can be disposed of in a moment by the application of a few rule-of-thumb methods.

This deplorable attitude is, it appears, so prevalent in America as to induce Mr Duprey to begin with three chapters of spirited attack. These chapters are, in fact, the best part of the book, and provide a very useful and valuable summary of the whole question. From a number of excellent and highly quotable remarks one might select a brief extract from an editorial in *Commonweal:* '... the Catholic tradition is not a Puritanical one .The Church is the mother of the arts, not their policeman'. Such things need to be said, and said often; not least in England, where there is a dearth of 'popular' books about Catholic criticism of the arts. We have, for example, nothing equivalent to the admirable works of the American Jesuit fathers William Lynch and Harold C. Gardiner.

The rest of the book is a little disappointing. The very obvious trouble is that the author bites off a great deal more than he can comfortably chew, attempting as he does a wide-ranging evaluative sweep of the whole contemporary theatrical scene in both American and Europe, with occasional forays into the cinema as well. The omissions, over-simplifications and lumpings-together are too many, and too irritating. For example, can Samuel Beckett – even if one dislikes him – really be shrugged off in one short paragraph? Can Robert Bolt – even if one admires him – really be described as 'a sort of theatrical Aquinas, Christianizing the new mimetic Aristotle, Brecht'? And how *can* one publish a book of this kind in which Sartre is simply left out, without apology or explanation?

Furthermore, the vigour of the style too often degenerates into mere stridency, and we get the sort of thing Hopkins described as 'the air and spirit of a man bouncing up from the table with his mouth full of bread and cheese and saying that he meant to stand no blasted nonsense'; as when Mr Duprey writes: 'Edward Albee, brash young novice, has torn off the white veil of humility and is confidently belching in the sanctuary of art'. About which it is enough to say, it is not the way a mature critic ought to write.

However, Mr Duprey is not usually as bad as this, and he does provide reasonably thorough and informative surveys of a number of modern dramatists as far removed from each other in space and *Weltanschauung* as, for example, Tennessee Williams and Henri Ghéon. The book as a whole has an air of close engagement and intellectual excitement which is attractive and stimulating; and, for the first three chapters if for nothing else, it is well worth reading.

KEITH MITCHELL

CAESARS AND SAINTS: The evolution of the Christian State, A.D. 180–313, by Stewart Perowne; Hodder and Stoughton; 25s.

As a guide to the history of the period, this book is excellent. It is vividly and clearly written, finely illustrated, and uses the abundant sources, both primary

and secondary, with perception. The sub-title indicates the purpose of the book, which is to answer the question 'how did a pagan monarchy centred in Rome become transmuted into a Christian theocracy directed from Constantinople?' (p. 13). Gibbon's grandly simple view, that the Christian faith was the source of all Rome's ills, does not fit the facts. Nor does the thesis of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, that after a period of crisis the empire was restored during the third century by the Illyrian emperors. Against this Mr Perowne urges, first, that there was no real restoration – there never is in history – but rather a development; and, second, that the Illyrian emperors 'came from a part of the empire that was intellectually and spiritually barren' (p. 14). More than this is required to explain the transmutation of the empire, which in any case should be seen 'as a logical, organic process . . . an evolution, not an explosion or a "new departure" '(p. 15).

The clue to this development, suggests Mr Perowne, is to be found in the Severan dynasty, which by its unashamed use of the army was strong enough to restore unity and peace to the domestic fabric, and which introduced a strong semitic influence into the empire. With Septimus Severus the centre of gravity begins to shift to the East. And it was from the East that the empire gradually received that education in morals and religion (not only from Jewish and Christian sources, but also from the Syrian cult of the sun-god favoured by the Severans) which prepared it to accept Christianity. This process was not without its setbacks. But the persecutions of Christianity sprang from political rather than religious motives, first from the application of Roman laws against illegal associations, later from a desire to exterminate Christianity entirely, in the name of the safety of the rejuvenated empire. The triumph of the Church was due not only to the constancy of the martyrs, but also to the way in which the Church, with its unified, world-wide organization and its spiritual ideals, chimed in with so much that had been developing in the empire since the end of the second century.

All this is not so much argued as allowed to emerge from a narrative which is enlivened by much fascinating detail about both caesars and saints. It is a refreshing and convincing piece of historical writing.

FABIAN RADCLIFFE, O.P.