

REVIEWS

JESUS CHRIST. His Person, His Message, His Credentials. By Léonce de Grandmaison, **S.J.** Vol. III. (Sheed & Ward ; 15/-)

The French original being so well known, little need be said of the matter of this, the third and last volume of the English translation. Père de Grandmaison's work is, we are reminded, not a *life* of Jesus, but a historical presentation of His Message, Person, and Works. This volume has two sections, entitled 'The Works of Christ' and 'The Religion of Jesus Christ,' the former treating of His prophecies, miracles and resurrection, the latter of the establishment of His religion and of some witnesses to Him in history. A fellow Jesuit has said of Père de Grandmaison's book that its chief value, at all events on its apologetic side, lies in his thorough survey of contemporary literature about Our Lord and in his judicious estimate upon it. Certainly he shows an extraordinarily wide knowledge of modern authors, he appraises them judiciously, and it is difficult to see how the work could have been done better. But the very success with which it has been done involves certain drawbacks from another point of view. It would be unjust to suggest that this is one of those books on the Gospels of which Newman says that we rise up from reading them wondering at the learning which has passed before us—and wondering why it passed. Given its purpose, the book was bound to be erudite. But the fact remains that the erudition—the amazing erudition, as the critic already quoted calls it—is rather too prominent, and somewhat distracts us from, and obscures, the central Figure. When, from time to time, Père de Grandmaison, leaving what others have written, chooses to tell us what he himself sees in the Gospels, he shows an insight that is admirable.

The translation on the whole reads well, but it contains a good number of slips and misprints. It is curious to find the form 'revivication' in several passages of the book ; the French has 'revivification,' which surely is the correct English form too. To speak of 'the whole Messianic work as the triumphant counterpart of the devices of the Evil One' (p. 134) is to use the word 'counterpart' in an unwarranted sense. This word, as Fowler notes, 'means a thing exactly similar to, not opposite to or contrasted with, another.' The French 'contre-partie' sometimes has this meaning, but by no means always, and certainly not here.

BLACKFRIARS

From where did Père de Grandmaison get the passage from St. Thomas—quoted in Latin—given on p. 156? The reference is certainly wrong (it is wrong in the French edition too), but we doubt whether the passage is to be found anywhere in the *Summa* precisely as it is given here. Was he quoting at first hand? We venture to doubt it, for in quoting other passages from the *Summa* (p. 297 f.) he gives a translation by Portalié, which, had he taken the trouble to compare it with the original, he would have seen to be more a travesty than a translation.

L.W.

JESUS RACONTE PAR LE JUIF ERRANT. By Edmond Fleg. (Librairie Gallimard ; 15 fr.)

We have grown only too accustomed to books in which sacred Personages are travestied in solemn language, with outward show, and sometimes genuine intention, of what the publishers call 'the deepest reverence.' Here, in this Jewish fantasy round the life of Our Lord, we have the precise opposite. The expression is colloquial, ironical, with a characteristic element of grotesque, but the substance is something very near adoration.

Edmond Fleg is still as he revealed himself in 'The Boy Prophet'—in the story of the little Jewish agnostic, who cries to the priest in the confessional that he cannot live unless he become a Christian, but he cannot believe that Jesus is God ; who in his spiritual hunger is torn between the beauty of Catholicism, the grandeur of suddenly realized Judaism, and . . . the universal comradeship of the Boy Scouts ; and who, finally, as an attempt at synthesis of all three, feels himself called to be the prophet of a new Messianism, summoning all Israel to make the world fit for a Messiah of Peace and Justice for all mankind.

And yet, in each of his books, the three-fold conflict is renewed, finding always the same unstable solution. What he sees as the crucifixion of Israel throughout the ages (a theme to which he constantly returns) comes between him and the Crucified, yet, *anima naturaliter christiana* if ever there was one, he is still tormented by the perennial problem. 'I remembered the wonder and despair of my childhood when I first read the Gospels, the questionings, more urgent year by year, that have since framed themselves before my mind.' It is out of such questionings, which led him to Holy Land, 'to seek the Master in the land of His tribulations,' that the present book was born, and the author has yet to find the final answer.

In the meantime, he has produced a book of extraordinary interest—the life of Christ, which he imagines told to him by a mysterious figure, who reveals himself as the Wandering Jew,