

Reviews

THE THEOLOGY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER. By John D. Godsey; S.C.M. Press, 25s.

The name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is becoming increasingly widely coupled with that of other great theologians of the twentieth century, notably with that of Karl Barth. The number of studies devoted to Bonhoeffer is growing steadily; Mr Godsey has assembled an impressive list of them in his (by no means complete) bibliography. The time has clearly come for Bonhoeffer to rise from his martyr's grave to new life in the pages and footnotes of doctoral theses. Not that Mr Godsey's book is in any way typical of this *genre*; it is far too clear, too readable, notwithstanding his scholarly thoroughness and the somewhat scholastic style of his divisions and subdivisions. The exposition appears to be both complete, balanced and occasionally penetrating. And yet, there is something elusively and curiously unconvincing and artificial about it. The reason for this is not that Mr Godsey's book is inadequate to its subject. It is rather that its subject does not lend itself to academic treatment of this kind; or, at any rate, that Bonhoeffer does not lend himself to academic treatment without being removed from the dimension in which his greatness lies.

Even the most theological of his writings are unmistakably a personal testimony. They are born from the need to re-examine the foundations of his hope and faith in the face of the widespread readiness of Christians to come to terms with the 'world'—in Bonhoeffer's case, with the world of Hitler's Germany. His death in the concentration camp at Flossenbürg in 1945 clinched a career to which, in retrospect, it seemed the logical conclusion. His theological writings are woven closely into the fabric of his life. They are always the concrete, personal reflections of a man living through trial and crisis, both shaping his response to his experience and being shaped by it. In them we encounter a man in search of the 'wholeness' required of a Christian, a wholeness which is perhaps one of the most distinctive and most fundamental conceptions of his theology. To consider the theology in abstraction from the life is inevitably to do it grave injustice; for Bonhoeffer was not great enough as a theologian to justify such treatment, and he was too great a man in other ways to be caught in the meshes of so scholarly and abstract a net.

R. A. MARKUS

THE EUCHARIST IN CATHOLIC LIFE. By Lawrence G. Lovasik, s.v.d.; New York—The Macmillan Company; 31s. 6d.

The publishers announce that 'At once a compendium of information and a devotional manual, this unusual book is a complete guide to all that is known on the great Sacrament of the Eucharist'; no wonder we find the dedication is to

Jesus Christ. It was predictable that the emphasis would lean to edification, and with this end in view Fr Lovasik writes with stolid earnestness and frequent recourse to his *Treasury of Catechism Stories*. The readers he has in mind are presumably nuns, especially teaching nuns, and they will of course find much material here. But in such a book over-simplified statements can foster common misapprehensions, and we will dwell on three examples. First, reception of the sacraments is absolutely necessary to salvation: true as this is for most of us Catholics, God does not demand the impossible, and where there is no possibility of actually doing so a genuine desire is sufficient; in the case of those many millions who through no fault of their own are unaware of the sacraments they will *eo ipso* not be aware of desire for them; nevertheless this desire is implicit where there is real concern to do good, and will gain them the same grace the sacraments betoken and confer. Second, the sacraments, and grace itself, are said to be medicinal: yet that is only the preliminary aspect of our calling to be 'sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint-heirs with Christ'. Third, there is the same thoughtless disjunction between Eucharist as sacrament and as sacrifice that is so often found; yet its *raison d'être* as sacrament is precisely to be sacrifice; sacrament here is the consecration of bread and wine, and the consecration constitutes the sacrifice; its fulfilment in the communion it already promises is not strictly to be called sacrament, but sacramental eating of the sacramental victim. All that Christ's death in the physical order did for us is done now in the order of sign, i.e., in the sacramental order, by the transubstantiation of bread and wine into his body and blood, so that his past death assures our present salvation. That was a physical sacrifice, offered once for all; this is a sacrifice in the order of sign, i.e., a sacramental sacrifice, which is given to men to offer continually, to show forth both his death and his coming advent in glory.

But these are random sallies, and there is, I believe, a more telling criticism. The book proceeds from Real Presence to Sacrifice and then to Communion, and the author's viewpoint can be given in his own words: 'In this sacrament Christ becomes present so that (a) He may abide bodily among us by His Real Presence in our tabernacles . . .' Silence here is surely more expressive than words.

THEODORE TAYLOR O.P.

SCRIPTURE IN THE LITURGY. By Charles Burgard, translated by J. Holland Smith; Challoner Publications; 11s. 6d.

Many Catholics in England today are anxious to improve their knowledge of the Bible, but they find difficulty in approaching it: they do not know in what light to read it. The idea behind Fr Burgard's book is that it is the liturgy that provides the proper setting for reading the Bible, for in the liturgy we have the Church to guide us in our understanding of the text. The book is arranged according to the seasons of the liturgical year. As the great mysteries of the