

REVIEWS

BELIEF IN THE TRINITY. By Dom Mark Pontifex. (Longmans; ss. 6d.)

This little book is more in the manner of St Anselm than of St Thomas Aquinas: more in the monastic than the scholastic tradition. It comes as a refreshing relaxation to any Thomist who loves in St Thomas not only the austere intellectualism which his duty in the schools imposed on him, but the underlying humanism and tender piety which he derived from the Benedictine monks who formed his character in childhood.

In his early work St Thomas, though always alive to the purely notional character of the ontological argument, followed St Anselm without protest along all other lines: in particular along the line of argument in the *Cur Deus Homo?*. In the *Summa Theologica*, however, this is one of the 'useless questions' that have been dropped. The theology of the Incarnation is now approached factually, not speculatively. Though this example has since taught the schools in their happiest days to limit speculation to the secondary conclusions of theology and never to approach primary dogmatic data *a priori*, this has not out-moded the cloistral 'meditations' of monks like St Anselm whose sympathy for their simpler brethren inclines them to use 'little reasons' leading to probable conclusions rather than apodeictic arguments establishing strictly limited certainties.

Dom Mark Pontifex has written to encourage belief in the Trinity, not to destroy it. Since knowing and believing are incompatibles, he would have destroyed faith had he been capable, as no man ever could be, of proving the dogma as a thesis demonstrated to the last point of certainty by purely rational argument. So far from attempting anything so foolish, he has wisely avoided even a scholastic theologian's microscopic elucidation of its finer points, and recommended it as a whole with arguments showing it to be at least probably true. His reasons are the '*parvae rationes*', most of them *ad hominem*, in which St Anselm delighted on all occasions.

Such a return to the infancy of scholastic theology is very timely. St Anselm accommodated himself to the muddled minds of the simple pious Anglo-Saxon monks of Canterbury. There are still muddled Anglo-Saxon minds in Canterbury, and many of them still sit lightly on simple pious hearts whose faith in the Trinity remains firm, but needs support. To these, as to all Catholics whose hearts are firmer in the faith than their minds are clear about it, this book is cordially recommended. It is also recommended to any Thomists who still think Thomism like Melchisedech, having neither father nor mother nor genealogy.

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