The work concludes (p. 195-201) with a brief analysis of Jerome as a biblical scholar and an assessment of his contribution to the history of exegesis. The "Bibliography" (p. 203-221) and the "Index of Biblical References" (p. 223-229) complete this book.

This small book deserves the highest recognition. It is written very clearly, and as far as I can see, it is the first comprehensive study of Jerome as an exegete. Other major works on this subject confined themselves to parts of Jerome’s work: A. Penna, Principe e carattere dell’esegesi di S. Girolamo, Rome 1950 and P. Jay, L’exégèse de saint Jérôme d’après son Commentaire sur Isaïe, Paris 1985).

Only some minor remarks can be made. In the first chapter B. enumerates three Jewish corpora that could have influenced the work of Jerome (rabbinic literature; literature of Qumran; Hellenistic Jewish literature). It is incomprehensible that B. does not examine the vast corpus of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Once can point at many exegetical traditions and techniques in this literature which have surely influenced several Fathers. Moreover, it remains unclear what the influence of Qumran on Jerome could have been.

It is well known that Jerome used many specific Jewish exegetical traditions in his commentaries. Although the relevance of this aspect of Jerome’s labours to a work on his exegetical principles and practice is clear for B., he considers that such a study lies beyond the scope of the present book. He has omitted it because of the problematic question of the dating of Jewish literature and also of the relative dating of specific traditions within that literature and in Jerome’s works. Although this decision is understandable, it is unfortunate. Such a work remains therefore a desideratum.

J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten


This work, based on the Didsbury lectures delivered by the author at the British Isles Nazarene College in Manchester in October 1989, is an extremely well written, well-informed, most interesting and challenging treatment of the role Israeliite Wisdom played in post-exilic times. Although the author is primarily concerned with the Book of Proverbs, Job and Qohelet and less with Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon, his publication should not go unmentioned in this Journal, because it tries to describe how Wisdom provided the Jews of the dispersion in Persian and

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Hellenistic times with the basis for a new, non-cultic, universalist worldview.

In his introduction (pp. 13-39) C. deals with the pre-exilic roots of Israelite Wisdom, its indebtedness to Near Eastern Wisdom literature, especially in the case of "royal Wisdom", and its distinctive features. According to the author, the condition of liminality caused by the exile, which could have entailed the loss of national and religious identity, strikingly led (at least for a significant proportion of the Jewish dispersion) to a redefinition of their belief system. The written word of prophecy provided a message of theodicy and legitimation but it did not set out detailed guidance for the wider range of daily issues. It is this that Wisdom provided. What was needed by the Jews living in the dispersion was a thoroughgoing reminting of norms of moral and social conduct on a more universalistic basis than the inherited world-view, focused on family and worship, had provided. This should not, according to C., be taken to mean that the shaping of our present Wisdom tradition took place primarily among the Jews of the diaspora. It is likely that this was not the case. But mainstream Judaism managed in his opinion to overcome most of the issues of controversy and dissension between the Jews in the dispersion and those who lived in the land of Israel: Judaism eventually achieved a relatively stable form.

The present reviewer asks himself whether the condition of liminality caused by the exile, should be seen as the background of the impact which Wisdom literature achieved in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The nucleus of the Book of Proverbs is pre-exilic and its prologue can hardly be explained against the backdrop of the diaspora. In contradistinction to the court tales of the Book of Esther, 1(3) Esdras, Daniel etc., neither Job nor Qohelet and Ben Sira seem to have been authored with the Jewish dispersion or even in particular the foreign domination of the Holy Land in mind. I would therefore prefer not to connect the latter books with the circumstances of the Jewish diaspora but to find the Sitz im Leben of this literature predominantly in the conditions which prevailed in the Land of Israel in post-exilic times.

In Chapter Two on "Wisdom and the World" (pp. 40-64) C. deals with the verbal artistry and the pragmatic and utilitarian function of Wisdom. The shift from oral to written Wisdom gave rise to a process of theologising and the need to bring the teaching of Wisdom in conformity with the teachings of other streams of Israelite traditions. C. underlines that the teaching of Wisdom and the teachings of the cultus were likely to come into conflict. In the cultus time was seasonal time, eternal and cyclic, but in Wisdom literature time is first and foremost characterised by the lifespan of each individual and existential. Wisdom also dispensed with the cultic conceptualisation of sacred space with its ideas about clean