

readers, may they be many, will at the start wonder where is the church of their weekly experience, the church of rubrics, of pre-nuptial enquiries, of so many and sometimes so complicated disciplinary laws, but they will find it in the end, and after seeing the foundations properly laid, will understand its purpose and necessity better.

For ourselves it is many years since we have read anything at all so invigorating on this subject, and never anything that goes deeper and preserves so thoroughly a Thomist course of statement.

IVO THOMAS, O.P.

LE CANTIQUE DES CANTIQUES. Nouvelle traduction par André Chouraqui; introduction et notes du R.P. Lucie-Marie de St Joseph, o.c.d. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

It was a good idea of the publishers' to produce in such an attractive format André Chouraqui's French translation of the Song of Songs. There is no better version than this, for it effects the rare achievement of uniting fidelity and poetry, and here even poetry is reached through fidelity. Evidently such a union presupposes a knowledge of Hebrew and of French capable of fusing the genius proper to each language at the source. It demands also an understanding of the mystery of Israel and of her divine election. Some of the obscurities of the French translation are in fact the obscurities of the Hebrew. The reader cannot regret these difficult passages, particularly as the editors have happily added some judicious notes from the pen of Père Robert de la Vierge, o.c.d., as a discreet appendix to the volume, to elucidate some of the more difficult expressions in the text. In this way the text itself loses nothing of its poetic rhythm and its music. As to the Introduction by Père Lucien-Marie de St Joseph, it must be admitted that these learned pages written by so erudite an exegete bring great refreshment. For they help the reader to discover the meaning of the inspired book according to the intention of the Spirit who has thus enriched the treasures of Israel, an intention which is revealed in the hearts of those who return to and still live deeply in spirit the mysterious life of Israel, the Church, the Spouse of Christ.

JEAN DE LA CROIX KAELIN, O.P.

THE WORD. A Meditation on the Prologue to St John's Gospel. By Adrienne von Speyr. (Collins; 10s. 6d.)

Here is a book which must have been very difficult to translate. I say this not so much because the book often makes turgid reading, but rather to point to the fundamental obstacle to understanding which the reader will have to contend with right from the start, the obstacle that this is a private work. We are given a meditation on the prologue to St John's Gospel, as the title-page claims, but it is an unedited meditation recollected with what

must be unusual faithfulness, for it bears all the marks of the meditation which any one of the author's readers might make for himself: now spontaneous, now contrived, as when a pattern, for example of the Trinity, is seen stamped on so many situations, both natural and supernatural, and with a clarity which seems almost to belong to private revelation. Again, any one of us might see similes, might make unqualified statements, statements so bald in their affirmations as to be almost scriptural, which would not explain or require explanation, for we should make them to ourselves; the association of ideas would be habitual, *we* should understand what *was* meant, but it is at least problematical whether anyone else would.

With such a book, to ask whether a given statement is true or false seems to be asking the wrong question, or at least one would need to know the author intimately to be able to give an answer; as it is, one must just participate when one can, and leave the rest for someone else. That such participation is possible, and at many different levels, is claimed by the translator in his introduction, and there is at least one level, that of human relationship, where a mind not set in the same key as the author's may make contact with her. Here the thought and the language are very like Martin Buber's; here the private view is, so to say, thrown open, and one may see that this is, after all, a book written for love. 'Love must allow others to be others; it must accept the proximity of other circles, in which others are related, not to it primarily, but to God. It is only by letting others alone and leaving things to God that one learns that the neighbour one does not know belongs to God, and then the light of real helpfulness and true community become possible. It is only when we set our neighbour free, when we recognise and respect his darkness because it is open to the mystery of God, that our reciprocal strangeness is endurable.' (p. 63.)
G.B.

THE GIFT OF GOD. A Study of Sanctifying Grace in the New Testament.
By John Morson, O.C.R. (Mercier Press; 12s. 6d.)

In the Rule of St Benedict there is a period each day given to *lectio divina*, or sacred reading, that is the meditative study of the Scriptures. This book is the product of such meditative reading and it needs to be approached in the same spirit. The author makes use of the Westminster Version of the New Testament, which is closest to the original Greek, and he keeps his eye constantly on the Greek text, so that it is a work of real scholarship. But it does not require any knowledge of Greek in the reader as the Greek words are always transliterated and their meaning carefully explained. At the same time it is a work of sound biblical theology. There is no attempt to read later meanings into words, but a deliberate effort to catch their exact meaning and so to trace the gradual development of doctrine. The books of the New Testament are studied in their chron-