

SEX ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE CATHOLIC. The Bellarmine Series, No. 10. By J. Leycester King, S.J. (Burns, Oates; 6s.).

Much has been written of late upon the necessity and technique of instructing children and adolescents in matters pertaining to sex. Health authorities, psychologists, social workers, educationalists and others have all contributed to the discussion. Unfortunately they have, generally speaking, taken only a partial view of the subject, regarding it exclusively from their own 'specialist' standpoint—that of hygiene, psychiatry, eugenics and so forth. Intentionally or otherwise, they have detached the subject from its necessary and fundamental context, which is that of morality and religion. The sex-life, it is true, is only a part of human life, but it must be treated as such, and related and subordinated to the interests and needs of the whole man—interests and needs of which morality and religion alone are competent to speak. Failure to allow for these paramount factors in the problem leads inevitably to an oversimplified or distorted statement of it and a solution which would prove inadequate and harmful if adopted in practice.

Nor is the matter one of purely academic interest, for theories and schemes of sex-instruction are already being tried out in schools and youth centres, while it is likely that under official inspiration and direction the same policy will prevail even more widely in the near future. Catholic parents, teachers, youth-workers and others having the care of the young need therefore to know what attitude they should adopt towards these measures and how far they are themselves, collectively or respectively, responsible for providing their charges with information, training and advice. For this reason Fr. Leycester King's book dealing with these aspects of the problem appears at a particularly opportune moment.

The author takes as his starting point the official teaching of the Church upon the subject, as expressed in the pronouncements of Popes, Roman Congregations and our own bishops in recent years. Having summarized the guidance given in these documents (which are set forth *in extenso* in appendices), the author goes on to consider the principles underlying the Church's attitude towards the sex-education of the young. This section might usefully have been developed at greater length. There follows a chapter dealing with the insufficiency and defects of solutions not based upon these principles in the practical solution of the problem. A final chapter contains some "hints for those called upon to advise, guide and help youth in this matter", which should prove useful. At the end there is a list of publications which may be consulted with advantage.

ALEXANDER L'ESTRANGE, O.P.

SPIRITUALISM. By Herbert V. O'Neill, with a Preface by His Grace, the Archbishop of Liverpool. (Burns, Oates; 5s.).

Fr. O'Neill, who has read the records of Spiritualism over a period of thirty years and has been in personal contact with many eminent Spiritualists, sets out "to disabuse, disillusion, and en-

lighten any who are inclined to think that there may be something in Spiritualism" (p. 15). His book is not a study in Psychical Research but "the presentation of such a case against Spiritualism that all Catholics at least will see for themselves how hollow, how fraudulent, how contradictory a movement it is and thereby be deterred from having anything to do with it". In the attempt to convince possible non-Catholic readers as well, the evidence is provided by quotations from the writings of none-Catholic investigators and of Spiritualists themselves, with Professor Joad as the impartial witness to the sense of the Catholic point of view.

The author has certainly not written 'without the book', as he puts it, but we get the impression that it is a scrap-book. We can sympathise with the general note of irritation, for, as his quotations abundantly show, he has to deal with a pseudo-religion full of contradictions, confusions and crudities. Yet this manner of writing, while showing that much spiritualism is pure fraud, a great deal can be explained by natural causes, and a certain amount is probably diabolic in origin, does not help us to understand the causes which make Spiritualism so attractive to many and how Catholicism can be the true corrective of such a perverse form of religion. This seems to us especially true of the last chapter in which Fr. O'Neill proposes the "Catholic Point of View".

This takes the form of an apologetic presenting Catholicism as a body of coherent truths believed on God's authority but founded in human reason and approached by way of the 'motives of credibility', especially the prophecies and miracles of the Bible. The position taken up is one which by no means emphasises the infused nature of the habit of faith but rather makes it the term of a rational investigation. As Thomists we find this exposition unsatisfactory but we also think it less apt to meet the needs of those attracted to Spiritualism than an apologetic which does emphasise the supernatural character of the act of faith and its motives while not lessening the importance of 'our reasonable service'. For Spiritualism is an attempt to fulfil a human need, though in a perverted manner. S. Thomas tells us that one who presumes to fore-know or foretell the future, without a divine revelation, usurps knowledge proper to God alone. For Catholics true 'divination' must take place under the divine initiative and for divine purposes as is abundantly shown in the Old and New Testaments. But the gift of faith itself, demanding the divine initiative, is an ordered participation in divine knowledge. It is through faith that we can believe with certainty in a future life and leave our war dead in the safe hands of God the Father Almighty. It seems to us more important to point this out than to insist on the reasonableness of our faith in comparison with the fraud and fallaciousness of Spiritualism.

DAMIAN MAGRATH, O.P.

ENJOYING THE NEW TESTAMENT. By Margaret Monro. (Longmans; 8s. 6d.)

Miss Monro's work is an excellent introduction to the New Tes-