

and judgement point to an important aspect in the Christian view of God, and is this aspect sufficiently allowed for?

It should be added that certain views which seem to be expressed (though it is not quite clear precisely what is meant) would scarcely be acceptable at least to Catholics, who would feel that far more could be said in defence of their position than is shown here and far more against the position proposed. For instance, on page 95 God is apparently said to be in some

way passive to the action of creatures, which would imply that he was subject to change, and on page 109 it is apparently said that creation is in some sense outside the control of God.

These are some thoughts which may occur to one section of the readers of this book, but there can be no doubt that the book will be widely read, and will lead many to deeper reflexion on the meaning of God.

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**THE CANON OF THE MASS AND LITURGICAL REFORM**, by Cipriano Vagaggini, translated by Peter Coughlan. *Geoffrey Chapman, London. 1967. 200 pp. 30s.*

At long last the Church authorities have given permission for the Canon of the Mass to be in English. This permission marks one more turning point in the history of the liturgy. There have, of course, been many, but one of the most momentous was the alteration by an anonymous Frankish scribe of the eighth century; in accordance with the mystical ideas of his age, he inserted the single word *tacito* into the ancient Roman directive: *Surgit Pontifex et [tacito] intret in canonem*. Since then the idea has been established that the canon of the Mass was not so much a prayer as a holy of holies into which the priest alone could enter. The new ruling gives a hard-won official approval to a very different attitude. We are now encouraged to appreciate this prayer as the blessing and thanksgiving which the celebrant at Mass, like the father of the Jewish family, makes over bread and wine on behalf of all present and with their consent. Once the novelty has worn off, however, and the joy somewhat abated, it will become evident that the ancient Roman canon is not very well suited to this function. It is essentially a prayer of offering. The elements of praise and thanksgiving, which it contains, are submerged under this dominant theme, and what logical development it has is obscured by the intrusion of the commemorations with their long lists of saints. Fr Vagaggini's book, therefore, arrives on the market at a very opportune moment, for it assists the general reader to appreciate the extent of these defects and to consider how they might best be remedied, to form an idea of what the central prayer of the eucharist has traditionally been and to think how this could best be realized in our present situation.

During the early centuries of Christianity the bishop or priest who presided at the celebration was free to formulate the thanksgiving prayer in his own words within the

limits of an accepted pattern. Eventually it became customary in the different Churches to use prayers composed for this purpose by certain famous bishops. Peter Coughlan, who translated the book, has done a great service by including in the English edition the Latin text and translation of many of these prayers, so that the Roman prayer can be seen as one amongst several different types of anaphora. Comparison shows the Roman prayer to be quite exceptional in its form and emphasis. Fr Vagaggini discusses the merits and demerits of these peculiarities and the various attempts that have been recently been made to 'correct' them. Most will agree that while there is nothing to be gained from altering this ancient prayer, the Roman rite would gain from the possibility of using some better constructed prayers as alternatives to it. Two such new forms are proposed by Fr Vagaggini himself but these are disappointing for a number of reasons. They are composed in a very traditional liturgical Latin which is utterly remote from the twentieth century, since we no longer think or speak in the concepts it presupposes. It is especially regrettable that the author tries to write into his prayers a particular theological account of the nature of the sacrifice of the Mass, and insists that prayers for use in the Roman Liturgy must conform to what he rather arbitrarily establishes as the Roman tradition.

In spite of these reserves, however, this book should lead many to a deeper understanding of the issues involved. Clearly we must look forward to a time when Christian communities will be able to exercise greater freedom in the choice and composition of eucharistic prayers which are more suited to their circumstances. Before this can come about, however, there must be a wider appreciation of the traditional form and function of this part of the Mass.

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