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and this is especially a danger in research on this subject which is at once complex and in many cases obscure. There are, however, no such blemishes in this work; it is thorough, complete and balanced. The author sets out in full the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin and English, and also the four passages from the New Testament which tell of the institution of the Eucharist together with an exegesis of them. In the body of the book there is an excellent summary of the doctrine of the twofold nature of the Mass as sacrament and sacrifice, followed by a historico-theological study of the prayers of the Ordinary of the Mass, showing their origins and inter-connection. Finally the rites of Pontifical Mass, Solemn Mass and Low Mass are explained, and two brief appendices are given on liturgical books and modern literature on the subject.

The form of the book makes it of necessity brief and succinct, and thus there are frequently phrases full of meaning which will become clear and fully understood only after re-reading and pondering; and for this purpose the text of the Ordinary of the Mass will prove invaluable for reference. Though in places more recondite questions have of necessity been laid aside, this does not leave one dissatisfied, for the crucial point of each of these questions is mentioned, and so the book as it stands is complete. It may indeed serve to whet the appetite for more specialized study, and for those who wish to delve deeper there is an exhaustive bibliography. The translation too is pleasing. It reads well in an easy graceful style, and the French seldom peeps through.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

**THE INTERPRETATION OF PLAINCHANT. A Preliminary Study.** By Alec Robertson, A.R.A.M., Chaplain of Westminster Cathedral. (Oxford University Press; 5/-.)

The plain man has little use for plain chant. Despite the part it plays in the Liturgy and the positive recommendations of two Popes it leaves the ordinary Catholic cold: if pressed on the subject he may exhibit a warm antagonism. Even with those who are well disposed there is a latent suspicion that the chant remains the darling of the expert, the plaything of the aesthete, or the monopoly of the musical archæologist. It is the fruit of a culture which affords no relish to present-day palates; its melodic and modal genius make no direct appeal to an ear attuned to modern scales and harmony; its rhythm (still the subject of hot disputes among the pundits) is to say the least difficult, and often seems to clash with the sonorous march of the liturgical text it partners; its rendering in many cases gives rise to a sense of despondency, and at times acute irritation. Does the fault of all this rest with the chant itself, with those who interpret or teach it,

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or with those who render it? Many will question this desponding view; the chant, admittedly an acquired taste, has intrinsic beauty, and thousands of men and women find in it the most fitting musical expression of their prayer. Much work is being done to propagate its use in schools and in many parishes—those that have dropped it in despair are not mentioned! A Society is devoted to its propagation, but it finds little popular encouragement or support.

It is the purpose of this altogether satisfying study under review to diagnose and discuss the problems set out above, and to give the choirmaster and teacher the right orientation and viewpoint for teaching the Chant in a humanist fashion. Practically every existing text-book deals with technicalities; here for the first time the Chant is integrated with its religious purpose; it is shown to be subordinate to the text which it illumines; it is rightly related to literature and music. In other words it is not treated as an isolated and sacrosanct phenomenon. The opening chapter develops this theme with a felicitous blending of common sense and wisdom, with timely warnings against undue pre-occupation with the aesthetic and technical aspect of the Chant, which is liable to give rise to unwholesome form of snobbery. It is good to read the following: 'I am sure the student of plainchant has much to gain from an intensive study of Bach and of the great *lieder* composers' (p. 3). "So much talk about prayer-song (the order should be song-prayer), so much unnecessary cheironomic posturing, so much repellent technical jargon, an obsession about rhythm, have obscured the fact that plainchant is first and foremost music—but music conditioned by the text to which it is set—to be treated and interpreted not as a thing apart, but according to the principles of all song-interpretation . . . There are too many well-intentioned people nowadays, who, having attended a summer school or two, a lecture here and there, feel themselves equipped to teach plainchant when they are without any real knowledge and love of the Liturgy, any proper musical training or spacious background of musical culture, but possess only unlimited confidence in themselves. In their hands plainchant becomes, doubtless, a science, but it ceases to be an art, and much to be pitied are the choirs who fall into the hands of these merciless mechanics" (p. 5). "I dread the uniformity of treatment, the regimentation to which, in deference to mistaken ideas of Solesmes' teaching, plainchant is often subjected, and which causes people to find the Church's official music so wearisome to listen to and priests reluctant to have time spent on its performance. What chance with such handicaps has the lyrical beauty, the dramatic force, of this offertory or that antiphon, of reaching the hearts of men and

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reinforcing the teaching of the Liturgy!" (p. 6). "(We wonder if the average parish in the Middle Ages singing plainchant) fell into the lady-like, namby-pamby, pernickety imitations of French monastic chanting—a thing beautiful in itself, in its proper setting—that are often heard to-day" (p. 8). The instruction given in the following Chapters is marked by the same sound common sense, and the rhythmic markings of Solesmes are followed as a means, not as an end, in the interpretation of the Vatican Editions. There is a refreshing insistence on the function of the Chant in illuminating the meaning of the text so often one hears a lovely passage rendered meaningless by an exclusive concentration on the Chant. The examples worked out here could not have been better chosen or more fittingly analyzed.

Those who use this indispensable book will learn to sing the Chant with a living voice, unafraid to express that temperate degree of personal sensibility which all enduring song demands. We have suffered too much already from scientific Robots in this respect. May this original and most stimulating introduction quite soon be followed by the bigger work which the author promises us. He is one of the few writers on this vital subject who regards the chant as something more than an archaic branch of musical science subjected to the arid touch of the technical expert. He manifests it to us for what it is, the song-prayer of the Living Church.

AELWIN TINDAL-ATKINSON, O.P.

### CATHOLIC BIOGRAPHY

IRISH SAINTS IN ITALY. By Fra Tommasini, O.F.M., translated with additional notes by J. F. Scanlan. (Sands; 15/-.)

CATHERINE TEKAKWITHA. By Daniel Sargent. (Longmans; 7/6.)

BLESSED AGNELLUS AND THE ENGLISH GREY FRIARS. By Father Gilbert, O.S.F.C. (Burns Oates; 5/-.)

MOTHER MARGARET MOSTYN. By Sister Anne Hardman, with a Preface by Archbishop Mostyn of Cardiff. (Burns Oates; 5/-.)

*Irish Saints in Italy* is a work of considerable historic value, for half the book is devoted to what amounts to a history of Irish Catholicism at home and abroad. It seems at times that the author is unnecessarily on the defensive in dealing with so glorious a page in history as the influence of Irish Saints on European Christianity. Dempster is long dead, and Gildas still more so. Surely no serious historian of to-day would attempt to rob Ireland of her great glory. If the introductory section is long—it extends over 230 pages—it is as we have said of the greatest value, and the remainder of the work, the individual lives of the seventeen