

without in any sense agreeing with the main thesis of this book, all pastors can benefit from the message of compassion and sympathy which must be exercised in dealing with the tragedy of broken marriages. This message is clearly stated in the last chapter of the book, an exposition of the Philosophy of Marriage in terms of that continual intimate relationship in which spirit beings have their very existence. Nothing so distorts the marriage relationship as to see it merely against the background of animal or just sociological sex fulfilment. And the normal way which God has provided for this deep spiritual development is in the man-woman relationship of marriage. Again the Eastern Orthodox Church is set up as a model for the west to follow. But here the author is treading on very dangerous grounds. For the Eastern Church marriage is declared to be a calling of equal status with monasticism. An ideal conception of an unbreakable marriage bond is never allowed to overwhelm compassion for those who have failed to achieve it, nor to refuse them the opportunity of another attempt, after divorce, in remarriage. The only reply to this comes from the words of St Paul, and however ignorant the Western Church may be made to appear in its treatment of the Pauline privilege and the Matthean exception, there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the following passage: 'Art thou yoked to a wife? Then do not go about to free thyself. Art thou free of wedlock? Then do not go about to find a wife.' (1 Cor. vii, 27.) And later in verses 32 and 33 we read: 'And I would have you free from concern. He who is unmarried is concerned with God's claim, asking how he is to please God; whereas the married man is concerned with the world's claim, asking how he is to please his wife and thus he is at issue with himself.' And the abiding task of the Roman Church will ever be that of explaining that the world's claim is not, and cannot ever be in the light of Christian revelation, paramount.

MATTHEW RIGNEY, O.P.

THE PROMISES OF GOD: An Exercise in Biblical Thinking. By Carroll E. Simcox. (Dacre Press; 9s. 6d.)

This book of forty short meditations based on Scripture succeeds. The style is attractively direct. In each meditation the author quotes an Old Testament passage illuminating a chosen aspect of religion B.C. Our attention is drawn to the immaturity of the natural religion of unredeemed man, and the situation is held for us to see the relevant aspect of our own being which is still plainly B.C. An obvious danger attached to this method is that the Old Testament might be caricatured through concentration on its weaknesses. Dr Simcox has in most cases been careful to avoid this injustice by relating the particular situation

to its period, and, except perhaps in one or two passages from the psalms towards the end of his book, he generally gives moral credit where it is due. The second half of each meditation gives us a New Testament passage in contrast to the situation sketched in the first half, and draws the Christian lesson from both Testaments together.

A recurrent theme throughout the book deals with the hard-headed reasonableness and worldly good sense of following the recognized course accepted by social opinion, or of following one's own judgment: surely God's will must accord with these? For example, a case is ably made out to show how Eve did 'the brave, sensible, liberal thing' in eating. Then, contrasted with this is the Christian teaching of complete self-resignation into God's hands, in wonder at 'the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God: how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!'

The Editorial of a recent issue of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* told us that 'the meditative reading of the Scriptures, *lectio divina*, is the unique groundwork of sanctity'. Many Catholics need encouragement to forsake old-fashioned manuals of emotional spirituality for the stronger meat of even older-fashioned knowledge and love of the Scriptures. Here is an example of the right sort of encouragement.

R.S.

YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN. By Dennis J. Geaney, o.s.a. (Geoffrey Chapman; 6s. 6d.)

The principles which should underlie all Catholic endeavour to influence social, political and industrial life are universal, but their application is particular to each set of circumstances. Fr Geaney attempts to show, at a popular level, how they can and should be applied to certain aspects of American life. Since this is so I cannot really assess the value of much that he has to say, though he gives the impression of knowing the public he is addressing, of knowing how to address it and of having great practical experience of Catholic lay activity in America. For precisely these reasons his book is less likely to be of use to the English reader whose situation is, on all but the most general view, so different. Perhaps it was thought that the book would give priests and leaders of lay activities in England an opportunity to see how others approach problems similar, in some respects, to those which they themselves face, and possibly to adapt their methods; but it is hardly sufficiently detailed to be of use in this way. In fact it remains difficult to understand why an exhortation to American Catholics should be published in England at all.

M.T.