

# Boekbesprekings : Book Reviews

## BIBLICAL ESSAYS

**Adam's Rib.** Essays on biblical medicine. By S. S. Levin, M.B., M.R.C.P., D.C.H. Pp. 180. \$6.95. California: Geron-X. 1971.

Well qualified by training and interest Dr Levin examines the biblical record in the light of modern medical knowledge as a living unity; not simply as a story of man's faith and salvation. He sees God from the beginning as a causal and therapeutic agent. Giving reasons he finds Eve 'adrenal' not 'rib' in origin; Abel as a genetic misfit (XYY) slain by Cain in self-defence; 'demons' foreshadowing bacteriology; and 'ritual', hygiene, and, presumably, public health of common stock and interrelated.

Through the accuracy of the record in word, fact and narrative Dr Levin recognizes the same diseases and responses in biblical and modern man, viz., genetic, metabolic, climatic, endocrinal, mental, epidemic, infectious, etc., and notes the transition from God, priest and prophet to 'general' practitioners with their impact and influence on the ideas, beliefs, institutions, and practices of biblical and subsequent societies.

Ritual, belief, and medicine are linked in death too. The Hebrew religion and physician regarded death as final, with immortality enshrined in the words, deeds, and descendants of the deceased. The body/soul duality of the other religions, with the soul 'saved' at the expense of the body, Dr Levin finds unacceptable on anatomical, genetic and biological grounds. He

sees it as a source of suffering and antisocial actions; not of salvation and an after-life. Not lacking in the compassion of the true physician however, Dr Levin 'accepts' its use if it gives peace of mind and comfort to the individual pre-mortem. Rich in evidence, leavened with humour, and sprinkled with originality, Dr Levin's lively contribution deserves a place on every doctor's bookshelf.

M.G.

## STEROID BIOCHEMISTRY

**Advances in Steroid Biochemistry and Pharmacology.** Vol. 2. Ed. by M. H. Briggs. Pp. ix + 479. £7.00. London and New York: Academic Press. 1970.

This volume contains 8 outstanding chapters providing much detail, with many references, figures and tables, on the following subjects: steroid hormones and sebaceous secretion; the role of sex steroids, hypothalamic LH-releasing hormone and FSH-releasing hormone in the regulation of gonadotrophin secretion from the anterior pituitary gland; steroid metabolism in the foeto-placental unit; metabolic effects of steroid contraceptives; steroid biosynthetic pathways in the human adrenal; indices of androgen production in women; interaction of sex hormones with target tissues and steroids in nidation. There is much of value here for those interested in the chemistry, metabolism and actions of steroid hormones.

N.S.