

REVIEWS

SACRAMENTAL PRAYER. By Conrad Pepler, O.P. (Bloomsbury Publishing Co.; 10s. 9d.)

It can happen that a collection of articles, in the first place written for a review, has only a fictitious unity when raised to the permanence of hard covers. But the essential harmony of Fr Conrad Pepler's writing on liturgical subjects does in fact give coherence to these eleven chapters, most of which originally appeared in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*. Twenty years have passed since Fr Pepler's *Lent*, an extended commentary on the liturgy of the season, was published in America, and it is interesting to recall how his theological understanding of the roots of liturgical prayer anticipated much that has been written in English since then. Now that the liturgy has become so acceptable a subject for popularization, it is worth remembering that recent developments (which even the most conservative of authorities have not altogether been able to suppress) owe much to the patient advocacy of such writers as Fr Pepler. He has constantly applied the resources of a considered theology to the pastoral implications of the liturgical prayer of the Church.

Thus it is that such questions as 'The Body in Worship' or 'The Worship of Images', as well as the more specifically liturgical subjects discussed, are given a dimension unusual in untechnical writing. And it is because the seven sacraments are so surely seen to be 'the foundations of all prayer whether liturgical or private' that this is so. This sturdy understanding of the sacramental 'thing' gives vitality to the whole discussion, and translates the liturgy from the arcane territory of the specialist or the partisan to its normative place in the total life of the Church.

Sacramental Prayer is to be commended, then, as a reasoned introduction to the life of prayer in union with the true mind of the Church. But one must question the argument that (in the Middle Ages) 'Gregorian [chant] had already succumbed to its inherent weakness of too great a simplicity and purity'. It is hard to see that excellence can be a weakness! And in passing one must also ask why the publishers have fixed so eccentric a price for a book which should be in popular demand.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

THE LIFE OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS: BIOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTS. Translated and edited with an introduction by Kenelm Foster. (Longmans; 30s.)

The two main documents here translated are the life by Bernard