

MORE LITERATURE ON LITURGY

RECENT Christian thought—and by recent we mean since the Renaissance—has tended to become more unreal and unrelated to the life of everyday Christian men. This is true even when thought has been turned into more popular and living channels such as the modern ‘liturgical movement’. The theory of the Christian way of worship sounds intriguing and can be written up to appeal to a few intellectuals or to those interested in the symbolism of human things, in poetry or art. But for so long this ‘movement’ seems to have failed to move because it was over-digested. We were taught as children, some of us, to masticate our food with forty bites to a mouthful. Luckily no one ever achieved this labour of mechanical nutrition, for surely if it did not ruin the food it at least ruined the human life and joy in eating. So with Christian thought about prayer and the liturgy, it seems to have been chewed over so often as to have become, not untrue or erroneous, but simply dead and joyless. This is perhaps particularly true of all the theology centred round the Mass, which has been analysed and meticulously ground to powder in men’s minds as though it were not food but fodder.

The great importance of Père Bouyer’s book on the Easter liturgy, the English translation of which we here welcome,¹ lies in this, that it was one of the first works which, while being the fruit of scholarship, brought the reader very close to real life. And this is because the author begins with real life. He takes the focal point of the whole liturgy, that of Easter when the new life pours into the Body of Christ, when the Christian begins to live in Christ because the liturgical act of the unique sacrifice has been completed and accepted by God. Easter, the centre of the year, repeated every Sunday and finally repeated every day, provides the reality of Christian life in the Body of Christ. We are not provided with a theological explanation of the Mass as a ‘daily miracle’, but we are led into a new, vital atmosphere which is impregnated as it were by the smell of the living sacrifice as its sweet perfume rises to the Father.

To give an example of what we mean: Père Bouyer writes of the psalms as part of the life of Christ and therefore of the Christian, the psalms which form the texture of the Holy Week Liturgy and of the Sacrifice itself. ‘Where the psalms are no longer used for prayer, the atmosphere of prayer in which the New Testament was composed seems lost and with it the real understanding of all that was genuinely

1. *The Paschal Mystery*, By Louis Bouyer. Translated from the French *Le Mystère Pascal* by Sister M. Benoit. (Allen & Unwin; 18s.)

new in the New Testament revelation.' (p. 9.) In other words, it is of little use to repeat that the Mass is the sacrifice of Calvary and that we must offer our bread on the altar in order to receive the bread of life, unless we also pray the psalms, the *prayer* of the Church. We have to take part in the one Action which Père Bouyer so movingly describes; but it is not simply a question of bodily action on the recitation of prayers. We have to enter into this 'mystery' which involves at once the 'mystery of iniquity' and its resolution in 'the mystery of Christ'. It is indeed the 'living sacrifice' and the sacrifice of the Church into which we are led by the author who admits his debt to St Augustine: 'this is the sacrifice of Christians that we being many form one single body in Christ. This is the sacrifice the Church performs in the sacrament of the altar, well-known to the faithful, where she teaches that, in what she offers to God, she herself is offered.' (*De Civitate Dei* X, 6.) It is in this spirit of introduction to a living mystery that he takes the reader through all the rites and ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter, so that the Liturgy and the Mass may be revealed as colouring the whole of life and Creation; 'the Paschal Mystery' treats of all the great doctrines of the faith without giving the impression, so often conveyed by the ardent liturgist, that he is using the action at the altar to 'get at' the congregation.

Another book that expressly owes much to Père Bouyer's epoch-initiating work has appeared from the pen of Dom Illtyd Trethowan.² But it provides a good illustration of the unrealistic, over-masticated type of Christian thought. The author takes us into a realm of ideas rather than leading us towards the mystery of Christ, although he is writing of the Mass and Liturgy in terms of the mystery. We have first to be told of the nature of the Christian liturgy—so much of the old ground trodden over once again; we have to be told precisely of the nature of sacrifice in general before the veil is drawn aside to show the Christian altar in act. It is as though a child had to learn the definitions of 'mother', 'father' or 'family' before being allowed to sit down to a meal with his parents and brothers and sisters. Thus we have to start up all the old arid arguments as to whether the Word would have been made flesh had Adam not sinned. Away we float into speculations about Scotus and thomists. 'It is difficult to give a fair treatment of a case which one does not accept', writes the author with candour about the thomists—and is not this just the very reason why the Mass has become uprooted from the liturgy and carried off to the laboratories of the theological scientists to be theorised over like some piece of dead human anatomy?

We must not be unfair to Dom Trethowan who has here attempted

2. *Christ in the Liturgy*. By Dom Illtyd Trethowan. (Sheed & Ward; 12s. 6d.)

a useful work of synthesis; he has especially introduced readers to the work of Dom Casel, who did so much to live the Paschal Mystery and to make Christians aware of this continual mystery in their midst. And he is trying to show, as he explains in an essay appended to this book, that intellectualism of the true sort is the essence of Christian perfection. He is keen, too, on restoring a 'biblical mentality' which will come, as Père Bouyer shows, from praying with and in the psalms. There are many useful parts of the book—as for example the comparison between the original hymns of the Office with their revised version perpetrated by Renaissance scholars and placed in the Roman Breviary. But so often the reader feels as though the balloon is quickly rising into the sky of speculation with a very insecure rope attaching it to the reality of the earth where Christ lives in the Liturgy.

It may appear strange to some that an American Episcopalian should have succeeded where the English Benedictine failed. Dr W. N. Pittenger,³ who is a professor in the Episcopalian seminary of New York, adopts, it is true, certain views that are unacceptable to Catholics—thus at the outset of his *Christian Sacrifice* he writes of Christ as unaware of the full implications of his own mission and as uncertain of the future. But when he leaves the general theology of the Incarnation and considers the meaning of the Mass in particular, he is on surer ground. He builds on the work of Dom Gregory Dix in the same way as Dom Illtyd Trethowan builds on the work of Père Bouyer and Dom Casel. This will reveal Dr Pittenger's angle in approaching the subject. And, avoiding the differences in teaching, we would here note the positive contributions which he makes to the study of the Mass by way of bringing it down to the concrete reality.

Firstly, he indicates the true meaning of a 'memorial' sacrifice, which had been an essential feature of the Jewish worship before the time of Christ. 'For the ancient Jews "to remember" meant something very strong and very real. The Passover, for example, was the great Jewish feast of remembrance. But no Jew would have thought that the feast was simply a turning back *in mind* to meditate on the mighty acts of prayer of the past. . . . He was *doing something*—as for instance eating in haste the Passover lamb—which brought to bear on the immediate present of the Jewish nation what God had accomplished for it in the past.' (p. 76.) And Christ himself was fulfilling this very act when he invited his apostles to *do* this eucharistic action in memory of himself. The early Church in fact retained a vivid realisation of this *anamnesis*; but its importance has since been dimmed by the multitudinous dis-

3. *The Christian Sacrifice*. A Study of the Eucharist in the Life of the Christian Church. By W. Norman Pittenger, S.T.D. (Oxford University Press: Cambridge; 21s.)

cussions and theorisings we have mentioned. The memorial, then, is a present action in which all the faithful are involved.

This introduces the second important and realistic contribution from this American professor; namely, the part played by the Church, the present Body of Christ. At this point the author rightly praises the work of de la Taille, S.J., but rightly, too, criticises him for remaining within the sphere of outmoded theorising which he had in fact attacked. As we have previously suggested (BLACKFRIARS, September 1950), the great Jesuit theologian, while inaugurating the welcome revolution in modern theology concerning the Mass, did not himself entirely succeed in breaking away from the old terms of reference. He insisted that the Mass was the *Church's* sacrifice but he did not really see this as an *act* in the *mysterium fidei*. Dr Pittenger, despite his own rather indistinct notions of the Church, lays his finger on the vital point which keeps the Mass as part and parcel of the Christian's life in the present. 'As soon as the nature of the Church is correctly understood, with a recognition of the deeper sense in which "memorial" is used to describe the eucharistic action, it is possible to see how that which was once for all done in history may still be a present reality in the life of the Christian Community. For the Church of God is both *in* and *inclusive of* the historic process. It is *in* the process, since it is a body of men who become members of the Body of Christ. It is *inclusive of* the process since it partakes of the eternal nature of Christ himself, whose Body it is and whose life permeates it and gives it its own vitality and meaning.' (pp. 113-4.) This stands, whatever Dr Pittenger's personal view of the nature of the Church may be, and it serves to emphasise a point that is easily overlooked. It serves to keep us in touch with the real bond that exists between the Body of Christ on the altar and the Body of Christ that is the Church. Here is the mystery of faith in which the Christians share, the mystery centred in the Easter action.

A recent book by the director of the influential *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique*, Père A.-M. Roguet, O.P., brings out these points clearly.⁴ In his introduction he classifies the various and numerous works on the Mass: (a) Explanatory of the rites of the Mass—the historic approach, which sometimes loses sight of the Mass itself in the sandstorm of detail; (b) Expository of the prayers of the Mass—the 'spiritual' approach which sometimes by-passes the true mystery in an excess of piety and meditation; and (c) Analytic of the essence of the Mass—the theological approach which at times becomes so involved in the problems of the bits and pieces that are left after analysis that it cannot contemplate the mystery. In his own book, which appears in a series

4. *La Messe: Approches du Mystère*. By A.-M. Roguet, O.P. (Cerf: Blackfriars; 6s. od.)

on the 'Liturgical Spirit', he seeks to begin with the real facts of the rite and thence to lead his readers to taste the mystery in terms of the act in which all the members of the Church share. There are many important points, which we have no space to mention; but in particular his treatment of the 'memorial' or *anamnesis* as being not merely of the past but essentially of the future too, elaborates Dr Pettinger's theme. The mystery in which the Christian and all Christians in the Church are involved is not limited to the passage of years; it embraces past, present and future. As the priest concludes the consecration he affirms that we are thereby reminded—*unde et memores*—of the death, resurrection and ascension into eternal glory of the Son of Man. 'There the Eucharist contains the whole redemptive mystery, far from being held down to commemorating the Passion alone. This shows us how radically false in principle—and often ridiculous in detail—are the allegorical explanations of the Mass which have poured out from the middle ages until our own day. They make out that the Mass represents the passion of Christ in a kind of series of living tableaux.' (pp. 101-2.) The 'memorial' envelops past, present and future, and we are by this action introduced into the whole which includes all three.

Père Roguet seems to keep our fingers on the pulse of the liturgy in the same way as does Père Bouyer in *The Paschal Mystery*, but by a shorter and more general method of approach. And in conclusion we must refer to the best manual on the Mass which has so far appeared, in which all these points of view are concisely summarised.⁵ In *What is the Mass?* Père Chéry divides his summary almost as Père Roguet in his introduction. In the *doctrinal* section he treats of the theological, but with both feet firmly planted on the ground, starting from the Scriptures and showing how the Mass is a Paschal meal. Only after the Scriptures have revealed the reality does the author discuss the meaning of 'sacrifice' and then lays a great emphasis on the Mass as the 'Offering by the Church and for the Church'. The glory of God is achieved by our unity in love, and this is what the Liturgy does, unites us and so glorifies God in love. The 'historical' section is one of the best synopses that we have ever come across—and the 'Liturgical' section runs through the various things and acts which make up the Liturgy, showing their 'why and wherefore'. In the 'practical' conclusion, Père Chéry ends by leaving his readers set firmly within the company of the fellowship of the eucharistic assembly; and no one could complain that he has strayed from the path of reality and life mapped out by Père Bouyer.

And so the works on the Liturgy and on the Mass continue to pour forth from the presses of the world, indicating the thirst of many for greater understanding of the central mystery of Christian life. Not always has this thirst been quenched with the most limpid waters; but

as time goes on the stream runs purer. This latest outpouring is indeed encouraging in its greater purity, springing as it does more directly from the deep and mysterious well of reality.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

5. *What is the Mass?* By H. Chéry, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; paper 5s., cloth 7s. 6d.)

REVIEWS

PLATO'S STATESMAN. A Translation of the *Politicus* of Plato with Introductory Essays and Footnotes; by J. B. Skemp. (Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science. Routledge and Kegan Paul; 28s.)

The *Statesman* is perhaps one of the least read, and certainly one of the most important, of the dialogues of Plato. For the understanding of his political thought it is as important as the *Republic* and the *Laws*. It contains the fullest description of the philosopher-king, of his authority unlimited by law, and the manner in which he should exercise it, to be found anywhere in the dialogues: and it also contains the clear-cut distinction between the nature of divine and human rule, and the admission, all the more significant because of the passionate conviction with which the ideal is expounded, that this perfect human ruler, the philosopher-king, does not occur in practice and that the best we can hope for is that bad second-best, the rule of law. Here the *Statesman* looks onward to the *Laws* where Plato in his old age, knowing that men in our world as it is can find neither divine shepherds nor perfectly wise and good human beings to rule them, sets to work to construct the best possible human city on the basis of absolute subservience of the rulers to the law, a law itself solidly based on true theology. There is much else of political interest in the *Statesman*. The account of how the ruler is to exercise his royal art and the descriptions of the imperfect constitutions include some of Plato's most sensible and realistic observations on politics. But Plato never treats or could treat politics in isolation from the rest of philosophy: so we find that the *Statesman* is not only a treatise on politics but an exercise in philosophical method, and furthermore that it raises theological questions of the first importance. The philosophical method in which it is an exercise is that of Division, one of the two great dialectical procedures (the other being Collection) which Plato came to hold were essential for leading the mind to the knowledge of the Ideas: and the extremely extensive examples of it given in the *Statesman* probably provide one of the reasons why the dialogue, like the *Sophist*, is not much read. They become of course