

## REVIEWS

MIRACLES: A PRELIMINARY STUDY. By C. S. Lewis (Bles; 10s. 6d.)

The qualities that we have long since learnt to expect from Mr Lewis's books—clarity of thought, strict logic, cogent argument, and the power of absorbing the reader's attention—are all very much in evidence in this latest work. You could hardly wish for a stronger defence-by-explanation, not only of miracles, but also—for the book covers much more ground than the modest title suggests—of the whole idea of supernatural religion. Mr Lewis shows the self-contradictoriness of the 'naturalist' theory: the theory that all reality is a single interlocked system of Nature; and points out how that system is in fact being constantly 'invaded' by what is supernatural to it, the life of mind. Thence he takes us to the existence of a self-subsistent mind, and to the idea of creation: the relation between Nature and God being such that 'everything looks as if Nature were not resisting an alien invader but rebelling against a lawful sovereign'. A criticism of Hume leads on to a demonstration of the metaphysical 'fitness' of miracle, and a discussion of the grand miracle, the Incarnation, to which all other miracles are related.

But, as was also to be expected, the book abounds in incidental suggestions of great value. One of the things Mr Lewis puts most forcibly is the fact that our modern subrational dislike of the supernatural, the intellectual climate of our times, is not an advance from Christianity but a relapse, a retrogression to primitivism. There are valuable passages on the idea of descent and re-ascent as the 'very formula of Reality' as a whole; and an equally valuable underlining of the tragic pass to which modern man has been brought through his loss of myth and symbol—robbed of the theological education which ought to come to him through these channels and therefore forced to seek the supernatural, if at all, through abstruse reasoning, a burden which 'plain men were never expected to bear before'.

A further train of thought is suggested by the discussion of supernatural (psychic) and supernatural (divine). It seems possible to distinguish three classes of 'invasions' of nature: (a) evidences of abnormal *psychic* power over matter; (b) evidences of the power over matter of an *engraced* personality, either partially recapturing what was before the Fall or partially anticipating what will be after the resurrection of the body (e.g. in saints' lives, their relationship with animals, perhaps some of their healings); and (c) evidences of direct divine intervention in ways beyond human nature in any condition, as in raisings from the dead. The collection and assessment of material for (a) goes on; it may be questioned whether sufficient study has been given by theologians to (b) in contrast to (c), and yet it is of vital importance in any study of the ordinary economy of grace in terms of cosmic power and energy. If Satanism has its

the line of thought that unifies the historical narrative, and it is a pity that the author felt himself impelled to shirk the fullness of the implications which he brings to light. There are several places where the conclusion is obviously thrusting at his reluctant mind, that the health of European society today needs renewed acceptance of all three of the main traditions that he describes, the religious legacy of Israel (supernatural faith in Christianity), the Greek ideal of freedom and the Roman reverence for law, the last two being unified and informed by the first. But when it comes to the point, we read: 'For a world-view centred in sense there must be substituted a world-view centred in God. This in no way implies a sterile return to the tradition of medievalism'. After that last neat portmanteau sentence packed so full of muddle and prejudice one is not surprised to find the Conclusion presenting 'The Christian religion as the synthesis of the Hebraic and Hellenic legacies' (only). The author shows clearly enough that he did not really think the tradition of medievalism sterile. No one would advocate a sterile return to anything. But a fruitful return to the tradition of medievalism must mean a return to the church which inherits the Roman discipline, a thought from which the argument keeps shying away. The Catholic reader will not always be satisfied with accounts of Christian doctrine, e.g., we are told that it is impossible to 'draw any clear line of demarcation between those of Christ's actions which are due to his divine and those which are due to his human nature', St Cyril of Alexandria being interpreted in a Monophysite sense in support of this position.

Ivo THOMAS, O.P.

EXISTENTIALISM. By Guido de Ruggiero, with an Introduction by Rayner Heppenstall. (Secker & Warburg; 5s.)

EXISTENTIALISME ET ACTE D'ETRE. By Benoit Pruche. O.P. (B. Arthaud; Grenoble and Paris, 140fr.)

Professor de Ruggiero abuses the existentialists on the first page and calls them self-deceivers on the second; a quick start, even for such a short essay. There has, however, been some provocation, and one can sympathise with the Professor's complaint.

But there is not much to recommend in this book except the last four pages. Mr Heppenstall's introduction is well-informed on the whole, but de Ruggiero's historical sketch is decidedly ungenerous—perhaps because he dislikes both Christianity and Atheism which seem to be the two opposed outcomes of the movement (so to call it). He abominates Heidegger and sneers at Marcel. His idealism revolts against philosophers who treat sin and death not only as data to be understood, but also as indications of our actual position in reality. For de Ruggiero the notion of 'nothing' is purely and simply and in every sense a mental negation of being; in *no* sense at all does nothing precede being. Hence our existence is in no sense *ex nihilo*; it does not, in fact, connote a reality suspended between nothing and God—