

compared on the basis of their form. The history that they record, however, is incomparable and unique. The "antecedent history" of the covenant formulary tells of God's act among his people from generation unto generation—ultimately in fact from eternity' (p. 91). Thus the author recognizes the limits as well as the value of form criticism.

The covenant formulary worked out on the basis of Old Testament texts can also be traced in Jewish and Christian texts, as is shown in the second part of this work. Here, however, the demonstrations seems less cogent. The point of departure is the *Qumran Manual of Discipline* (IQS iii-vi, 26). In this instance the application of form-critical method succeeds in revealing a

rational structure (p. 176). Other texts considered are the Damascus Documents, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache, 11 Clement, the Testament of the XII Patriarchs. The structure of the covenant formulary appears in these in varying measure.

We might wonder about the new covenant of the New Testament. 'In a word, in their structures the old and new covenants do not differ. The new element in the New Covenant is its new historic foundation' (p. 180). Thus once again is invoked the difference between form and content, as indeed is consistently done throughout this valuable work.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

**MAN AND HIS HOPE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**, by Walther Zimmerli. *Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series.* S.C.M. Press, London, 1971, 174 pp. £2.00.

Professor Zimmerli's new book aims at the structure of a good who-dun-it. Quite early on amidst all the introductory stuff he has planted a small clue as to how it all happened. He has been reading *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*.

Of course, like most of us when we are starting to enjoy the mystery at the vicarage, the original hearers of these open lectures at Gottingen may have missed this single reference, and they must, therefore, have been pretty puzzled by much of what follows. For the professor's talk of *elpis* and *mabbat*, of Proverbs and Isaiah, of Amos and Zephaniah, sends us, like the baronet's footprint in the snow and the governess' secret assignation in the British Museum, up a series of false trails from the centre of the piece. And the original audience was not given the final chapter. Happily the *Edwin Drood* character of the mystery is cleared up for those who, like good reviewers, read on to the very last pages of the book. These come to the final revelation of the 'conversation with Ernst Bloch' which tells all.

Professor Zimmerli has hustled through the consolations of Eliphaz the Temanite and their echoes in Proverbs and Psalm 37, the devout wish of Job that Yahweh preserve him in the underworld until the wrath is passed, the confidence expressed in Lamentations that Yahweh is the portion of the priestly tribe, the promise of children at the moment of Original Punishment, the varied hopes of Yahwist and Priest and a very von Radian Deuteronomist, and a review of prophetic expectations. All this makes a dull muddle in the mind. Then we are confronted with Bloch's interpretation of the divine name as 'I will be what I will be'

and of Yahweh as 'a God of the end of days, with futurity as the characteristic of his being', *Deus Spes*, who is better served by the nomadic Nazirite, the Rechabite family, and those fierce-mouthed prophets who called for a revolutionary push through the repressive social and religious structure of orthodoxy. Bloch suggests that the Old Testament witnesses, against the taming men who speak of the Law of Yahweh, to a revelation of an open future. Orthodox Hebrew interpretation from Moses onwards, says Bloch, has manufactured a god of order and ritual, cosmos and calendar, like Ptah and Marduk, a god who has perfected his intention in the past and now sees that the stable world is good. Against such a god all good men revolt in the cause of an advancing hope. Job, for example, makes 'an exodus from Yahweh himself into the unknown Canaan of which he was the unfulfilled promise'.

Professor Zimmerli makes much of Bloch's getting Yahweh's name wrong and making a number of exegetical mistakes, but he recognizes that the main question is still whether Bloch's expropriation of the Old Testament revelation is really justified. Hence this book.

A reading of the last chapter makes sense of the argument of the whole. It is only possible to appreciate why Professor Zimmerli spends such a time examining the relation of Egyptian talk of *maat* to Israelite wisdom literature, analysing the debate of Job and his friends, and marking out the line of witness to divine freedom from the rejection of a calculable order at Job 14, 19 to the apocalyptic affirmation of Daniel 3, 17, after the presentation of Bloch's challenge to the orthodox. Professor Zimmerli's

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