

PREAMBULE A L'ACTE DE FOI. By A. Lyonnet. (Lethielleux; 100frs.)  
 QU'EST-CE QU'UN CATHOLIQUE? By R. P. E. Delaye, S.J. (Editions  
 Spes; 300frs.)

The *Préambule* is the outcome of discussions between the author and his fellow prisoners of war during the Nazi domination. In the camps he visited, or in which he was compelled to live, the Abbé Lyonnet found men willing to argue about God: either because they felt argument would lend weight and point to their rejection and denial of him, or because, believing after a fashion in God, they were mystified, even rebellious that he should treat them so, or, again, they talked of God because there was nothing else to talk about that would enable them temporarily to forget their present plight. Of those many questions and debates the author now issues his notes, so that the book has the air of urgency and pressing need he felt at the time for the souls of his fellow prisoners, and which he experiences now for the souls of those who have returned from the camps to the disappointment and frustration of post-war life. The truth of God is here set forth in a manner that corresponds and meets the doubts, anxieties and perplexities that probe many a heart and mind.

In *Qu'est-ce qu'un Catholique?* we find expounded the same truths, but in a very different manner. Père Delaye has in mind a much wider and more mixed public. The arguments he advances are more comprehensive, more developed. This is a volume which is the result of many more years of careful thought and reading, and painstaking assessment of material and data. This does not imply that the reader will encounter teaching that is ponderous, heavy, unwieldy. Indeed, the merit of the book is nowhere more apparent than in the skill Père Delaye displays in rendering tractable and explicit what, in less competent hands, might well have remained obscure and puzzling. On the other hand, the reader must not expect to find all the difficulties swept away, and everything simplified and rendered easy. Such can only arise when the examination of revealed truth is superficial and shallow, whereas in this book we are given what makes for penetration and reflection.

TERENCE NETHERWAY, O.P.

DAS SEELENLEBEN DES HEILIGEN THOMAS VON AQUIN. By Martin Grabman. (Paulus Verlag, Fribourg, Switzerland; n.p.)

The sources for a study of the personal holiness of St Thomas would appear to be very scanty: the acts of his canonisation, a few letters and his magnificent but remarkably impersonal writings. The late Dr Grabmann, however, after a life-time of loving research had acquired a deep understanding of the spirit behind the writings and here in this his last slender volume sketched a convincing, delicate and wholly attractive picture of the spiritual life of his great master. It is in fact the third edition of a book which first

appeared in 1924, but considerably extended and drawing upon the most recent work both in German and other languages and even when only remotely connected with the subject. The acts of the canonisation show a life perfectly ordered, wholly intent upon God and absolutely obedient to the rule so generously and so determinedly accepted; the letters show how courteous he could be to those who sought enlightenment and help, even when they distracted him from his primary concern. Dominant in his writings are the virtues of wisdom and charity, and that peace which was also partly the fruit of his early training among the Benedictines. Both these and the few recorded incidents of his life show him as always learning with complete submission and love from the crucified Christ, the Incarnate Word, exemplary and efficient cause of all the holiness that can be in man.

EDWARD QUINN.

OUR LADY'S MISSIONER (St Louis Marie de Montfort). By Rev. James F. Cassidy. (Gill; 3s.)

GOING GOD'S WAY. By Marie Beattie. (Gill; 4s.6d.)

Spiritual books of this kind are legion. They are not meant to last, and in the case of the two under review the style should ensure that.

Fr Cassidy gives us quite a good idea of the saint's times, his tireless journeyings—preaching and labouring amidst a hostile Jansenistic clergy. In such a small book and at such a distance it may be too much to expect the deeper, more human inner struggle to be dealt with effectively. To most readers St Louis will emerge as a child prodigy of the spiritual way; what I believe the Americans call a holy Joe. He does not appear attractive. He does not inspire us, breathe hope into us. The style is hopelessly outmoded. Dignity in hagiography does not mean such passages as the following: 'But soon his body, unable to bear the harsh conditions which his sacrificial spirit welcomed, became the victim of an illness which brought him to the portals of death'. It is all in that strain.

Mary Beattie is obviously determined at all costs to avoid such pompous phrases. So much so indeed that she too gets in her own light. She gives us twenty-three essays or meditations under the double heading of 'Love of God and Love of Neighbour'. There is a wealth of apt and beautiful quotations from Scripture, much sound sense and insight into human nature. But this is offset by feminine asides in a very 'moral' strain. One's irritation is increased by a style which can never resist the most chattering adjectives in its efforts to be racy. English equivalents should be given for Latin (and Irish!) tags in a book of this nature. There are several misprints needing correction. After reading such books one is even more convinced of the need for developing a style that will in no way obtrude upon the reader and put him off.

ADRIAN DOWLING, O.P.