

BOOK REVIEWS

DAS SIEGESLIED AM SCHILFMEER: CHRISTLICHE AUSEINANDERSSETZUNGEN MIT DEM ALTEN TESTAMENT. By Norbert Lohfink, S.J. Frankfurt: Knecht, 1965. Pp. 273. DM 16.80.

The title derives from a study of Ex 15, one of the collected essays which make up this volume. The subtitle strikes off the nature of the book, a sort of Christian conversation with the *OT*. Some of the essays have been previously published: "Formation of the *OT*," "Inerrancy," "Song of Moses," "The Greatest Commandment," "Buber's Translation of the Bible." Others are published for the first time: "The Narrative of the Fall," "Freedom," "Law and Grace," "Man and Death." L. has already distinguished himself with scholarly studies of Deuteronomy, and the present volume contains first-class contributions to biblical theology. The reviewer read them all with interest and profit, and never failed to be stimulated by L.'s insights, many of them quite original. The readers of this periodical deserve a detailed discussion of his essay on inerrancy, which has already provoked considerable reaction (J. Coppens and R. Marlé, as opposed to K. Prümm and E. Gutwenger) since its first appearance in *Stimmen der Zeit*, June, 1964.

How is the question of biblical inerrancy to be posed? L. discusses three approaches: the inerrancy of the biblical writer(s), of the individual book, and of the Bible as a whole, and he concludes that the last affords the right basis for discussion. The tendency of Catholic theology has been to emphasize the inerrancy of the biblical writer, and this is also the direction of *Providentissimus Deus*, which presupposed a limited and even definite number of "inspired writers" (Moses, Solomon, etc.), who would have written (complete) "books." Scholarly research has shown that the process of the formation of the *OT* eliminates such a presupposition; one simply cannot give an approximate number to the "inspired authors" for the "books" which have been formed by addition, glossing, and completing. If one holds that the final author or editor of a given "book" is the "inspired author," this is merely mechanical without being realistic. Rather, one would think that all who contributed to the work were inspired proportionately. Even in this view, however, the book seems to resemble an archeological tell (L.'s appropriate metaphor) of inerrant statements made by inspired authors. This point of view hardly commends itself.

Perhaps, then, one should speak of an inerrant "book"? But is a biblical "book" such a fixed quantity? A biblical book does not have the individuality of a book that has been selected, purchased, and finally placed on one's shelf. This point also has been illustrated by modern insights into the composition of the biblical works; one thinks of the combination of tradi-

tions in the "five" books of the Pentateuch. More important, this concept of a biblical book creates the illusion of an independent and independently inerrant book—with total disregard, e.g., of the concrete differences between the Deuteronomic history and the Chronicler's history. Each book becomes a static quantity, and ultimately one is reduced to the old "proof-text" method, except that now one can oppose one inerrant book against another. The reviewer has always felt this difficulty in the case of the wisdom literature. Surely here one must recognize opposition and contradiction; the various currents in the wisdom literature are critical of each other: Job, of the conservative positions represented in Proverbs, etc. There is no one "inerrant" book, just as no text can be absolutized in its "inerrancy." Here we come to the heart of the matter: the recognition of the unity of the entire Bible, instead of disparate units put together in a merely additive fashion. This unity was willed by God and ultimately recognized in canonization. The "books" themselves show that they were read and glossed and expanded in the light of "the analogy of Scripture" (L.'s phrase). In fact, the *OT* itself cannot be separated from the *NT* in this view. As long as the canon was in the process of formation, no individual "book" had its definitive meaning. And when the canon of the *OT* was definitively closed (paradoxically, by being taken up as *OT* along with the *NT*), there was provided a final context in which the *OT* was to be read. Hence we should properly speak of the "inerrancy of the Bible."

I trust that the above remarks are a fair indication of L.'s thoughts. His slender essay (along with that of O. Loretz in his advocacy of the Semitic notion of truth) should be recognized as a valuable contribution to the problem which has been raised in the aula of St. Peter's during the third session of Vatican Council II (among others, by Cardinals König and Meyer). The reader may find it interesting to know that steps are being taken for an English translation.

Catholic University of America

ROLAND E. MURPHY, O.C.A.R.M.

LE LIVRE DES PROVERBES. By André Barucq, S.D.B. Paris: Gabalda, 1964. Pp. 267.

With the renewed interest in biblical studies and the great themes of salvation history, it is well to remember that the inspired authors have also spoken to us in homely detail about the problems of personal happiness and the successful conduct of daily life. Moreover, they speak in a universal tone which is quite distinct from the Law and the Prophets. The study of Israel's wisdom literature has shown that the Israelite wise man was in contact with the intellectual life of the ancient Near East. These original