

patient progress through the details of exegesis enables him to make a good case for Bloch's having misunderstood what was going on in the Old Testament, and a suggestion that Bloch examine again the nature of his hope.

Professor Zimmerli can show that Job was a man who, in his zeal for the living and mysterious God who could not be harnessed to a clever theological system, appealed to Yahweh himself against the limited categories of his wiser friends. And he makes it plain that the faith of the Old Testament people is given not to the calculable god of Eliphaz but to the Lord who may be horrified at the corruption

of the world (Genesis 6, 11) but who calls men ever forward to himself, *Deus Spei*. He supposes, too, that Bloch's own hope in a free human future which has left every god behind is suspiciously like the clever invention of Job's comforter in its removal of the foundations of responsibility. That this removal is performed not in the name of rule but in the name of revolt does not, Professor Zimmerli suggests, ultimately make much difference.

Michael Innes might have made a better attempt at ordering the material but Professor Zimmerli's story is still an interesting one.

HAMISH F. G. SWANSTON

THE AGONISING CHOICE: BIRTH CONTROL, RELIGION AND THE LAW, by Norman St John-Stevas. *Eyre & Spottiswoode*, London. 327 pp, indices. £3.50.

The modern debate among Catholics about birth control really started with the development of the pill in the late 1950s, when people began first to equate the use of the pill with the use of the 'safe period', and then to question the traditional arguments against contraception anyway. The Vatican Council made a special point of not making married love subordinate to having children, but the question of birth control was reserved to a special papal commission. Their eventual report was, of course, not accepted by the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1969) re-asserting the traditional position, and the Catholic world settled down to accept, dispute, gloss, or ignore its teaching.

The core of *The Agonising Choice* (amounting to about half) is an account of these events, concentrating on the curious history of the papal commission and the response that followed the encyclical, particularly that in England and the U.S.A.—and the reaction to that response—and ending with the bishops' synod of 1969 which is understood to have re-established collegiality. This is done largely by quoting extensively from articles, letters to newspapers, papal and bishops' statements and so on. Cumulatively all this is perhaps rather tedious—though that depends really on the reader's tastes. The very accumulation of statements, however, does indicate clearly enough how the English bishops, say, were obliged to gloss the encyclical's teaching in terms of individual conscience. It also recreates for us the look of the ecclesiastical world of the time, a world of nicely turned phrases (e.g. Cardinal Alfrink's masterly 'the time of schism is passed. After the latest

Council the position of the pope is clear'; or Archbishop Cardinale interpreting Cardinal Heenan's 'God bless you' as 'God help you'), of attempts to stop discussion, demands for obedience, summary action against dissenting clergy and so on. As a lawyer, Mr St John-Stevas is good in his cool cataloguing of all this. He points out, too, that English law could be called on, for instance, to annul the dismissal of a parish priest if this were done without following the due process of canon law and the over-riding principles of natural justice (fair hearing, etc.)—and that any threat of excommunication in such circumstances would amount to contempt of court as an attempt to interfere with the English legal process.

The Agonising Choice also contains a very thorough and vigorous analysis of the encyclical itself, pointing out its logical flaws and the unargued shift from marriage to the biological integrity of each sexual act (without regard to any wider context) as the basis of its ruling. But though glancing references are made in the book to the natural law argument it is not as such considered.

The question naturally arises as to whether Catholics who consider contraception to be immoral should try to give effect at large to this condemnation. Broadly, Mr St John-Stevas' view is that (as in every situation of the kind) this should only be attempted if it could be shown that demonstrable evils flow from its practice, for it is only then that there is any justification for campaigning against the moral consensus of a society. Moral precepts embodied in law are, anyway, only enforceable if they are supported by the moral consensus of

that society. There are at present no grounds for saying that contraception notably injures the public good.

In fact, Mr St John-Stevas considers the promotion of family planning and population control as much a Christian imperative as the requirement that the 'developed' countries—the 16 per cent of the world's population enjoying 70 per cent of its wealth—should disgorge some of their wealth. (There is support enough for this view in official Church documents; disagreement, after all, is only about contraception.) Oddly, he emphasizes the responsibility of the West for the present situation, not by reference to past or continuing exploitation, but by reference to the way Western medicine has stimulated the population explosion by reducing infant mortality and disease. The international aid programme is discussed, then, without any special reference to its political and cultural implications for the 'underdeveloped' countries. The perspective found here is one in which it is possible to say that traditional British trade policy has been of great help to underdeveloped countries.

Plenty of facts and figures about aid are given, though. This approach is characteristic of the book as a whole. Indeed, in some places it more or less consists of collected information about birth control. A considerable amount of ground is covered this way, but there are dis-

advantages in it. If the particular information provided is found uninteresting, then this invites the thought that something else would have been preferable—that it would have been more useful, for instance, if the section on English and American law had considered the development of family law over the years rather than just providing a summary of the Family Planning Act, 1967 (permitting local authorities to provide facilities) or, in the case of America, a state-by-state account of the relaxing of contraception prohibitions. Sometimes, too, 'information' is not enough—the summary, for example, of Augustine's views was bound to be inadequate, for Augustine's views are only comprehensible when their historical context is also fully provided.

What holds the book together is the story of Mr St John-Stevas himself, as he tells it in the Introduction and as he appears in the pages: writing letters, articles, attending meetings. For embedded in the book is an impressive account of his move from total opposition in 1950 to birth control (which caused the fall of the Greek and Roman Empires) to his present view that Catholics are free to decide according to their own consciences what method of birth control to employ. He hasn't just written *The Agonising Choice* to discuss *Humanae Vitae*, but to help Catholics who do not accept it.

ANTHONY ARCHER, O.P.

ANGLICAN VISION, by Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta. *S.P.C.K.*, London 1971. 153 pp. £2.25.

There is always for an Anglican a special fascination in seeing his own tradition from the point of view of someone who can look at it from continental Europe. One of the more illuminating books about the Oxford Movement, for instance, came from Sweden, Brilioth's *The Anglican Revival*, another from France, Louis Bouyer's *Newman*. In the case of Canon de Mendieta, the interest is still further enhanced in that the writer is both a continental and an Anglican, one whose Christian experience has been remarkably ecumenical; 'baptized, confirmed, and ordained priest in the Roman Catholic Church', led by his scholarly work into a deep and sympathetic study of the Greek Fathers and Eastern Orthodoxy, living and ministering in the Church of England for the past fifteen years.

It must be said at the outset that Canon de Mendieta's vision is that of a scholar and historian, a man of tradition, with a clear and analytical mind, rather than that of a specu-

lative or a radical thinker. The purpose of his book is to try to discern what is peculiar to the Anglican vision of the wholeness, the Catholicity of Christian faith, and how that Anglican experience may be at the service of the unity of all Christian people. He starts his book with a brief survey of the history of the Church of England since the reformation, and a description and analysis of the present spectrum of views commonly held among Anglicans. Although the brevity of this section inevitably makes the treatment sometimes over-generalized, much interesting information and observation is contained here.

It is, however, the second part of the book which will probably gain most attention both from Anglicans and members of other Churches. In it, the author sets out his view of 'the fundamental distinction between faith and theology', and of the further distinction between 'theological principles, and theological theories and systems'. Here, too, there