

**A READER IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY**, ed. by John Bowden and James Richmond, London. S.C.M. Press, 1967, paperback, 190 pp. 7s. 6d.

This reader, it is hoped, will act as a guide for the elusive 'interested layman' as well as possibly becoming a text-book for sixth forms and university or college courses in theology, or even in parish study groups. It fulfils excellently the aim of its editors, viz. to illustrate from prominent writers such vital issues of contemporary theology as demythologizing, the doctrine of God, verification of theological statements and the problem of secularization. There are six sections covering the theology of the word (Barth), existentialism (Bultmann and Tillich), Roman Catholic theology (Rahne Schillebeeckx and Teilhard de Chardin), secularization (von Weizsacker, Bonhoeffer and van Peursen), analytic philosophy (Braithwaite, John Wisdom, Basil Mitchell and John Hick) and comments and reactions (H. D. Lewis, David

Jenkins and John Macquarrie). A number of the passages chosen for inclusion have become classics, e.g. Bultmann's *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (in extract), Bonhoeffer's 'The Non-religious Interpretation of Biblical Concepts', Braithwaite's *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief* and Wisdom's parable of the garden. The preface and introduction are helpful, adequate notes precede each extract and useful bibliographies are given. In the section on Roman Catholic theology it was a little surprising to find Ladislaus Boros recommended warmly while theologians like Congar and Ratzinger were passed over in silence. Oscar Cullmann is there on the cover to cast an arch glance at Bultmann even if he fails to rate a single mention in the reader itself.

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**THE INFERTILE PERIOD**, by J. Marshall. *Helicon Press*, Baltimore. *Darton, Longman & Todd*, London. 120 pp. 21s.

This is the second edition of Dr Marshall's book and its continuing popularity is a just reward to a piece of pioneering work in this country. In 1963, when it first appeared, there was no publication which encompassed the physiology of ovulation and its practical application to birth regulation so effectively. The book was the fruit of many years of persevering work allowing the infertile period to be placed on a sound scientific basis. Decades of neglect had earned for it the pejorative term Vatican roulette, an expression still used by the biased and the ignorant. This new edition includes new material and remains a clear and concise exposition of the subject.

Since the early sixties, however, the whole climate of opinion inside the Church has changed with unprecedented speed. The use of the infertile period demands certain strict requirements of continence, husband-wife co-operation and unequivocal spiritual motiva-

tion. This motivation is in dire jeopardy due to the failure of the Church to bring forward precise and convincing reasons for its teaching on contraception. The recent leak in the press has shown that the majority decision of the Papal Commission favoured the use of the pill which by implication destroyed the principal theological arguments held against contraception, namely the prevention of the intrinsic creativity of the sexual act.

In this state of doubt and upheaval the infertile period is bound to suffer. Inevitably it has become a convenient scapegoat for much displaced frustration and hostility. I believe that only when the position of the Church is clarified will the infertile period find its rightful place amongst the other methods controlling birth. When this time comes Dr Marshall's contribution will be an invaluable help to the ultimate evaluation of this method.

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