

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

Gui, and the depositions made at the canonization enquiry; both date from some forty-five years after St Thomas's death. A few other relevant documents are also included, and extensive notes (twenty-two pages of small type for Gui). The translation reads admirably, and makes one regret that Fr Kenelm did not have better material to work on. Biography in the thirteenth and fourteenth century was at a low ebb, a long time had gone by, and the life itself was pretty uneventful: the canonization witness rarely comes to life, and Gui is tedious in the extreme.

If one wants to read the life of St Thomas, this is of course the best place to do it; there is none of the sentimentality of modern hagiography, and the variant versions have not yet been smoothed over. Did he or did he not eat the herrings (pp. 86 and 95)? Sometimes the right version seems obvious: the donnish teasing of 'I would rather have Chrysostom on Matthew' as told by Bartholomew of Capua (p. 109) is ruined by the moralizing addition in Gui (p. 52). But is it true (as Fr Kenelm suggests in the Introduction) that we need more than the saint's own writings to see him as a person? Surely the saints who live for us are those we can still read. St Paul, St Augustine, St Theresa have no need of biographers; and even where there are good contemporary lives, as of St Anselm and St Aelred, and the writing itself is more abstract, it is still in the writing that we know them. St Thomas is certainly more difficult; yet to me at least he seems closer when he is expressing his own highly characteristic views than in many of the 'holy stories' repeated here. Still it is pleasant to know that the *Contra Gentiles* was written on odd bits of scribbling paper (p. 103), and no student of the *Summa* will be surprised to learn that he was capable of dictating in his sleep (p. 51).

The notes are somewhat burdensome; it might have been better had those of interest to the general reader been put with the text, rather than buried with the elaborate historical references, admirable and thorough as these are. More of the general explanations would have helped: the references to days in purgatory (p. 40) or his confessor's lighthearted breaking of the seal (p. 57) will puzzle readers, and the student would like to know what that 'striking and original' treatment of mathematics might be (p. 131). Fr Kenelm can do this sort of comment very well when he wants, as his notes on the letter from the arts faculty show (p. 156). These are only minor criticisms. Granted the job was worth doing, it could scarcely have been better done.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

FREE SPEECH IN THE CHURCH. By Karl Rahner. (Sheed and Ward; 4s.) Many people learning that 'free speech in the Church' was about to be discussed by a competent theologian wrote in at once to get the