

sixteen per cent of those who enter it eventually become priests. (It is, incidentally, a day school, and Fr Fichter thinks this is why it is more successful than others.) On the other hand, two-thirds of those in major seminaries (over a wide area) have never been in a minor seminary. It may be that such schools have become an anachronism, expensive in man-power as well as money, in countries where a good education is available to all who can benefit from it. The second point concerns novitiates. Fr Putz reports that more and more men and women from various organizations in the lay apostolate are entering regular communities, and doing so from the best of motives. But in very many cases they find the novitiate difficult, because the spiritual formation, zeal, and community spirit there fall short of what they have known in the lay apostolate.

Finally, there are four papers, notable for their breadth of view, on post-novitiate training, on hospital work, on mission work, and on teaching, by sisters working in these fields. The first and last of these (by Sister Mary Emil, I.H.M., and Sister Annette Walters, C.S.J.) deal with education at different levels, and both emphasize the point that in a time of rapid change and instability the educated mind is more important than ever before. This has been recognized in the public educational system, and in the past ten years Americans have made strenuous efforts to raise standards, particularly by improving the education, status and salaries of teachers, and by ability grouping and the special education of the more gifted children. Catholic institutions must not only keep pace with these developments. If Catholics, who form a minority group, are to become a leaven in the mass, they must be better educated, both liberally and professionally, than the majority. This is particularly important for women religious, who have to do without many of the experiences of informal education.

This book has the weaknesses inevitable in a symposium, but it contains many stimulating observations which will interest all religious who do apostolic work.

A.G.

THE COMMUNICATION OF CONVICTION. By Michael Day, CONG. ORAT.
(2s. 6d.)

ABODES OF GOD: The Church, Our Lady. By René Voillaume.
(3s. 6d.) (Both Geoffrey Chapman, *Doctrine and Life* series.)

Faith needs to be based on personal conviction, today more than ever before, when the impacts of a secular environment are so numerous, and the suasions to conformity so insidious. This personal conviction does not come only from doctrinal instruction in schools, but rather by growing up in the faith, as a member of a family and of

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.