

the Church, and as an individual who prays and receives the sacraments. But schools have an important part to play, and that is what Fr Day concentrates on. His remarks on the method of teaching religion would apply to other subjects: it is the content of the religious lesson which makes it unique. What the child should be helped to know is not just a system of doctrine, but the person of Jesus Christ, as revealed by the scriptures and the teaching of the Church. And the teacher himself must be convinced and well-informed, to expound the Church's doctrine as a living organic whole centred on Christ, and to teach the reality and importance of the life of grace. These principles are not new, but they are important, and Fr Day states them clearly (though in rather academic language) in this little booklet.

Père Voillaume, superior and co-founder of the Little Brothers of Jesus, puts the principles of teaching the faith into practice by giving us excellent popular apologetic. His talks were not written out, but taken down in shorthand as he gave them, and published in France. Now they have been translated (by Ronald Matthews) into good colloquial English which keeps the directness of the spoken word.

A.G.

**THE AKATHISTOS HYMN.** Greek text with English translation and introduction by G. G. Meersseman, O.P. (The University Press, Fribourg, Switzerland; 3.85 Swiss frs (about 6s. 4d.))

The Akathistos hymn is the oldest and most profound hymn in praise of the Mother of God in all Greek Christian literature. Its authorship is not known, but it was probably composed as early as the fifth century—certainly long before 626, when we first hear of it being used officially in thanksgiving at Constantinople after deliverance from a siege. The hymn takes its name from the dignity ascribed to it—that it is to be sung standing, 'the non-sitting hymn'. In the Byzantine rite, both Catholic and Orthodox, it is sung in part on the first four Saturdays of Lent, and in its entirety on the fifth, which is called Akathistos Saturday. Apart from its official place in the liturgy, it is frequently used by clergy and laity alike for purposes of private devotion, as the rosary or little office of the blessed Virgin is used in the west.

This new edition is by the learned Dominican scholar, Fr G. G. Meersseman, an authority on the hymn and its influence on the Christian literature of the west in the middle ages. His translation, prefaced by an important introduction, is, as we would expect, able and exact, though there is one curious lapse—*ochema* 'chariot' is given as 'brougham'! The book is beautifully printed and anyone with even a smattering of Greek will be able to profit by and enjoy the parallel text.

The specific aim of this new translation is to make the Akathistos hymn better known and loved and prayed in the western Church. (No English version has been in print since Fr Vincent McNabb's translation, published by Blackfriars in 1947, ceased to be available.) It is a simple yet deeply contemplative poem, partly narrative, partly theological, a source of most fruitful meditation on the whole mystery and majesty of the incarnation which it celebrates. Its use in our common veneration of the Mother of God would not only help to unite east and west, but at the same time emphasize the catholicity of the Church by bringing to it the riches of the devotional practices of the east.

JOYCE M. WHALE

CHRIST IN US. By James Killgallon and Gerard Weber. (Sheed and Ward, London; Cloth 10s. 6d., Paper 6s.)

THE RISEN CHRIST. By Caryll Houselander. (Sheed and Ward, London; 8s. 6d.)

THE PRIESTLY LIFE. By Ronald Knox. (Sheed and Ward, London; 12s. 6d.)

The liturgical movement is gradually gathering momentum in this country; people are becoming more conscious of the fact that their presence at mass is not simply a presence at a show, but a participation in the offering of the body and blood of Christ; a greater realization of what the mass is will bring about a corresponding greater realization that religion is not something confined to a half hour on Sunday mornings, a realization that we are all Christ-bearers. The three books under review will each in its own way help to further this growth.

So often a child, or an adult, will go through a catechism, learning by heart the questions and answers, and at the end of it will have a good technical knowledge of what Catholics ought to believe, but that knowledge is not allowed to have any bearing on his everyday life. The blame cannot be put entirely on the catechism—it is necessary to have the bare skeleton of Catholic dogma set out in some form or other as a *résumé* of Catholic teaching, but unfortunately conciseness can lead to a dry, almost a dead, presentation of truth. In *Christ In Us*—a catechism, yes, but one that has life in it—the authors have presented the teaching of the Church in a way not usually found in catechisms. Instead of scriptural texts quoted merely to support their statements of the Church's teaching the doctrine is presented in and drawn from actual terms of scripture; Christ is presented to us as living still: the catechism abounds with such statements as 'Christ still teaches his doctrine to the world. Now he does so through his Church. One of the most effective ways in which our Lord teaches us today is through