

BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION. By Raoul Plus, s.J. (Challoner Publications; 8s. 6d.)

This book was published in French in the late 1920's (though the publishers give no date at all), and it is not worth putting into English so late in the day. Sleeping-cars instance modern progress, the two-inch gun modern weapons, and similarly the teaching the book gives trails behind the times. For it is a common-place observation that theology in the last few years has made particularly fruitful advances in sacramental theology. The study of typology in the Bible has shown what vigour the concept of baptism had for the early Christians, whom Jesus from his mount of Ascension directed to their promised land through the passage of the waters, just as his forerunner Moses on the mountain sent the tribes forward where he himself would not go. The sacraments have been re-evaluated as sacred signs (back here to St Augustine and St Thomas), and the rites and aspirations of the mystery-religions are seen superabundantly fulfilled in our intimacy with the divine through the cleansing waters and the sacred bread.

Instead of this, what we have is a prolix concern with agnostic onslaughts of the last century. And the proportions of the book are wrong: the subject of baptism is grounded on studies of the supernatural order and the fall and the redemption and the institution of the sacrament (a section which modern criticism would transform): which culminates in no more than a material description of the ceremonies, and the purity, generosity and joy which should characterize the Christian. The paschal vigil is not mentioned. In his chapter on the possibilities of salvation for unbaptized adults the author is restricted by the outlook of his times, giving prominence to the untenable theories of Cardinal Billot, who did not see that moral judgments were inevitably involved in any properly human activity, and distinguishing between the body and the soul of the church, which disjunction the teaching of the late Pope's encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* of 1943 thenceforward disallowed.

The faults are partly due to the author, but he was writing for his times, over thirty years ago; the faults are much more the publishers', who should be of our own times, aware of its needs. This series began so promisingly; let us hope it will now pick up again to further the liturgical appreciation which is professedly its aim.

THEODORE TAYLOR, O.P.

THE MEANING OF GRACE. By Charles Journet. (Geoffrey Chapman; 12s. 6d.)

This book, which is written in a pleasant and easy style, was originally a series of talks. It sets out to explain in simple language the doctrine