

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF ABBOT VONIER. Vol. I: The Incarnation and Redemption. Vol II: The Church and the Sacraments. (Burns Oates; 25s. each.)

These are the first two of three volumes which will make available once more ten of Abbot Vonier's books. The first volume reproduces four of them—*The Christian Mind*, *The Personality of Christ*, *The Victory of Christ* and *The Divine Motherhood*. Their subject-matter is a consideration of the difference in outlook brought about in a man through being a Christian, exemplified by the life of St Paul; an examination of the implications of the hypostatic union; a demonstration of the effect of Christ's triumph over death, sin and Satan; and an appreciation of what is meant by the title 'Mother of God'.

Vol. II contains Vonier's most outstanding book, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, which is a corrective to views about the Mass current at the time of its first publication, and, for that matter, views which have been held since. Vonier underlines the sacramental character of the Mass in a convincing manner. The other two books of this volume—*The Spirit and the Bride* and *The People of God*—are of unequal value. From different angles they treat of the problem of the existence of sin in the Church which is essentially holy. The thesis that 'People of God', though referring to the same as the concept 'Church', will yield a supplementary content on examination, rests on the author's own distinction of the 'Church' representing what is mystical and sacramental, while 'People of God' expresses the Church's social aspect. One's suspicions of the validity of the distinction are confirmed when the conclusion is drawn (and presumably this is the reason for the distinction) '... we see the advantage of completing the notion of a Church with the idea of a people. It actually sounds better to speak of a people with whom God is in turn either pleased or angry, than to say that the Church herself experiences those differences of treatment.' (p. 196.)

However, it is good to know that Vonier's books are to be given a new circulation. Apart from their intrinsic worth, they answer a present need, and it is some measure of Abbot Vonier's stature that no one has since seriously attempted to compete with him in the same genre. It should not be supposed that there is any real contradiction between the author's emphasis (in some of the original prefaces) that his works were strictly theological, and the claim made by the present Abbot of Buckfast (in his preface to the volumes) that 'he wrote primarily for the instruction and edification of the ordinary Catholic'. Abbot Vonier was unrelentingly opposed to the production of books of Catholic devotion which lacked any real theological content, and by his own books he has amply established the fact that a work of theology and a book of wide appeal to Catholics are not incompatible. Indeed, if the truths of faith are not

being offered to the faithful in books of devotion, it difficult to see what useful purpose they serve, and easy to see what harm they do.

It is a pity that the minor abridgment made in editing Vol. I was not sufficiently ample to exclude the spurious text of St Thomas quoted on page 188 to support an unthomistic doctrine.

STANISLAUS PARKER, O.P.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION. By L. W. Grensted. (Home University Library; Oxford; 6s.)

THE RECOVERY OF BELIEF. By C. E. M. Joad. (Faber and Faber; 15s.)

As a result of the impetus given by William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* at the beginning of the century, and the translation into English of the works of Freud a little later, a vast literature has accumulated under the general heading of 'Psychology of Religion'. Yet in spite of, or perhaps because of, the large number of books which have been written on the subject, there is still considerable confusion as to the real status of the psychology of religion in the modern 'scientific sense'.

Professor Grensted believes that 'perhaps the time has come when some attempt can be made to begin the process of sorting matters out', and it is with this in view that he has written his book. The difficulties of such an undertaking are emphasised in the first few chapters, dealing with the terms of reference. 'There is no agreement as to the field which should be properly included under the general heading of religion, and still less is there agreement among psychologists as to the methods, aims, and subject-matter of psychology itself.' Nevertheless, the author does succeed in giving a fairly coherent account of the emergence over the last fifty years of a subject which, though still 'nebulous and ill-defined', is yet discernible as an important branch of the study of human behaviour.

It is this historical section, together with the excellent bibliographical note at the end, which makes the book such a valuable introduction to the subject for the general reader. The survey of the main aspects of religious behaviour, such as conflict and conversion, prayer and worship, mystical states, etc., may be found difficult by those not acquainted with the technical terms of psychology, though on the whole it is very readable. Obviously, from the Catholic point of view, the treatment of such themes in a work like this must appear at least inadequate at many points, and doubtless some of the author's statements will be contested by psychologists. His conclusion would seem sober enough: 'The findings of psychology are of less importance theoretically and of more importance practically than is commonly supposed to be the case'. Theoretically one might say that the chief value of the work of psychologists to date has been to demonstrate the impossibility of a purely psychological interpretation of religion; and in view of the increasing tendency of psychology to be more