

Those who have admired Dr Dominian's determination through many years to bring together positively his training and experience as a psychologist and his commitment to the Christian tradition on the meaning and vocation of marriage will read his new book with initial excitement. Has the good doctor now provided us with a comprehensive replacement for his previous studies – *Christian Marriage* (1967), *Marital Breakdown* (1968), and *Proposals for a new Sexual Ethic* (1977)? Obviously it would be unfair to hope for a totally new magnum opus; he leads a busy life as a Consultant Psychiatrist and Director of the Marriage Research Centre at the Central Middlesex Hospital, and he is generous in accepting speaking engagements. Yet this is a fresh piece of writing, and where earlier material is re-used in precis, it is also re-written. Dominian himself has participated so fully in the various dialogues that have followed the 'relational' definition of marriage provided by the Second Vatican Council, and the somewhat similar developments expressed in the two Anglican Reports of the last decade that it is tantalising to ponder how far he now finds in these documents confirmation of what he already believes and how far in this book he has adjusted to them. In some ways he seems more comfortable with the Church's teaching as he now describes it than once seemed the case. Probably more than in his previous writings, this is a book for parish priests and laity, to reassure them that a Christian marriage can work splendidly.

Within a crisp 279 pages, Dominian rightly gives most space to the potential a marriage has to provide, by grace and love, a unique personal experience for the spouses of sustaining and healing growth. The luggage we bring with us on the start of this journey, he argues, is not only our obvious characteristics, like and unlike, which cause the original attraction and carry us through the excitements and adjustments of courtship. We also bring with us the wounds and scars of our emotional battles in childhood. Since the marriage

experience is in some sense an adult replay of our first attempts to grow as a loving person, self-confident enough to give and receive, so the ability to grow into a fulfilling marriage will depend on the skill the partners can learn in adapting to each other's real personality. A capacity to accept change, and patience with differences and the unexpected are part of the healing sustaining process, and a key word for spouses who would be happy is to maintain their availability to each other.

It is a commonplace to note that the secular view of contemporary marriage 'stresses the quality of the relationship, and more is often made of the erotic and genital expressions of this quality day by day than of the responsibilities accepted in the original commitment. Dominian reminds us of the wider context. Money, housing, friendship, and above all both extension of the loving encounter with the family and children both declare and enrich the quality of the marriage, though coitus, as a reminder of the relationship of the Trinity, enables the couple to reach peaks of unity and return to their separate complementarity.

What Dominian has to say about the life cycle of marriage, the early, middle, and later years, is perhaps familiar, but concisely set out, and his section on marital breakdown reflects what any priest sadly knows in his pastoral work: however carefully marriage preparation is undertaken, for what are called macro-social reasons and micro-social reasons, we are living at a time when an increasing number of people easily lose their motivation to fight for their marriage. This loss of faith can come early, especially among those who marry too young, or after many years, when separate development has reduced availability and co-operation beyond revival, and another relationship often beckons irresistibly. The reasons for this fragility of motivation are well known, and the hard fact of our times is that the general expectation of what marriage will bring has been raised so high that many people will fail to achieve it and have come to be-

lieve that it is preferable to try to do better in a second or third attempt than to live out the realities of a first marriage in a mood of disappointment and frustration.

Against the despair of this mood, Dominican offers, in his final section, a Liturgy for marriage. The Christian family is to become a little Church, living and growing by those same insights as the Body of Christ itself, and he provides a selection of biblical passages which might be offered to married couples four times a year as a kind of in-service training course. Like the opening chapter, this material is so compressed that it could probably best be used in a parish as study notes for group work.

Dominian assumes throughout that

many marriages will need expert help at various crisis points and this raises the obvious question where is such help to be found. It is one thing to deplore the conspiracy of silence, with which so many couples seem to shroud their problems until events make reconciliation and growth together impossible, quite another to suppose that there yet exists trained resources within the Church which are both locally available and yet sufficiently detached and independent from our authority structures to be approached in confidence and privacy. More than in any of his previous writings, Dominican makes clear our need for such provision.

PETER E COLEMAN

**JESUS IN THE FAITH OF CHRISTIANS** by Hywel D. Lewis.

*Macmillan* 1981 pp viii + 114 £15

Four recent lectures with some incidental pieces of writing added to them make up this short book, which is principally concerned with resisting denials, especially ambiguous denials, of the divinity of Jesus Christ (£15 is a lot for such a collection). The first, 'Religious Experience and Truth', puts Professor Lewis's views on the basis of religious belief into a convenient form. He writes of 'radical antinomies that compel us to recognize some more ultimate reality in which all that we can, in principle, comprehend is rooted, but which is not itself comprehensible beyond the recognition of its inevitability', whereas religious experience 'properly comes in at the point where we ask how we go further than the sense of some ultimate all-encompassing mystery' (pp 4-5). When he goes on to allow that 'the "insight" into there having to be God. . . is itself an experience', he adds at once that 'it is so in the sense that all cognition is experience', referring immediately, by way of example, to the apprehension that twice two is four. This, then, is a knowledge *that* something is so, not a knowledge *of* it. And it is not a matter of logical necessity. Those who adopt another point of view, which may be conveniently labelled Blondelian, would agree that one has commonly to accept God in a sort of darkness

before a personal relationship with him can be established. But this does not mean that recognizing the duty of accepting him is not itself a genuine experience of him. For Lewis 'religious experience' arises when 'the sense of ultimate being . . . has a distinctive impact on other formative features of the total experience in which it occurs' and 'becomes a closely intimate articulate presence in the very core of our essentially finite awareness. . . . God puts his own imprimatur on certain insights and sensitivities' (pp 8-9). Some who might be rather chary of making special claims of that kind would want to say, more generally, that we can gain some faint awareness of God himself, of *who* he is. Otherwise what does this talk of a 'presence' amount to? They would accept the next point that Lewis makes: 'One feature of exceptional importance in the process whereby our understanding is extended in the enlivened sense of the involvement of our lives in a supreme and transcendent reality is a refinement and deepening of moral awareness'. Here again this 'sense' might seem to be a mental contact with 'transcendent reality'. But Lewis goes on to state his well-known antipathy to any suggestion that moral obligation is not explicable unless God, although often unrecognized as such, summons us in it to himself. He thinks, ap-