

THE LITURGY AND RITUAL OF THE CELTIC CHURCH by F. E. Warren (second edition, with a new introduction and bibliography by Jane Stevenson). *Boydell*, 1987. Pp. cxxviii + xix + 291. £29.50.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE LITURGY by Jean Lebon, trans. Margaret Lydamore and John Bowden. *SCM Press*, 1987. Pp. x + 148. £5.95.

The juxtaposition of these two books for review illustrates neatly the way in which the study of liturgy has developed over the last century. F. E. Warren's book, first published in 1881, is a classic of traditional liturgiology, which is here reproduced in its original format, giving firstly a critical account of Celtic liturgy, and secondly actual liturgical texts of the various Celtic churches, in a form characteristic of the best Victorian scholarship. Of the editorial material 'not all', the dust-jacket delicately notes 'has been superseded'—but the insights of and the material available to scholars in the century since this book was first published are brought together in Jane Stevenson's extended introduction and comprehensive bibliography, which comprise the greater part of the first 128 pages of the present volume. Professor Henry Chadwick, in a helpful and enlightening foreword, sets Warren's original work clearly in its historical setting, as part of that 'important stream in the tradition of Anglican divinity ... a desire to find a catholic Church-life and order which were nevertheless independent of Roman control and centralisation', which explains both Warren's original interest in this field and also his occasional 'polemical aeuence' to this effect. Dr Stevenson, a scholar in the field of Celtic studies, has in her introduction provided an exposition, a correction and an updating of Warren's work which must be of value both to students of her own subject and to liturgists, by whom the reissue of Warren's classic work will be welcomed.

It is indeed a work of liturgiology—liturgy studied in terms of historical texts and practices. Jean Lebon's *How to Understand the Liturgy* is an example of liturgics—applied rather than pure liturgy—a study of something lived and experienced, a book directed to the parish priest, the catechist and all those involved in the celebration of liturgy as a pastoral activity. It is based on sound scholarship, practical and imaginative; as J.D. Crichton says in his introduction to the English edition 'The French often bring to their celebrations a quality of (informed) imagination that is all too little found, in Britain at any rate.' Lebon begins with a most lucid and lively exposition of basic terms—sign, symbol, ritual—which informs the latter part of the book where he deals with Christian liturgy in general and the Eucharist in particular. He provides a wealth of down-to-earth illustrations and common-sense suggestions for liturgical celebration—it is in the best sense an 'enabling' book—and at various stages throughout has extremely helpful and constructive ideas for 'assemblies without a priest'. For the most part he avoids jargon (an exception is the word 'cantillation', though this may be due to the translators rather than the author.) He makes frequent appeals to what is appropriate and courteous in secular celebration as guidance for the celebration of the eucharist; for example, 'When one sees the priest go to the tabernacle having made his own communion alone, one cannot help in all reverence thinking of a host who eats alone the meal he has just prepared and then says, "Wait! I'm going to look in the pantry to see what is left over from the last meal!"—a salutary analogy. His equation of the Presentation of the Gifts with the Lord's taking of the bread and cup is not now generally accepted, and I feel that he too easily dismisses the value of the succinctness and clarity of the collect form as irrelevant to contemporary experience; on the other hand, his doubts over the propriety of concelebration are well-founded. In all such matters of controversy he backs up his opinion sensibly and coherently; even though the reader may not always be convinced, he will have to rethink his own position. However, the practical guidance and the pastoral sensitivity with which the book is packed may well lead to forgiveness of its occasional lapses. Its presentation is most attractive,

well laid-out, with clear and informative diagrams and many photographs. Its emphasis on the vital importance of proper preparation for liturgical celebration, with instructions on how this may be achieved, are entirely to be welcomed. It is one of a series of 'How to Understand ...' books, on the Bible, Church history etc., and if the rest are up to this standard they are worth seeking out.

It is strange that a book such as this, imbued with the spirit of Vatican II and informed by so lively and modern an understanding of the meaning of the liturgy, should have as its cover illustration a photograph of a celebration at Brompton Oratory which could mislead one as to its contents.

Lebon's account of the historical background of the eucharist is brief indeed, but his whole thrust of radical liturgics is based on a thorough understanding of what the eucharist has been and can be for the church. Warren's book may seem purely an academic exercise, but it is from the basis of such objective scholarship that the work of modern liturgists such as Lebon has sprung, enabling Christian worship to be experienced subjectively as a living and objective reality.

JILL PINNOCK

BEYOND DECLINE: A CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES by Robin Gill. *SCM Press, London, 1988. Pp. 146. £5.95.*

THEOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY: A READER, edited and introduced by Robin Gill, *Geoffrey Chapman, London and Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, 1987. Pp. 424.*

Can the sociologists save us? Robin Gill thinks so. Perhaps not save us so much as offer us hope. And who are the 'us'? We who are committed Christians, lay and ordained, who are concerned about the decline of institutional church life. Gill is an Anglican priest who has worked for some years in country parishes on the Scottish border: he also lectures full-time in pastoral and ethical subjects in New College, Edinburgh. His book, *Beyond Decline: A Challenge to the Churches* is a declaration of how he sees the churches should deal with institutional retreat. His optimism which some might find admirable, is related to two axioms. One, the churches must adopt a creative appreciation of the religious pluralism in which they are now set. And pluralism exists in each denomination at every level: unanimity or dogmatic uniformity are no longer to be found in their midst. The second axiom is that the churches should proceed according to the principles of praxis—a close integration of theology and religious action—and with it the rider that critically examining such an integration stands the master, sociology. It means too, according to Gill, that there should be no gulf between academic theology and the person in the pew. Nowhere must there be anti-intellectualism. The laity must be told all. Whether his concept of praxis is theoretically tenable is open to serious question. Whilst it might be said to appeal to pragmatists and might also to be held to be in keeping with some aspects of Christ's teaching, it is without content. Precisely what kind of theology is to be wedded to what kind of practice? No clear answers emerge.

Sociology can offer hope because, according to Gill it encourages us to take a *via media* between two, for him, undesirable positions: the attempt of a church to make official pronouncements on ethical and social issues, pretending that they are consensus positions; and siding with radical theologians, who appear to abandon prayer, sacraments and worship in favour of political pronouncements and involvement in movements for social amelioration.

Gill, taking what some might see as an old-fashioned view, has an interest in numbers and outreach and wants to keep the traditional parish structure and church order. His best chapter is on these issues where he places his hope for the church in rural Britain on a flexible, non-paid, part-time priesthood. It obviously works out well for him, for he is a hard