

ALPHA AND OMEGA, by S. H. Hooke; James Nisbet, 21s.

The elderly have a way of representing a tradition so seductively that any criticism seems the grossest impiety. Professor Hooke, who is now over ninety, has written a book that will delight everybody who respects the fine tradition of New Testament study associated with men like Hoskyns, Hebert, Thornton, Lightfoot and Farrer. This tradition has progressively realised the essential theological centre of scripture, and the chief virtue of this book is its adherence to this tradition of exegesis. It will be interesting to the specialist, but it is not too technical for the ordinary reader and this is quite an achievement. The 'Jewish sects and mannerisms' sort of book is no earthly use as an introduction to scripture: it gives the beginner the impression that he is being initiated into an antiquarian rather than a divine society. He needs a book which shows him how scripture is talking to his Christian being, a book that gives him a theological view of scripture; he has got to be able to hear the themes, and not get too distracted by the technical problems that the orchestra is mastering. Professor Hooke is writing with just the balance that is required; this is the style we need to learn, a whole lot of writing must be done in it based on a serious commitment to scripture as the word of God, exegetical at that level, and thoroughly informed by modern scholarship.

Ostensibly Professor Hooke has written the book in an attempt to develop Dr Farrer's use of the term 'image', and although I think that this has given the book its coherence, I cannot believe that he is tackling quite the right sort of problem. The Old Testament, as Farrer shows, can be seen to possess a variety of dominating theological images which were assumed in the person of Christ and given their final sense in his life, death and resurrection. This is a useful and carefully chosen exegetical language. I do not agree with Professor Hooke that it is useful to try to pin-point one definitive situation which always gives birth to the revealed image—the experience of surrender to the divine call; it is very difficult to demonstrate, without forcing, that every image birth, even if you can locate the occasion, fits into this pattern. It is much more important that we should see what we mean by 'image', and I am almost certain that Professor Hooke hasn't. This is the point for development. 'Image' has the advantage of stressing the poetic extension of a word that occurs in scripture, the movement from natural to divine acts in the same language. It allows for the association and transformation of ideas in an imaginative pattern. The word must not carry any abstract sense, it is seen on analysis to be wholly existential. The image refers to a history, it shows itself in patterns of redemptive acts. The image-words stands to such actions as a title to the play. 'Kingship' would not be an image in this sense, but 'David' suggests innumerable movements inside scripture.

No commentator can give the final account, but I think it must be said that the author's failure to make any analysis of image language has led him into the rather confusing remarks he makes about levels of history and an insufficient emphasis on the importance of saving history itself. I don't however take this

level of the book very seriously, and consequently I don't think it affects its value as an indication of how we are to understand the Bible.

CHARLES BOXER, O.P.

WAYS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE, by Louis Arnaud Reid; George Allen and Unwin, 40s.

Twelve years ago Professor Ryle pointed out the affinity between classical epistemology and Protestantism. Discussing 'introspective awareness' in *The Concept of Mind* he wrote: 'When the epistemologists' concept of consciousness first became popular, it seems to have been in part a transformed application of the Protestant notion of conscience'. The Protestants, Ryle remarked, anxious to claim that a man could know the moral state of his soul and the wishes of God without the aid of confessors and scholars, spoke of the God-given 'light' of private conscience. Similarly, he suggested, Descartes, committed to showing how the contents of the world of mind could be ascertained without the help of sense perception, called in 'consciousness' to play in the mental world the part played by light in the mechanical world. (*The Concept of Mind*, p. 159).

The insight is profound, and worth developing. Classical epistemology, from Descartes to Ayer, bases itself on the private experiences of the individual, as Protestantism rested upon the inwardness of the believer alone before God. The part which is played in Cartesianism by the doubter's *cogito ergo sum* was played in Lutheranism by the sinner's intimate conviction of his justification by God. For the young Newman no less than for Descartes and Berkeley the sole indubitable principles are the existence and attributes of oneself and one's creator. The body and its organs are of as little account in the theorising of the British Empiricists as they were in the worship of the English Puritans. Classical epistemology is as little interested in the way in which meaning and knowledge are communicated from one human being to another as the early Protestants were in the process of tradition whereby the concepts and truths of religion are handed down from one generation to the next. The institution of language and the membership of a human society with its rules and customs seemed to classical epistemologists to have little to do with the problem of knowledge; just as to many Protestants the sacraments and laws of a visible church seemed of little moment to the quality of a believer's experience of salvation.

In the last few years classical epistemology has been decisively assailed; and the insights which overthrew it show an unexpected correspondence with the Catholic doctrines which were challenged by Protestantism. It has been realised that even the most private experiences can be described only in a public and shareable language, and that such descriptions must be capable of being checked by outsiders; just as the Church has always insisted that religious experience derives its quality from, and must be tested by, the context of communicable religious belief and observable practice in which it occurs. It