

us, it enables its readers to perceive the relevance of the liturgical cycle to the business of Christian life. For those who wish to make use of the liturgy of their Sunday mass to deepen their understanding of the faith and perfect their everyday life, this short introduction cannot be too highly recommended.

Père Avril has for some years been responsible for the preaching at the mass broadcast each Sunday by the French radio, and his sermons are so popular that he has now been persuaded to publish them. The third volume of the French edition contains sermons for the Sundays from Easter to Pentecost; the English translation of the second volume contains sermons for the Sundays from Septuagesima to Passiontide and it is not easy to see why it should be entitled *The meaning of Easter*. These are very special sermons preached to a vast and heterogeneous audience, many members of which make no pretence of being Christians. They are short, usually based on the epistle and gospel of the day, and their style is simple. The preacher is remarkably successful in setting out the basic truths of the Christian revelation in a way that is accessible to his audience. It is not often that one hears sermons as good as these. While everyone who reads them will benefit, preachers especially will be able to draw from them many valuable hints.

PAULINUS MILNER, O.P.

CHRISTIAN FAILURE, by Ignace Lepp; Bloomsbury, 16s. 6d.

Fr Ignace Lepp is an intellectual who owed his conversion from Communism to the influence of the *avant garde* Catholic writers and thinkers in France. After the hopes promised by the pontificate of Pius XI, and the first years of Pius XII, that 'the Church had boldly taken its stand in the progressive camp', he says, the reaction set in with the rising power of the 'dogmatists', and anyone in favour of reform or change was suspect. It was with this attitude, a complete contradiction of much that had brought him into the Church, that Fr Lepp was confronted as a priest. *Christian Failure* (well translated by Elizabeth Strakosch) is a record in the form of a diary kept intermittently between 1941 and 1956. It covers time spent in a parish in Marseilles during the Occupation (when he helped the Resistance) and after the Liberation; then in Morocco as editor of a Catholic paper, with a short visit from there to Algeria (this is most interesting as he foresees the holocaust which was to come); and he is able to give his impressions of Catholicism in country districts and provincial towns.

From all this varied experience two paramount facts emerge for him, both responsible for that 'deplorable gulf opened between Christianity and the popular masses (according to Pius XI the greatest crime perpetrated by the capitalist era)'. First the reactionary spirit of the Church; seminaries do not choose priests to deal with the problems of modern life; many religious orders answer a need which is past, while a movement like the Worker Priests is suppressed; when living side by side with another religion or another Christian

denomination the Church is all too arrogantly exclusive as if she were a club rather than the Universal Church. And secondly, following from this, the frequent double morality and hypocrisy of Catholicism: sexual morality is all important, while social justice is ignored or suspect; what is Right Wing is all right (no matter if Christian ethics are contradicted), what is Left, is not; prejudice and ignorance are deliberately fostered so that (irony of ironies) Christianity may serve to buttress the interests of class and property. A first hand impression of this kind which is so free of bitterness, and coming as it does from a man so clearly devoted to his work as a priest, is shocking but potentially constructive. Of course it is not the whole picture, as Fr Lepp makes very clear; and now nearly seven years after the end of this diary there is a 'wind of change' from which much can be hoped.

Apart from a brief clear distinction between the Church and the 'Christian world' this book offers no answer or explanation. Many Catholics find this distinction a hard one to live with in practice, so one hopes that more will come of Fr Lepp's suggestion that 'one day I may be able to write a book which will show the eternal youth of the Church and the Holy Spirit's ever active presence in her'.

FAITH TOLKIEN

THE PARISH COMMUNION TODAY, edited by David M. Paton; S.P.C.K.; 7s. 6d.

COME, LET US WORSHIP, by Dom Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B.; Darton, Longman & Todd; 21s.

If the rubrics of liturgy be compared to the rules of football, what is there in liturgy that corresponds to the excellence of the game and the winning of it? What do people have in mind, leaving its rules aside, when they talk about improving our liturgy? Enthusiasts of not so long ago answered this in terms of heightened spectacle. Liturgy was theatre of a particularly awe-inspiring sort; the clerics were up there on the stage, and the laity attended and reacted as best they could. This theatrical model suggested obvious laws for improvement: the clergy could be better rehearsed, and so could choirs and organists. A whole range of cultural experience from sophisticated purity to popular sentiment could be exploited, depending on the taste of the clergy and the background of the parishioners. Unfortunately, the laws for improvement never got on with the rules; it was rather as though a choreographer had been appointed as a football team manager. Liturgy was reluctant to go along with the theatrical model; complicated plainchant sung by sensitive medievalists has, for most people (many monks included), very little entertainment value.

Many attempts have been made in the course of history to overcome this difficulty - theatrical music, for instance, and diligent instruction of the laity in means for exercising their passivity, meditations, private prayers, the rosary and