

practices and procedures in the contemporary parish.' He is not alone in finding that they have become routine and out-of-date, for in the very week that his book was published Cardinal Felin was telling his clergy precisely the same thing, and deploring it. But then France is not England. No, but Fr Foster is writing about parishes in England, and spells out how concern for the organized life of the parish may go far to stifle its organic life. He finds that 'the happenings and events in the life of an average parish conform to a blue-print which left the drawing board toward the end of the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII', and 'apart from minor adjustments, the established pattern of today's parochial life answers the needs of a nineteenth century community.'

A parish, to be a living community in the Church, must be more than an amorphous mass of 'practising' Catholics; it should be an organic group of 'witnessing' Catholics. He suggests that there is a problem more important than that of lapsation, it is the fact that of those who remain faithful 'very few are committed or competent enough to bear effective witness to Christian truth in their everyday lives.' We have Catholic conformity but not Catholic behaviour.

It must be allowed that a great deal of the criticism is just, although made up of uncomfortable truths which may provoke resentment rather than acceptance. But it would give quite a false impression to suggest that the attitude of the author is merely negative and destructive, for more than half the work is given over to practical suggestions for making the most of the potentialities which already exist in the parish. The central idea is that the mission of the parish is to animate society, and this demands certain changes of attitude and emphasis. The goal is spiritual maturity, so that the laity can play their part in the life and apostolate of the Church which is becoming more urgent every day.

JOHN FITZSIMONS

THE CHRISTIAN IN POLITICS, by Walter James; Oxford University Press; 21s.

Cynicism often wears the mask of realism, especially when sitting in judgment on the frustrated efforts of idealists in this fallen world. Nowhere perhaps is the temptation to do this greater than in the realm of politics. The political theory (or theories) professed by Christians is high in its ideals, yet so pitifully earth-bound in practice. Let it be said at once that Mr James has resisted the temptation, and in so doing has written a most valuable book, where a great deal of the value comes from the comparison of theory and practice.

The theory is represented by the legacy of the early Church, continued on into the middle ages, and concluding with the Christian social movement in the Church of England from Maurice, Ludlow and Kingsley in the mid-nineteenth century through Gore and COPEC to Temple in our own generation. This is contrasted with the life and work of six Christians who achieved eminence

in the political life of England in the past hundred and fifty years, Wilberforce, Shaftesbury, Gladstone, Salisbury (at the beginning of this century), Lansbury and Cripps. There is also a rather sketchy chapter about the Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe which have been in office, if not always in power, since the end of the Second World War. This juxtaposition is a most salutary exercise, although one feels that of the British statesmen only Lansbury and Cripps were trying consciously to be Christian politicians.

The main point which emerges, especially in the two chapters devoted to the difficulties of applying Christian principles in home and foreign affairs, is the immense burden laid on the active layman. Churchmen and theologians may enunciate high-sounding principles, but the layman has the unenviable task of making the prudential judgments. One of the most moving quotations in this book is a letter from Lansbury to Cripps full of doubt and frustration, yet illumined by a humble faith. The pluralist society is not the easiest place to try and exercise the art of the possible.

JOHN FITZSIMONS

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AND BRITISH POLITICS, by James B. Christoph; Allen and Unwin; 25s.

The Homicide Act of 1957, with its categories of capital and non-capital murder and its provision for diminished responsibility as a ground of defence, was the outcome of ten years of parliamentary and public controversy. Its compromises, and the way they were arrived at, reflect very well the processes of democratic debate in this country, and Professor Christoph's valuable book is as much a study of government at work as it is of the particular issue of the abolition of the death penalty for murder.

The two parliamentary battles - the first under the Attlee administration in 1948 and the second under Eden in 1956-7 - were very similar in pattern. A free vote in the House of Commons ensured a victory for abolition on both occasions; each time the measure was heavily defeated in the Lords. Under the Labour Government, the Criminal Justice Act was passed, omitting any mention of capital punishment: under the Tories, a compromise bill was devised, which won the allegiance of most of the earlier Conservative abolitionists, and the 1957 act became law. There were strange parallels. In 1948 Major Lloyd George was an abolitionist and the Home Secretary (Mr Chuter Ede) opposed any change in the law. In 1957 their votes were exactly reversed, for by this time Major Lloyd George was Home Secretary and Mr Chuter Ede was in opposition.

The history of the debates and the parliamentary manoeuvring of these years is accurately recalled by Professor Christoph, with all the paraphernalia of private members' motions, ten minute rules, pairing and lobbying. And he gives full weight to the campaign *pro* and *con* outside Westminster, with all the publicity aroused by such spectacular murder cases as those of Craig and Bentley, Evans