

from Oxford Jesus Coll. MS 2, and the (Latin) Life of St. Winifred from a British Museum MS (Cottonian Codex A v). In addition, several tracts (pedigrees, etc.) are included. Some of the Lives included by Rees, e.g. those of SS. Catharine, Margaret and Aidus, are omitted as irrelevant to a collection of lives of Welsh saints.

It should be made clear that *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae* is only a collection of texts, with English translations (except in the case of the Lives of Beuno and David; although translations of these are printed elsewhere, they would have been welcome here for the sake of completeness). Apart from descriptions of the MSS by Drs. Idris Bell and Robin Flower of the British Museum, there are no notes or comments. This will be a disappointment to many readers of Mr. Wade-Evans's *Welsh Christian Origins*, who may have hoped for a taste of his lively methods in a critical study of these Lives, which bristle with all sorts of problems. For the most part they date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (the Vespasian MS was apparently written at Brecon Priory, being intended as a supplementary legendary of Welsh saints for use in one of the new Benedictine houses of Norman foundation), and as such they can scarcely be expected to provide an objective record of figures who flourished six centuries before. Gougaud has indeed described the collection as "largely fabulous in content", and Canon Doble, in his recent study of St. Illtud, had little difficulty in showing that the *Vita Illtuti* is almost worthless as a historical account.

This collection will be valuable to those scholars who wish to have a reliable text, and—for the most part—a clear translation, of these medieval lives of Celtic saints. But it must be confessed that the value of the book to the general reader is seriously curtailed by the absence of any indication of the historical background of the lives, or of any hint of where additional information may be found—as in the published work of J. E. Lloyd, Hugh Williams, Chevalier, Duine, Gougaud, Doble and—not least—Mr. Wade-Evans himself. Perhaps the limitations are imposed by war-time economy: that at least has not prevented the Oxford University Press from producing an admirably printed volume on excellent paper.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

TOWARDS THE REALISATION OF GOD. By Stephen J. Brown, S.J.  
(Brown & Nolan; 7s. 6d.).

"There is nothing whatsoever which a man can ever think or ever do which will not be influenced more or less by the thought and the belief he has in his heart concerning Almighty God". That is the basis of Fr. Brown's book, but it is his purpose to make the thought and belief concerning God a *realisation*. Religion can easily be based on one of two principles: a purely rationalised principle or a purely volitional or even emotional one. Neither of these alone can lead to the knowledge of the

true God, and their synthesis is not always so easy a matter. It is therefore Father Brown's purpose to attempt this synthesis in such a way that we can say he has *brought God home* to us, or made us realize God. That much he makes clear in the introductory chapter. But true realisation must be based on dogma, so the greater part of the book is taken up with expositions of fundamental dogmas, the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, Grace; and in these sections there are many occasions on which the truth is *brought home*, whether by a telling phrase, or a familiar simile which has not, until we read it in this context, ever been illuminated for us. It is hard to say how Fr Brown achieves his purpose, for, in this book at any rate, one would not describe his style as penetrating, but it has that kind of sterling ordinariness which appeals to the ordinary man. True there are occasional lapses into cliché and pedestrianism, but there are equally occasional flashes of lively reality. We don't want a world full of brilliant books, because we are not all brilliant people, but we do want a few books of this ordinary average levelness, and shall we also say level-headedness, because, given the dogmatic basis which Fr. Brown expounds in a good workmanlike fashion there is an atmosphere of steadiness and security, and at the same time of sparkling adventure when, through some occasional flash we do realise that God is a personal God and has an interest in us as a person. Definitely a book for the ordinary man who wants the word of God without any fireworks.

Two observations might be made in no carping spirit: Father Brown's readers will not always get as quickly bored with him as he sometimes, with sincerity enough, suggests. In seeking theology in English poetry I think Francis Thompson and William Blake would have also proved fruitful sources.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

DANS 300 ANS. By Marcel-M. Desmarais, O.P. (Les Editions du Lévrier, Ottawa).

Here are nine broadcast sermons, portraying the earthly reminiscences of nine beatified souls. Their avocations on earth were different, but they were alike in their fidelity to a common ground of Christian life which blossomed into the one eternal happiness which they share. Père Desmarais conveys with great vividness their growing certainty of the truth of the values which they maintain and which the world about them rejects. Their temptations and sufferings are a shading without substance, which brings into relief their spiritual solidity. The cumulative effect of the nine sermons, when read in a book, may make this point more definitely than their separate delivery on the air. The souls who speak are well aware of the contribution to their happiness made by the presence of other souls whom they have helped to save. Indeed, the biographies are deeply personal, but there is a great sense of the Church as the Communion of Saints, in