

As P. Pierre says to his archbishop in the dramatic conversation at the book's close, what the men see is the Gospel lived; 'the neighbourhood begins to stir'. It must not be forgotten that the experiments of the priest-workmen are still few and far between: barely a hundred of them for seven or eight millions of the proletariat; and, moreover, they are still very new; those longest at the work have only been going for five years—a very short time to get to know a milieu. It does not seem possible at this juncture to set down the theory of an attempt inspired before all else by what might be called apostolic anguish. How is it possible to say what one can do or what one should do? How are the rules to be determined? The priest-workmen are witnesses searching out, for the future, the touchstones of grace in this atheistic milieu.

Some people have perhaps allowed themselves to be carried away by a kind of romanticism. For Epinal, the priest-workman has taken the place of the missionary setting out to baptise the pagan black peoples of Africa. In reality, even if it does provide material for a novel, the life of the priest-workman has nothing romantic about it. It is a hard life, spiritually and physically; if on the external plane it is not subjected to certain customs or a certain traditional framework, in actual fact it springs from demands and rules which are all the more rigorous.

(From documentation supplied by the *Centre d'Information Catholique*; translated and adapted by K.P.)



## ISAAC

Behind the tent-flap Sara laughed,  
Thinking their guest was kind, if daft.  
But Abraham and all time after  
Echo the barren woman's laughter.

B.W.