

THE VOICE OF THE HOLY LAND. Text by Illtud Evans, O.P., with two L.P. Records. *Soundprint: Hutchinsons 25s.*

This is a splendid picture book. It does not suffer from that photographic elephantiasis which makes so many picture books impossible to use except on a library table. Its modesty is not confined to its physical dimensions. The photographs intend no more than to highlight the central, memorable, essential features of the Holy Land. Happily, Holy Land means more than pre-1948 Palestine. Damascus is here too. But of course anthologies of photographs are like anthologies of verse. No one is ever quite satisfied with the selection. What one can say of this anthology is that it is excellently representative. It will drive any regular visitor to the Holy Land to nostalgia and recollection.

Still the production intends more than this. Two 7-inch records are included which purport to give the 'voice' of the Holy Land even as the pictures give us its sight. These, one must say, are less successful. Unlike the photographs and Fr Illtud Evans' text they seem rather mechanical and uninspired. To be sure, we have Pope Paul's voice in parts of the Mass, but this might have come as well from anywhere else on earth. This is a minor complaint.

The photographs are not uniformly excellent. The text however is always helpful, informative,

evocative. In the present international situation it was no doubt wise for Fr Illtud Evans to avoid contemporary references. One would never guess from his words that the Jordan-Israel division is as heartbreaking as it is intractable. To criticize this transcendental neutrality is to reveal a bias. Even so, I am not afraid to reveal my own by saying that the new 'industrial' Nazareth, which will effectively turn Christian Arab Nazareth into a ghetto, is a frightening thing (for me) to behold.

This, however, is irrelevant to the book itself. It is an ideal companion to that guide to the Holy Land published by Mowbray for Inter-Church Travel. It is exactly the book to put into the hands of the intending or returning pilgrim. I shall keep it by my bedside until it falls apart, long after I have disposed of the discs to my children.

Two things which this book makes one think about. (1) Is there any way in which the principle of pilgrimage could become a part of Christian duty as it is in Islam? Not a hard-hearted obligation, but something which all would feel a deep impulse to follow, preferably in some kind of inter-church context. (2) Why can we not follow the Greek usage and call the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the Church of the Resurrection?

H.G.R.