

REVIEWS

LE LIVRE DE JOB. By J. Steinmann. ('Lectio Divina' series. Editions du Cerf.)

Few things can be more gratifying than to discern in a new non-specialist work the influence of one after another of one's own favourite authors. M. Steinmann's latest book is a case in point. In his textual emendations and exegetical notes Hölscher's influence unmistakably predominates. *Sources Bibliques de Job* evidently owes much to Bentzen's theory that in Job 'the parallel poems in dialogue form are only a further development of the psalm of lamentation and its forms'. In describing the cosmogonic conceptions of biblical authors M. Steinmann quotes at length from Pedersen. His comparison of Job with the Servant of Yahweh is reminiscent of a theory of Engnell's (which Bentzen also cites) in which a similar comparison is drawn. In the chapter entitled *Droit et Cosmogonie* the author adduces a number of examples of the 'law-court' phrasology in Job which Lindblom has particularly emphasized. The views of many well-known commentators, among them Dhorme, Stevenson and Driver-Gray, are ably summarized in the essay on the meaning of Job. Finally it is especially encouraging to notice how closely M. Steinmann's own views on this point approximate to those of Weiser, who stresses the importance of accepting Job in its integrity and of perceiving in it the 'interior and exterior dialectic' of 'Man in his Contradiction'. Certainly then M. Steinmann cannot be accused of being out of date. The only serious omissions one notices in his bibliography are those of that acknowledged master, Peters, and of Kissane, whose original work, especially on the material structure and strophic system of Job, no subsequent commentator can afford to ignore.

The plan of the book is also interesting. It is divided into four main parts entitled respectively 'Historical and Literary Introduction', 'The Drama of Job translated with a Commentary', 'Aspects of the Book of Job', and 'Some Ways of Reading Job'. In the introduction the Ancient Near-Eastern and Greek parallels are particularly well presented with extensive quotations. Here the only improvement one can suggest is that some mention might have been made of the Indian legend of King Hariskandra, held by many commentators to provide the closest and most significant parallels of all. 'Aspects' comprises a string of essays, several of them most penetrating and original, on such special questions as the composition, characters, poetry, and 'Cult and Prophecy' in Job. (The influence of the Scandinavian school on M.

Steinmann's work is unmistakable.) 'Ways of Reading Job' combines a brief history of the exegesis of the book from Gregory the Great to Claudel with a survey of the various philosophical speculations to which it has given rise among non-biblical scholars including Kierkegaard, Marcel, and Jung. The respective approaches of St Albert and St Thomas are especially well described. It can be seen therefore that the scope of M. Steinmann's latest work is characteristically broad. It is unlikely that ever before have so many connected problems been so fully discussed within the space of a single commentary.

One is rather less happy, however, about this author's extensive rearrangement of the text. Firstly he has taken the most unusual step of relegating all the secondary interpolations to a separate chapter, which makes it difficult for the reader to assess their contribution as integral parts of the 'largest literary unit', the book as a whole. Secondly, though the text of Job is certainly much disordered, M. Steinmann is perhaps a little too ready to alter the existing sequence where the sense does not really demand it. He gives the impression of having adopted almost all of Hölscher's numerous transpositions and suppressions piece-meal, and of having added several more of his own. Even with Hölscher's critical explanations these alterations sometimes seemed unnecessary and extreme. Here, in a commentary where virtually no justification is offered, some of them seem decidedly arbitrary. The transposition of 40, 1-14 to a position between 41, 26 and 42, 2 seems particularly improbable, and practically no other commentator since Budde appears to have adopted it.

Then, too, one feels that M. Steinmann is occasionally inclined to over-dramatize and to over-state as when, developing a rather unimportant remark of Hölscher's, he unwarrantably magnifies the feasts of Job's sons into 'pantagruéliques beuveries' (p. 81). More far-reaching in its effects is the exaggerated statement that 'Dans l'ancien Israël, le malade grave, l'homme ruiné était considéré comme un pestiféré, auquel on donnait volontiers le coup de sabot de l'âne' (p. 69). It is quite true that disease and misfortune were regarded as signs of Yahweh's displeasure. But surely this was only one of two conflicting attitudes. It was counter-balanced by the tradition which regarded the protection and succour of the afflicted, the clients of Yahweh, as a matter of sacred duty. This attitude is occasionally foreshadowed in Egyptian, Babylonian, and Ugaritic texts, but especially stressed in the Old Testament, and most of all perhaps in Deuteronomy and the Law of Holiness, the very sections to which we are referred as instances of the opposite tendency (p. 67). It is fundamentally important to recognize not only that the situation of Job corresponds to the situation of the Individual Laments, not only that the 'friends' of Job are magnified

versions of the 'friends' of this type of psalm, not only that lamentations of this kind probably originated as ritual expurgations, but above all that Job himself is supremely the *anaw* of these psalms, that afflicted but righteous one who complains to Yahweh that his friends are failing to perform their sacred obligations to him. M. Steinmann does indeed recognize a similar conflict of attitudes in his notes on 22, 22-30, but apparently only with reference to a particular context. The reviewer would maintain that it is fundamental throughout the entire book. Again, one cannot agree that the connection between Job and the apocalyptic writings is anything like so close as is suggested (p. 300 ff.), or that in making Job an Edomite the author obeyed the same impulse which induced our Lord to choose a Samaritan as an example of charity (p. 80). The alleged biblical precedents for the peculiar dialogue form in Job are unconvincing, and one remains an adherent of the more usual view that it derives from Egyptian or Babylonian prototypes.

These objections are not for one moment intended to obscure the over-all excellence of the book. No serious student of Job can afford not to read it. For here M. Steinmann is presenting us, as only he can, with the distilled excellence of the very latest scholarship, and in addition offering several original and important contributions of his own.

JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION. By Justus George Lawler. (Newman Press; \$3.00.)

This book is a series of essays on such subjects as education, marriage, theology, the sacraments, the Church, tradition and progress. The author is a layman, a member of the faculty of Religion in an American university. But these *Studies in Religious Thought* are not to be dismissed out of hand as laicized theology. As Fr John Oesterreicher points out in a very able Introduction, what Pius XII condemned on May 31, 1954, was a *theologia laicalis*, a laicized theology, which is opposite to a *theologia ecclesiastica*, a theology imbued with the spirit of the Church. The Holy Father spoke out against all, priests or layman, who think themselves to be teachers in their own right, and who claim a role distinct from, or even set against, the public teaching authority of the Church.

In assessing the different problems involved, the author shows how the only way to a solution is that of St Thomas himself, the middle way which avoids the extremes of opinion yet touches both camps; rooted in tradition, the middle way is at the same time open to the realities of the present; the Church, as Pius XII has said explicitly,