

will the rational man become a Christian?', this essay has both entertainment and serious value as it examines Pascal's question, What will you wager to make a Christian decision? Some clear thinking has gone into this essay and will demand an equal effort if our apologetic today is to make sense and have appeal.

On a final summing-up the most provocative article in the year came from a name well known for his discussion of controversial themes, D. E. Nineham. And what more question-raising subject could have been chosen for a Rylands Lecture than 'The Use of the Bible in Modern Theology'? In the printed article (*BJRL*, 52, Autumn 1969) Nineham sends up a trial balloon — or to use his own rather inelegant metaphor, asks what the fly on the wall would have heard (p. 109) if it had eavesdropped on a conversation between God and certain groups and individuals in the past. The answer is certainly not what orthodox views of the Bible's normativeness would reply; and although Nineham puts some astute criticisms as road-blocks in the way of an easy acceptance of the Bible's authority, he himself can come up with little better than Coleridge's standpoint that the Bible is inspired because we find it inspiring. He does, however, wish to understand this dictum in corporate terms, which is still a long way off being

satisfactory. But his essay is a model of lucid thought and mellifluous style — and as such an example to all writers in this field.

#### Abbreviations

- BJRL* *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (Manchester).  
*CBQ* *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (Washington).  
*EQ* *Evangelical Quarterly* (Exeter).  
*ExpT* *Expository Times* (Edinburgh).  
*HTR* *Harvard Theological Review* (Cambridge, Mass.).  
*JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature* (Philadelphia).  
*NTS* *New Testament Studies* (Cambridge).  
*SJT* *Scottish Journal of Theology* (Edinburgh).  
*ZNTW* *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Berlin).

#### Postscript

If any significant contribution from a Tyndale Fellowship member or TSF student has been overlooked, this omission is accidental, but could have been put right by the author's sending a copy, offprint or note of title to the writer at Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 North Oakland Ave., Pasadena, California 91101, USA.

---

## A New Introduction to the Old Testament

Donald J Wiseman

*Introduction to the Old Testament by R. K. Harrison (1232pp., £3) is the largest individual work yet published by the Tyndale Press and fulfils the longing of many students for a work that will present a conservative approach to the problems of the Old Testament in a cogent and detailed manner. Professor Wiseman here introduces and commends this volume.*

Get this book! You cannot afford not to if you wish to be a serious theological student with at least some idea of the wide variety of Old Testament problems and their possible answers. You can afford it for this massive volume is larger, yet cheaper, more comprehensive and certainly far more reliable than the English translation (1965) of O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (updated) which is now in vogue. Now at last we have a useful conservative and substantial contribution which will also prove a useful reference work as it is, in reality, several volumes in one, covering Old

Testament theology, history and other studies as well as the introductions to individual books.

Dr R. K. Harrison, Professor of Old Testament at Wycliffe College, Toronto, writes with close acquaintance with students' problems in the theological faculties of the British Isles for he was here both as a student (he has a BD, MTh and PhD from London University) and teacher (he is now a DD). He was Chaplain of Clifton Theological College, Bristol from 1947 to 1949. His writings have covered a wide field. His *Teach Yourself Hebrew*, *A History of Old Testament Times*, *Teach Yourself Archaeology of the Old Testament*, *Teach Yourself Archaeology of the New Testament*, *The Psalms for Today*, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* and many other contributions show that his main literary activity has been directed to making the results of scholarship known to a wider readership. He is currently editor of the *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (succeeding the late Dr E. J. Young) and his *Jeremiah* in the Tyndale Old Testament Com-

mentary series should be published by the end of the year.

The range of the volume is impressive. The contents are divided into fourteen parts of which the last seven (600 + pages) are devoted to the discussion of each book in the order of the Hebrew canon. The title and purpose is followed by an analysis of the contents. This is brief, and sometimes less thought-provoking than that provided by E. J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Tyndale Press, revised edition, 1956) which well deserves to continue for those who want a more 'Handbook' approach. Most attention is given to the sources and the major problems of each book. Clear summaries of viewpoints held by scholars who differ from the author are given sympathetically. Harrison's position is throughout conservative, yet he openly takes up an individual stance where interpretations may differ. Some 'critical scholars' will not like the periodic denunciations to which he subjects them, fair though they usually are. Some conservative scholars (including the reviewer) may well fight shy of his occasional lapses into what seems like 'critical' argument and even terminology (e.g. his 'religious drama' of Gn. 1-3). Yet a study of the whole book and especially of his comments on the authority of Scripture, revelation and inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy (pp. 473-475) leave the reader in no doubt of his basic conservative position.

The first part of the book begins with a survey of the development of Old Testament study itself. In the course of this details of the Graf-Wellhausen theory are followed by possible answers so far provided (though still too few) by conservative scholars. Thus the possible alternative hypothesis indicated by the recurrent colophon formula, 'These are the genealogical histories of . . .' is given fully. Nothing which precedes this formula in any section of Genesis could not have been known to, or written for, the person named. In this way early documents could have been transmitted to their Mosaic 'editor'. The statement of such ideas and review of problems tends, by the arrangement of the book, to lead to repetition. Thus this theory is repeated, but not, be it noted by literary critics, in identical form, for often there are additions and other comments. The student using the book for reference will not be troubled by this and may well welcome the full treatment given in each section. On the other hand, if he is to get the best out of the book on any subject, he will need to follow the index to ensure that he gets the full treatment as it is given under the different biblical books as no cross-references are provided.

The history of Old Testament study takes us through the many reactions to the now fragmented and twisted documentary hypothesis. Gunkel and form criticism seem to be treated with particular favour. Early 'attacks' (one of the author's favourite words) on the theory from Smend to the 'fundamentalist' controversy in USA are included.

The liturgical tradition of Mowinckel and his followers and the dying school of myth and ritual favoured by Hooke are well covered (in the section on historical anthropology).

Old Testament sociology, the first I believe to appear in any Old Testament Introduction, appraises the writings of Lods, Alt and Noth and offers reasonable criticisms of their positions. It is this approach which will make the whole volume helpful to novice or savant alike. A section on the influence of archaeology on Old Testament (rather weak) is followed by an account of later scholarship through the Uppsala school to Albright, Rowley (was he really 'one of the most independent thinkers of his generation' (p. 69)?) to Cyrus Gordon. Conservative contributions are placed in fair perspective.

Part Two covers Old Testament archaeology. Though adequate and covering well-worn ground, it does not have the touch of someone closely engaged in this field or that of related Hittite, Egyptian and Mesopotamian studies which has been the case in England. Though he refers most appreciatively throughout the whole book to the *New Bible Dictionary* (IVP, 1962), here and in the pages detailing the archaeological background of the Old Testament (pp. 105-134) could well be supplemented by additional bibliography.

Chronology (Part Three) is made much clearer by tables and lists from Adam — Abraham. For early Israel the so-called late date of the Exodus is followed (as on pp. 315ff. where detailed argument is also given). Comparative tables with ample text help comparison to be made with the dates proposed by Albright, Thiele and Harrison (who differs from NBD). He usefully gives a table of the Judges according to both early and late dates for the Exodus.

'The Old Testament Text and Canon' (Part Four) includes an outline of textual criticism and essays on the role of the textual critic, classification of scribal errors in transmission. These show a remarkable scribal fidelity behind the Massoretic text which 'in general constitutes a witness whose reliability is of a deservedly high degree' (p. 249). There is a note on modern editions of Hebrew Bibles.

Old Testament history, or rather historiography, is well discussed in the wider context of Mesopotamian and Egyptian practices in Part Five. The basic attitudes and assumptions behind the works of Oesterley and Robinson, Albright and Bright are described in a way which will help all who turn to these histories. A long section is given over to problems of Old Testament history, supposed anachronisms, the date of the Exodus (again), this time with perhaps too much emphasis on the now belittled evidence of Glueck's surface explorations and their use for ascertaining periods of occupancy of East Jordan.

'Old Testament Religion' (pp. 349-414) is a volume in itself and covers just those aspects which trouble the theological student. The methodology, the evolutionary hypothesis behind most discussions of the development of Hebrew religion, the

impact of the Canaanites (Ras Shamra), animism, totemism, ancestor-worship (the author rightly belittles the incidence of child-sacrifice) as well as Kaufmann's theories are all put under close scrutiny. I am impressed with his fine section on the divine Name (pp. 399-403 which must be read in conjunction with the same problem taken up in Exodus on pp. 578-582) and the arguments for Mosaic monotheism. The religion of the monarchy and of the prophets and later Judaism (2 pages) are only more lightly discussed.

To make a division between 'Old Testament Religion' and 'Old Testament Theology' is sound in this context. The latter (pp. 415-492) gives an overall view of Old Testament theology and the principles of interpretation. 'Any historically orientated Old Testament theology must somehow grapple with the problems of the ultimate meaning of Old Testament history.' B. Albrektson's *History and the Gods* (1967) came too late to be considered. This is a pity since it brings a challenge to the widely-held dogma of *Heilsgeschichte*, that the Old Testament revelation is through God observed in action in history and not through His speaking directly through inspired men. The view rests on a supposed, and now disproved, difference in the thought of Israelites compared with their neighbours. We must still look for the distinctive ideas of the Old Testament. It is interesting that the covenant is discussed under 'Problems in Old Testament Theology'.

In the light of Mesopotamian discoveries the covenant has, in fact, become one aspect in which current writing on Old Testament theology is fast moving back to traditional conservative studies (see now *Westminster Theological Journal*, November 1969, for the application of this to the question of the canon).

These remarks should show that the strength of this new Introduction lies in its completeness (even sometimes tautology) and its conservative approach with aims to cover all possible subjects or to touch upon them aims not to 'burke any issue' and at the same time to give a fair appraisal of the problems left unanswered. Nevertheless, the reviewer believes that the day has passed when a single author can compass so wide a range with equal authority, accuracy and consistency. Though of a good standard throughout, there are areas in which the conservative position should or could be put more forcefully. What is disappointing, if understandable in view of the time it must have taken to compile so large a text, is that the bibliography and literature cited (and the author shows that he has read and studied it) stops, with few exceptions, in 1963.

In view of the wide appeal this book should have to teachers and students of the Old Testament at every level I believe it was right not to have included the Apocrypha in the British edition. Yes, this is a book to get and to use.

---

## Readers' Forum

**If the ascension narrative is not to be interpreted as a literal 'ascent above the bright blue sky', how is it to be interpreted?**

While I have every sympathy with the questioner, we must not over-emphasize the physical aspects of the ascension. Of course we recognize that heaven is not a place 'up there — above the bright blue sky'. Heaven is not a locality; it is a state of being that transcends time and space. Therefore the 'going back' of Christ to His Father was not a transference from one place to another but from one mode of existence to another. This may sound philosophical, but I believe that it is in accord with the teaching of Scripture which recognizes that there are different levels of being (1 Cor. 15: 35f.). The account of the ascension in Acts 1: 9-11, therefore, marks the withdrawal of Christ from this world of sense into the world of spirit. This does not mean to say that we are rejecting Luke's portrayal of the visible ascension. Christ had stated on numerous occasions that after His ministry He would return to His Father (e.g. Jn. 14: 2; 16: 28) and, quite obviously, some visible ending to the completion of His earthly work was necessary. The narrative in

Acts, then, is to be seen as a visible sign of His completed work and to some extent an accommodation to the thought forms and understanding of believers, whose comprehension is limited to time and space.

It would seem therefore, perfectly reasonable to see Acts portraying what actually took place, that Jesus went up and 'a cloud took him out of their sight'. The cloud probably recalls the story of the transfiguration where Christ entered into the divine cloud and after entering the cloud temporarily, the cloud passed on leaving Him behind. In the ascension narrative, however, He enters the cloud and disappears from sight. Scripture, in fact, does not encourage us to continue this 'spatial' language beyond the cloud. Indeed we must try to maintain a scriptural balance between earthly language and extra-terrestrial reality: 'He ascended *far above all the heavens*.'

George L. Carey

Questions for answer on this page should be sent to the Editor (Dr I. H. Marshall, Dept. of New Testament Exegesis, King's College, Aberdeen, AB9 2UB);