

commandment of love, and that their application will depend in the last resort on the unique situation of the individual.

Any situation-ethicist seeking for ammunition here will, however, be disappointed. Quite early on the author in fact dissociates himself from situation ethics; he understands Jesus to have given precepts which he regarded as binding, emphasizes the peremptory nature of the call to the Kingdom, which is for him the *raison d'être* of moral conduct (presumably for the Christian alone), and the absolute necessity of removing the proximate occasion of sin ('If your hand scandalize you, cut it off?').

This will be seen by many as a salutary reaction in the same line as Rahner's essay on sin and situation-ethics (published in English in a recent *Stagbook*). The real strength of the book does not, however, lie in solving the moral dilemmas of today in either direction but in filling in the exegetical groundwork and ordering the material – the moral demands of Jesus, the various stages in the development in moral thinking in the early Church, the contributions of individual theologians. This task is done very well indeed and will prove an invaluable and up-to-date guide and source-book. In the meantime, the moral debate will no doubt continue.

Accepting the limits which the author sets himself, one weakness which one feels is the neglect of the covenant-category with its bearing on the formulation of moral demands. This could have been suggested by the author's exegesis of the 'entering' sayings with reference to Deuteronomy and entering the land of Canaan since

Deuteronomy sees the covenant as *the* context of moral demand and performance which are, respectively, the self-revelation of the covenant-God and the response and self-commitment of the community. The saying of Jesus 'If you love me, keep my commandments' is in fact a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 11:1 and Luke's Sermon on the Plain, with its blessings and curses, looks rather reminiscent of the covenant-ceremony in Deut. 27–28. The fact that the Church was seen in the first place as a covenant-community must be relevant for the moral conduct expected of its members.

The big difficulty in understanding New Testament ethical teaching has always been the crisis mentality which seems to such a great extent to have motivated it. Here again, the writer takes full account of this in explaining passages such as 1 Cor. 7 but we are left with the problem of making it meaningful for those who, with Chardin and a great many others, see humanity as just beginning to get into its evolutionary stride. Perhaps more emphasis could have been placed on the increasing depth of focus with which the Church's relation to the world was viewed throughout the New Testament period and how this process has gone on since and must therefore influence our interpretation of the moral attitudes which we find in some New Testament chapters.

Apart from a rare infelicity of phrase the translation is excellent. The absence of an index is difficult to explain and reduces very substantially the value of a publication of this sort.

*Joseph Blenkinsopp, S.D.B.*

THE BIBLE IN A NEW AGE by Karl Rahner and others. *Sheed and Ward, 11s. 6d.*

GOD'S CREATION by A. Hulsbosch, O.S.A. *Sheed and Ward, 15s.*

THE BIBLE ON THE LIVING GOD by B. Van Iersel. *Sheed and Ward, 9s.*

THE BIBLE ON MARRIAGE by G. M. Vollebregt. *Sheed and Ward, 9s.*

It has now become commonplace to say that the Church has experienced a revolution in biblical studies of recent years, and that an intelligent interest in the Bible is now recognized as essential to clergy and laity alike. It remains

true, nevertheless, that English Catholicism on the whole tends only to pay lip-service to this trend in the life of the Church. These 'Stagbooks' are especially welcome as showing how a theology that is biblically rooted can be presented to

ordinary people.

Anyone who seeks an orientation in this field will find the collection of essays in *The Bible in a New Age* very helpful. They are meant as an introduction to biblical theology and its place in the dogmatic theology of the Church. Turning to the problem of studying the Bible *today*, the enquirer could hardly do better than turn to A. Hulsbosch's *God's Creation* for a discussion about the relevance of such concepts as creation, sin and redemption and how concepts which are biblically rooted can be seen to reveal new depths of meaning in the midst of a scientific culture. The discussion of biblical themes is thorough for a book of this size and is in fact the most valuable part of the book.

For an introduction to themes of the Old Testament concerning the nature of God, B. Van Iersel's book *The Bible on the Living God* can be recommended. It is an attempt to discuss the image of God in the Old Testament, especially. We all have our image of God, but in the books of the Bible, not only do we look in vain for a real representation of God, but our search for a

satisfactory definition of God does not yield any results either, although the biblical authors had an intense awareness of God. Anyone who reads this book will find help in transforming what is probably an abstract conception of God into a living reality. How necessary it is, too, to feel God as a living presence in the context of marriage, in which we mirror the relationship between God and His Church. Yet no topic of theology has, perhaps, been so neglected by theologians, as this. *The Bible on Marriage*, by G. N. Vollebregt, will be a help to all who feel the need to re-think the Church's traditional approach to the sacrament of marriage. The Bible contains no systematic treatise on marriage; it is spoken of almost incidentally. Yet it has much to say on this vital relationship between man and woman in the context of mankind's relationship to the Living God and as a sacrament constituting a bond with Christ's life and resurrection. Any discussion of marriage which neglects this can only be arid and unreal.

Mervyn Davies, O.P.

WISDOM IN PROVERBS, *The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9*, by R. N. Whybray. SCM Press (*Studies in Biblical Theology 45*), 13s. 6d.

It is difficult to describe the contents of this book to the 'clergy and laymen' to whom the excellent SBT series is addressed, without making it seem much less interesting reading than it really is. For non-specialists in the mysteries of biblical criticism are inclined to hold suspect the kind of fragmented literary analysis that is found here. But in dealing with works of such obviously composite origin as the Book of Proverbs some effort to disentangle the sources is a prime necessity, and whether or not one finds Dr Whybray's solution convincing, he will have been made aware of the problems in masterly fashion. Moreover he will have come a long way along the road to understanding the development of the concept of wisdom which was of such enormous importance in the religion of Israel and consequently in late Judaism, Christianity and

Gnosticism.

The author sees in the prologue or introduction to the Book of Proverbs – chs. 1–9, which differ fundamentally in style from the earlier, gnomic sections of the book – a primitive framework of ten 'discourses' of a teacher to his pupil on the value of heeding his instructions. All ten of them have a common structure which is always visible though sometimes much expanded and elaborated, and the collection is shown to be modelled upon Egyptian pedagogical works. In both Egypt and Israel this sort of teaching was largely secular in character. Into the collection of discourses, Dr Whybray believes, later writers have inserted two distinct sets of theological statements about the personified figure of wisdom. The purpose of the additions was to relate the wisdom tradition to the religion of Yahwism,