he

'floats in the limbo world which lies between the abstract concept and the concrete sensuous realization of the creatures of the mind', but it is no reproach to say that his symbolism is 'imprecise'. A play is not a didactic allegory and our inability to be sure of the exact interpretation of all his symbols does not invalidate them or make them 'woolly'. Rhetoric is strong in both writers and Dr Chiari has a good page (p. 37) on the difference, for dramatic purposes, between good and bad rhetoric.