

THE BAPTISM OF ART. By Wladimir Weidle. (Dacre Press; 3s.6d.)

The author of this illustrated brochure sets out to explain the gulf between Greco-Roman and medieval art, but his sub-title 'Notes on the Religion of the Catacomb Paintings' takes us nearer to his real achievement, which is more of an essay in church history than in art history. The purely significative character of the catacomb paintings reveals a common bond with contemporary mystery religions, particularly in the insistence of both on the reality of initiation into the mystery. All the fruits of the early Church are marked by a living faith in the one baptismal mystery—and the author thinks that this mystery included all the sacraments, several of which were not then thought of separately. When the Church triumphed a psychological change took place and mystery became liturgy. The cosmos of Christianity took shape in the imagination of the faithful to find its expression and embodiment in the original Christian art which now appears for the first time. Art had through a long mortification 'plunged, as though in the baptismal font, into the pure element of faith' and was thus cleansed and emerged as the 'new creature'. It was thus the concentration on the idea of the baptismal mystery which eventually brought about the rebirth, the baptism of art.

The whole thesis is very condensed and difficult to follow, but like so much of the Russian way of thinking—the author is Professor of the History of Christian Art at the Russian Theological Academy in Paris—it bears much fruit when linked with more orthodox Catholic theology.

C.J.D.P.

FIFTY SERMONS BY CANON RESTIEAUX. (Mercier Press; 10s.6d.)

These fifty sermons or chapters give us a course of simple, straightforward instructions on the essentials of the faith. In the opening sermons Canon Restieaux establishes that man is created to know and love God, which purpose is fulfilled through Christ. With Christ as the corner-stone, the author proceeds to develop teaching on the Christian life and practice. He expounds the role of Christ as divine redeemer and founder of the Church; deals also with the nature and constitution of the Church, the sacraments, and the Christian way of living (particularly as expressed in the lives of certain saints, e.g., Peter and Mary Magdalen). All these themes are treated simply, capably, clearly. Another feature of the book is that Canon Restieaux comments on and explains the chief feasts celebrated by the Church during the course of the year. Indeed it is the cycle of the Church's year that he takes and uses as the framework on which he can set and develop the revealed truth of God.

T.N.