

GOD WHO ACTS. By G. Ernest Wright. (S.C.M. Press; 8s.)

This is one of the series of 'Studies in Biblical Theology' that includes a number of short works by distinguished non-Catholic scholars. Here the author contends that biblical theology should not, or rather cannot, be presented as a system of 'propositional dogmatics'. It is and must be a recital of God's acts, and of inferences from them. His acts are known by the interpretation of the historical events, and can be described only in the concepts of the biblical history. Biblical theology is defined as the confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God; the Bible is neither history for its own sake, nor a dogmatic system; but revelation in a particular historical medium.

The author himself objects that revelation must needs be given a logical, coherent form; he quotes with respect and affection the fine, orthodox and scholastic doctrine of God in the Westminster Confession, which is that of his own communion; but, he complains, 'it does not quite introduce us to the biblical God'. He then produces a system of his own: a doctrinal scheme given in historical terms. He makes the good point that Old Testament and New Testament must be taken together; Christ is the culminating point in the redemptive history.

One has much sympathy with the author's contention, and there is a great deal that is valuable in his book. Among Catholics the faith is too often taught in a merely schematic and abstract way. We need to present it far more 'in the round', with the action of life, as in so much of the Bible. But all the same, the author does not find that certain parts of Scripture fit well into his theory, for instance the Wisdom books; and he has a somewhat irrational horror of those categories, Hellenic and abstract as they are, thanks to which the Church has come to understand God's work of redemption.

JOHN HIGGENS, O.S.B.

GRAVITY AND GRACE. By Simone Weil. Translated by Emma Crauffurd. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 15s.)

There is no need at this date to spend time in recommending the work of Simone Weil to the English-speaking world; she has rightly become established as one of the most powerful religious thinkers of our time. Might I, however, mention two facts about her which are related in *Simone Weil, telleque nous l'avons connue* by P. Perrin and Gustave Thibon (who also contributes a fine introduction to the work reviewed here). The first is that Simone Weil's notebooks contains many sentences which do not represent a considered judgment, but were set down as ideas that had occurred to her and might later serve as material for further reflection. When we are aware of this I think we read her work with more understanding. Secondly, even her fierce asceticism had not removed her from the level of human frailty: she needed her cigarettes!

Perhaps this gap in her asceticism should not be stressed; but it is worth mentioning, because she is such a powerful thinker that the reader is liable to be crushed by the sheer light and brilliance of her insights. Seen through a haze of tobacco-smoke they acquire warmth and humanity.

The following quotation, however, will do more than any reviewer can both to recommend Simone Weil's work and to indicate the quality of Miss Crauffurd's translation:

'The sin which we have in us emerges from us and spreads outside ourselves setting up a contagion of sin. Thus, when we are in a temper, those around us grow angry. Or again, from superior to inferior: anger produces fear. But at the contact of a perfectly pure being there is a transmutation and the sin becomes suffering. Such is the function of the just servant of Isaiah, of the Lamb of God. Such is redemptive suffering. All the criminal violence of the Roman Empire ran up against Christ and in him it became pure suffering. Evil beings, on the other hand, transform simple suffering (sickness for example) into sin.'

DONALD NICHOLL

L'EDUCATION DU SENS LITURGIQUE. By H. Lubienska de Lenval. (Cerf 'L'Esprit Liturgique'. Blackfriars.)

The author of this book is an experienced educationalist, and resumes in these pages her principles and practice in forming children (and adults) to a formal participation in the Church's liturgy. Although it is small in extent, it raises large problems and could easily stir up controversy if some passages were taken tragically by those interested in the liturgical movement.

The book certainly has much to recommend it. Basing herself on 1 Thess. 5, 23, the author well says that no education is complete unless it is composed of bodily discipline, intellectual culture and spiritual life; and God is the principle cohesion (p. 14). And all these elements are found in the liturgy itself, by which the Church educates her children for eternity. Thus education for the liturgy is principally education by and in the liturgy. The Mass is not principally an intellectual exercise nor the 'joyful elbowing of a crowd', but is above all the Mystery in Act; celebrated first of all for God, it teaches the people to rejoin God through Christ (p. 30). Christ's action is perpetuated in the Mass, where the priest holds Christ's place and speaks in the name of the people. But the liturgy is by no means exclusively exterior: the education of the liturgical sense is a progress towards 'interior silence' thanks to the active participation in the Holy Mysteries that Blessed Pius X recommended. One presumes that by 'interior silence' the author means contemplative prayer and all that this implies, in the sense that Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity used the term. One welcomes this emphasis as it is not always found in our liturgical publica-