

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Casel: THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The strictures of Fr Fergus Kerr in your December issue on the quality of the translation apparent in *The Mystery of Christian Worship* by Dom Odo Casel published by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., are in my opinion justified. We took professional advice about this translation. An Oxbridge professor assured us it was good. A London professor praises it in a review recently published. Both professors must have been nodding since Fr Fergus Kerr's criticism is demonstrably correct.

The obvious way for a publisher to avoid such trouble is to commission a translator who will do the job properly and so eliminate the need for taking advice later. But for works of the calibre of Dom Odo Casel's, also for practically all theological works to be translated from the French or German, a translator capable of making an adequate translation must himself be a good theologian of the kind who should probably be undertaking original work himself. He often is. He probably has no time to translate. One is frightened of putting on him a task which will delay his own valuable work. And the number of such theologians is strictly limited.

Publishers, like government officials, are often supposed to be slightly inane, incapable of making common sense judgements. But often enough the full dimensions of the problems they have to solve are not generally appreciated. It seemed therefore worthwhile, without in any way objecting, indeed whilst welcoming criticism whenever it is due, to let your readers know something of our general dilemma, and something of our experience in this particular (very trying) case. At least we achieved a gamma +, even beta minus: Fr Kerr found 'no instance in which what Casel was trying to say entirely failed to come across'. And he generously added 'There is a sense in which this is all one wants from Casel anyway'. All the same, we agree: it's not good enough.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN M. TODD.