

God's help. Over and over again in guiding ourselves or giving advice to others we are probably wrong, giving out mischief all our lives. What a deal of evil we may be doing unintentionally. If our lives have not tried to be faithful our advice may be doing harm to souls who have trusted us. So God must help us, and God *will* help us as we are faithful and trust to God's inspirations. We shall be judged not only for our lives but for our conscience. Life is the result of conscience, conscience the result of life, round and round in a circle.

Remember, our conscience will judge truly according to the measure of our LOVE.



## REVIEWS

THE GOLDEN STRING. By Bede Griffiths, O.S.B. (The Harvill Press; 12s. 6d.)

'To follow up the vision which we have seen, to keep it in mind when we are thrown back again on the world, to live in its light and to shape our lives by its law . . .': this, for Dom Bede Griffiths, is to wind in William Blake's 'golden string' which 'will lead you in at heaven's gate built in Jerusalem's wall'. The vision (and it is, in no derogatory sense, a visionary's book) came first with the schoolboy's sudden initiation, on a lovely evening early in summer, to 'another world of beauty and mystery' to which man properly belongs. Drawn insistently on by this ancient beauty he was led away from the restless fictions and ugly output of modern life to God and to the Catholic faith and to monasticism at Prinknash Abbey. And the very account is written with a beauty and sensitiveness that reflect the constant ideal in the background.

His generation was bewildered and disillusioned, the post-war generation of the 20's. 'We did not belong anywhere. That was part of our misery; whether we liked it or not we were uprooted like the rest of the world, and wherever we went we could not escape ourselves.' All too many of that generation, finding, as they thought, in morality law without love, in religion conformity without deep inspiration, nourished themselves upon the light food of romanticism and politics, until both turned to wormwood in the 30's. Dom Bede instead, with the same starting point, plunged roots deep, first into the past (which he

and his Oxford companions discovered in book and stone), then into the real earth of the Cotswolds (by an experiment in living the same in principle as that of the Desert Fathers), and at last (discovering Scripture) into the absolute ground, God.

The climax came after a night of prayer: 'the hard casing of exterior reality seemed to have been broken through, and everything disclosed its inner being'. Certainly a great deal was still to be learned, but prayer was the key that had turned the lock. Yet he had still to be taught by the Catholic Church, and particularly by the discipline of monastic life, that this and the other instruments of his entry into truth could not be handled without subtle danger: 'I realised that what I had been seeking was a fantasy under which my own self-will was disguised. . . . I had followed my own desires for so long and worked out my own ideal, that it was difficult for me to see that the process had now to be reversed.' When God leads, it is obedience and detachment that are demanded of the creature; and it had been God leading all the time. . . .

This is a notable book. It is more than the unfinished autobiography of one man; it records the spiritual experience, in the most authentic tones, of a whole generation—a generation in captivity; and it shows how one man has found freedom. Some readers may feel (and I think the author certainly feels) that the journey is still to be continued. The last chapters of the book are less certain than the main portion—as if there is still a balance to be achieved, a perfect charity still to be laid hold of towards that modern world and its achievements which made the prison. Are they not materials, which, rebuilt, may yet make the temple of God?

COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

THE CONFESSIONS OF ST AUGUSTINE. Tr. by Sir Tobie Matthew, Kt., revised and edited by Dom Roger Hudleston. (The Orchard Books; Burns Oates; 15s.)

The volumes of the new Orchard series are designed to adorn a bookshelf rather than to fit a pocket. They are in fact about three times as large as their forerunners of the old series, and quite four times as expensive. Otherwise this edition by Dom Hudleston of Augustine's *Confessions* is identical with the one which first appeared in 1923.

The editor is surely right to include the last three books of reflections on the first chapter of Genesis. As he remarks in the introduction, while the exegesis may be a little old-fashioned nowadays, it is of value as a corrective to the attitude of people who, in Sir Tobie's rendering of Augustine, 'are so hot upon the negative that Moses did not mean that which I say, but that which they say'. But more than that, these Books XI-XIII are integral to Augustine's design in writing the *Confessions*.