

Blackfriars

THE MASS, ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY. By Dom Jean de Puniet, Abbot of St. Paul's, Oosterhout. Translated by the Benedictines of Stanbrook. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd. Pp. xxiii, 203; 6/-.)

This book is a very readable synthesis of modern liturgical scholarship. Its most valuable contribution to popular literature on the subject is the general view of the history and structure of the Mass which it leaves in the reader's mind; but in addition to this it is a mine of information about every rite and formula. Originally conferences to the monks of Oosterhout, these chapters have been published 'to interest Catholics more deeply in their Sunday or daily Mass.' The author attains this end by following the Mass in its natural growth. The book is rich in detail, yet not dry or involved. It deserves wide circulation among those who wish for a true appreciation, based on sound scholarship, of the antiquity and meaning of the ritual at which they assist to-day.

The first part of the book is constructive in form. The origins of the Mass are traced from the Last Supper until about the end of the fourth century, when the Roman usage became fixed. The principal texts from the New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers, and the early witnesses to the Canon, treated of so extensively by Dom Cagin and others, are fully quoted (in translation), and their historical meaning as seen in the light of recent studies is well shown. The second part inverts the process, and using the early Sacramentaries, the Roman Ordinines, the Liber Pontificalis, etc., shows the place of each part of our present Mass in the historical process. At the same time the meaning of the various ceremonies and of the words of the Canon is explained. This part is introduced by a chapter on the church, altar and vestments.

It is, of course, impossible in a book of this size and character to develop proofs or to give many references. To do so would be to detract from its purpose, which requires that it should be readable and clear. However, the very naturalness of the development presented here is perhaps no small argument in favour of Dom de Puniet's views. The translation is good.

Although this book treats of the Roman Mass, it must not be thought that it is useless, or of less use, as a commentary on the Dominican; rather it reveals the essentially Roman character of that rite.

O.M.