

meditation is a singularly attractive volume, condensed and largely re-written, the fruit of a gay humility which would have won the heart of St Robert himself, who by general consent was 'of a peculiarly genial type' and a man 'of a pleasant and playful manner,' and 'of a loving courtesy'. Indeed gaiety and affability in him went hand in hand and explain much of the success of his life-work, the *Controversies*, for which he has always been renowned. It was his mildness that helped him so much to defend the Church against the attacks of the heretics, and drew numbers of his readers into the true fold. His moderation in argument was indeed remarkable in an age 'when controversy, never a school for chivalry, was like a snake-pit. With Luther's awful example as an inspiration the heretics stopped at nothing in the way of abuse and scurrility, the majority of Catholic writers paid them back in their own coin'.

One English Protestant, Andrew Willet, after giving numerous examples of Catholic intemperance of language, admitted that Bellarmine was 'the mildest and most modest child of the crue (crew)', and confessed that in all the two million words of the *Controversies* he could only discover a dozen with even the appearance of abuse. But not all approved of Bellarmine's moderation in argument; the heretics were angered by its success amongst their followers, whilst many Catholics maintained that he was confirming his opponents in their error by his very mildness, and some went so far as to accuse him of supplying them by his many quotations and extracts from the Fathers with arguments against Catholicism which they themselves would not have had the wit to manufacture.

If in the midst of these dark clouds of opposition the saint's kindly nature shone thus brightly, we can well imagine what a constant joy his company must have been to his brethren in religion, exemplified at its peak by his tender care of the angelic youth Aloysius whom he so lovingly attended during his illness and at his death. The young saint died in 1591, thirty years before St Robert, who through all those years never missed his annual pilgrimage to the grave of his spiritual son.

Of the other great features of his life, his work as a professor, his labours as a diocesan bishop and as a cardinal in curia, Fr Brodrick has an equally interesting story to unfold, making his book surely one of the best biographies of a saint in modern times.

WALTER GUMBLET, O.P.

AND WE THE PEOPLE, by Tim O'Neill. Geoffrey Chapman, 21s.

Fr O'Neill spent ten years in the forties and fifties working as a missionary in New Britain among primitive Melanesian tribes. The outstanding quality of his book is his evident love and respect for the tribesmen: there is no question here of colonial and colonial-missionary attitudes—'They are incapable of learning', 'They can't be expected to be good Catholics, they are only poor

natives after all', 'Natives don't understand kindness, even from a priest'. Fr O'Neill sitting for hours patiently gathering stories of Nutu the Creator, Saia the Evil Spirit, Porekanu and Sanauga the good and mischievous Little People, and comparing these with Catholic faith and Irish legend, was working in the great tradition of Ricci and De Nobili. Mission work should never be the imposition of beliefs and practices from outside, many of them reflecting the history of European Catholicism rather than the essential development of the faith and life of the Church. It must begin from a desire to learn and understand, to assimilate and encourage others to retain, whatever is of most value in a culture or way of life.

The book has been written up from a diary, written at the end of the day's work or march in camps and village rest-houses. It is interesting to hear of communal property-systems among the Melanesians, or of judicial sentence by denunciation, unenforced yet leading infallibly to suicide or flight into exile; yet this is not an anthropological work. There is a lot of discussion of missionary methods, but again this is not a handbook of missiology. The style is direct and lively, though one may wonder if the bluff Irish heartiness does not occasionally become something of a pose.

JEROME SMITH, O.P.

DISPUTED QUESTIONS, by Thomas Merton; Hollis and Carter, 21s.

*Disputed Questions* is not really a satisfactory title for this book (as the author himself almost admits). Something like *Living Questions* or *Relevant Questions* would perhaps have been more indicative of its contents. Part of the trouble is that the questions raised throughout this book are simply not disputed enough—this itself is one of the author's major themes. Merton, from the sanity of his monastery, and by no means cut off from the world in spirit and understanding, is able to suggest to us, in part at least, where lie the roots of our present malaise. His concern is to bring out in most human terms the significance of *person* as against the false significance of *individual*. He ranges far and wide, from Russian literary dilemmas to the monks of Mount Athos, from the problem of sacred art to the meaning of Christian solitude. Admirers of *Elected Silence*, says the blurb, will rediscover here the Merton they know, but admirers of *No Man is an Island*, I also suggest, will see here how he has been able to project further, and with such value, the significance of the doctrine which he outlined to us there.

GILES HIBBERT, O.P.