

TO LIVE IS CHRIST, by R. W. Gleason, S.J.; Gill, 18s.

This is a fine book on the relation between nature and grace in the life of a religious. The general principles on which Gleason works and many of the particulars he produces would suit any priest or laymen as well as a religious. He presents the real imitation of Christ through participation, the realization of the individual as a member of the holy People of God, 'the very power to follow is given by the one in whose Mystical Body we have our life'.

Our life in Christ is a growth in love, we know that we love the children of God when we love God, and we know that the great enemies of love are formalism, ritualism and casuistry – we must make a gift of ourselves to our community, and our community is a reflection of 'the Trinitarian life as it is lived by Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. We are to be active in community, not retreat into communal protection. Gleason is rightly indignant with those who appear to consider ordination or profession an escape from responsibility and work while claiming for themselves a constantly increasing comfort. The love of comfort leads to the destruction of the community (and here he is writing as much of the family and the nation as the specifically religious community) for it leads to stagnation and apathy while the selfish prefer to 'float along the stream of their order's accepted traditions without contributing anything personal or without vitally absorbing or understanding these traditions. Whatever is done in the particular community in which they live, whether or not it be in accordance with the genuine spirit of their institute, is to their liking'. Professor Knowles has shewn us such men in the past, Fr Gleason draws attention to their presence here and now. Lively imitation of Christ implies growth and development. Gleason has a wonderful passage about devotional practices which inhibit rather than foster the love of God by outmoded and ridiculous forms which have only custom and a past use to recommend them. And he is happy in his advice to Superiors to take modern men as they are, generous and quickly responding to encouragement, independent and unused to the idea that authority does not abide question, reserving faith for divine truth.

A man does not become a religious to obey authority but to fulfil the talents God has given him and fulfil them in a way which helps him to become the friend of God. We must learn to have a proper respect for nature as well as for the supernatural. We must learn to have confidence in our Father who will be glorified in us. These are the two lessons of this book. There is none more worth the saying. An excellent book.

HAMISH SWANSTON, CONG. ORAT.

GRACE, by Robert W. Gleason, S.J.; Sheed and Ward, 10s. 6d.

Fr Gleason's book is intended to shew 'how relevant theological realities are to the psychic needs of modern man'. A worthy aim. The expectation is dis-

appointed in the event. It does not appear profitable at this time to talk of grace as 'a created, spiritual, absolute, qualitative accident', or (for different reasons) of St Paul's experience on the road to Damascus 'producing in the ultimate reaches of his soul the realization that the condescension of God is no response to human merit'.

It is significant that Gleason acknowledges a debt to Eichrodt's theological study of the Old Testament, but not to Von Rad's later work which is free of the great pioneer's hesitancy in throwing away outdated categories. The book has been written for seminarians, for whom it will certainly provide a useful example of the kind of thing technical theological work can become, and for graduates and educated laymen, who will not find it much to their purpose, I fear. The print is anyway far too small to make for comfort in reading.

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TO KNOW CHRIST JESUS, by F. J. Sheed; Sheed and Ward, 21s. — Paperback, 10s. 6d.

In the language of Lincoln, this book is 'dedicated to a proposition': *Qui, licet Deus sit et homo, non duo tamen, sed unus est Christus*. Mr Sheed sets out, not to prove the truth of the statement, but to make it live. His starting-point is the gospel, and he pursues his objective through 362 pages of comment, by turns historical, scriptural, theological and apologetic.

The work evades classification. We are told in the first lines of the foreword that it is neither a biography nor a gospel commentary: perhaps the simplest way of describing it is to say that Mr Sheed has gone to the trouble of *thinking out* the gospels. Why? Because too many Catholics are content with simply being orthodox about the Incarnation: 'it does not suffice to meditate on what divinity means and what manhood means . . . It is easy to turn the one Person and the two Natures into a diagram . . . but Christ Our Lord was not a diagram . . . One has met people who give their lives to the study of the theology of the Incarnation, and hardly know the Gospels at all.' It still needs to be said that 'the one certain way to know what a God-man could do is to see the one God-man in action — not *could* a divine person have done thus or thus in a human nature, but what *did* Christ Jesus do, what *did* he say?'

If you happen to have a first-class mind, capable of assimilating scholarship and not being swamped by it, plus a prose style of quite exceptional clarity, you will probably be able to turn your meditations on the gospel into a readable book; but you will never produce anything half as good as *To Know Christ Jesus*, unless you can also bring to the work what Mr Sheed so patently brings to his — a passionate but unsentimental devotion to the person of Christ and a built-in realization of what the Creed means by *perfectus Deus, perfectus homo*. Whatever the secondary merits of this book, its primary achievement is that it keeps both the divinity and the humanity of Christ in sharp focus: it holds us