

MY IDEAL: Jesus, Son of Mary. By Emil Neubert, Marianist. (Mercier; 3s. 6d.)

This is a well-intentioned little book meant to promote the imitation of our Lord by the way of an all-embracing filial piety towards his Mother. Judging by the list of editions and translations, it seems to have been widely popular. But the author has been ill-advised to choose the form employed by the *Imitation*, namely a dialogue between first Jesus, then Mary, and the Faithful Soul. For his style is that of the text-book. For example, our Lady is made to say: 'I am the Queen of the Apostles, not only because I watched over the first Apostles with maternal affection; not only because I obtain fecundity for the work of their successors . . . but also because their apostolate is only a limited participation in the universal apostolate first confided to me'. The doctrine is undeniable; but the present reviewer does not find its presentation attractive.

J.H.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO FATIMA (Burns Oates; 1s.) is a most useful booklet for those intending to make a pilgrimage there. The authoress, Miss Susan Lowndes, gives simple instructions on where Fatima is and how to get there, maps of Portugal, and Fatima, addresses of hotels and pensions, and so on, in a very small space.

IS GOD EVIDENT? An Essay towards a Natural Theology. By Gerald Heard. (Faber; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Heard's latest book is, as he explains in the sub-title, a defence of Natural Theology; and from this rather unexpected source, it is of special interest. To most Catholics the name of Mr Heard suggests extreme and unorthodox mystical practice rather than positive theological thought, and to find such vehement support for the age-old Catholic advocacy of *reason* is the more welcome for being unexpected.

It would be quite *un-reasonable* to expect Mr Heard's final conclusions (but are they *final*?) to be theologically correct: he writes explicitly for non-believers, and all that he is in fact concerned to prove is that some positive religious belief is, at the very least, not against reason, and beyond that, that reason leads towards it. With all the first part of his book, indeed, we should be almost wholly in agreement—and indeed for the public he has in mind, it is a very useful argument against the usual slick non-belief. The chapters on 'Why Natural Theology is needed' and 'What Natural Theology can prove' are both moderate and persuasive, and the 'escapist' and 'therapeutic' views of religion are excellently disposed of. 'One thing is clear: escapists may make converts; they will never make saints.' And of the absolute value of the saints he has no doubt. His comments on the nature of sanctity are both interesting and penetrating, and he recognises fully the need for positive dogmatic faith in the making of a saint. 'Sanctity, that

immediate proof that a religion works to the full height of its claims, and is therefore, for all practical purposes, true, can only be produced by those whose convictions have no reservations, but whose faith is so deep and simple that it is incapable of any sub-rational inhibitions' . . . further, the Church is right when it says: 'These, our saints, were saints because they believed what Dogma teaches. It is the Tradition, and their unquestioning faith in the Tradition, that made it possible for them to become saints.'

Again, he realises and emphasises the need for rational belief as the basis of 'immediate' faith. 'The fact is that the simple person is not blindly irrational. He, or she, accepts what Tradition teaches about the nature of the universe *because*—and this is the final and vital step—that teaching seems to him, or her, *rational*.' Tradition or Authority may, after that first step, become one's guide, but it cannot do so before that.'

All this is surely excellently 'sound', but having got so far, the conclusion to which it finally leads Mr Heard is not at all the obvious Catholic conclusion: quite the reverse. This all-important need for firm belief presents for him the strongest, most conclusive, argument against the Church as the Way to sanctity today. In the past, he freely admits, the greatest saints have been the product of the Catholic Church, but this can no longer be so today because the ever growing knowledge of science, in particular of physics, although it does lead to belief in God—and this is the main thesis of the book—conflicts with orthodox Cosmology. Only the very simple and uninformed today are able to accept the Christian dogmas with the total and unquestioning faith which is necessary for sanctity. As confirmation of his case he draws attention to the changing character of the saints as the knowledge of science has increased. The child, or childlike type of modern saints contrasts with the great intellects of past ages. He freely admits that some 'great minds' today can still accept the Catholic faith sincerely, but it involves a mental *tour de force*, a painful and disintegrating tension, that impedes their growth in sanctity; and he cites Baron von Hügel and Cardinal Newman as examples of this inevitable tension. There is, he finds, less of this harmful conflict between the oriental 'Cosmos' and the Universe, and less rigidity in its conceptions.

Up to a point, we feel that Mr Heard is far better informed, more understanding of the Catholic position than the usual non-Catholic critic. He knows more than the average outsider; but of course he does not know enough, and occasional passages betray an earlier and more prejudiced attitude. 'The Old Testament is a short and narrow tale of a provincially minded people, who, as is natural with the ignorant, conceived themselves, with little objective evidence to support their prejudice, as being supremely favoured by God.' Such a dismissal of all Scriptural value seems to belong to a cruder and less enlightened phase in Mr Heard's own spiritual develop-

ment, but it is disappointing in a work that shows elsewhere so much advance in religious understanding. It is the more regrettable because the chapter on the 'World of lawful freedom', the world of Physics, reveals a quite astonishing agreement with so much of the Biblical Cosmology, studied more deeply. To the unscientific reader indeed, to whom this world of physics is unfamiliar, this chapter is peculiarly exciting in its almost startling confirmation of Genesis, as revealed by scientific 'spiritual exegesis'. One is left wondering how far the theories and hypotheses which Mr Heard puts forward so ably will be accepted by the average good physicist. The list of authorities quoted seems impressive and this whole section of the book recalls the parallel chapters in Le Comte de Nouy's arresting study, 'L'homme et sa destinée', written from somewhat the same point of view and with a similar intention. Both writers are concerned to show 'design and purpose' through the medium of modern science, both are far more successful and convincing in their preparatory chapters than in their positive solutions, but in the present case the contrast is more decided and more disappointing. A strain of irrational fantasy breaks through the accounts of evolution and regression till in the final sections we are left with a subjective, unconvincing picture quite unworthy of the careful thought of the beginning.

It is a pity that so much good work, so much imaginative study should culminate so disappointingly; but for the first half alone, this book is well worth reading.

ROSALIND MURRAY.

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI. A biography by Omer Englebert, translated and edited by Edward Hutton. (Burns Oates; 16s.)

The life of St Francis of Assisi is well enough known in this country to ensure interest in a new biography. During the last sixty years an immense amount of patient work has been devoted to the Franciscan source. By 1926 Dr Seton could write that no one worker could keep pace with the study of the whole subject. Where the *franciscanisant* could not keep up, the general reader could hardly find his way without a guide. The last scholarly Life in English was Fr Cuthbert's, which Sabatier thought the best in fifty years; but it was published in 1912. There was room for a new book written, if not better, at least differently, as M. Englebert modestly says in his preface. It is admirably done. The documents are left to speak for themselves as much as possible; the very full references enable almost every statement in the text to be controlled; there is an Appendix on the sources; there is a number of illustrations; the price, as such things go today, is reasonable.

There are—perhaps there will always be—serious differences of opinion about early Franciscan history. But reputable interpretations of St Francis are not so very far apart. The non-specialist