

answers to the perennial questions raised by St Joan's life: why did she continue to dress as a man? When did she disobey the 'voices'? What effect did she really have on the military situation? etc.

It is because he works most carefully over these preliminary questions that Stolpe is so convincing in the last section of his book, which gives a detailed account of her capture, imprisonment, trial and death. Already, before we arrive at this last act, the athletic, impulsive, racy village girl that she was has taken on flesh and blood, so that we find no difficulty in understanding her reactions—not even her denial of the 'voices'. And for a twentieth-century reader there is something uncanny in the resemblances between the techniques of persecution applied to Joan and those now being applied in our own day. If commissars were subscribers to *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* one would recommend them to read this book for their salvation; the same goes for ecclesiastics and Senators.

Finally, Stolpe tells us that he has written a supplementary work to this one, on the crisis within research on St Joan. It would be good to have it in English.

DONALD NICHOLL

*THE BASIS OF THE MYSTICISM OF ST THOMAS.* By Fr Conrad Pepler, O.P. (Aquinas Paper No. 21. Blackfriars Publications; 2s.)

The impact of Tresmontant's study, *La pensée hébraïque*, upon the mind of Fr Pepler is writ large in this recent Aquinas Paper. And for this we are duly grateful, since Tresmontant has neatly summarized the antithesis to Hebrew thought presented by the conceptual procedure of the Greeks, and has shown how the most vital modern thought is breaking loose from Greek abstractions to enjoy that concrete knowledge of individuals so beloved of the Hebrews. Fr Pepler has applied Tresmontant's findings to the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas to show that St Thomas's mysticism is grounded in the Scriptures, and is thereby closely related to the Hebrew modes which dominate the Scriptures. St Thomas's teaching on this subject has been neglected, he maintains, because 'his successors, instead of following in his footsteps and developing to the full the thomistic principles of mystical union in the Word of God, ignored the virgin soil that he had ploughed and either continued to cultivate the deceptively lush platonic plains or began to dash across the whole land fascinated by the mechanical perfection of their new scholastic tractors'. The villain of the piece is platonic idealism in combat with the Aristotelian realism stated by St Thomas, the latter being 'the best tool for penetrating to the Spirit of the Bible and so tasting of the heights of mysticism more securely'.

But, as Tresmontant points out (p. 33), Aristotle was as Greek as they

make them in his conception of time, which is so opposed to that of the Hebrews. Furthermore, as Fr Pepler himself emphasizes, St John of the Cross—in the neo-platonic tradition—comes much nearer to the poetic, concrete Biblical manner of expression than does St Thomas Aquinas with his Aristotelian realism. Again that sharp sense of the contingent so characteristic of the Hebrew mind has its closest parallel in Duns Scotus rather than St Thomas (whose account of individuation is so clearly derived from Greek theories). I do not raise these queries because I doubt the main lesson of this new Aquinas pamphlet—that Christian mysticism must ever be incarnational and scriptural—but because I can see no future for the side-issues of platonism, aristotelianism, etc. By all means let us read Plato, Aristotle and St Thomas, but let us then forget their alien terminology and express the vision as it is given to us by their aid. It is when he does this that Fr Pepler's pamphlet is so rewarding; for it is when he expresses his own vision that he 'speaks to our condition'.

DONALD NICHOLL

WHAT LAW AND LETTER KILL. The Spiritual Teaching of Fr Francis Devas, S.J. Edited by Philip Caraman, S.J. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

The late Fr Devas was known to thousands of Catholics as a preacher and retreat giver, and they will be grateful to Fr Caraman for having undertaken this work, which is a series of extracts from sermons preached by Fr Devas during the last twenty years of his life. Fr Devas never published any of his sermons, but they were taken down and preserved by some of his admirers, and it is from these that Fr Caraman has taken the extracts which form this book. They are well chosen, and illustrate admirably the spiritual teaching of Fr Devas, a teaching which is characteristic of its author, simple, practical, full of common-sense, and yet profound, showing the depth of his knowledge of the spiritual life. Fr Devas understood people, their problems and their difficulties, and many of the extracts given here show how he can be of great assistance to all who wish to live the full Christian life. The style throughout is direct and accurate, although in extract 38 the language is more imaginative than theological.

F.P.

IRELAND OF THE SAINTS. By D. D. C. Pochin Mould. (Batsford; 21s.)

'This book', says its author, 'is an attempt to write about one of the many Irelands, Ireland of the Saints, an attempt to describe how Christianity came to Ireland, and how it developed there and then came to influence and change the rest of the Christian world.' This attempt, it may be said, has been attended with remarkable success. The many