

of Jewish life, its intellectual clarity and independence, and its reverence for a truth which is more than purely 'factual' grow from an education firmly centred on Scripture. We do not want to reproduce the Jewish approach

in every aspect, but Jewish child-rearing methods have something to teach Christians who are, also, people of the Book.

ROSEMARY HAUGHTON

**MARITAL BREAKDOWN**, by Jack Dominian. *Penguin Books*, 1968. 162 pp. 4s.; *Darton, Longman & Todd*, 1968, 172 pp. 30s.

What is the nature of contemporary marriage? Why does it so often fail? What can be done about it? These are the big questions that Dr Dominian faces in his slim Pelican entitled *Marital Breakdown*. A psychiatrist with ten years' experience as a medical adviser to the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, he makes use of the latest scientific studies as well as his own considerable clinical experience to probe the sociological and psychological background to the problem.

The principal cause of marital breakdown, according to Dr Dominian, is psychological immaturity: 'the presence of characteristics or needs which rightly belong to an earlier phase of development'. The attempt by one or both partners to meet these anachronistic demands imposes an excessive burden on a marriage. Dr Dominian analyses three of the commonest types of immaturity: dependency, deprivation, and lack of self-esteem. It is not hard to imagine the marital difficulties of a person who has never achieved a minimum of emotional independence or of someone who, deprived of affection and security in childhood, has an inordinate need for love coupled with a total incapacity to reciprocate. Dr Dominian illustrates his descriptions with case histories, and throughout the book emphasizes the emotional factors that frequently lie behind the apparent problems: how sexual complaints are so often the outward sign of personality conflicts; how the motives behind adultery are usually much more complex than simple pleasure-seeking; how seemingly sensible reasons for postponing childbearing can mask a deep and powerful unconscious anxiety.

As a basis for discussion, Dr Dominian presents the conclusions of recent research: the close relationship between early marriage and instability; the fact, also remarked by Shakespeare, that 'hasty marriage seldom proveth well'; the particular vulnerability of the early years of marriage; the evidence that people from broken homes start marriage with a greater than average risk of unhappiness; the finding that premarital pregnancy has adverse effects on marriage; the indication that child-

less marriages run an above average risk of ending in divorce.

Beyond a perfunctory opening chapter that grants the impact of social changes on the structure of marriage, Dr Dominian concentrates on what he calls 'The primacy of the emotional interpersonal conflict'. Influenced no doubt by his own clinical experience, he does tend to look upon marriage as an isolated relationship between individuals. If one views marriage in a wider historical context, however, one begins to wonder if people really are any more immature today than they were in the past. Without even considering totally different cultures, one has only to read nineteenth-century novels to find graphic examples of Dr Dominian's personality failings among married couples. Yet these marriages, far from ideal, did not come to conclusions catastrophic both to the individuals concerned and to society. Are we today led to expect too much from marriage: to place too great a burden on what is, after all, only a union of two imperfect humans? Is instant and perfect happiness, which includes a lifetime of romantic love, sexual ecstasy and personal fulfilment, a realistic goal?

Margaret Mead, the American anthropologist, recently advocated coming to terms with the contemporary situation. Since people are now marrying younger and living longer, she has prescribed different kinds of marriage for different stages in life: for example, a youthful childless marriage, possibly of students; a later marriage that would include planned parenthood; and a subsequent marriage in middle age, when the children have grown up, and perhaps the parents, too. (Dr Dominian agrees that emotional growth and the attendant changes provide a major source of conflict leading to the breakdown of marriage.) Now, some years since her original proposition, Margaret Mead notes sadly that her idea has not found favour with the young who still obstinately cling to the ideal of a monogamous marriage for life. There is something touching, if a little ridiculous, in this American grandmother, chiding the youth of today for their

'hopeless, ridiculous, and utterly untenable position': 'wanting to believe it will be for ever'. Though her solution may be uninviting, her diagnosis of the modern predicament is astute: 'we ask too much of marriage and not getting it we despair too quickly and break it off'.

What then can be done? Dr Dominian recommends more research on marriage, divorce and its impact on children, the extension of competent counselling services for those seeking help with marriage problems, and the training of professional social workers concerned entirely with marriage to work on behalf of local authorities, courts and voluntary organizations. Finally, he advocates a general education for marriage. It is to be hoped that this preparation may include a more realistic and less introspective approach to the inevitable frustration and disappointment. In the field of prevention, as distinct from therapy, it might in the long run prove more profitable to attempt to change the climate of the day rather than to concentrate exclusively on the inponderables of human relations.

Dr Dominian's own views are balanced and enlightened. He sees some form of effective and mutually acceptable birth regulation as essential, but adds the salutary reminder that birth control is not a universal panacea for psychological difficulties. On the subject of

divorce, he considers the legal concept of matrimonial offence no longer compatible with the essence of marriage, which he defines as 'a commitment to a physical, emotional, social and spiritual relationship'. Of the meaning of sexual intercourse in marriage, he writes: 'The current pre-occupation with sexual gratification and the previous obsession with procreation have tended to distract attention from one of the principal features of the act, which is the powerful reassurance it gives to the couple at all times but particularly during special periods of need, that each wants and is prepared to accept the other unconditionally. This is an unconditional acceptance which is not in evidence elsewhere in life, except in the early and unspoiled relationship between the baby and its mother.'

Although a limitation in one sense, Dr Dominian's overriding concern with psychological problems, coupled with his wide experience and very real compassion for the suffering occasioned by marital breakdown, makes this little book of the greatest value to all those doctors, social workers or priests who seek to help unhappy couples to prove that

ruin'd love, when it is built anew,  
Grows fairer than at first, more  
strong, far greater.

LIONEL AND ZOE HERSOV

**MARRIAGE UNDER STRESS: A Comparative Study of Marriage Conciliation, by Gerald Sanctuary, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1968. 197 pp. 35s.**

But for the sub-title one might expect this book to provide an analysis either of factors, social and psychological, contributing to marital tension, or of the processes of conciliation work. Instead it is an account of the provision of marriage counselling services by voluntary and statutory agencies in Great Britain and in a number of other western countries. The growth of these services, which in many instances has gone on alongside legislative changes making it easier to obtain a divorce, may be seen as reflecting the wish of society to preserve the family as the important unit of social life.

The author, the National Secretary of the National Marriage Guidance Council, describes its development since 1938, when a small group of professional people, concerned about the increase in the divorce rate following the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1937, formed a working committee to see how the problems could be tackled. Mr Sanctuary is at his most lively when describing the early days of the

venture, when 'many of the public, and certainly the national press, were sceptical to the point of scorn'. He includes an account of the recruitment, selection and training of voluntary counsellors, and points out the emphasis within the organization on developing skills for the work. Some of the description of day-to-day administration of Centres is repetitive and unnecessarily detailed. There is also an outline of the work of other British agencies, including the probation service, the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, and the Family Discussion Bureau.

The British pattern of providing marriage counselling services through voluntary workers in special agencies substantially financed by government funds is followed with variations in some other countries, particularly Australia and New Zealand. In Scandinavia, conciliation services are closely linked with the judicial system; for example, couples seeking a divorce in Norway are required, before a divorce is