

used to reveal the truth to us and to bring it home.' In this way he makes very sure at the outset that the notion of grace is clear to his readers. Then after considering the institution of the sacraments, their power and the part we must play in receiving them, he comes to the main work of the book which is to consider in some detail (150 pages as against 30 or so of introduction) the two 'routine' or daily sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. True, he has nothing new to say, but it is the manner of saying which is valuable. He writes colourfully with numerous illustrations from contemporary life, vivid images and metaphors, but all the time the fundamental principles of the Church's teaching on the sacraments are being driven home. The use of the Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church and the saints and mystics is flexible and thoroughly well adapted to its purpose, which is to enlighten the mind. Nor does learning bear down heavily on the work. Frequently one is startled to find that here is nothing more than St Thomas' plain teaching; but it is so competently and neatly applied to our practical problems that we cannot believe it is so old. A neat explanation of *reviviscentia* freshens the mind, and simple practical instructions about making a good communion or preventing frequent confessions going stale make this an admirable book for routine spiritual reading, and for priests who want to pass on the advice to others.

THE WINDOW IN THE WALL. By Ronald Knox. (Burns & Oates; 15s.)

On the back of the dust-cover of this book are to be found two arresting titles, *In Soft Garments*, *The Hidden Stream*. The greatness, and it is true greatness, of Monsignor Knox's preaching shows itself in his power to command our attention with the first words he utters. And he never loses that command; I found myself forcibly carried along in reading these sermons on the Holy Eucharist delivered annually over the last twenty years at Corpus Christi, Maiden Lane. But this command springs from no brittle urbanity; true, Mgr Knox has all the superficial virtues, but style always serves matter. The first sermon which gives the title to the book is an excellent example. Mgr Knox takes the text from the Canticle of Canticles, 'And now he is standing on the other side of this very wall; now he is looking through each window in turn, peering through every chink. I can hear my true love calling to me, Rise up, rise up quickly, dear heart, so gentle, so beautiful, rise up and come with me.' At first he appears merely to be setting the text in its context, until with the art of a great preacher he plunges us right into the middle of the situation with the remark, 'that voice at the window brings to my own mind a fancy which I have often had . . . that the glittering Disc of whiteness which we see occupying that round opening [in the monstrance] is not reflecting the light of the

candles in front of it but is penetrated with a light of its own, a light not of this world, shining through it from behind, as if through a window. . . .’ He might well have stopped there and drawn some moral lesson, but no, the ‘strong meat’ of theology is yet to come. The window is in a wall, the ‘wall of our corrupt nature . . . and through that wall the Incarnation and the Passion of Jesus Christ have made a great window . . . made a breach in our citadel, let light into our prison’. Yet again this is not a thing that happened once and was done with, it is for all eternity, and we have a pledge of that in the Eucharist where ‘In this mystery of Transubstantiation, he has broken into the very heart of nature’, and so the wall of partition is no longer a wall of partition. What a superb and masterly way of bringing home the truth that Christ’s Incarnation is the raising and transformation of our human nature here and now for us. There we have an example of Mgr Knox’s power to command and at the same time his suavity of style; they spring together from a firm grasp of the truths of religion and a severe discipline of thought. But there is yet one more quality which sweetens everything: for all that his mind has been devoted to learning all his life, his eyes have never been taken off his fellow men, and we can find reflected in them love and humility. So in the end every extended metaphor, every image, every scrap of scholarship and learning is drawn to some direct, practical and gentle conclusion. ‘I wonder, is that why some of us are so frightened of Holy Communion, because we still cling to the world of sense?’ ‘When you pray for the Pope’s intentions at Mass, take your stand beside him in imagination, the man on whom we Christians, millions of us, have laid the burden of our common solicitudes.’ One cannot take up, still less put down, this book without very great gratitude to Monsignor Knox for making the truths of our faith real and bringing them home to us firmly and yet tenderly. This is work that will last and stand beside Cardinal Newman and will be read again and again.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE SACRAMENTS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. By M. M. Philipon, O.P.

Translated by J. A. Otto. (Sands; 16s.)

Readers who are used to this kind of book will like it. It gives an adequate theology of the sacraments, ‘and provides as well many passages suitable for meditation’: this from the dust-cover. The theology will be swallowed because it is given in familiar abstract terms, but it will remain undigested because the author himself has never succeeded in digesting it; he has only made it palatable with a wrapping of devotional platitude (probably less wearisome in French). Genuine theology implies personally understanding the content of