

## REVIEWS

AN ESSAY IN CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY. By Dom Illyd Trethowan. (Longmans; 12s. 6d.)

Dom Illyd's *Essay* turns out to be a whole succession of essays, with plenty of interest but not much continuity; difficult to discuss in limited space. Its central theme is our natural knowledge of God, round which the many other topics are loosely grouped. Philosophy for Dom Illyd is no academic game of system building, but an attempt to understand one's personal experience in its totality, an adventure that involves the whole of one's being: though for communication to others it should perhaps involve rather more logic too.

The early chapters insist that our minds should not be confined to discursive thinking *about* things, but can, indeed must, achieve a direct intuitive awareness of them, and of ourselves. We can then affirm with certainty that God exists, not by using syllogistic proof, but by becoming aware of his presence to ourselves and to all other things. When we fully attend to creatures we come to realize that they are in fact creatures, caused; when we fully attend to the workings of our own minds we come to realize that they are acted on by God. Dom Illyd brings forward a series of 'suasions', rather in the manner of the medieval Augustinians, to remove the obstacles preventing this realization of God's presence. He continues by treating various objections from Kant and the pages of *Mind*, and goes on to develop, in two chapters, the outlines of Christian ethical theory. Lastly comes a discussion of the psychology of conversion. Dom Illyd considers that the usual accounts unduly neglect the non-discursive activity of intellect, and thus give the will too considerable a role in the convert's first act of faith. In this connection it would have been interesting to know his views about Newman's 'illative sense'.

A book by an English Catholic philosopher is a rare and welcome event, and here there is the additional attraction of an approach which, though it will be familiar to readers of Lavelle and Le Senne, is still unusual in England. It is unfortunate, then, that this book is marked by a quite disproportionate amount of polemic, which gives it an undeservedly ephemeral air. Opposed views do not help to clarify one's own position unless presented with a sympathy that makes them appear plausible, not merely called in to be knocked down. Dom Illyd tends to attribute doctrines *a priori* to a school of philosophers, and then finds them in the writers whom he considers to be of that school—a curiously abstract procedure in a philosophy of the concrete.

One such school is referred to as that of 'official Thomism'. Yet

interpreters of St Thomas hold widely divergent philosophical positions, some of which—for example, Aimé Forest's—approximate to Dom Illtyd's own. The writings of St Thomas himself are seldom discussed, but on the one occasion when his views are set out at length (as expounded by Fr Copleston), the apparent opposition is due to the fact that Dom Illtyd is talking about something rather different. St Thomas held that the particularity of things, as felt by the senses, is normally lost when we begin talking about them; which is surely a matter of experience. It would be necessary to examine carefully what he says about the bases of metaphysics to discover whether he in fact thought that an intellectual grasp of individuality could be recovered.

A more serious over-simplification is implied by the use of the word 'logical positivist'. To be called a positivist by Dom Illtyd it is only necessary to write for *Mind*; which would matter less if it did not also involve being saddled with the views of the Vienna Circle on verification. This is especially unfortunate because a sympathetic study of the linguistic analysts by a Christian philosopher would benefit both sides as regards clarity of thought and depth of insight.

If this notice seems unduly critical, it is a measure of the interest of Dom Illtyd's essay; the faults of lesser books are more readily overlooked. It is recommended to anyone who is going to enjoy arguing with a highly stimulating person.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

THE LATIN LANGUAGE. By L. R. Palmer. (Faber and Faber; 45s.)

Professor Palmer's volume on the Latin language is a distinguished addition to the 'Great Languages' series of which he is now general editor. The declared purpose of the series is 'to provide, in a single volume, a comprehensive account of the history, structure, and characteristic achievement' of each language, and its development, 'as spoken and written', is shown 'in relation to the culture it served or serves'. It is surprising to find that the present volume is the first 'comprehensive history of Latin . . . in English since the rise of modern philology'. In the circumstances it is fortunate that the work comes from the hands of a scholar who is eminent as a classical philologist and notable for his wide and acute knowledge of modern writings on linguistics. The result is a handsome volume, rich in its learning, mature in its judgments and attractive in its style.

There are two parts to the work: Part I gives an outline history of the Latin language and Part II a comparative-historical grammar. In the first part Professor Palmer traces the history of the language beyond the time of the earliest extant written evidence and considers