

CHRIST'S WAY. By Mother Simeon, S.C.H.J. (Douglas Organ; 7s. 6d.)

This book of meditations for young women demands considerable commendation because it teaches the active virtues without discarding contemplation. It follows the gospel story quite simply; and because the thought is rich it will last a long time, because it is shrewd it will keep prayer alive. 'Christ had to snatch his peace and his short times with his Father just as we do'—the woman taken in adultery had a claim on Christ because she was his neighbour—Cosmetics like sweets can be the object of renunciation. These are samples of a book whose strong spirit will warm the heart the more deeply as it is taken in small measures.

CHRIST IN HIS MYSTICAL BODY. By C. J. Woollen. (Sands; 6s.)

As the title declares this is an attempt to explain the doctrine of the Mystical Body simply. Simplicity seems often to cloak ill-digested theology, but we can be grateful for the parallel-use of Old and New Testaments and the highlights thrown on a few neglected truths such as the angels' place in the Mystical Body.

QUESTIONS THEOLOGIQUES SUR LE MARIAGE. By Edmond Boissard, O.S.B. (Les Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars).

Canon Masure has recently pointed out how often the seminary course passes over far too briefly the very sacrament for which the student is supposed to be spending all his time in preparing. Less disastrous, but still inexcusable, is the even hastier treatment of the one sacrament that he will never receive or even confer. Not as if marriage were neglected in the seminaries. Now, more than ever, the greatest care is given to the study of the Canon Law and Moral Theology of marriage: all the possible ways in which impediments might arise are mastered, the regulations *de usu matrimonii* are known—sometimes with mathematical precision—and the horri-fyingly liberal views of saintly theologians on conjugal rights duly noted. But how many priests have been equipped with an adequate exegesis of Luke xx, 34-36, or could satisfy a devoted couple as to how their love will endure in heaven?

Dom Boissard devotes a special and most illuminating chapter to marriage 'dans l'au delà' in this thoroughly scientific, but eminently readable and attractive *Dogmatic* theology of matrimony. That particular question is of course not the most important and, after briefly answering those who argue, 'In the good old days people just got married and got on with it. Why bother them with theology?' he devotes a third of the book to the elucidation of the meaning (*sens*) and ends of marriage. He very graciously apologises for his repeated criticisms of the views of Dr Herbert Doms at this point and he insists on the notable contribution that the latter has made by bringing out the tremendous importance of an essential if secondary end and the profound spiritual unity of those joined in one flesh. Defend-

ing the traditional view, he shows that this is far from being a rationalist or utilitarian conception: marriage is assimilated to the union of Christ and his Church and is therefore at once a mystical and a fruitful union. The ends must not be torn apart and, although mutual love may be regarded as the *immediate* end, directly attained, it must be subordinated to the more fundamental, more universal end of life itself—natural and supernatural—and the education proportioned to it.

In the remaining essays, apparently distinct but following very conveniently on one another, he writes calmly, sympathetically, and with suave judgment on all the main topics of the Church's doctrine of marriage. Of particular interest to many questioners at the present time is the final essay on sanctity in the married state. Of the possibility and the fact of married saints there can of course be no doubt, that marriage as a way to holiness is a part of Catholic teaching and springs from the nature of the sacrament; but married saints are notably fewer than the unmarried and the virtues which have justified their canonisation do not owe anything to the married state as such; on the other hand virginity—not mere celibacy—does involve such total detachment that it is of itself a most apt means of reaching heroic sanctity. The grace of marriage is unique; it makes husband and wife love Christ in one another. But the fruitful love of virginity is more direct.

EDWARD QUINN

THE WAY OF THE MYSTIC. By H. C. Graef. (Mercier Press; 10s. 6d.)

The spirit of this well-written and balanced work is contained in the author's belief expressed with obvious sincerity that if we knew how to use our supernatural powers we, of seemingly lesser ambitions and opportunities, would live a mystic union with God to his greater glory and to a deepening of the vitality of Holy Church. In the Introduction which adequately deals with the theological foundations of mysticism she writes: 'The mystics have known both the gift and the boundless munificence of the Giver, who desires to bestow it even now as lovingly as He desired it by the well in Samaria. If we but knew the gift of God, and had the confidence of St Paul in Him "who is powerful to do superabundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that operates in us", that is according to the life of grace energising our whole being if we will but let it do so'.

Written in a clear style and with practical emphasis, the book shows the way to union with God taught by fifteen contemplative souls. These studies, though brief, are not at all superficial and much thought has gone into their making. The majority of the important schools find adequate representation. Thus, the reader is offered understanding studies of those great personalities such as Bernard of Clairvaux and St Catherine of Siena whose practical influence upon Popes and kings still excites our bewildered imagination, as well as