

once something discernible to mere observation which, taking its scale into account, remains characteristically Christian.

C. HASTINGS

THE GOLD RING, by T. W. Burke; Darton, Longman and Todd; 9s. 6d.

A high divorce and illegitimate birth rate, widespread sexual promiscuity and abortion, and almost a universal practice of artificial birth control are some of the visible scars inflicted by contemporary society on Christian marriage. The Christian answer, until very recently, has been an inward looking policy which met each new threat with a fresh condemnation and, whenever indicated, further disciplinary regulations for the faithful. Thus, for many Catholics, marrying in the Church has meant the fulfilment of certain requirements (marrying a Catholic, in a Catholic Church, procreating and sending the children to a Catholic School) and little more.

Recently there has been a decisive turning away from this outlook. Thought, within the Church, is being increasingly focussed in a re-examination of God's love in the marriage between Yaweh and his people in the Old Testament; and Christ and his Church since the Incarnation. In these prototypes we can find endless spiritual riches to inspire and guide Christian couples and provide a clear and shining example to those who look at Christianity from afar.

Fr Burke, using material from the French *L'Anneau d'Or* series (hence the title of the book) and adding original material, examines this theme. There are chapters on sacramental grace in marriage, the nature of the sexual act, procreation and the role of the family in society and the Church. The subject is so important and the plan so promising that it is particularly disappointing to report that the book is only partially successful. For too much has been tackled in 134 pages and the presentation is uneven.

Chapter nine, dealing with the problem of birth limitation and the use of the infertile period must be singled out for special criticism. Medical advice was sought before writing it, thus lending authority to the advice given on page 95 (3 days before menstruation and 2 days after it), which as it stands is highly dangerous and under certain circumstances will certainly lead to conception. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that the use of the infertile period should be based on personal instruction given either by a specially trained physician or at a Catholic Marriage Advisory Council centre. If this is not possible information should be sought by post from the nearest centre, of which there are over 40 in the country now. There is also a repetition of the often quoted statement that the wife is deprived at a time when her sexual desire is maximum. In the light of modern research this is simply not true. In general there is far too much emphasis on the supposed difficulties and little attention is paid to the presence of sacrifice, in the mutual offering of love to God during the period of abstinence, providing a source of grace and an opportunity for love to grow.

In dealing with the relationship and specific role of the husband and wife the author repeats meaningless generalizations such as the husband's intellectual superiority over his wife, particularly unfortunate since the example that follows is that of a married woman doctor. This bias is further shown in asserting woman's alleged inferior capacity for abstract thought and similarly about her 'rational capacity to things'. Such statements not only ignore modern psychological scholarship, but by straying from reality, contribute little to what is a genuinely complex contemporary problem. The relationship between parents and children is similarly treated with little imagination.

Despite these unsatisfactory aspects, this book will more than justify its existence if it leads readers to the original material, which is the hope both of the author and of Fr M. O'Leary, the Chairman of the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, who has written a foreword.

J. DOMINIAN

ESCAPE FROM LONELINESS, by Paul Tournier, translated by John S. Gilmour; S.C.M. Press; 21s.

I have always thought that Orson Welles, though wittily malicious, was more than a little unkind about the Swiss. 'What have they produced in over three hundred years?' he asked in that unforgettably haunting film *The Third Man*. And snap came the answer—'the cuckoo clock'. Myself I think he might have added two more things at least—neutrality and Jung. Both are relevant to this book.

Its author, a Swiss Protestant doctor and psychiatrist (though he prefers to call it 'counsellor') writing however in the manner of a clergyman or pastor or evangelist, is well aware of the limitations of his society. These he attributes in part, and not altogether frivolously, to the watch industry which causes his countrymen, so he says, to 'see every thing small'. The mountains, too, may play their part in restricting the horizon of the Swiss (though you would not easily get an English mountain-lover to agree with this). And then they are a people who have no access to the sea. This adds to their sense of being hemmed in; to their terror of suffocating, of being swallowed by their neighbours and losing their identity. So they turn in upon themselves, narrowing their world.

Out of such a background comes this book. It is a background very different from our own, and this is reflected in the case-histories to which the writer, as a practising psychiatrist, alludes. His people and their particular anxieties are simply not, in superficials, like ourselves. Nor is their religious sense ours. They talk forever about having 'spiritual experiences' as a result of which a husband, perhaps, ceases to make intolerable demands on his wife, or a young girl recovers from a broken engagement. Naturally, we have no reason to doubt the reality of these. But it remains that English Catholics, or Catholics of any sort, do not talk like this and do not exactly feel like this either.