

ERIC GILL: WORK MAN. By Donald Attwater. (James Clarke; 4s. 6d. each).

This book provides a useful introduction to the principle tenets of Eric Gill's creed; it sends the reader to the artist's own writings; and it has the advantage of being written by a personal friend. Mr. Attwater, writing within a year of his friend's death, makes little attempt at a critique of Gill's ideas, and beyond an occasional warning about exaggerations, is wholehearted in his praise. The reader will be puzzled at the title, for he will find pages on Gill, the Roman Catholic; Gill, the Pacifist; Gill, the Humanist. He will find a good deal about Gill, the Work Theorist, but nothing will he find about the Workman himself. Now this is a great disappointment, for Gill judged from his writings alone, Gill as the theorist, has always left an impression of petulance, of impatient, carping criticism and ill humour which was quite foreign to the man himself. This little book perpetuates and stresses this false impression, particularly with regard to the Church. Here we are made to feel that Eric Gill condescended to join the Roman Church in spite of its decrepid degeneracy, because he chanced upon the kernel of truth which the normal man would not suspect to lie amidst so much corruption. The same rather "superior" attitude to almost every modern institution is here emphasised.

Mr. Attwater lost a great opportunity of writing about the workman. There are three aspects of Gill that must soon be drawn together to form a whole picture of the man himself: the theorist, the artist, and the man one could know and love. The first is given by Gill himself in his many essays and books. The second has not yet been done thoroughly, but could be attempted by any student of the works of Gill's hands at any time. What is urgently needed is for one who knew him intimately to gather in all the strands and tell us of the man who worked in stone and wood, with chisel and brush and graver. Such a task, of course, could not be attempted in the first year and in a small work of this kind. But Mr. Attwater could have told us something of the way Gill worked, of what he owed to Edward Johnstone in his lettering, of how he carved direct on to the stone and of the importance of his material in his work—making a statue so that it looked like stone and not like plaster or human flesh. He could have told of the influence of that work on others and on Gill himself . . . But then this is the first of a series of monographs on "Modern Christian Revolutionaries"—God help them. Who could expect a balanced portrait under such a title? To-day revolutions are the fruits of ideologies, and so these men, Gill, Niebuhr, Chesterton, Berdyaev, Kierkegaard . . . have to be presented as founders of ideologies. But grace is the only true Christian revolutionary, and every Christian is a revolutionary in so far as he lives graciously. Eric Gill's greatest significance lay in the life he tried to live, the work he set his hand to, and there was the turning point of his revolution. CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.