

The author is not content passively to list the different positions taken in current studies, but accompanies his reviews with trenchant comments of various trends, often in critical terms.

In the last chapter Fuller cites several current trends which, in his opinion, promise to meet with general acceptance. The last one he mentions has tremendous implications not only for technical New Testament studies as such, but for the whole understanding of the Christian faith and the Church in the light of the New Testament. For, says Fuller, 'It is becoming increasingly clear that the New Testament covers three phases in the emergence of Christianity: the ministry of Jesus, the apostolic and the sub-apostolic ages. . . . It should become increasingly apparent that the sub-apostolic age . . . was the legitimate response to the apostolic age, in which what was implicit in the earlier period is now made explicit in the later. This would mean, ultimately, that the second-century achievements of catholicism—the creed, canon, episcopate and liturgy—are the unfolding of what was implicit in the apostolic kerygma' (pp. 137 f.). Here, then, a question is posed that inevitably every reader, minister and translator of the New Testament must face: what is the nature, locus and content of God's revelation, and how is it related to the Scripture?

Fuller's final brief statement of unresolved problems (pp. 139–42) ends with a paragraph of reassurance to the *idiōtēs*, who might become somewhat perturbed over what seem to him to be the machinations of experts in so violently handling the New Testament. Whether this word of consolation is adequate and altogether convincing is somewhat debatable. None the less, any New Testament student who wants to know what are the main areas of research and dispute in modern New Testament studies will do well to read this book.

ROBERT G. BRATCHER

The World of the Old Testament, by Cyrus H. Gordon. London: Phoenix House, 1960, pp. 312; 30s. 0d.

This book is a revised edition of the author's *Introduction to Old Testament Times* published in 1953, and reflects his interest in the literary and cultural background of the Near East which lies behind the Old Testament.

A comparison between this book and such a standard work as Oesterley and Robinson's *History of Israel*, published in 1932, shows what a radical transformation has taken place in the world of Old Testament studies during the past thirty years. The earlier work appeared too soon for the inclusion of any reference to Ugarit and its literature, while Dr Gordon's book not only devotes a whole chapter to Ugarit but makes constant references in other parts of the book to Ugaritic parallels to Hebrew thought. At the same time the Mesopotamian and Egyptian contributions to the world of the ancient Near East are by no means overlooked. There is here a far greater willingness to recognize the influence of the Homeric world on that of the Bible than has hitherto been generally acknowledged.

The book will be of more use to those who wish to know something about the influences from outside Israel itself which helped to shape the situation in

which the Old Testament came to be written, than to those who require specific help in interpreting perplexing passages in the Bible. There are, it is true, frequent Biblical references, but these could more easily have been traced if the book had been provided with an index to Biblical passages in addition to the rather incomplete index of names which it now includes.

Biblical history from the time of Abraham to that of Nehemiah is covered in about 160 pages, in the midst of which is inserted a somewhat irrelevant chapter on 'Discoveries at Karatepe' in Cilicia. It is evident, therefore, that no opportunity is given for a detailed treatment of any part of the Old Testament. There is virtually no attempt to deal with any Old Testament material subsequent to the Persian period, and Daniel is hastily dismissed in a page or so. Professor Gordon displays a marked respect not only for the traditional Hebrew text as against emendations, even where they are based on early versions, but also for the integrity of the books which bear the names of such prophets as Isaiah, Amos and Micah. This apparent 'conservatism' is, however, combined with a tendency to rationalize awkward elements in the Old Testament, and a marked scepticism regarding the reliability of the written material as the source for genuine history, as against 'epic' tradition. Some of the parallels between Old Testament material and that which is found in other sources are given undue prominence: the stale bread in the story of the Gibeonites in Joshua 9 is hardly likely to be an echo of the stale loaves in the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic.

This is not the place to query in detail the points at which Dr Gordon's interpretation of the Old Testament seems open to question, but mention should be made of the extremely late date given for the descent into Egypt (early thirteenth century) based largely on Gen. 47: 11, and the consequent radical contraction of the period of the oppression, with the Exodus taking place in the earlier part of the second half of the same century. 'The entire span of Hebrew bondage,' claims Dr Gordon, 'could have been bridged by the latter part of Joseph's career and Moses' prime'. For Joseph to have been living during any part of the bondage of his people would involve a radical departure from tradition.

The book is written in a very racy, popular style and its use of the English language shows many signs of hasty composition. The inadequacy of the index has already been mentioned, and the inclusion of a Bibliography would also have been helpful.

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