

A PRIEST IN RUSSIA AND THE BALTIC. By Charles Bourgeois, S.J. (Clonmore and Reynolds; 9s. 6d.)

Father Charles Bourgeois (Father Vassily) is a Jesuit of the Byzantine rite. In 1932 he accepted an invitation to work in Estonia, was imprisoned during the German occupation in 1942, and after the return of the Russians in 1944 was enabled to go to Moscow. It is not clear how long he stopped there, but long enough to get material for half-a-dozen of the best short chapters I have seen on religion in the U.S.S.R., written from the point of view of one whose life is devoted to the cause of Christian unity in general and of the Russians in particular. There is nothing sensational, nothing 'exciting', nothing to nourish confessional self-satisfaction in this book. What Father Bourgeois writes is really illuminating, very discouraging and quite undiscouraged. The picture he draws of the little groups of Catholics (nearly all of course of foreign origin) in the catacombs of Moscow and Leningrad is most moving. And no less so are his references to the huge patient mass of ordinary Russians, 'a people who knew so well how to give itself to the unhappy, to the humiliated and ill-treated'. On almost his last page this people wrings from Father Bourgeois the cry, 'We Catholics, have we been compassionate? . . . Is not some gesture of humility required of us?'

An additional recommendation of this book is that the translation reads so easily and so well. I am only sorry Father Bourgeois did not go back a few more years and give a chapter to his experience in the Podkarpatska Rus. A reprint of his essay 'L'appel des races au Catholicisme' (*Xaveriana*, 1932-33) would have had relevance to matters that are touched on in this book.

DONALD ATTWATER

THE ANCIENT SECRET. By Flavia Anderson. (Gollancz; 25s.)

It seems ungrateful after the beguiling game of follow-my-leader on which Lady Flavia Anderson takes us to bring up the notion of proof. The first part of her thesis is fairly easy to accept, that the original Grail was some kind of stone, perhaps a crystal, perhaps the centre of a cult whose ritual and myth has attached itself to the Grail-as-Chalice; this is not altogether new, as a generation brought up on *The Waste Land* knows, even if few have verified the references to Miss Weston. One is slightly less comfortable when this ritual is reconstructed in detail and attached to the West country Arthurian landmarks. But to believe that the Grail-crystal was the Urim and Thummim of the Hebrew high priest is too difficult: *perhaps* the Urim and Thummim was a crystal, *perhaps* it was mounted in a kind of monstrosity, as a