

whose convent-bred scrupulosity so nearly brings disaster to Joan: all are wonderfully observed and move within the complex trivialities of school life most authentically, and often most amusingly as well.

Sometimes it happens that a novel, like a fine day or a perfect flower, achieves all that it can hope to be. *The Singular Hope* is such a novel. One can only urge that it should be read—for its integrity, its skill and its deep understanding of the truest human need.

I.E.

THE LAYMAN IN THE CHURCH. By Michael de la Bedoyère. (Burns and Oates; 10s. 6d.)

WE ARE MEN. By John M. Todd. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

It is not to be expected that a theology of the laity should spring fully armed as Athene from the brow of Zeus; the subject is only beginning to be studied seriously. However, Count de la Bedoyère in his *The Layman in the Church* has been remarkably successful in assembling an armoury for it. Such a work must be a perilous enterprise, and a preoccupation with safety-catches seems to be inevitable. The author sees as central to his subject the Christian layman's participation in Christ as priest, prophet or teacher and King. These offices which belong in a direct way to the teaching authority of the Church and its hierarchical function, are analogically applicable to the layman. In practice this will consist in his giving witness to Christ in his daily life. Because these analogical concepts are differently realised in the layman, it is a mistake to suppose that the ideal layman is a cleric manqué. Count de la Bedoyère is so insistent on this point that he requires a distinctive lay spirituality to replace the monastic or clerical spirituality up till now offered to the layman. Historical reasons have made it necessary to emphasize the juridical and hierarchical character of the Church perhaps at the expense of the aspect of community in a common life, so that the layman has felt himself to be united to the Church by external links rather than by a consciousness of a shared life. The implications of the layman's sharing in Christ's priesthood, his kingship and his being a teacher are worked out in terms of parents and children, of social and international relationships. The liturgy provides the realization of community in Christ.

One begins to realize just how well Count de la Bedoyère has done his work when one turns to John Todd's *We Are Men*. This is advertised as a book for the Christian layman. The publisher's puff admits that the book is experimental and that the author cannot be equally competent in every sphere he covers. Unfortunately the author seems to have felt called upon to be informative in a small book on matters where information could scarcely be available to him. The

priest is lectured on how to exercise the pastoral care, the religious community on running its finances. The book claims to be an application of the whole of theology to the world, but the attempt to do so will make anyone trained in theology wonder continually whether this statement or that is to be taken in the sense it has for a theologian or in a vaguer sense less questionable. The book covers a wide territory: sex, workers, intellectuals, citizens, relaxation, religion, and even a plea for the introduction of yoga into Christianity.

STANISLAUS PARKER, O.P.

CATHOLIC DOCUMENTS. Published for the Pontifical Court Club. (Salesian Press, Surrey Lane, S.W. 11; 2s. 6d. each issue).

The variety and importance of papal pronouncements in recent years have made such a publication as *Catholic Documents* most valuable. Thus the latest issue (No. XVI) contains accurate and readable translations of such notable documents as the Pope's encyclical letter on the twelfth centenary of the death of St Boniface, the Christmas broadcast of 1953 on 'The Technological Conception of Life' and the discourse for the fourth centenary of the Gregorian University. The authority of the Pope's teaching demands the widest circulation, so alive as it is to the complex needs of our own time, and *Catholic Documents* (which presents all its material in full without commentary) is performing a most useful function. The only qualification one has relates to the chronology of its documents. Thus the issue for September 1954 (No. XV) in fact contains some addresses delivered later than those included in the December issue, and the immensely important broadcast of Easter 1954 has yet to appear.

ORAL TRADITION. Studies in Biblical Theology No. 11. By Eduard Nielsen. (S.C.M. Press; 7s.)

The purpose of this short but important book is to prove that the recent Scandinavian school of 'traditio-historical' criticism, the rise of which is traced in the introductory chapter, can provide more satisfactory answers to certain Old Testament problems than the earlier and still prevailing school of 'literary criticism'. It can be shown from parallels in other Near Eastern cultures (ch. 2) and from scattered indications in the Old Testament itself (ch. 3) that oral tradition was valued highly, quite other than in our times, that oral tradition and writing were equally the business of specialists, i.e. reciters and scribes, that oral tradition was committed to writing only for special reasons, for example at a time of crisis, and that a considerable amount of composition of different oral traditions took place before they were