

which has the expressed approval of the Holy Father, indicates some of these. The measure of this change is here to be seen in the author's proposals which include (given certain safeguards) the use of the infertile period from the very beginning of marriage, the hope that Catholic universities will promote courses and research in sexology, and the sincere wish for an exchange between priests and doctors, starting at the seminary and carried on at all levels of their mutual work.

The theme of the book is the control of sexuality in the service of love. This, the author stresses, legitimately encompasses genital activity but needs to transcend it and to include the exchange between souls and minds as well. He examines the prevailing notions of love in society and their corrosive impact on Christian practice. He finds the need for a restatement of the meaning of love in Christian terms with obsolete habits and attitudes pruned and a full account taken of modern psychological and biological research.

There is much to be grateful for in this bold and refreshing book but one must be weary of certain tendencies in works of this kind. There is usually an excessive zeal to prove some particular point and this is done without adequate evidence. Thus on page 16 the statement is made that the instability of family life and the disturbing increase of divorces can, of course, be traced back to the corrosive and shattering effect of contraception. Anyone actively engaged in marital reconciliation learns rapidly that distorted sexual relations are but one symptom of a wider constellation of psychological difficulties. An overemphasis (entirely unsupported by critical evidence) on birth control as a cause of divorce tends to remove attention from and delay research in the much wider field of psychological difficulties. An incomplete grasp of psychological facts leads to the statement on page 45 that normally sexual desire does not begin to bloom in a girl until marriage. This may be true for some girls but is far from universal and may produce unnecessary anxiety and moral difficulties in some readers who may consider their feelings in some way perverse. The subject of masturbation receives the only really unsatisfactory treatment in the whole book.

To some, the views expressed in this book will appear too advanced. I think they do no more than come to grips in a realistic manner with long-standing problems in this field. There is now an urgent need for these views to percolate to the very heart of each parish and there provide some of the answers to the frequent agonising conflicts of conscience.

J. DOMINIAN

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE, by John Marshall; Darton, Longman and Todd, 5s.

This excellent book sets out to provide for people about to be married a synthesis of the various aspects of necessary knowledge in brief and simple form, with emphasis on the positive ideal rather than the possible pitfalls and failures. Preparation for marriage is today more than ever necessary because marriage is

a much more difficult task than it was in times past, even on the material plane, and because it is as much a vocation as the priesthood or religious life, both of which require preparatory training. Hence the chapters of this book cover every aspect of marriage. The chapter on the primary and secondary purposes of marriage is a very clear explanation of a subject often badly and inadequately expressed. However this book does not attempt to go more deeply than is necessary into its subject, and hence it is refreshingly clear of the advice on 'technique' which weighs down so many other books on this subject. Yet it does cover various obvious questions such as intimacy during pregnancy, advice about honeymoons and sex before marriage. In so positive a book it may at first sight seem surprising to find a chapter on contraception, but this is necessary on account of the propaganda favouring it, and the chapter proposes very simply and clearly and convincingly the arguments against it, as well as answering the objection that the safe period is the 'Catholic form of contraception'. Very practical advice is given for both sides in the chapter on the psychological differences between men and women, showing how these provide sources for greater understanding and union rather than for quarrels. Despite its moving pages on the sanctity and happiness of marriage lived as a vocation, this book adopts no sweetly pious tone, but is throughout practical and in contact with reality, as may be seen from the suggestion that baby-sitting be used by parochial organisations as a form of Catholic action. Topics such as the length of a courtship, knowledge of one another's families, the mother-in-law 'problem', women working after marriage, and how to compose a simple budget, makes this a book which could well be given to every engaged couple, and which would render quite unnecessary any of the embarrassed and embarrassing explanations of Catholic teaching on marriage given by many priests. It may seem surprising that some of the chapters are contained in a book on preparation for marriage, when they seem at first sight to be more suitable for reading a year or so after it. But perhaps we may hope that Dr Marshall will give us another book of equal excellence to be read when the first months have passed.

ADRIAN WALKER

HISTORICAL SELECTIONS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, by Ninian Smart; S.C.M., 40s.

This book consists of excerpts from representative philosophers of religion in the Western tradition, with short introductions to the work of each philosopher as a whole. No living author is included.

The introductions are as interesting and useful as the excerpts themselves; the summaries of the teaching of Aristotle (in the section on Aquinas) and of Hegel