

**St. Thomas and the Existence of God:** Three Interpretations. By William Bryar. Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1951. pp. xxv and 252. \$5.00.

It would be difficult to name two intellectual disciplines that are more opposed in their historical beginnings and the spirit that motivates them than Logical Positivism and Thomism. Yet here is a study in which the methods of Logical Positivism are applied to a detailed analysis of St. Thomas' first proof for the existence of God. Ostensibly written for those trained in the tradition of Wittgenstein and the *Weiner Kreis*, it shows not only that there need be no open conflict between Thomism and modern logical methods, but even that the latter can be fruitfully employed in clarifying the thought and expression of the Angelic Doctor.

The main part of the treatment is necessarily technical, and will not be understood by those who have no foundation in modern logic. However, the author has explained the general lines of his thought in non-technical language in the Preface, and has similarly summarized his interpretations of the proof in a chapter entitled "General Conclusions." He has also added four Appendices, one dealing with the parallel arguments of St. Thomas in the *Contra Gentiles*, a second on the contemporary thought of Arabian commentators on Aristotle, a third on Salamucha's and Bochenski's use of mathematical logic on the *Contra Gentiles'* text, and a final one summarizing various expositions of modern Thomists on the meaning of St. Thomas' terms and textual development. The entire work is tentative and exploratory, with the accent on explication of meaning rather than on actual demonstration, and thus it is radically different from the traditional commentaries on the *prima via*.

Whether or not Mr. Bryar has made a significant contribution to the understanding of St. Thomas' argument from motion cannot be easily ascertained from the first, or even the fifth, reading. Actually the evaluation of his contribution is more a problem for a dissertation than a book review. But there is no doubt that he has opened up new avenues of thought in the study of St. Thomas, and his work merits serious attention among Thomists who are interested in modern logical developments. His publisher is also to be congratulated for undertaking the publication of a work that obviously will not be a "best seller," but nevertheless is a pioneering venture in a new, and difficult, field of interpretative study.

A.W.