

REVIEWS

L'OEUVRE THÉOLOGIQUE DU PÈRE AMBROISE GARDEIL. By H. G. Gardeil, O.P. (Le Saulchoir; 600 fr.)

The subject of this book, Père Ambroise Gardeil, O.P., has now been dead some twenty-five years. In the interval, his nephew has been able to assess his importance as a philosopher, apologist, and theologian, and now revives his memory. Born in 1859, he died in 1931. A short biographical notice, with a list of his publishing writings, may be found in the October number of the *Bulletin Thomiste* 1931 (Notes).

Here is a study of P. Gardeil's intellectual formation and development as a mature theologian as witnessed to by a close analysis of his published and unpublished writings arranged in chronological sequence. Though his earlier years were lived in obscurity, he became a celebrated professor and controversialist closely in touch with contemporary culture and every intellectual movement. He not only wrote extensively but in the course of time expounded the whole of the *Summa Theologica* at least twice. His life, however, was far from being one of unbroken tranquillity, since owing to the political and religious disturbances in France, he was twice forced into exile abroad. In his later years, he was engaged in a doctrinal apostolate, which found an outlet in his writings on spiritual theology, and in the preaching of retreats to religious. As professor and Regent of Studies in the Dominican Province of France he occupied a key position, and exerted a profound influence on the intellectual formation of the French Dominicans as well as in other parts of his Order. He was greatly responsible for the revival of interest in Thomist philosophy of which Gilson and Maritain are among the foremost exponents. In collaboration with such great personalities as Pères Coconnier, Mandonnet, and Sertillanges, he was the spirit of inspiration behind the foundation in 1893 of the *Revue Thomiste*. He was also closely associated with the launching of the *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* in 1907. Besides his published books and numerous lesser writings, he contributed as many as thirteen scholarly articles to the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. He was gifted with a particularly open and sympathetic mind enabling him to see what was good and sound in other systems of thought, although he may have been opposed to them on philosophical and theological grounds. His method of approach seems to have been not unlike that adopted in the realm of biblical criticism by Père M.-J. Lagrange, O.P., founder of the *École Biblique*, Jerusalem.

The background scene had been set by Pope Leo XIII's revival

of Thomism and its sequel the condemnation of modernism by Pope St Pius X. P. Gardeil's chief contribution in defence of the Church against modernism was *Le Donné révélé*, in which he refutes the theories of Loisy and Tyrrel. In his earlier days he had been for ten years mainly occupied with studies in the philosophy of the sciences, experimental psychology, and the validity of human knowledge, and he did not cease later to be interested in these topics. He realized that destructive criticism is not enough, but that there is a need also of reconciling faith with modern scientific thought. He is outstanding as a master of methodical thinking in the light of principles learnt from St Thomas. His firm conviction was that the Catholic philosopher and theologian should be *au courant* with the latest scientific findings, and so be in a position to meet all comers on equal terms. He contrived by the written and spoken word to stave off error, to win to the faith enlightened minds, and to safeguard those in the Church from succumb to the wave of scepticism and positivism.

The newly founded Institute of Philosophy at Louvain won his admiration, and he was in close correspondence with the then Mgr Mercier, though he differed from him particularly on some points of his criteriology. He was broadly in agreement with the Spanish Dominican Marin-Sola in his teaching on the evolution of dogma.

At the bidding of the Master General he joined a commission with De Groot and Lagrange to draft a syllabus for Dominican studies within the Order, which received the special approbation of Pope St Pius X.

The book will serve as an introduction to P. Gardeil's published works seen in their context. Learned societies, when at a loss for a profitable subject to discuss, may perhaps find inspiration here. And it may be read with profit by those amateurs who busy themselves with playing down Thomist philosophy and theology in favour of more esoteric and eclectic ways of thinking.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

THE SELF AND THE DRAMAS OF HISTORY. By Reinhold Niebuhr. (Faber; 21s.)

In spite of the deserved reputation of the author in both theology and political ethics, two things will limit the popularity and value of this book among Catholics. One is a somewhat abstruse metaphysical style, to which we are not yet accustomed in this country and which is hardly used by Catholics anywhere, and the other is his gross misunderstanding of Catholicism, especially in its Thomist dress. As for the language, I have in mind abstract expressions such as 'principles of meaning', 'structures of meaning', 'rationally analysable