

of a biological organism; the eucharist as its nourishment, penance and extreme unction as the cure of its ailments, marriage as its perpetuation. There is finally a short chapter on the Church Triumphant.

This book is a straight draught of cold water in an era of theological cocktails; it is a monument to the sanity and undemonstrative strength of Catholic theology at its best. Every important thesis is backed by quotations from scripture, the Fathers, the Councils of the Church, and recent papal encyclicals—especially Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis*. The bearing of the sacraments on Christian living is described with reference to every kind of situation; the author is nothing if not thorough. The reader learns that if someone who has not been baptized is martyred and then miraculously brought back to life, he must still be baptized before he can enjoy any of the other sacramental benefits of the Church. You may baptize in dirty or muddy water, but not in milk, tea or soup, however high the water content; the criteria here are both chemical analysis and what the ordinary man is 'prepared in normal circumstances to call 'water'. You may baptize an unconscious man if you are reasonably sure that he has expressed a vague desire to be baptized sometime; otherwise, you may only give him conditional baptism. But more typical of the work as a whole is the passage of inspired common sense, where it is remarked that, to a man dying of wounds in battle and crazed with pain, the sight or touch of a crucifix is of far more comfort than any amount of talking. On the problem of how frequently one should go to communion, the author quotes St Augustine to the effect that the attitude of Zacchaeus, who welcomed Jesus into his house with joy, and that of the centurion, who protested that he was not worthy that Jesus should come into his house, are not really inconsistent with one another. Some of the analogies used have a pleasantly medieval tang about them; though grace comes only from God, our souls must be predisposed to receive it, rather as wood has to be sanded before it can receive a beautiful gloss. Yet God and man by no means act merely co-ordinately in the matter, like two men sawing a log.

In all, this seems a good treatise of practical theology for the layman; in content, traditional but relevant; in style, concise, limpid and unequivocal.

HUGO MEYNELL

TRUTHS MEN LIVE BY, by John A. O'Brien; The Macmillan Company, New York, 13s. 6d.

'As the watch implies a watchmaker so the universe implies a God'; for 'the most accurate chronometer made by human hands . . . has to be corrected by the clock of the stars as caught by the United States Naval Observatory at Annapolis'. This level is sustained throughout, and the values are as bad as the logic: 'Why die for an ideal, if there is no Power that sustains and underwrites that ideal, and will ultimately reward your self-sacrifice?' It is asserted that it

'may be said' that 'God's knowledge of all the actions of humanity' is 'not the cause, but the result of the exercise of free will'. The meaning of salvation and the Christian hope in the resurrection are perverted into a Platonic immortality: 'Divine revelation supplements our reason with the knowledge that the soul upon leaving the body passes on into *everlasting* life. This means that the soul is immortal—as immortal as the God who brought it into being'. As proof of Christ's mission we have a description of prophecy as history written backwards, of a badness which can surely never have been surpassed; it includes the assertion that the Messiah's *name* was predicted. There are some horrifying passages: We are supposed to react to the 'unprofitable servants' parable by doing something extra and so becoming profitable. We are expected to weep with admiration at a U.S. army surgeon for *not refusing* to operate on a gangrenous Japanese prisoner (who had lain disembowelled for several days in a fox-hole) apparently after the very last, however slightly wounded, American had been treated. The implications of this story as told by Fr O'Brien *must* be an unjustified insult to the American medical profession: they cannot be *that far* from all remembrance of the Hippocratic oath.

It goes on and on. Even the slightest acquaintance with Indian religious literature makes one blush to think of any Hindu or Buddhist reading the assertion that 'while the love of friends is common to all mankind, the love of enemies is distinctively Christian'. One would like to find something to praise: Fr O'Brien can be credited with a whole-hearted assertion of the compatibility of evolution with creation. One rejoices less than one might over this encouraging milestone in the progress of the lowest kind of apologetic, since there is no sign of any awareness of the real philosophical and theological difficulties about human origins. Besides, one had been offered in an earlier chapter the impossibility of spontaneous generation as a proof of the existence of God. Then comes a diagrammatic Tree of Humanity with a long, thin branch for Piltdown Man, all to himself. There is a scattering of similarly weird howlers throughout the book: Job prophesied 1500 years before Christ; the earliest gospel manuscripts are of the fourth century; the Codex Sinaiticus is in Leningrad, etc.. I suppose it does not matter much, but it does make one wonder when Fr O'Brien last did any reading.

One can only hope that this deplorable book will do less harm than is envisaged in the author's introduction, where he hopes that it will prove a source of help and inspiration to every family in America.

C. HASTINGS