

LE MONDE DOIT CHOISIR is one of those impossible demands Christians sometimes make in rhetorical spirit, and Père André Kruth, S.J., makes it as a title of a book in which the choice is between Communism and Liberalism on the one hand and Christian Social Doctrine on the other (Editions Spes; 540 francs). One knows very well that the world will never choose but continue to drift along the channel of least resistance and easy solutions. However, the book is far better than its title suggests, for it provides an excellent summary of Christian Social Teaching based on the Papal documents from 1878 to 1954 and concludes with some useful tables, chronological and others.

Father JEAN DE LEFFE, S.J., has written a well documented book on the Christians in Communist China—*Chrétiens dans la Chine de Mao* (Desclée de Brouwer)—written from first-hand experience since he was himself a prisoner under the Communists in Shanghai. He knows the spirit of the hundreds of martyrs now giving their lives quietly in these prisons without the spectacular tortures of previous Chinese persecutions but no further from the agonies of Calvary. The book concludes with over forty pages of poems composed by the author while in prison but never put on paper until after his release.



EXTRACTS

DOCTRINE & LIFE (Cork; 1s. 6d. every two months) publishes in its June-July number an account of the second Irish Liturgical Congress held this year during Low Week. The general theme was 'Sunday Worship in the Parish', and while some of the discussions were evidently concerned in particular with the situation in Ireland, the general tenor of the papers seems to have been applicable to the general scene and very stimulating.

Fr McIvor is to be congratulated for at last raising a doubt about the utility of the missal, which is so often regarded by the liturgically minded as unassailably the best means of assisting at Mass.

He noted the growing desire on the part of many of the faithful to have some part in the Mass, something more than what the missal does for them, for reading the missal is always a solitary act. . . .

The missal brings about only a material unity among the congregation. No doubt the daily missal is a step in the right direction in enabling the faithful to know what is being said. But it should surely be used more as a *preparation* for Mass. In the early Church, there were only two or three books, each of which was different from the other—proper to Celebrant, Deacon, Subdeacon, etc., and when a book was to be used,

everyone shared the one by attending to what was being read from it. It is to be hoped that many who are keen on true liturgical prayer will take up what Fr McIvor has said at this Congress.

Dom Placid Murray, the Prior of Glenstal where the Congress was held, made a very valuable contribution in presenting the Canon in its simplest form and in simplest English.

The present Roman Canon . . . is not in need of reconstruction. Its only fault is that the sequence of its thought has been interrupted by three later prayers, the Communicantes, Memento of the Dead, and the Nobis Quoque. Taking the other prayers he translated them into the English idiom. . . . The Canon, composed as it was long before the Eucharistic heresies, does not represent a reasoned theological position. It is a prayer, not a thesis.

It is liturgical contributions such as these that will help most of all to restore a true liturgical prayer which is welded into the personal prayer of each individual Christian so that it will no longer be regarded as something quite different from the types of prayer described so individualistically in the manuals.

But there remains a fundamental difficulty not so much of language as of the very cast of modern thought. This was touched on in a discussion about the Psalms as forms of prayer.

Can (our) habits of prayer be remoulded in order to take up this imagery and idiom so foreign to them? This is something that is in a way anterior to the liturgical movement. The opportunities for people to take part in the liturgy are rare enough, but it is all meaningless if the Psalms do not come naturally to their lips as prayers.

This difficulty embraces the whole of our liturgy and our religion in modern industrial times. The Gospel, like the Psalms, is couched in the simplest terms and imagery for a simple people who knew without having to 'give thought' about shepherds, sowers sowing seed, wheat and cockle, fishing nets and home and fathers and mothers. Now for an increasing majority of people these things are romantic unrealities. The present writer can remember as a boy, between thirty and forty years ago, talking to the wise old shepherds on the South Downs and watching them with their dogs caring for their sheep. But that is already a dream. Those wise old men who lived in the open for so many weeks in the year are no longer with us. The Psalm sings of the Lord, who is my Shepherd; our Lord insists that he is the true Shepherd who knows his flock. But all that is slipping rapidly into the land of fairy story. Have we to convert the Gospels into images of shop-stewards and the like, or to convert the people to a simpler and more primitive form of life? That should surely be a subject for a liturgical congress of the future.