

his life and writings must have occupied years of the Canon's time and care. He begins his book very modestly, too modestly, by disclaiming any title to the name of scholar; but any scholar who wishes to understand the life and work of the prophet in their historical and literary setting would do well to read this book. As a rule scholars do well to avoid those writers who try to dramatize the Scriptures and improve on the sacred text by the use of their imagination. And at first sight it might seem that in this book there was rather too much of such phrases as 'it is reasonable to suppose', 'it is not impossible to suppose', 'it may be', 'perhaps', etc. But on consideration we may say that the author's suppositions are on the whole well grounded historically. The book makes a story that is enjoyable as well as informative.

REGINALD GINNS, O.P.

THE OPEN BOOK. Edited by Pamela Whitlock. (Collins; 12s. 6d.)

'You may hardly think of things like holly and mincepies as having any religious significance. Yet they have.'

These, the opening sentences of a chapter on the traditions associated with the great feasts of the Church, might be taken as a key to this whole book, for it is essentially a religious book, in the fullest sense: an attempt to show that the good news of the gospel touches every facet of life; a book into which every member of the family can dip, and find something for profit and pleasure.

The first of the five sections deals with the gospels: the evangelists, and the people they write of, are described in an everyday idiom, with enough of social and historical background to make them real. Some of the parables, dealt with in a similar manner, give a fresh significance to our Lord's words and methods of teaching, and should send the reader back to the New Testament for further exploration.

The second section, called 'God and our neighbour', is concerned with the commandments of love, and here are modern parables, short instructions, some lively and pertinent puzzles, and a charming collection of prayers and praises from such varied sources as Richard Rolle and Dr Johnson.

The third part gives an account of the feasts of the Church's year, of which Christmas is treated most fully. The retelling of this story in the setting of the Welsh and English countryside is a bold attempt to underline the realism of the Holy Family's suffering, by relating it to familiar scenes. Yet, beautifully as this is done, some may feel that it defeats its own end. Children are very literal-minded, and great sticklers for tradition, and this may cause a protest. The remainder of this section is a mine of information about feast-day customs—not forgetting seasonable recipes.

Part four, a collection of tales, legends and stories of the saints, will have a general appeal; whilst the fifth is a selection of delightful carols for all seasons.

In the acknowledgements, Grail sources are quoted for a considerable part of the text, and this enjoyable family book reflects much of the spirit of that movement.

ROSEMARY HEDDON

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY. By Frederick Copleston, S.J. (Burns & Oates; 18s.)

It is a little disappointing, after Fr Copleston's excellent full-length study of the philosophy of Aquinas, to find that his latest book is a collection of lectures and articles written originally for many different audiences. The largest unity within the book is four lectures on existentialism. Englishmen write little in this tradition, but they write excessively about it, despite its being so difficult to write about. Fr Copleston does not make the usual mistake of emphasizing extra-philosophical elements in these thinkers; he concentrates rightly enough on their metaphysics, yet hardly manages to convey its originality and importance in this brief survey. His other historical essay, on contemporary British philosophy, is even more drastically condensed. It is in the central chapters of his book where he talks philosophically rather than about philosophy that he is most interesting. He uses the technique of linguistic analysis with skill, as in the essay where he distinguishes noticing something or becoming aware of it from merely seeing it, and uses the distinction to explain how we become aware of existence: the starting point of metaphysics. In these earlier chapters Fr Copleston is perhaps slightly too concerned about justifying metaphysics: philosophers today are less against it than he seems to suppose. But the best thing in the book is his discussion of the meaning of the statements made about God. He shows it is first necessary to ask why we want to make such statements, and that is because of something we know about created being; only afterwards do we ask how the terms of the statement remain meaningful when used of God. He can then distinguish what he calls the 'subjective' meaning of the term, used of created things, and the 'objective' meaning used of God, though this meaning remains completely unknown. Better names might have been found to express this difference of *modus significandi*; but the discussion is clear. This is most refreshing after the nonsense talk about analogy usually produces.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.