

bypass the greatest parts of the *Confessions* without a thought of their existence. A. R.

ALL MY DAYS FOR GOD. Reflections . . . from Saint Alphonsus. II Sexagesima—Pentecost. Selected and Edited by J. B. Coyle, C.S.S.R. (Gill, Dublin; 6s. 6d.)

This is the second of the four volumes designed to cover the liturgical year with suitable meditations from the writings of the founder of the Redemptorist Congregation. The Archbishop of Armagh recommends it to the clergy and laity alike as a solid foundation for prayer and devotion. It would be a mistake to expect the spiritual writings of St Alphonsus to be merely his own mental excogitations. Even a canonized Doctor of the Church could not thus hold the reader effectively for a year of prayer. These reflections are full of references to the writers who had preserved the spiritual tradition to the time of this post-Reformation saint. St Augustine, St Bernard, St Gertrude, St Matilda, St Thomas, St Aloysius, St Teresa—they are all here and many others to encourage the reader to leave the words below and to leap up into the bosom of God. P. S. J.

THE VOICE OF A PRIEST. By Edward Leen, C.S.Sp. (Sheed & Ward; 10s. 6d.)

This is a collection of addresses by the late Fr Edward Leen edited with a biographic introduction and appreciation by Fr Bernard J. Kelly, C.S.Sp. There are two divisions—the author's: Religious Ideals and Christian Ideals; but within these the sermons are arranged in chronological order by the Editor who also provides the titles. There are sermons on Grace and the Virtues, Actual Grace, the Sovereignty of God, the Battle, the Victory, St Thomas Aquinas, the Episcopacy, etc.

Fr Kelly considers that the first two sermons reveal the core of Fr Leen's spiritual doctrine: Christian life as a warfare, Grace as God's aid in man's striving after fulness. These themes give unity to the work and a many-sided view of what was a personal problem and experience for the author. Although to understand Fr Leen's mind one must read his other works—for these are special addresses and usually for religious—nevertheless, as the Editor says, this is a human document, and is instructive as such as well as for its doctrine. For the author is acutely aware of the corruption of human nature, of the deep-rootedness of evil tendencies in fallen nature, of the need for denial and death to self. There is an excellent address to some newly-professed religious (p. 102) on the illusion of the young that they have achieved perfection before they have begun, because they have not been tried by the disorder of life. The real test is in the circumstances of life which are not according to our will. That is where real union with God is achieved, not in prayer even, certainly not in the careful testing of the novitiate: 'it is living our life in a certain way that makes it spiritual . . . not thinking, nor meditating, nor even praying, not attendance at Mass nor receiving the Sacra-

ments . . . these are all but means to concrete, practical, spiritual oneness with God. . . . To walk with God means to be in sympathy with God . . . to share God's views. . . . Real spirituality postulates a radical transformation. . . . We grow like God by disciplining ourselves to act like God. . . . If at times phrases of unexpected severity come from his lips like that in which he says that there is a positive opposition between grace and nature or his castigation of governments and politicians for neglecting Christ—unexpected from one who acknowledges his debt to St Thomas both explicitly and implicitly in these pages—it is because he has such a deep awareness of the meaning of grace on the one hand, and the present condition of nature and man's call to supernatural life on the other. Grace is the source of that life of abounding vitality, the only life for man. At every moment human life must depend upon actual or habitual grace and the great evil is the assertion of man's independence of God, freely setting his own standards of life. Human nature is seen not as an abstract essence but in a state in which grace transforms it through and through. It is not merely corrupted, fallen, but simply as nature it is opposed to the divine because in fact it has been ordained to a supernatural end. While the essential goodness of nature and its tendencies and the possibility of naturally good actions are not denied, that natural order is seen as dependent upon the supernatural and inevitably involved in it. If these distinctions are only implied it is because the viewpoint is total and experiential.

The Editor sees the last sermon on the saints as indicating a later tranquillity which was not present when some of the earlier books were written. For a certain stoical trend is apparent sometimes, an acute awareness of the struggle, an impatience with failure to attain the ideal. War is for Peace, Fr Leen says more than once, but he was aware of the struggle because he was so aware of the demands made on nature by Grace. His sermons on the Sovereignty of God, on Grace and the Virtues, on Actual Grace bear witness to his awareness of man's dependence on God. In the end that dependence means only peace.

DAMIAN MAGRATH, O.P.