

THE IMMACULATE HEART. Litany and Meditations. By Mgr. Johannes Messner. (Mercier Press; 3s.)

Is it fair to base a book of meditations on theological opinions? Mariologists may ask themselves the question when reading Mgr Messner's book. It is a series of most useful meditations on the Litany of the Immaculate Heart. The underlying theology is that of M. J. Scheeben. The faithful who ponder these paragraphs or points (and they take some pondering) will feel that they are penetrating into the world of spiritual wonders which we call Mariology, under the guidance of an expert. And so they are. But few will realise that the Mariology of Scheeben is very far from being the last word on all subjects. His key-theme ('the key to all Mariology' ,p. 14), which is that of Mary as 'God's bride as well as God's Mother', has not by any means received general acceptance as the first principle of Mariology, though it is no doubt a beautiful and inspiring idea. So small a book packed with so many lovely thoughts deserves general commendation, but for the student of Mariology the presentation may appear somewhat unbalanced. There is a slip in the footnote on p. 22. For 'July 12th' read 'February 12th'. G.M.C.

EXTRACTS

HOLY SCRIPTURE must ever be the main nourishment, with the Eucharist, of the Christian life. Too often men turn to cut-and-dried textbooks for guidance in the spiritual life when they would find all they need in the Word of God. Perhaps they are too easily discouraged by the literal sense, and it is of interest to find Dom Ralph Russell showing (in *The Downside Review*, winter number) the importance of the 'spiritual sense' and how it is safeguarded by the late Encyclical *Humani Generis*. The 'literal' sense, which is what the author meant when he wrote, contains other, deeper significances, and the words of the Scriptures are always revealing new and deeper vistas, leaving the earthly images and turning towards God himself and his Providence.

Are we not opening the door wide to fanciful interpretations?

The answer lies chiefly in the unity of God's providential plan, shown in the Old and New Testaments, and in the fact that events acquire a new and spiritual meaning from God's own revelation of his design.

It is the coming of our Lord that finally 'opens up' the meaning of the Old Testament and gives us a key to untold mysteries in the Bible. For this reason the spiritually minded man must keep his eye constantly on the Word of God.