

whose true literature this is, and who, please God, may soon be brought back again to these healing waters. I.E.

ACTUAL GRACE AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. By John V. Matthews, S.J. (Mercier Press; 7s. 6d.)

A considerable number of devotional books consist so entirely of pietistic ejaculations that it is difficult to see a long future for them. Father Matthews' study of grace is to be welcomed for having eschewed that tedium, though a reviewer might be misled into fearing the worst when he reads on the dust-cover that it belongs to the 'Recall to the Spiritual Life Series'. It is high time this phrase 'spiritual life' were either given its precise meaning or decently put to death. Living a holy Catholic life is not an exclusively spiritual affair, and Catholics in England, and Ireland, too, are now sufficiently tolerated for us to admit that living a Catholic life embraces politics and business, and everyday routine, and is more than an 'affair of the "spirit"'. More important still today, holy men are needed who not only cultivate their 'spirit', whatever that might mean, but holy men who find their religion driving their lives in office and factory and committee-room. Father Matthews himself, however, is rarely guilty of disembowelling the language of religion, though he does occasionally speak of 'souls' when he means persons or people, but in general his writing is marked by clarity, simplicity and deliberation. The simplicity is almost excessive, but it is useful. He has written a book of instruction presupposing nothing except willing readers. He does not attempt to move our emotions but to enlighten our minds. He succeeds. Only twice do we have to pause. In the ticklish question of the relation of grace and nature it would have been helpful to hear a little, though by the nature of the book only a little, of how nature can be predisposed—or not—to grace, and how grace builds on nature. In Chapter XVIII he sets out to show that actual grace does not take away human freedom: but as the question has hardly been raised the answer only creates difficulties; and there is one surprising remark: 'It is generally felt that actual grace took away St Paul's freedom of will for the time being when the saint was struck down on the road to Damascus'. How general? Information about the relationship of grace and nature would again have helped.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

A CHAQUE JOUR SUFFIT SA JOIE. By Isabelle Rivère. (Emile-Paul; 450 fr.)

At a time when men all too frequently utter in despair the cry, 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof', it is refreshing to find a

book with the title '*A chaque jour suffit sa joie*'; and still more refreshing is to read this book, for it contains the meditations of one who has seen something of the joy that is to be found in God, and who has succeeded, in no small measure, in conveying with remarkable freshness to her readers a sense of God's all-embracing love. But this book is not, as might appear from the table of contents, a random collection of thoughts on a select number of liturgical feasts. Basing herself on the Church's liturgy, and making full use of Scripture, the author does in fact give us a very beautiful treatise on Almighty God, and especially God considered as Love—'*la flamme du dévorant amour qu'est Dieu*'. It is the story of God's great act of love for man, begun in the Creation, and culminating in the Redemption. This again is both courageous and necessary at a time when the word 'love' is as often misused and misunderstood as was its synonym 'charity' before it. And because God's love for man finds its highest expression in the Incarnation, the author is more than justified in beginning these meditations with the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, 'the mother of fair love'.

The present volume is concerned with the first half of the liturgical year, and doubtless some things which are barely touched will be dealt with more fully in the second volume. But reading these meditations we certainly come to a fuller realisation of the Love that is God, of the vital connection between God's love for man, and man's love for God, and of what that means for us here and now in the twentieth century. Written in vigorous language, with a simplicity yet profundity of thought, and in a style which is a joy to read, this book should prove to be of lasting value. We are grateful to Madame Rivère for this fresh contribution to both literature and the spiritual life.

VINCENT PIZZALA, O.P.

THE MYSTERY OF BEING. Gifford Lectures, 1949. By Gabriel Marcel. (Harvill Press; 15s.)

This study of instinct in men and animals has thrown more light on the contemplative life than any book we have seen for some time, and proves that Gifford Lectures on Natural Theology do not necessarily fall outside the interests of a review which aims at kneading all life into food for the spirit. And when the lecturer himself is a Catholic of tremendous insight such as M. Marcel, the relevance of his work will be obvious enough.

There are two sets of people for whom *The Mystery of Being* will prove particularly stimulating: those who teach religion, and those who protect its purity through precise reflection. The first set may seem to be touched only obliquely when we say that M. Marcel, for