

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

of grace, its historical development, and its personal implications. It is divided into two parts, which are entitled *Grace in its Essence* and *The Existential States of Grace*. This already sounds interesting, and a further look at the individual chapter and section headings would confirm this first impression. It must, alas, be said that the book moves from disappointment to disappointment. The first chapter on *Habitual Grace and the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost* tries to produce an air of actuality and contact; one is however left very much with a feeling that grace is just a 'thing' which is 'put' into the soul by God to do one good. The chapters that follow rise somewhat above this level, but wherever there is opportunity or occasion for the work to redeem itself and come to life, it sadly fails to do so. At times (as for example when faith, hope and charity are talked about in terms of time-sequence) it would seem to me to be positively unsatisfactory. With the second part one is once again brought to disappointment. 'Existential' is a loaded word these days; here the load has been shed, if indeed it was ever taken up, and one finds the same void. Ultimately one must say that this is simply 'manual-theology' watered down to a post-catechism, yet adult, level. There is great need for good theological writing at this level, which makes the book all the more disappointing. Those interested in this subject would do far better (both intellectually and financially) with *The Theology of Grace* by Jean Daujat in the *Faith and Fact* series.

GILES HIBBERT, O.P.

MARGARET ROPER. By E. E. Reynolds. (Burns and Oates; 16s.)

Margaret Roper's life could not be an easy one to write about. Anything as simple and unobtrusive as her personality we might easily fail to notice. Little is known about her, and nothing remarkable happened to her, personally. It is only in relation to her father that she becomes not only interesting, but important. This book wisely invents nothing (and how grateful one is to find no reconstruction of Old Chelsea with cries of Old London). We are given the meaningful sidelights when these are relevant: the German merchants in the steelyard, for instance, with their contraband Lutheran books. The picture of Margaret emerges, of course, largely in correspondence between her and her father. Once again we are dazzled by this wonderful Renaissance childhood, the sheer quality of the mental and spiritual atmosphere in which the More children were brought up. Almost the only thing comparable to it would be that of the young Bachs, living and breathing their daily music. We see something of the affluent days at Chelsea, and soon Margaret is quietly and unremarkably married. And then quite suddenly there is the dénouement, the oath, the Tower, and the extreme intimacy of father and favourite daughter