

REVIEWS

THE LIVING BREAD. By Thomas Merton. (Burns & Oates; 12s. 6d.)

Father Merton's latest book does not at first sight appear to share those qualities which up to now have been popularly associated with his writings. Here is a plain statement of the Church's teaching about the Blessed Sacrament and it would seem too much to expect 'inspirational writing' and the similar qualities that have been singled out for praise in his earlier books. Nevertheless it is with justice that his publishers claim to find 'radiant contagious joy' in *The Living Bread*. This is not a flamboyant quality; it does not spring from qualities of imagination or style so much as from a deep-rooted and strong personal love of our Lord. At first it is difficult to detect where the radiance comes from: the style of the writing is quiet and restrained; thought is strictly disciplined; even illustrations of points of doctrine are never fetched or elaborate. On reflection the reader is compelled to believe that he is sharing the happiness of the writer and there is nothing more to it than that. Yet there is just one thing. The first words of the Prologue are, 'Christianity is more than a doctrine. It is Christ himself living in those whom he has united to himself in one Mystical Body.' Is this perhaps a key to Father Merton's quiet happiness in theology? He is not so much writing to teach as performing a labour of love, speaking from the fullness of his heart. He is writing about a Person, not about an idea or a theory, though his book is learned enough and he can quote the Fathers and teachers of the Church when the need arises. His enthusiasm is controlled by the traditional teaching of the Church and the book falls into four main parts: God's love for man which prompted him to give himself in the Eucharist; the Sacrifice of the Mass; the Sacrament; our response to these gifts. Hence this is a book valuable both for meditation and study and above all for systematic meditation. The style is contemporary, the illustrations, applications and problems are all of our own times, and it is no faint praise to say that this book can occupy a place on our shelves beside Abbot Vonier's classic on the same subject.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AND THE MASS. By St Thomas Aquinas.
Translated by Rev. F. O'Neill. (Blackfriars; 10s. 6d.)

Blackfriars have republished Father O'Neill's work which was first brought out by Pepler and Sewell in 1935. For those who do not already know the book its chief merits may be noted. The explanation of philosophical terms in the general introduction is admirably brief and