

Fr. Tanner, having called at the wrong address, proceeds to upbraid the householder for not being the person he wants to see. Had he been reviewing the works of Monnin, Septier, Convert or even Joseph Vianney he might have found there the spirit of appreciation and valuation which he might have desired to discredit.

On a slightly different but allied issue may I, Dear Reverend Editor, put a point to you? Do you really think it is doing a service to the spiritual life to permit in print the suggestion that the manner of life of the Curé is not such as one would think himself capable of imitating today? It is surely the desire and not the capability that is usually lacking. The inspirations and gifts of the Holy Ghost together with human reasoning gave that manner of life its birth at Dardilly, and sustained it through Ecully and Ars to the end. A theological view which harps on a 'new asceticism' at the expense of the old seems to posit without warrant a change in God's dealings with souls, depriving them now of spiritual gifts made to other generations. To what extent the Curé may be said to be an example must surely be decided for each soul according to those gifts and human reasoning. But the truth does remain that canonisation has set up the life of this saint as a safe and prudent model; and in declaring him Patron first of the French clergy and later of the pastoral clergy of the universal Church it appears to have been the desire of the Popes to emphasise that significance. Cardinal Gasparri, writing on behalf of Pope Pius XI to Canon Trochu, expressed the hope that 'this model of all priestly virtues should be imitated as much as possible'; and one recalls the words engraved under the body of the Saint at Ars and expressing the feelings of the French clergy—'*Clari Exempli Patrono Galliarum sacerdotum*'.—Yours, etc.,

F. BRANNEY.



## REVIEWS

TWO IN ONE FLESH. *Vol. I: Introduction to Sex and Marriage; Vol. II: The Mystery of Sex and Marriage in Catholic Theology; Vol. III: The Practice of Sex and Marriage.* By Rev. E. C. Messenger, Ph.D. Preface by Rev. J. Leycester King, S.J. (Sands; 6s., 10s.6d., 6s. respectively.)

Except possibly in Germany, the Catholic attitude to sex has seldom been discussed so thoroughly as in these three volumes. Dr Messenger's main concern, so simple that it has constantly been overlooked, is to show that sex is as much a part of creation as all other things and as worthy of the rest of nature to be perfected by grace: it is therefore *good*.

In a devastating first chapter he calls attention to the lapses of the most distinguished theologians when they come to treat of this subject and of their failure to appreciate the outlook of tradition (although some of the fathers entertained quaint notions of sexual relationships). The confusion between what is physically unclean and morally evil is understandable, given the structure of the human body, but it can be avoided and ought not to be allowed to sink into the minds of children. The author is courageous enough to show how he has himself endeavoured to form the correct outlook in a process of catechising, but one cannot help feeling that even a broad-minded teacher would be more than a little embarrassed in overhearing such an instruction. He is on safer ground when he points out the contradiction in Genicot-Salsmans permitting to the married 'actus impudicitiae quilibet'. The principle ought to be clear enough, the explanation of the principle is a singularly delicate and difficult matter. For as the author and the best of those whom he quotes all have to admit, in our present state sex becomes the occasion of sin far more easily than any of the other good things that God has made.

The introductory volume is chiefly concerned to dispel prejudice, to show the natural healthiness of the sex-function from the teaching of revelation, from science and from philosophy. The division is not too clear in this volume: Chapter Three has a sub-section I, but what would correspond to sub-section II is covered by Chapter Four. The second volume contains what is claimed to be and in fact is 'a more profound and detailed account of Catholic teaching on sex and marriage, with a special treatment of its sources in Scripture and Tradition'. But this means going back over texts of the Old and New Testament already discussed, admittedly from a different angle, in the first volume; there are also far too many references to other pages where a point raised will be taken up again, even to other volumes. The trouble is that the subject-matter does not lend itself to so clear-cut a division as is implied by the separate volumes. Without losing any of its essentials, the work could have been reduced in size and contained in a single and not-too-bulky volume. The third volume is meant to be a practical application of the Christian principles, showing how they agree with the conclusions of science and how they secure the dignity and joy of the whole man in one of his most characteristic activities.

On the whole, the work is to be welcomed. It provides on every aspect of sex and marriage information which will enable the married to make their state at once more spiritually fruitful and happier even on the natural plane; in the unmarried it ought to inculcate a reverence for the dignity which, permanently or temporarily, they do not share.

EDWARD QUINN.