

**THE WORLD OF ANCIENT ISRAEL. SOCIOLOGICAL, ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE** edited by R.E. Clements, *Cambridge University Press*. 1989. Pp xi + 436. £45.

Exegetical fashions change. We have moved in the last hundred years from German pre-occupation with texts and their sources to a concern for the analysis of the dynamic of the biblical text. In the past twenty years or so a new concern has emerged: how can the social sciences and their analysis of the dynamic of societies provide insight into the laws, customs, and social attitudes of ancient Israel. While interest in the sociological background of the biblical texts is not new, it has hitherto been based upon comparative literature or archaeology.

The present volume has been produced under the sponsorship of the Society for Old Testament Study. The editor acknowledges that the methodology for appropriating the social sciences is still in its developmental stage. He hopes that the collection will show a common interest between biblicists and scholars of the sociology of religion and that 'a socio-political approach ... may hope to contribute ... a fuller awareness of the forces which served to give shape to the biblical community, and to shed light on the cultural context in which it emerged and developed' (p. 8). J.W. Rogerson ('Anthropology and the Old Testament') notes that few biblicists work directly with sociologists or anthropologists and that greater co-operation is needed in order to place this new approach on firm footing. However, this collection has not completely met the editor's stated goals. Of the eighteen essays only the first six really attempt to relate the insights of the social sciences to the world of Ancient Israel (others either make use of material which really comes from archaeology and ancient literature, though most at least make reference to the work done in the social sciences). The problem appears to be that one must rely either on modern models of society that are independent of the biblical world and may be at odds with the texts, or one must rely on the texts themselves. Most of the contributors tend to revert back to literary-critical or historical-critical approaches. So one must ask how much a knowledge of models for the development of societies or an understanding of anthropology can help. Coggins observes that the real question should be not how sociology is appropriated for biblical studies but how biblicists should address social issues (173ff.) The difficulty has yet to be resolved, and R.P. Carroll ('Prophecy and Society doubts that it can be. Nevertheless, many old issues (e.g., holy war, covenant ideology, apocalyptic, life, death and resurrection) as well as some new issues (e.g., 'Women in ancient Israel') are given thoughtful treatment.

There is an excellent discussion by H.G.M. Williamson on the changing of the concept of the word 'Israel' between the pre- and post-exilic worlds, by Whybray on the 'Social world of the wisdom writers' (with a clear discussion of theories of the origins of the wisdom literature together with interesting observations on Job and Ecclesiastes), P.R. Davies on the 'Social world of the apocalyptic' (with a fine presentation of the shakiness of current theories both of the prophesy and the wisdom matrices of the origin of the apocalyptic), P.J. Budd on 'Holiness and cult' (with a good analysis of Mary Douglas's application of the principles of structural anthropology to laws of cleanness—another can be found in Rogerson's essay) and M.A.

Knibb on 'Life and death in the Old Testament'. Other essays can also be recommended. Rogerson's essay discusses serious attempts to apply modern models of societal development (e.g., the work of Gottwald and Mendenhall) to the Old Testament evidence for Israel's origins (here one might ask whether the distinction (31ff.) between 'emic approaches'—how a people regard themselves—and 'etic approaches'—the attempt to construct a quasi-scientific theory which is verifiable or falsifiable—is not the sociological counterpart to various literary approaches to biblical texts). A.D.H. Mayes discusses the abiding influence of Weber and Durkheim on discussions of religion and society, R.J. Coggins presents the 'Origins of the Jewish diaspora', and G.H. Jones deals with the 'Concept of holy war' and gives a good critique of von Rad (though he takes as given the Exodus, Covenant and Conquest, despite, and without making reference to, the work of Mendenhall and Gottwald discussed elsewhere in the volume; and he never seems to explain whether one can truly distinguish between profane war and holy war).

This is not to say that one cannot find value in most of the essays here, but some suffer from various defects. For example, in an otherwise interesting and balanced discussion of 'Women in ancient Israel' G.I. Emerson, while noting that women played a more prominent role and were more highly regarded in ancient Israel than is sometimes maintained, often ignores problems of relative chronology and origins of the evidence she brings to bear. Unanswered is how one accounts for the deterioration in the status of women in Israel/Judea. F.S. Frick on 'Ecology, agriculture and patterns of settlement' provides a thought-provoking thesis for the settlement of the Land on the basis of arability. His work is worth following up, but his essay is so turgid, so dense, so weighed down with jargon ('societies as problem-solving systems') [p.67], 'material isomorph' [68], 'agricultural intensification' [69], ponderous sentimentousness ('Agriculture concentrates usable productivity, increasing consumable yield per unit area of land. It involves human intervention in the ecosystem process, seeking to maintain an artificial ecosystem' [70]) and statistics that it is virtually impenetrable. The only essay which this reviewer found without merit is R.P. Carroll on 'Prophecy and society'. This contribution is prolix throughout, frivolous and pompous by turns, employs 15 exclamation points to make points, and is riddled with exotic tropes (what is meant by 'text as palimpsest of social reality' (209)?). He dismisses equally the worth of modern anthropological models and the reliability of the texts themselves as evidence for the meaning of their content. (In contrast see Whybray on Wisdom, who acknowledges that external evidence must be used when internal evidence breaks down.) He singles out R.R. Wilson's work on prophecy in Israel for special attack, yet appears not to have understood Wilson's work (and berates him for devoting more than twice as much space to the northern as to the southern prophets, not recognizing that this apparent imbalance is caused by Wilson's including the Deuteronomist among the Ephraimite prophets).

While the book does not for the most part break new ground, being rather a series of presentations on the state of the art, it can stand as a useful reference work, both for the non-specialist as well as the biblical scholar who may not be up on all the latest developments, inasmuch as it

brings together current views on most major sociological and anthropological issues in Old Testament studies. The bibliographies which accompany each essay are a ready guide to further reading.

A word must be said about the production of the book itself. It appears to have been hastily put together and proof-read with the aid of a computer programme. The index gives authors (and one reference to M.P. Carroll (23) is under R.P. Carroll) but no subjects. The biblical index includes 2 Esdras and 1 Enoch. The bibliographies abound in typographical errors, especially misspellings of French and German words and names (the publisher Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht is presented 13 times as 'Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht', Vielhauer appears as 'Veilhauer' (271). Nor are the bibliographies consistent in their citations. The texts of the essays themselves have inexcusable typographical errors. The epigraph to Carroll's essay (from 1 Cor.) contains five incorrect diacritics (203). Some of the misspellings are 'verses' for 'versus' (22, 1.6), 'Isiah' for 'Isaiah' (161, 1.21), 'Weltenschauung' for 'Weltanschauung' (261, 1.3), 'suzereign' for 'suzerain' (330, 1.33), 'soley' for 'solely' (341, 1.31). Words are improperly divided; for example, 'themsel-ves' (31), 'ethnog-raphical' (208), 'comprehens-ive' (204). Transliteration of Hebrew is not thoroughly consistent (Jackson uses a different system from the rest), and also contains errors: one finds *aleph* for *ayin* (331, 1.31; 382, 1.10), *ayin* for *aleph* (382, 1.15), *ayin* for *shwa* (165, 1.8; 394, 1.45), three errors with *berit* (171, 1.34; 172, lines 6 and 9). On 373 a line has dropped out and another has been duplicated at lines 15 and 16. Some abbreviations in the bibliographies do not appear in the list of abbreviations (IDBS, 394, RHPR 180) as well as OAN (214) (and the list itself contains seven mistakes). One could note many more errors, which of themselves are insignificant, but, in view of their frequency, they leave the impression of a very poor job of copy editing. For £45 one is entitled to a more carefully composed work.

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**THE PRAXIS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEOLOGY OF EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX**, edited by R Schreiter & M C Hilker, *Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1969*, Pp. 164. \$16.62

**FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL** by Edward Schillebeeckx (translated by John Bowden), *SCM, London, 1969*. Pp 181. £9.50.

There can be little doubt that Edward Schillebeeckx is one of the most outstanding Roman Catholic theologians alive today. He is all the more interesting for his hermeneutical and philosophical pilgrimage which reflects the many currents of thought flowing into the Catholic body politic. This collection of essays on Schillebeeckx is to be welcomed for at least three reasons. First, compared to the sometimes dense and meandering writings of Schillebeeckx's main works, his expositors are elegantly lucid. Second, there are few good introductory books to Schillebeeckx in English (the main contenders being John Bowden's *Edward Schillebeeckx* and Robert Schreiter's *The Schillebeeckx Reader*). Third, the essays range through key areas such as Schillebeeckx's methodological and contextual development