

BLACKFRIARS

the Sentences, and at least as much a reflection of current assumptions as of the saint's own and original thought.

This is a book which provides plenty of meat for the thought and discussions of theologians, and account must be taken of it by any who would henceforth write on the theory or morals of marriage and sex. It will no longer be possible to give to the augustinian-thomist *finis primarius* so naïve an interpretation as has hitherto been common.

But the chief value of the book will be for the thoughtful layman who is determined to take his vocation to marriage seriously and to plumb all its depths and meaning. He will indeed find here no practical "marriage manual," nor a code of moral laws governing marital relationships. Instead he will find that right thinking which must be presupposed to right living, and without which Christian moral teaching must remain largely unintelligible. He will be enabled to see in its true light much that seems to him obscure and unreasonable in that moral teaching, and learn to appreciate from the book's sober reasoning far more of the loftiness and responsibilities of the vocation to marriage and the turpitude of sexual sin than from any amount of moral exhortation. Never, for instance, have we seen the truth of the doctrine of the intrinsic heinousness of an extramarital sex-functioning (*mortale ex toto genere*) made so luminously apparent.

Those who have no German may welcome the literal—sometimes painfully literal—French translation; but they may prefer to await an English version which is in active preparation.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

PRESENCE MARIALE. François Charmot, S.J. (Editions Spes; 12
12 frs.)

This book tackles an important question. In the new spirit of Catholic Action where is the place of the Mother of God? Already some are beginning to lose sight of an essential side of Catholic spirituality. Devotion to Mary, in a wealth of spiritual ideas and organisations and tactics:—"Incorporation," "The Mystical Body," "Militancy," "Action," "Christianisation of the Milieu." Where does the Mother of God come in? There are not lacking young Catholics who are, in their hurry, bored with the Rosary and solemn old-fashioned statues of Our Lady. And to place her again in their lives a mere appeal is not sufficient. It wants a real theological instruction to her position. But it wants theological instruction that is not abstract and dry but real as is their experience of the power of militant Christianity.

REVIEWS

Fr. Charmot undertakes to provide such a work, in his own words "midway between theology and piety," an "essay in religious psychology." And as such his book will not suffice. There are many statements in it hardly tolerable for their looseness in poetry, much less where theological exactitude is professed. For example:

"Mary is the sole spouse (*épouse unique*) of God and the only elect (*seule élue*)." (p. 17.)

"(Mary) contains in her perfection all the Church and all humanity (*toute l'Eglise et toute l'humanité*)." (p. 17.)

"... the Virgin was veritably creatrix (*créatrice*) with God of a new humanity." (p. 34.)

"In Mary the Church bears the stigmata. (*En Marie l'Eglise est une stigmatisée*)." (p. 68.)

"There are therefore in the Church two aspects: that of life and that of fecundity of life. The life is Christ. The fecundity of life is the Mother of Christ or Christ living in his Mother." (p. 84.)

"... The Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles as He descended the first time upon the humanity of Christ by the mediation (*médiation*) of Mary." (p. 81.)

These words as they occur in the book are partially explained by the context. But in general they are such as could only be explained by being explained away. As Theology they are seriously misleading. As Piety they would form an untrue piety. And they are such as would undoubtedly give that scandal to the non-Catholic which we should be so careful to avoid whenever possible. At least one of these charges could be upheld in the individual case of each quotation, and in some cases all of them.

There is much good matter in the book, but because of these grave defects it is not one that could be recommended . . .

Our Lady does not need more than her due praise.

FINBAR SYNNOTT, O.P.

RELIGION AND LIFE. By Aloysius Roche. (Burns Oates; 3s. 6d.)

TALKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. By Aloysius Roche. (Sands; 3s. 6d.)

RULES OF LIFE. By Rev. Joseph Degen. (Burns Oates; 2s. 6d.)

LETTERS TO BART. By T. J. Sheridan, S.J. (Sands; 3s. 6d.)

All these four books are good. They approach life in a healthy traditionally Christian way. They do not deal with anything abstruse, and for the most part we agree with the way the authors have attempted to meet the exigencies of present-day Catholics in face of present-day work and play, temptations and difficulties. In other words they work out on certain points and to some extent the Catholic theory of life.