

by a 'meditative commentary' on about two more chapters of it. It can be quite an amusing game trying to guess what the Confraternity version is, with the help of this book and a Knox or Douay, but hardly conducive to prayer. But even without the difficulty of an unfamiliar text, this is a very dull book. It tries to cover far too much in each meditation. The first section on Job is the best.

*Pages d'Évangile* is a collection of twenty-five talks given by Père Philippe Dagonet, O.P., during Sunday morning television services. They are neat little sermons, sticking fairly closely to the text and each one dealing with a single incident or parable. The author has a gift for making the Gospel come alive and for showing its relevance to problems today. I felt that Père Dagonet was dogged by the fear that he would not carry his large and varied audience with him if he dared to leave the well beaten track. I think in his last talk, *L'Évangile a changé le monde*, he forgot about his listeners and said what he really wanted to say, and for this reason I found this the most interesting.

SISTER MARY SANDRINA, O.P.

THE EAGLE'S WORD, Gerald Vann, O.P.; Collins, 25s.

St John's gospel is symbolic in language, structure and thought to a greater extent even than the synoptic gospels. If we are able now to explore the Johannine symbolism directly, without scruples at every turn as to whether or not we are endangering the historicity of the gospel, this is, in part, a measure of the success of Lagrange's fundamental defence in his commentary of nearly forty years ago. Fr Vann acknowledges a special debt to Lagrange but the direction of his own commentary (in the long introductory essay that forms half of the book) is quite different: to explore the riches of the gospel symbols against the background both of the Old Testament and of 'the universal imagery of mankind as a whole'. That the first of these is a necessary element in any understanding of St John is acknowledged by all save the most extreme 'hellenizing' commentators, even though too great an emphasis on the sources of St John's thought risks an undervaluation of his own proper genius and achievement. This second background of universal imagery has been largely neglected and one must salute here the pioneer quality of Fr Vann's essay. A certain disquiet may, however, be felt in face of the following statement:

Thus we have to make a triple distinction: the pagan myths and rituals express man's deepest yearnings, his yearning for immortal life and youth; the Old Testament expresses not merely a yearning but a hope, and a hope firmly based on a divine promise; the New Testament shows us the fulfilment of the promise and the hope (and a *a fortiori* of the yearnings) in the person of the Incarnate Word, who lived out the myth-pattern in actual historical fact . . . It is not so much that this statement is untrue as that it is radically incomplete, and to say that in the pagan myths we shall expect to find distortions of 'the

pattern' scarcely suffices to set the balance right. 'The pattern' of pagan man's religious desires (itself an abstraction from many different religious cultures) is simply other than the pattern of Old Testament hopes: this is surely the enduring truth of the invectives of the prophets, that redemption from Yahweh is utterly different from immortality gained through man's cults. Fr Vann perhaps thinks that this goes without saying, but it would help if he were to make his theological basis clearer.

And this is not only a matter of general theory: throughout the introductory essay there is a tendency to allow Jungian metaphor to overlay the biblical symbols. Are the dark waters of the primeval chaos really the womb from which light and life must spring, or are they rather the threatening forces of disorder and nothingness that Yahweh restrains by his almighty power? If evil is that from which our Lord taught us to pray for liberation can we be engaged in the struggle of redeeming, transfiguring, and so integrating the evil?

The paraphrase of the gospel given in the second part of the book is delightfully successful. Most of it is a free translation printed in blank-verse form, but occasionally the text is replaced or expanded by a commentary on St John's meaning put into Johannine language.

JEROME SMITH, O.P.

THE MASS IN THE WEST, by Lancelot C. Sheppard; Burns and Oates, 8s. 6d.

THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY OF TAIZÉ; Faith Press, 9s.

Travel—or even the television camera—is apt to confront one with a mass unlike the one in the local parish church. To assist at it intelligently one needs to know something about the rite, a need which this book, by the general editor of the Faith and Fact Books, supplies by giving an account of the modern variants of the Roman rite. After a very summary sketch of the history of the Roman Mass, it shows something of the unity in diversity still existing in the Latin Church, in chapters devoted to the Ambrosian and Mozarabic rites, the rites of Lyons and Braga, and the monastic rites, i.e., Carthusian, Cistercian, Premonstratensian, Carmelite and Dominican. Each is treated under the headings: origins and history, and the order (or rite) of mass. A great deal of reading preceded the writing of this little volume, but inaccuracies, perhaps due to restricted space (e.g., in the enumeration of the Offertory prayers of the Ambrosian rite, p. 32) or to out-of-date sources (the Cistercians no longer sing the 'O salutaris hostia' immediately after the consecration, p. 78), tended to shake one reader's confidence in its general trustworthiness. The proportions of the chapter devoted to the Ambrosian and Mozarabic rites were unexpected, for, as the author admits, the latter is practically defunct, while the former is extensively used, not only in Italy but also in numerous parishes of the Ticino in Switzerland. Maybe the author, like the reviewer, has come across the very abbreviated