

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of the Old Testament, but not to Von Rad's later work which is free of the great pioneer's hesitancy in throwing away outdated categories.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.

HAMISH SWANSTON, CONG. ORAT.

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

in the presence of a man who is truly God, the presence of a divine person who is also truly the carpenter from Nazareth. Quotations could be multiplied; here is one: 'We remind ourselves that, though Christ is God, his manhood was not just a garment he chose to wear. He was not pretending to be man for our Redemption. He *had become* man for our Redemption. His human nature was a real nature, and really human.' And another: 'That he was true man means that in the early years of Nazareth he was true child. He had to be nourished as other children are — or God would have been undernourished; washed as other children are, or God would have been left unclean; dressed as other children are, or God would have lain naked.'

Everything else in the book is subordinated to the author's purpose of getting people to *think* about Christ. Mr Sheed uses the back-cloths of history and geography to throw gospel incidents into relief. He prods us into considering the doctrinal implications, the 'theological roots and fruits' of the New Testament. He illustrates the 'thrust of the Old Testament into the New'. And as we might expect, he is alive to problems, not unwilling to suggest an 'apologetic' line of argument when one seems to be called for.

It could be objected that he tries to do too much; that, in spite of careful planning and arrangement, this is not a tidy book. But the lack of one minor virtue is a small price to pay for the richness and clarity of Mr Sheed's reflections. Specialist scripture scholars (for whom this book was not written) may find some of the author's positions too conservative for their taste: there are 'harmonising' tendencies at work, and the chronology is perhaps too neatly sewn up; but the book remains a stimulating and rewarding contribution to Christian literature. A layman's book, primarily; but a tonic, surely, for everyone whose vocation involves the communication of religious truth. 'The object is not to prove something but to meet someone — that we should know Christ Jesus . . .'

DAVID GOTHARD, C.R.I.

Fr Gothard was working on this review during his last illness. His early death has deprived this journal of a valued contributor. May he rest in peace — EDITOR.

**MADAME DE CHANTAL: Portrait of a Saint**, by Elizabeth Stopp; Faber and Faber, 35s.

This is, according to the dust-cover of the book, 'the first modern critical biography, based on the original sources, of St Jane Frances de Chantal'. The sub-title of the book is also not without meaning: for 'portrait of a Saint', by which Dr Stopp means the 'personal and spiritual development of a saint', seen against its background in time and place (*Preface*), is most certainly fulfilled in this excellent biography. Dr Stopp has made use of original and unpublished