

CAN CHRIST HELP ME? By C. C. Martindale, S.J. ('Needs of Today' Series. Rich and Cowan; 6s.)

Fr Martindale has written a sequel to *Does God Matter for Me?* in the same series, which came out before the war. The gap has been unavoidably long; but it is a matter for congratulation that the present work has now appeared. Like its predecessor, though of value to convinced believers, it is written chiefly for those who would like to believe, but cannot do so yet. There is every reason to think that these will read it with great profit. It belongs to that best class of Apologetical books, where the writer, if in the present case it is not impertinent to say so, has a deep and lifelong understanding of his subject and puts his whole heart into what he writes; and has, besides, the gift of persuasion. No one of good-will could read this presentation of the life and person of our Lord without being stirred to some extent. Anyone who desires to believe, but finds it difficult, is likely to find his difficulties vanish. Not that the book is faultless; Fr Martindale's impetuous style is very untidy. He finds it hard to leave out anything that it occurs to him to say. Occasionally he is betrayed into making serious slips. For instance, on p. 116, where the reference should be to Matt. 22, 36, or better to Mark 12, 28, the words of the lawyer are ascribed to our Lord, and he has been confused with the young man who had great possessions. The servants (p. 120) who 'have done only what they ought' are precisely not 'gain-ful'. On p. 145 'and the End of the World' seems to have dropped out after 'the siege and sack of Jerusalem'.

There is no need to analyse the book in detail; the author himself has not found it easy. For the reader's guidance he has done his best at the beginning, but confesses that 'as to order, or arrangement of paragraphs, it may seem at times that there is none'. But he goes on, 'there is, in the writer's mind'; and in point of fact, the main plan is clear enough. In Parts I and II he treats of revelation in general and the reasons for our considering the claims of Jesus as revealer before those of others. There follows an outline of Hebrew history; then a vivid sketch of the life and teaching of Jesus in the Gospels. In Parts III and IV, the core of the book, he emphasises the qualities that should make Christ attractive to us, a 'help' in the sense of meeting the needs we feel. Then, reversing his method, he drives home the point that, given Christ's authority to reveal God, now shown clearly enough, we have to see what he requires of us to make us attractive to him. It is by assimilating the character of Christ, and the laws of the Kingdom which he preached, that every man, and society as a whole, can find their 'help'; a personal relationship with Christ is the secret of right relationships between men. (Part V.) Fr Martindale ends with a half-promise of another volume on 'our incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit', which it is to be hoped he will soon fulfil.

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