

## BLACKFRIARS

MORALS AND MARRIAGE. The Catholic Background to Sex. By T. G. Wayne. (Longmans; 3/6.)

Moral theologians of to-day are fully justified in giving a fresh impetus to studies in sexual morality. For nowadays less than ever can the solution of delicate problems in married life be left to unaided instinct; to think otherwise is to court disaster, or at least the spoiling of many lives. So many aberrations threaten to mar the greatness of marriage, a human greatness and a divine greatness, that it becomes imperative to speak out. And so the author of this little book speaks out; and though he would modestly veil his identity under a pseudonym, he cannot hide from us his indisputable competency. Careful reading enables us to say quite simply: We have before us the fruit of much reflection, the work of a qualified moral theologian who has given voice to the Church's authentic teaching. We have no hesitation in expressing our gratitude to this unknown author—and the thanks of all his readers, who, we hope, will be very numerous.

This little book has primarily a practical purpose, and makes no pretence of exhausting all the resources of sacramental theology. Thus it is that the principal chapters treat of the morality, obligation, and possible perversions of intercourse; the result is complete, briefly expressed, and withal sufficiently concisely. Little need for details here: let each read for himself.

Let it be noted, however, that the author goes far beyond narrow, stereotyped solutions to problems; such particular applications as he proposes retain their true significance because the whole of sexual morality is seen in its "totalitarian" aspect. The union of husband and wife is a reality at once human and religious, having due place in the entire order of the universe, and a significance nothing less than cosmic; and so psychologists, sociologists, theologians, will each have their say on the matter.

Another point which we would do well to ponder and which engages T. G. Wayne's thought: the love of husband and wife is something *total*, the gift of a *person* to a *person*; physical relationships are only great in so far as they are part and parcel of a love which is purely a love of friendship; sexual pleasure is one element in an experience which is human in its very widest sense, for it is an experience which is born of mind and heart far more than of the flesh. Hence the importance of the life in common which is home life, and the preponderant rôle of sex characteristics such as voice, bearing, a masculine or feminine outlook—characteristics which nevertheless only have a secondary influence in the conjugal act. True, sexual relationships are ordained to procreation; but our author, by recognizing the value of the mutual *personal* gift of husband and wife, comes into line

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with the conclusions of some contemporary writers—I have in mind Dietrich von Hildebrand—writers who are heedful of certain psychological analyses, and alive to the reproach (recently formulated with some asperity by the Russian thinker N. Berdiaev) of having been blind to the dignity of love in marriage and of having overstressed its sociological and biological function. T. G. Wayne has, in our opinion, truly taken cognizance of and weighed in the balance all the values at issue.

May we hazard one little reservation? It is this: the author speaks of the beauty of a marriage wherein is seen the splendour of chastity in the married state, speaks too of his conviction that the Incarnation can save the *entire* man, body and soul, hallowing his most concrete activities—then, surely, a supplementary paragraph is needed on the excellence of the celibate state, thereby answering those who may wonder that the Church esteems continence promised to God more highly than the married state.

One last word—to give our wholehearted approval to this useful little book, and to draw attention to its frontispiece which presents us with an engraving of rare beauty, vigorously realist, the work of Eric Gill.

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SPIRITUAL SONGS FROM ENGLISH MSS. OF FOURTEENTH TO SIXTEENTH CENTURIES. Edited by Frances M. M. Comper, with a Preface by H. J. C. Grierson. (S.P.C.K.; 7/6.)

“There are some beautiful things that will never come again, and not individuals alone but classes of things.” So writes Grierson in his preface to this volume, for the mediæval religious lyric is, unfortunately, one of these things. To-day most religious poetry comes from versifiers who, however sincere they may be, seem incapable of giving the impress of sincerity and reality to their writing. Their thought and feeling seem sentimental, remote and vague; they break the great maxim “the higher the theme, the harder the thought.” Seeming to have little grasp of the humanity of Our Lord and Lady, they place them outside place and time altogether, in the abstract, or maybe in an “historical,” setting. Their fault is that of all our world, and of the language in which we feel and think. We have much to learn from the mediæval poet, who had no sense of *period*, but who possessed instead a sense of the concrete and eternal nature of God and His Mother. We cannot learn now to write as vividly as he, but we can, through the mediumship for instance of this intelligently edited volume, let him teach us to feel the real more sharply and see it more objectively.

G. B. S.