

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

clear; the translation too is precise and clear-cut; and, perhaps most noticeable of all, Father O'Neill has had the courage to arrange the articles of St Thomas's *Summa* in a fashion we find easier to follow these days, that is to say, the body of the article is set out first and then the objections are taken and answered one by one. He selects for translation St Thomas's teachings on the matter and form of the sacrament, the meaning of transubstantiation, and the ministry and use of the sacrament. There are appendices on the nature of immolation in the Mass and notes on quantity, accidents, etc. Altogether this is a reasonably complete study of the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist which should be welcome to students and laymen of all ages, especially as it fits so easily into the pocket.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE RULE OF ST AUGUSTINE. Commentary by Blessed Alphonsus Orocozco, O.S.A. Translation by Rev. Thomas A. Hand, O.S.A. (Gill; 8s. 6d.)

Dominicans are accustomed to hearing the Rule read in the refectory once a week and thus soon get to know it almost by heart both in Latin and English. It must therefore be a tribute to the translator that even a cursory reading of this new version brings to new life what is already old and familiar. Not that the version is noticeably 'modern' in any of the variety of meanings people give to that word, but it is simple and direct, and those are perennial virtues. Here is a first-rate example: 'Do not say that anything is your own, but let everything be possessed as property common to all'. It is clear and no one can have any doubt about its meaning. The Rule of Saint Augustine is the foundation of the constitutions of so many religious orders and congregations that one must give this book a big welcome. The commentary by a Spanish Augustinian father who lived almost through the whole of the sixteenth century is also straightforward and direct and is chiefly distinguished for the fact that it passes quickly over less universal points, such as taking a companion to the public baths, and spends most time on the fundamentals of religious life, charity, prayer, and the three vows.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

AN INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPLATIVE MEDITATION. By F. D. Joret, O.P. (Blackfriars; 3s. 6d.)

Father Joret's method first catches the eye in this little book. He starts with the first person singular: what does it mean to be recollected? what is my relationship to God, i.e. the divine presence around us and the image of God in my soul?, and so he slowly draws us out of our-