

WHAT IS THE MASS? By H. Chéry, O.P. (Blackfriars; 5s. Cloth 7s.6d.)

Père Chéry's book is not the perfect book on the Mass, but it falls little short of a very high standard. In just over a hundred pages the author contrives to say at greater or less length all that we need to know about the centre of the Christian life. The book is divided into four parts: doctrine, history, liturgy, practical methods. Such an amount of material is satisfactorily compressed into so small a space because Père Chéry writes with true perspective, and in each section the less important topics are granted less space. The history of the liturgy provokes books 'bogged down in scholarship'. Père Chéry's historical section is a model of proportion and good sense: for instance, while four pages are devoted to the Mass in the Scriptures, the history of the Church's liturgy in the last four centuries is sketched in succinct sentences such as, 'Some proper prefaces have been added'. Similar balance may be observed in the liturgical section: 'liturgical things' such as altar linen, vestments and colours are put in their places and the bulk of the section is devoted to a study of the form of the Mass. The last section, practical despite excursions into theory, is a lucid explanation of the place of the Mass in the Christian's life. The book has found a worthy translator in Mr Sheppard, a writer who never wastes his readers' time. His own deep sense of the Communion of Saints fills the English version.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

LA MESSE, APPROCHES DU MYSTÈRE. Par A.-M. Roguet, O.P. (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars; 6s.)

The special importance of the liturgical work sponsored by the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* (of which Père Roguet is the director) is that it allies sound theology to a realistic appreciation of the needs of the apostolate. We should in this country be sufficiently familiar with the activities of liturgical publicists to appreciate the value of that sane theological learning without which the liturgical movement can degenerate into an endless pursuit of means unrelated to adequately considered ends. Père Roguet's writing is an excellent example of a theology that lives: and it lives because it is firmly rooted in scriptural and patristic tradition. It can afford to proceed to practical suggestions because it has first established the basic theological truths which liturgical 'action' exists to declare.

In his latest book (in the series *L'Esprit Liturgique*) Père Roguet considers the Mass as a 'mystery', avoiding equally the divergent emphasis of the work of archaeologists and ritualists, the books of 'meditation on the Mass, and, finally, the strictly theological discussions of 'the sacrifice of the Mass'. Such works have their value; but it is partial, it

abstracts from the Mass as an *action*, 'an action that is repeated and which cannot be artificially isolated or immobilised; a collective action, the work of the whole assembly gathered about the priest at the altar'. Thus Père Roguet begins with what we find: an assembly of people brought together to offer sacrifice to God. And it is within the context of a mystery in which the Christian people are incorporated that he goes on to discuss the elements of the Mass: preparation, praise, daily bread, sacrifice, the pledge of future glory. His purpose, he explains, is not simply to show 'that the Catholic should, when he is present at Mass, know what he is doing or that he should have "ideas" about the Mass, but rather that he should live it'. And his living of the Mass is in terms of an action in which he shares; a meal to which he is invited; a life to which he is introduced.

Such a reconciliation of theological learning with a vigorous understanding of the actual needs of the faithful is a rare achievement, and Père Roguet's book (which, in default of anything comparable in English, we hope may soon be translated) should do much to deepen the appreciation of the Mystery of Faith. The need is imperative, for books 'about' the Mass are no substitute for living it, and it is this primary function of Christian faith which Père Roguet expounds with learning—and, not least important, with sympathy.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

CHRIST IN THE LITURGY. By Dom Illtyd Trethowan, O.S.B. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

'We must not *acquiesce* in a state of affairs in which the Liturgy has ceased to form the mentality, and to be the natural expression, even of those social groups which have remained most staunchly Catholic' (pp. 94-95). Dom Illtyd's book may be regarded, not as a mere refusal to acquiesce, but as a passionate protest against this state of affairs. The Liturgy is the sign and the means of our participation in the mystery of Christ; yet it is, for probably the majority of Catholics in this country, no more than an incident even in what they might call their spiritual life. They may very readily go to Mass frequently, follow the Missal intelligently, but their participation is regarded as a good work—perhaps indeed the most important of all good works—performed by an individual. How can they be aware of the Church as Christ's body, of their common membership *in* Christ, if they are not as a community worshipping, offering, sorrowing, rejoicing with Christ?

Dom Illtyd reminds us of all this and provides those who are trying to share more intelligently and more fully in the Christian mysteries with a stimulating commentary on the liturgical year together with a number of essays bearing on the same theme. Some of the views