

REVIEWS

ARISTOTLE'S 'DE ANIMA', WITH A COMMENTARY OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS. Translated by Kenelm Foster, O.P., and Sylvester Humphries, O.P. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 42s.)

A scientific work of philosophy such as this, with its detailed and excellent introduction by Ivo Thomas, O.P. (who puts the work into its historical context and instructs the reader on how to use it), might seem irrelevant to the study of the life of the spirit. But this commentary of St Thomas on the nature of the soul will always be of the utmost importance to anyone who wishes to make a serious invasion into the realms of spiritual theology, both practical and theoretic. This combined work of Aristotle and St Thomas reveals the tool with which the latter fashioned the pure stone of revelation and perfected the graceful figure of the human person. Without that tool the stone would have remained a mysterious mass of rock upon which the Church stood, but which could be seen in different shapes and likenesses according to the different lights in which it was seen, and the different types of people who saw it. But St Thomas's tool has revealed this permanent object of admiration and emulation, the Christian man. The modern zest for psychology should be tempered by the same method as Catholic theology, and above all those who are concerned with spiritual states and progress should learn the principles here set forth. If those who so easily tend to separate body and soul should come to understand what St Thomas means when he says that 'the body is potential to the actuality that comes from its soul' (p. 177), how much surer would be their attitude to the Incarnation and to mortification. If they would take the trouble to read with care this very profound and difficult commentary, they would learn where grace may first be received and how it can be said to sanctify the soul and then the soul's faculties. They would learn, too, what is essential to the functioning of the soul and what accidental, what is imagination and sense, and what is of the mind and will; what the relation is between the emotions and the experience of such mysterious things as the presence of God. These things are not mentioned, but this tool can be made to follow delicately over the surface of the human person. The joint authors show how the intellect depends on the senses (p. 456); and by showing that they give the death-blow to all the false illuminisms which suppose that the spirit of a Christian can grow superior to and independent of imagination or sight.

If it be argued that such a book is only for specialists and might have been left in its original Latin, it should be remembered that few special-

ists—particularly psychological and spiritual ones—are really at home with the classic tongue. Many more people will be able to take this book down from the library shelves and begin to understand what the ancient ‘rational psychology’ was about and how it can apply to moral practice. The translators have carried out their difficult task with success, if not distinction (for it would be almost impossible to turn this practical Latin into distinguished English prose). The book is readable and accurate. But no one unfamiliar with St Thomas’s commentaries on Aristotle should begin to read without first mastering the Introduction by Father Thomas. ‘We should’, he says, ‘read the Commentary as an exposition of an enquiry composed within a living tradition still vitally active in speculation.’ (p. 15.)

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

THE PEOPLE’S PRIEST. By John C. Heenan. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

‘The reader’, says Dr Heenan by way of preface, ‘will find little enough in these chapters about the deeper spiritual life of the priest. My object in writing is much more modest. It is to give younger priests the results of twenty years’ experience in the ministry. I cannot tell them what they ought to do. I know, by recalling past blunders what they should avoid. I shall suggest how the priest in a parish can seek and find perfection in his own state.’ The twenty-two chapters which follow are eminently readable, often amusing and always practical. And accordingly the clergy will like them. The narrative is intensely personal without being in the least egoistic.

As one would expect from the title, the book is mainly concerned with the attitude to be adopted towards the pastorate. Dr Heenan deals in turn with all the aspects and manifestations of parish life: the sick, the poor, the institutions and the rest. He speaks clearly from experience and stresses the importance, which indeed can never be exaggerated, of compassion and of kindness. He rightly stresses the importance of visiting. The chapters on the administration of the sacraments, and especially confession, are outstandingly good. He writes with a virile tenderness about our Blessed Lady and he has a first-rate chapter on ‘The Work of Conversion’ in which he has had so great experience. All these things are illustrated with a wealth of scriptural quotation.

Dr Heenan is always stimulating but sometimes provocative. And occasionally one pauses to consider whether what he says is really the mind of the Church. When for example he says: ‘The breviary can easily become an obstacle to our prayer of thanksgiving’, he might seem to suggest that private prayer is to be preferred to the *Opus Dei*. It is rather surprising that in his chapter on Prayer he has less than one page on the Divine Office. And even in that small space he takes the surely defeatist line that ‘for the most part the Office will be a burden’.