

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. By Reginald Buckler, O.P. (Blackfriars; 11s.)

This book was originally published over forty years ago under the title *Spiritual Considerations*.

There is really no need for an extended review of Fr Buckler's work in these pages. His theme is that the spiritual life is the life of the spirit: the Holy Spirit in himself, in his Church, in Christ, in us, and the response to that Holy Spirit of the Church, of Christ, of ourselves, made in and through the same Holy Spirit.

A thing that strikes a modern reader of these pages of spiritual wisdom is that forty years ago there was, evidently, no division into priests who teach but cannot (or do not) preach and priests who preach but cannot (or do not) teach. It is not surprising, then, that Fr Buckler does not have to perform literary feats to maintain the truth of the contemplative spirit and the apostolic spirit.

MURDOCH SCOTT, O.P.

THE SIEGE PERILOUS. Essays in Biblical Anthropology. By S. H. Hooke. (S.C.M. Press; 21s.)

This is a stimulating title for a stimulating book, but the two stimulations have no connection whatever. The title's only value is as an eye-catcher; but since the contents of the book, which the title does so little to indicate, are interesting in their own right, the reader whose eye has been caught will not feel cheated.

Professor Hooke says in his Introduction that these essays, which have appeared in various journals during the last twenty-five years, represent the results of his attempt to fulfil his lifelong purpose of building a bridge between anthropology, archaeology, and biblical studies. The first actual essay in bridge-building of this collection is the eighth, 'The Emergence of Christianity from Judaism', first published in 1937. It is ingenious, but unconvincing. Professor Hooke had not yet found the key pontifical principles, the comprehensive framework of ideas to bring his valuable but widely disparate material together. The twelfth essay, 'Myth and Ritual reconsidered', first published in 1954, contains a retraction of at least one of the opinions which rendered the earlier sketch unsatisfactory. This and others of the later essays show that the author's mind has been turning definitely to theology, in particular the theology of revelation, to provide him with the principles which will alone suffice to build his bridge for him.

Far and away the best essay in the book is 'The Sign of Emmanuel', first published in 1954. This is a small masterpiece of genuine theological exegesis, as distinct from purely anthropological, literary, or historical criticism. If Professor Hooke would apply the method he

uses so skilfully in this one instance to all the 'myth and ritual' material which he has devoted his career to collecting, he would indeed achieve a magnificent piece of bridge-building. A book, not just a collection of essays, with some such title as 'Myth, Ritual and Revelation', would be a worthy fruit of a green old age, and a fitting crown for a life of such distinguished scholarship.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

THE DIRECTION OF NUNS. (Blackfriars; 16s. 6d.)

This book is the seventh of a series. It consists of a translation of the conferences given at Versailles in 1953 during a national congress of religious women and priests who exercise their ministry among them. It begins with an inspiring talk by Mgr Garrone, now Archbishop of Toulouse, on the role of nuns in the modern world. There follows an historical sketch by Father Duval, O.P., which is both suggestive and useful, especially where the author shows how contemporary ideas on the place of women have influenced the form which religious life took at a given period. The theological essays by Fathers Plé and Carpentier will repay careful reading. They seek to make clear the connection between the religious state and that which every Christian has adopted by his baptism. 'The religious life is an act of public worship which results in a state of dedication, a visible and complete response to the implications of baptism and the Eucharistic sacrifice', we read. Or again: 'religious profession represents the most complete form of the priesthood of the faithful'. It is good to see the fraternal love of a religious community related to St John's saying that 'Christ died to gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed' or to find it said that a religious is an impatient Christian, eager, in the words of the Didache or the Apocalypse, that Christ come and the world pass away, so that fraternal love may be in truth a foretaste of heaven.

Among the other essays one would like to single out that on preaching, with its emphasis on doctrinal instruction, and that on the canonical visitation which is largely a digest of St Teresa's own wise words on the subject. There are also papers on the roles of chaplain, confessor and ecclesiastical superior, and a concluding chapter on the present policy of the Holy See. Altogether this is a most useful and rewarding book to have.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.