

ambiguity is, he thinks, the major defect of *Honest to God*. He suggests that the Bishop wants to show that all men of good will really believe in Christianity already, and that in order to show this he 'invests all his key-words and concepts with both a Christian and a non-Christian face and, having obtained recognition of the latter he adroitly substitutes the former for it' (p. 162). The suggestion is that the Bishop occupies a world consisting exclusively of professed Christians and western secular humanists who are probably crypto-Christians, and this, says Dr Mascall is just provincialism. It fails to take account, in the first place, of people like Marxists who have a quite definite set of beliefs which contradict some Christian beliefs, but it also ignores several other world religions which are far less 'secularized' than the most traditionalist version of Christianity. To suppose that the non-Christian really accepts Christianity in his heart of hearts is to erect a barrier to dialogue; it prevents us from hearing what he is actually saying. Such is Dr Mascall's thesis, and I must say that at this stage of the game he seems to be ahead on points, though there are one or two places where I would not agree with his interpretation of the Bishop. For example, the Bishop, quoting Norman Pittenger, speaks of God as 'the Reality undergirding and penetrating through the whole derived creation' and Dr Mascall thinks that St Thomas Aquinas would disagree (p. 125). Certainly it is not Aquinas' style but it seems to me susceptible of a perfectly orthodox thomist interpretation. I think the Professor is similarly unfair about the Bishop's use of the phrase 'depth of being' (p. 128) and most unfair

of all in his treatment of the Bishop on *kenosis* (pp. 152–3). On the other hand he gives him, more generously than I would, the benefit of the doubt about freedom and creation. He interprets the Bishop as saying that the difference between the biblical and immanentist world-view is that for the Bible, *God* is free, whereas it still seems to me that what the Bishop actually says is that we are free over against God (pp. 173–4).

Professor Mascall makes out a very good case indeed, and this is a book which absolutely demands a reply from the other side on the same academic level. I do not doubt that a reply can be made; we unquestionably do need a re-statement of what God is all about, and I think it quite likely that the 'new theologians' (in the Anglo-Saxon sense of that variable phrase) have seen further into this than the rest of us. The fact that their first attempts to explain what they are groping for have not been too successful should not deter them. But if they fail to meet the challenge of this book, if they cannot take account of the new situation created by Dr Mascall's criticisms and go on from there, then we shall have, reluctantly to conclude that it was all just a mirage in the dreary desert of conventional Christian theology. Professor Mascall is too modest and too courteous to end his book with the appropriate quotation from St Thomas Aquinas which I give in a slightly expurgated form.

*Si quis autem velit contra haec quae scripsimus aliquid dicere, non loquatur in angulis nec coram pueris qui nesciunt de tam arduis iudicare, sed contra hoc scriptum scribat, si audeat.*

Herbert McCabe, O.P.

THE MORAL TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT by Rudolph Schmackenburg. *Herder Burns and Oates, 50s.*

No doubt many will take up a book bearing a title like this in the hope of finding a contribution to the current debate on the basic presuppositions of Christian ethics and the ethical teaching of Christ in particular. We have been reminded recently that in the ethic of Jesus 'nothing is

prescribed – except love', that his sayings on morality including some that look like commandments are in fact intended only as signposts not tethering posts, that they are only (to use the figure of Emil Brunner) the spokes which point to the centre of the wheel, meaning the one

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