

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

the liturgy of the Church' (pp. 63-4); 'Throughout the liturgical year the Church not only presents to us the mysteries of Jesus Christ, she strives to make us take part in them and thereby share more fully in the life of Christ, our head' (p. 143). The present reviewer has used this catechism as a basis for instructing non-Catholics and has found it admirably suited to the purpose. Catholics, adults and older children, will no doubt profit immensely from a study of it for it makes so clear how the life of a Catholic is a life of the mystical body of Christ, a divine life, with the sacraments as means of obtaining and increasing this life within us.

Miss Houselander in *The Risen Christ*, a book which is the natural complement of all her previous books in which she wrote on the birth of Christ into the world and in us, very beautifully and with her characteristic simplicity and poetry considers how we are to reflect in our own life the risen life of Christ. When she is reminding us that not only must the wise man suffer the fool gladly but also the fool must suffer the wise man gladly; when she is reflecting on the mystery, on the wonder and joy of the mystery, that we who are members of Christ's body *are* so; when, in the chapter 'The Crown of Thorns', she meditates more especially on the aspect of prayer as the raising of the mind to God, always she keeps before us as the main motive of the book our responsibility to prove to those who are unaware of it, to prove it by our own life, that Christ has risen from the dead and lives still, in his physical body in heaven, in his mystical body, in you and me, on earth. It is not a large book but it contains a wealth of statements of the deepest truth set out in a way which shows their relevance to us today.

*The Priestly Life* consists of a number of conferences given by the late Mgr Knox in a retreat to priests. Although addressed primarily to priests it need not, and one might say ought not, to be restricted only to the bookshelves of presbyteries. As in all Mgr Knox's writings, frequently we come across a phrase which, to quote Mgr Knox himself, 'flashes out of the page, and you say to yourself, "By Jove, that's true"', and the next moment you say to yourself, "By Jove, that's me".' 'Don't let us forget that man was created to live in a paradise, and lost it through a kind of claustrophobia. Even there he could wish for wider horizons' (p. 22)—how many of us, priests and laymen alike, tend to neglect our proper field of work because we are busy about other things? 'Let us notice one thing about St Paul when he was having a row, or indeed whenever he was trying to get his own way—that is, Christ's way' (p. 50); so unexpected, so easy to miss, the sting in the tail, our own way ought to be Christ's way. Mgr Knox is full of sound common-sense and has much good advice to give. His conference on

prayer, for example, with its advice that if distractions at prayer are voluntary, stop them, or that priests should not do odd jobs like opening the window or stoking the fire while saying office, gives the impression that here is a man writing who really is speaking from experience; a man who first sees faults in himself and then having seen them in others wishes to advise not because he condemns others but because he does wish to help them.

MICHAEL PLATTS, O.P.

LES INSTITUTS SÉCULIERS DANS L'ÉGLISE: DOCTRINES ET RÉALISATIONS ACTUELLES. (Bonne Presse; n.p.)

CONSECRATION À DIEU ET PRÉSENCE AU MONDE: LES INSTITUTS SÉCULIERS. By J.-M. Perrin, O.P. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE IN THE WORLD. By A. M. Goichon. Trans. M. A. Bouchard. (B. Herder and Co.; 32s.)

Any consideration of the secular institutes must now start from the pontifical documents by which they have been constituted and encouraged. These are the apostolic constitution, *Provida Mater*: the motu proprio, *Primo feliciter*: and the instruction, *Cum Sanctissimus*. The first book here reviewed, after an excellent ten-page introduction, gives the three documents in a French translation and adds a short allocution of Pius XII to one of the more important institutes. The remainder of the book, rather more than half, is a guidebook to institutes that already exist, cataloguing them by their state of development, that is those that have papal, those that have diocesan approval, and those which hope soon to achieve at least the latter. In all, sixty-five are listed, each with a short history, description and the address of the principal house or director. This is very useful, even if some of the descriptions have the serene optimism of the brochures advertising seaside resorts. The catalogue is not complete, but it could not be expected to be: this crop is still fermenting, it is not all bottled yet.

Fr Perrin gives both the Latin and the French of the first two papal documents. These are prefaced with rather more than a hundred pages in which he sets out the spiritual teaching of the documents in a firm framework of theology. The twin ideas of the title—consecration to God and presence in, penetration of the world—are excellently if briefly worked out, and the point (of great importance) made that the secular character of this new form of Christian living determines not only the apostolic but the interior life of its followers. The section on the role of the evangelical counsels is too brief: even though this is determined largely by the character and directives of the individual institute, some general rules of adaptation can surely be expressed. One is glad to note too that among the elements necessary in the formation