

to a more enlightened or moderate conservatism. According to Rogers, honesty and openness will naturally lead away from a narrow conservatism. Does this type of conservatism lack integrity, or is it a necessary immature stage from which some must begin? Can one be truly open and remain a rigid conservative? Or does openness lead naturally to the place where Rogers finds himself now? These are some questions that arise out of these confessions.

Teaching today at Fuller Theological Seminary, Rogers still considers himself an "emerging evangelical." Surely his confessions will not be received in the same way by all. Conservatives who have not grown in the manner that he has will surely think he has gone too far, especially in his understanding of Scripture and in his attitudes toward social issues. He seems to be in agreement with the "new evangelicals" described by Quebedeaux (*The New Evangelicals* [New York, 1974]). Has he come to his final destination, or will his openness lead him further to a more liberal stance? Only time will reveal this.

Andrews University

SAKAE KUBO

Von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom In Israel*. Trans. by James D. Martin. Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1972. xii + 330 pp. \$12.95.

It is quite challenging to write something about the history and nature of the wisdom tradition in Israel because of the nonsystematic and basically fragmentary nature of the material available; moreover, a comprehensive study in this field seems almost impossible due to the frequent divergence of primary and secondary sources of Israelite wisdom. In this respect the book of the late Professor Gerhard von Rad, originally published in German as *Weisheit in Israel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970) and now admirably and felicitously translated into English by James D. Martin, is worth praising, for it successfully overcomes the above mentioned difficulties.

Von Rad's book brilliantly illustrates an historical approach to understanding wisdom literature in ancient Israel, which asks such questions as date and authorship, origin and setting, but which also stresses the theological importance of wisdom, its ideas and values in relationship to the rest of Israelite faith. Following von Rad, the reader is not just studying wisdom as an object, but is associated in a highly creative and original phenomenological enterprise, where the method used and the object studied become one and the same thing. This does justice to Israelite wisdom, which is basically a response to divine revelation found in the world of nature, daily experiences, cult, and metahistory.

The volume is divided into four parts. Part I discusses the forms and sources of Israelite wisdom, the extra-biblical influence and non-influence, the sages themselves and how they saw the world. The author sees the emergence of Israelite wisdom in the period of the early monarchy, when the old Yahwistic faith was challenged by rational discernment, the emergence of human responsibility, and the breakdown of the older sacral world view. The wisdom theology that developed in the Solomonic period had its genesis,

not in the court system or in a professional group, but in a wealthy middle class order which affirmed the secularization and humanization of the world. It stressed a functional, empirical faith in the freedom and sovereignty of Yahweh which proclaimed no separation between sacred and profane, and no difference between revelation and reason in the Israelite understanding of reality. It is this emphasis which the sage shared with priestly and prophetic elements, that marked his wisdom unique in the annals of Near Eastern lore.

Part II is a mature theological and philosophical discussion on the various factors which enter into the heavy Hebrew stress on life, and on man's constant relationship with God, community, and himself. But running through this experience is an element of mystery stemming from God's penetration into history, before which man's knowledge and ethical conduct are limited. This knowledge-wisdom-intellect begins in trusting in Yahweh and His creation. It is this theme of trust which most exactly permits man to have truly essential intercourse with God, man, and nature. The negation of this trust is foolishness, and exiles a person from a life of goodness and harmony to a world of death and evil.

Part III deals with distinctive elements of wisdom in Israel's particular cultic and cultural experience. The folk wisdom of home, tribe, temple, and marketplace is discussed at great length. The salient wisdom traditions found in books like Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Ecclesiasticus are criticized, explained, and made relevant for today's theology. The teachings of Ben Sirach, where wisdom and national-religious traditions are joined together, are evaluated with the intent of showing the rightness of an ethical order in life that is manifested in manners and values which stem from experiencing the world and being in the world. No better account for an elucidation of the pertinent sources dealing with divine determination of events and destinies is found than here. The author clearly distinguishes predeterminism from providence, "appropriate time" from "appointed time," man's responsibility and soteriology; and he persuasively argues that the apocalyptic writers drew strength from wisdom theology.

Part IV contains concluding remarks emphasizing both negative and positive features and achievements of Israel's didactic productions. Von Rad's research leads him to conclude that the essence of Israelite wisdom is that "the truth about the world and man can never become the object of our theoretical knowledge; that reliable knowledge can be achieved only through a relationship of trust with things; that it is the highest wisdom to abstain from the attempt to control wisdom in abstract terms, that it is much wiser to let things retain their constantly puzzling nature, and that means to allow them to become themselves active and, by what they have to say, to set man to rights" (p. 318). This credo does not claim absolute knowledge, but it is unique in the ancient circles of the wise and has left an undeniable mark in the history of Israelite-Jewish cultural and religious development.

The volume is indispensable as a ground-breaking study of the theology of wisdom and society in the Bible. For normal introductory classes, however, it will prove to be too difficult and esoteric; it presupposes a strong knowledge of introduction and literature of the Bible, and familiarity with principal schools and trends in modern wisdom scholarship.