

group ministries, priest-workers, auxiliary priests and deacons. It will require a massive handing over to the laity of non-ministerial functions in the Church. Within such a context, it is not fanciful to foresee the emergence of a

married clergy working alongside and on equal terms with their fellow-priests who have chosen a celibate ministry. But nothing short of this will get to the root of the trouble.

J. R. WICKSTEED, O.C.R.

THE FREEDOM OF SEXUAL LOVE, A Christian Concept of Sexuality in Marriage, by Joseph and Lois Bird. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1968. 189 pp. 25s.

Part of the tragedy of many couples who seek marriage advisory counselling is that they do not know how to love and are in danger of producing children who will perpetuate this vicious circle. If they have never witnessed love they will almost certainly fail in love themselves. The problem, then, is how to help them to break this circle. This book may help many, for it tries to integrate detailed sex instruction and psychological insight into Christian love. As such the book represents their own personal love story, and it is the only book I know which conveys such information in this way; they offer it with great humility, as an act of witness, hoping that it may give freedom and joy to others not so fortunate. They have succeeded. Though in one sense it is a pity that such an intimate book should have to be written, it is clearly necessary.

Their vision is the antithesis of Henry Vaughan's poem *Retreat*: they move *forward* to the goal of complete love, and they are honest enough to acknowledge the many difficulties on the way. The very perfection described, however, suggests the first of several reserves about this book: it could discourage all but the luckiest and best-endowed.

Even good love has its deserts and downs. And somewhere between the extremes of resorting to a psychologist and hiding, curled up, prickles uplifted like a hedgehog, lies the vast field of examination of conscience. It is there that we can find out so much about ourselves and discover reasons for certain behaviour. Unhidden problems may be manageable. Serious problems need professional help. The authors insist on the importance of communication; some may disagree and prefer the deep peace which comes from silent awareness. And one's silent conversations with God may sound pixilated to others if put into words, rather as some of the authors' own confidences may seem to be so for some of their readers—as, for instance, this: 'Pregnancy is a nine months' extension of the orgasm.'

Then, since sex is part of love, and marriage is a commitment to love, there are areas of love unexplored by the authors, possibly

because they have not lived through them yet. For sex has its seasons—spring sex, summer sex, autumn sex, winter sex, each with its own moods and colours. It is of the last two periods that one could learn more. The sometimes foggy days of the menopause. The upheaval of retirement and retrenchment, learning for the first time what it is like to live together all day and every day, the wife losing some of her privacy and the husband and possibly the wife parted from their life-work and outside environment. A geriatrician will say that here is where one can meet the unloving and the unloved, the lonely and deserted, or the elderly relations tearing apart a younger generation's marriage. Modern medicine is prolonging old age, and yet few people prepare for it emotionally. It is the ultimate revelation and test of unselfish love, humility and charity. What so often happens is that people become petulant and demanding, and indulge in emotional blackmail, they feel useless and unhappy and become nothing but a burden in a rather unsympathetic world. It need not be so.

What is also missing is a reflection on the part friends play in sex and love throughout marriage—and friends should here include the children. Although the authors have nine of their own, they are mentioned only in the dedication as a means through which their oneness has grown. But children and friends are not just means for the growth of love on the part of the parents; they have to be loved for their own sakes, and children have to be gradually released to become adults—it is like releasing a kite delicately to the changing and risky winds.

Finally, there is a lack of laughter and fun in the book. Eutrapelia is the yeast and whipped egg-white of love, the agents which sustain and give lightness to marriage. They must be nursed as gently as a soufflé or kneaded as diligently as dough. As Ogden Nash wrote:

One would be in less danger
From the wiles of the stranger
If one's kin and kith
Were more fun to be with.

The book is therefore original, courageous

and welcome; but it is more of a pointer than a complete achievement. It includes an excellent foreword on the history of the attitude of the

Church towards marriage. But it excludes—at least in the reviewer's copy—pages 190 and 191.

DIANA CRUTCHLEY

A HISTORY OF EASTERN CHRISTIANITY, by Aziz S. Atiya. *Methuen and Co.*, London, 1968. 486 pp. 90s.

Most Christians concerned with the problem of unity would think of it in terms of the relations between Catholics and Protestants, or between Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, and forget that there are others who might take part in the discussions and the reunion: the survivors of certain ancient Churches of the Near East, whose theology and liturgy were expressed not in Latin, Greek or the languages of Europe, but in Coptic, Syriac and Armenian, and whose history diverged from that of the rest of Christendom during the period of the great Christological controversies and the Councils. It is therefore useful to have this long, detailed and scholarly work devoted to them.

By 'Eastern Christianity' Professor Atiya means the three Churches which accepted the Monophysite view in some degree, or at least did not accept the formulations of the Council of Chalcedon—Copts, Armenians and 'Jacobites' or Syrian Orthodox; the Nestorians or Assyrians; the Maronites who were once Monothelites but accepted the authority of Rome in the Crusading period; and that interesting offshoot of Near Eastern Christendom, the Christian community of the Malabar coast. Apart from the Maronites, he does not deal systematically with the eastern Uniate Churches, and his references to Catholic missionaries are not favourable (p. 112: 'the introduction of Catholicism into Egypt came more through politics and expediency than through candid conviction'). He also excludes the 'Greek' or Eastern Orthodox Church. This exclusion may be misleading if it gives the impression that the Eastern Orthodox of the Near East are Greeks and therefore in some sense foreign to the area: they are so in Egypt, but in the Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem most of the clergy and laity are Arabic-speaking and no less indigenous than the Jacobites. It also from time to time makes the historical narrative hard to understand: for example, the main description of the British and American Protestant missions in Syria and Lebanon comes in the chapter on the Jacobites, and this will give the impression that the missionaries were mainly concerned with the Jacobites, whereas in fact they were

more concerned with the 'Greek' Orthodox and Uniates. But in another way the exclusion is justified: it enables Professor Atiya to lay full emphasis on the continued existence and vitality of these other Churches, and to show clearly that the old distinction of 'orthodox' and 'heretics' is as misleading as it is unkind: separated both by doctrinal controversy and by the rise of Islam, these ancient Churches grew apart from the rest of Christendom and developed in a way of their own; now they are growing together again, and differences of theological formulation, although important, no longer arouse such hatred as in the past.

A distinguished historian of the Crusades, Professor Atiya is himself a Copt, founded the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo, and has played a part in the public life of his people. His book is particularly full and well informed on his own community. Its history, faith, organization and liturgy are described with authority and a wealth of detail. There is, for example, an interesting passage about the influence of Coptic Christianity in Ireland: 'Irish Christianity, the great civilizing agent of the early Middle Ages among the northern nations, was the child of the Egyptian Church. Seven Egyptian monks are buried at Disert Uldith. . . .' Again, this description of the election of a Patriarch vividly reveals something about the spirit of eastern Christendom:

Before the final selection is made by lot, continuous services are held for three days in succession and a complete vigil is observed on the eve of the third. Names of the three candidates on little scrolls are enclosed in a sealed envelope with a fourth scroll on which is written, 'Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd'. This is deposited on the altar and opened before the congregation after the final Holy Communion by the celebrant, who is usually the oldest interim archbishop acting for the patriarch. Then an infant of about eight picks out the winning name, unless the fourth scroll emerges to indicate that none of the three is acceptable to the divine will and thus the whole operation must be repeated until the issue is resolved.

About the other Churches, Professor Atiya