

REVIEWS

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

LA VRAIE VIE CHRETIENNE. By A. Gardeil. (Desclée de Brouwer; 20 frs.)

These are fragments that would have gone towards the composition of a comprehensive and synthetic work on Christian spirituality which the late Père Gardeil, O.P., had projected but never accomplished. A great part of the matter has already appeared in articles in the *Revue Thomiste* and *Vie Spirituelle*. And yet we can be doubly grateful to his nephew, Père H.-D. Gardeil, for the production of this book: first, because more of Père Gardeil's invaluable work is made accessible, and secondly because he himself has sketched in outline a plan and reconstruction of the whole work as originally intended. And this last is of particular value inasmuch as it exemplifies that which all thomists should have at heart—a whole, synthetic, structural view of Christian ascetical teaching and practice (*structure* was a favourite notion with Père Gardeil). An all-embracing vision, cohesion and sequence of thought, and other kindred elements, go towards forming that "architectural" habit of mind whose great achievement is to be seen in the plan of the *Summa. Sapientis est ordinare*. Spiritual readings and ascetical literature in general often treat of profound, excellent matter: but too often it may be uncorrelated, departmentalized. The need is not so much for various *Meditations for Every Day in the Year* but rather for an ascetical doctrine that presents Christian life as a unity. There can be no doubt that Père Gardeil, had he lived, would have shown us *la vraie vie chrétienne* in its fulness as a synthetic whole.

The present work, such as we have it, will be relished by those who seek strong meat rather than sweetmeats in ascetical teaching. Page after page is quarried straight from St. Thomas and hewn into its French form; and time and again we can note points of profound psychological analysis and a masterly knowledge of souls. Noteworthy too is the happy use of etymology in explanations and definitions. Occasionally an apologetic preoccupation—e.g. as regards "la moral laïque"—will interest French rather than English readers.

The publication of this work of ascetic theology in the *Bibliothèque Française de Philosophie* is not without a certain piquancy: perhaps enough to kindle a debate on the nature of Christian philosophy. Yet we have no doubt that the editors have acted rightly.

ROLAND D. POTTER, O.P.

THE TEACHING OF ST. AUGUSTINE ON PRAYER AND THE CONTEMPORATIVE LIFE. By Fr. Hugh Pope, O.P. (Burns Oates; 6/-.)

The teaching of St. Augustine on prayer is a subject on which there are not many books in any language, and certainly very