

many homes, especially where there are also older children, but may have some use in school.

It is undoubtedly the third section which is the most valuable part of the book. Here the authors give a detailed programme for religious education either in the home or the school, and base it on the liturgical year, and on biblical material. A series of excerpts from Old and New Testaments has been carefully selected and adapted to the child's understanding. The content is invaluable, but the methods are perhaps more suited for classroom than home. We have few classes for three and four year olds in Catholic schools in this country, but for the reception class, the five year olds, it would be difficult to find a better introduction to religious training.

MARY BROGAN

GOLDEN LEGEND OF YOUNG SAINTS, by Daniel-Rops; Geoffrey Chapman, 12s. 6d.

This book is in the worst tradition of hagiography. The florid style is objectionable in that it is entirely foreign to the best children's books, and indeed is absent from any children's books written in the last thirty years. This immediately strikes an alien note. Both situations and characters are grossly overdrawn. Incidents are not allowed to speak for themselves, the moral is rammed home with exaggeratedly pious and sentimental comments. The saints are portrayed as too perfect. In some cases scanty incidents are embedded in shoals of words extolling their virtues. Holiness apparently comes without effort, without setback and in its completeness. These saints are so unreal that no normal child could identify himself or herself with the hero, with the possible exception of the martyrs. Moreover they are unattractive and the child may not even wish to resemble them.

The worst aspect of the book is the way sanctity is divorced from humanity. Apart from St Paul, Marcellus, and the martyrs, the only criterion of sanctity is the number of hours spent in prayer in church and the patient acceptance of illness. Do we want our children to think that this is all God requires of them? There is little joy and almost no human affection; this is a complete denial of humanity. It is implied that life is evil, perhaps it is better to die young. Despite the statement in the last chapter that 'Holiness does not mean living differently from others, it does not mean that we have to leave everything and shut ourselves up in a cloister or that we have to face ravenous lions on the sand of an arena' all the saints described by the author do precisely this. With the exception of St Louis and St Paul all either die young or enter a monastery or convent. And why at fifteen should Louis be 'already loved as a saint'? Why not as a good king?

The stories of St Paul, Marcellus, and St Brendan are exceptions; St Paul in particular emerges as a real person. The accounts of the early martyrs are also more successful, possibly because they are mainly limited to the occasion of their martyrdom, although these are not necessarily bloodthirsty and brutal

descriptions. It is regrettable that small boys will probably find this the most interesting part of the book.

To limit the book to child saints is reasonable if it is balanced by the prospect of adult life giving an increased scope to carry out our vocation as apostles whether in a religious order or not. It seems psychologically dangerous and spiritually stultifying to suggest, even by implication, to a child that adult life has nothing further to offer.

MARY BROGAN

RITE AND MAN, by Louis Bouyer; Burns and Oates, 42s.

Fr Bouyer explains the purpose of this book in his first chapter: 'With the help of the modern sciences that deal with man, we intend to examine what might be described as the anthropological antecedents to Christianity. From this study, the human character of Christianity should emerge with a clarity that would otherwise be hardly suspected. But this does not mean that its divinity will be obscured. . . The divine reveals itself in the transformation it effects in what is human. . . the divine restores human nature in elevating it to a supernatural life'. The modern sciences concerned are psychology, and that part of anthropology which throws light on the study of comparative religions; the religious phenomena considered are the uses of word and rite, sacrifice and sacrament, and beliefs and practices relating to sacred space and sacred time. In including modern psychological discoveries, I think Fr Bouyer is casting his net too wide; it is not possible to deal with them satisfactorily in a work of popularisation of this kind, and the chapter which sums them up in fourteen pages is so superficial as to lessen the value of the book. The same seems to me to be true of the chapter on Sacred Time, while the lengthy section on Sacred Space gets bogged down in complicated details about the shapes of synagogue, basilica and cathedral that belong in a different sort of book.

The rest of the book is quite fascinating; there is a most useful 'compare and contrast' type of chapter on Pagan Mysteries and Christian Sacraments, showing how totally opposed the Christian notion of the 'mystery' is to the mysteries of Paganism; the chapter on sacrifice is extremely interesting, and there is a most illuminating analysis of the different positions given to word and ritual in Protestantism and Catholicism. Indeed the most valuable things in the book, to my mind, are the expositions of the Catholic position versus the Protestant, or the Catholic versus the Catholic in our day, with instances of how the great Christological heresies of the past have their modern counterparts in ecclesiology, and explanations of how some of the lopsided positions of the present have come about.

The translator's style is unfortunately rather cumbersome, and occasionally becomes totally baffling, so that the book requires a certain effort to read—but it is by no means an effort wasted.

REGINA O'HEA