

occasionally regarded as evidence for heresy' (p. 19). In the light of Mr Sumpston's own research it would be more convincing to write 'Unwar-

ranted optimism was one of the principal characteristics of Mediaeval religion'.

GERVASE MATHEW OP

CARE OF THE CHILD FACING DEATH, edited by Lindy Burton. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, London, 1974. 225 pp. £4.95.

The sufferings of children whose lives are threatened by illness, and the sufferings of their families, are often aggravated by the insecurity and naivety of those who help them. This book brings these helpers enlightenment and the confidence to work together; the result must be an improvement in the quality of the care they give.

Seventeen chapters by various authors enable the reader to set his own limited experience in a broader framework, and to understand and correct his own attitudes. With few exceptions these authors write clearly and avoid the jargon of their particular professions; they do not intimidate the readers or waste his time. Dr Burton must take much of the credit for this achievement, and her own contribution on 'The family coping with a heavy treatment régime' is a model of conciseness and informativeness.

This is not a depressing book: its keynotes are hope, dignity and realism. In this respect it is also an excellent introduction to the pastoral care of the dying. Loneliness and a sense that our environing universe,

which is immediately painful and frightening, is also ultimately hostile or at least unfeeling are two of the chief trials of the dying and of those who love them. The kind of care described and urged in this book is better than any verbal consolation in fighting these fears—or rather, both our words and our sacraments are in danger of being incredible unless both patient and family find their loneliness softened by understanding and can feel honest caring love in and beyond their pains. How can we place ourselves or those we love into God's hands unless the realism, acceptance and reliability of those around us encourages us to believe that God has built these qualities into the larger context of our life and death? Here too we know God by analogy.

Doctors and hospital staff, school-teachers, clergy, Samaritans, and all who come in contact with very ill children and their families will profit from this book; so will the general reader whose compassionate instincts need and thrive upon the discipline of facts, scientific study and the wise counsel of experience.

MICHAEL SLUSSER