

- 22 Pat Roy Mooney: 'The Law of the Seed' *Development Dialogue*, 1983: 1—2 Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala.
- 23 *ibid.* p. 88.
- 24 Mooney quotes losses of 'half to two-thirds' in the gene-banks in Australia and the USA. *ibid.* p. 76.
- 25 *ibid.* p. 132.
- 26 Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation *Introductory Notes for Symposium Participants* 1987 p. 4.
- 27 *ibid.* p. 8. For the tissue culture production of vanilla and its implications for the economies of several African countries see *RAFI Bio-communiqué*, January 1987.
- 28 *Introductory Notes for Symposium Participants*, p. 12.
- 29 Lewis Mumford: *The Pentagon of Power*, London 1971, p. 128. The late Sir Martin Ryle, Astronomer Royal, was deeply concerned with the many misuses of science and technology. See his letter to the President of the Pontifical Academy of Science and the background to it: *Martin Ryle's Letter*, Menard Press, London, 1985, pp. 16—20. Particularly striking is his question: 'Should fundamental Science (in some areas now, others will emerge later) be stopped?'

## Reviews

**FAITH AND ETHICS: RECENT ROMAN CATHOLICISM** by Vincent McNamara. *Gill and Macmillan, Dublin; Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C. 1985.*  
Pp. 225. £9.96

This is the most interesting book I have read about fundamental moral theology for quite some time. It is about a controversy which for the last few years has engaged some of the most prominent Catholic moral theologians. The controversy concerns the specificity of Christian Ethics. Stated simply, the question at issue is whether Christian ethics has any specifically Christian content. Does the Christian revelation add anything to the moral obligations which people of good will can discover for themselves without the aid of revelation? Everyone involved in the controversy agrees that Christian revelation adds specifically Christian motives to human acts, and that it gives Christian morality a specific form and context, but does it add anything to the content of a good humanistic ethic?

Though, of course, antecedents can be discovered in theological tradition, the controversy is of recent origin. For some time before the Second Vatican Council there had been calls for the renewal of moral theology. They were accepted and endorsed by the Council. The neo-Scholastic version of moral theology was found wanting in many respects, not least being that it seemed to be a purely secular morality with a mere surface dressing of Christianity; one which used the Bible, not as a genuine theological source, but as a source of proof texts. There was a call for a morality of genuinely Christian inspiration, rooted in the Bible. At first it looked as if it would be relatively easy to renew moral theology, but soon difficulties began to surface. There were problems about how the Bible could be used as a source of moral teaching, and it appeared to some scholars that, if we based our morality on the Bible, we would be unable to dialogue about moral issues of

mutual concern, and they are many, with well intentioned non-believers. Prominent theologians began to argue that there is no specifically Christian ethics. Among them were men who had been in the forefront of the renewal movement. They argue that ethical reasoning is autonomous, and that the Christian revelation only adds specific motives and gives ethics a Christian form and context. Other exponents of renewal reacted strongly. They considered the claim for autonomy a betrayal of the renewal. They foretold grave dangers for the Church if this line of thought were pursued. They continued to argue for an ethics based on belief, a *Glaubensethik*. And so two parties were formed, the autonomy school and the *Glaubensethik* school. The debate between the two is as yet unresolved. It has continued for about fifteen years.

It will be clear to the reader that this is a very important, as well as a very interesting, debate. Whatever stand one takes will determine how one grounds moral norms, how one expects bible reading and meditation on the faith to affect one's daily living, what one thinks is the role of the teaching Church in the sphere of morals, and with what presuppositions one engages in ecumenical dialogue and dialogue with non-believers.

The author traces the progress of the debate from its beginnings to the present. He analyses the neo-scholastic moral system, the hopes expressed by early exponents of renewal, and the arguments for and against autonomy in morals. He moves the debate forward by highlighting imprecisions in terminology or argument on the part of either school. He broadens the scope of the argument by going deeper into matters about which there is disagreement. For example, he shows that neither party has sufficiently attended to developments in the theology of revelation; both operate with a propositional view of revelation, whereas contemporary theology sees revelation more as the expression of the faith of scriptural writers and communities. This radically changes our approach to the Bible. He brings philosophical analysis to bear on the precise meaning of intention, motive and justifying reason and the distinction between them, and is able to show that, in the light of a clearer understanding of moral agency, the autonomy school's relegation of Christian considerations to the sphere of motive, as if motive did not enter into the meaning of a moral act, is unsatisfactory. He has very useful sections on *agape*, which the *Glaubensethik* school maintains is peculiar to Christianity, and on the validity of the divine command model of Christian ethics. Systematic theology and metaphysics shed light on the nature of morality and the kind of God-talk appropriate to moral discourse.

Neither party is found wholly wrong, but neither emerges unscathed. It would be unwise for anyone to write further on the topic without first studying and absorbing this book. It can be enthusiastically recommended, for its interest, its importance and its scholarship.

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**KNOWING THE UNKNOWN GOD: IBN-SINA, MAIMONIDES, AQUINAS**, by David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1986*. Pp.x + 130. Cloth: \$15.95.

Although the subtitle of this book might suggest an historical study, its aim, as the author points out, is 'more contemporary and philosophical'. (p. ix) It is presented as an 'essay in conceptual clarification,' necessary for knowing 'what it is we are speaking of in speaking of God, how to relate this divinity to whatever else we may know, and how especially to handle the religious tradition's avowal that God lies beyond our ken'. (p. 1)

According to the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, God is transcendent, distinct from all that we know, and thus unknowable. Yet there is a 'connection' (chapter 1) between God and all things that enables us to speak of him. To