

'realised eschatology'. There is a consensus among the contributors that the whole Bible is to be read in the light of Christ, its climax, and that in seeking guidance from it on any point the right method is to start with the New Testament, to go back to the Old Testament, and then to revert to the New Testament again.

I am bound to admit that the volume's contribution to its specific theme (Biblical authority in the social and political issues of today) seems to me somewhat jejune. The reason is one of which the authors are more or less aware. The Bible is in itself a dead thing, a collection of books each with its own *Sitz im Leben* in the distant past, a dumb oracle for the particular questionings of successive ages. It proclaims in general the primacy of the spirit, the supremacy of God, the imperative of conscience and the 'law' of charity. But to apply such principles in the changing contingencies of history is the task of the Church through its members and its *magisterium*. There is one point, in conclusion, on which I should have welcomed clearer or more persistent emphasis. Man's social and political obligation are not in a sphere apart from that of his personal sanctification—as though I were called upon to be charitable in my 'private life' but just in my civic behaviour. Rather, charity is the 'law' of my whole activity as a man, and must therefore control my social, economic, political and cultural relations. The State and civil society are real only in the interrelated individual-persons whom they comprise, and it is dangerous, even unconsciously, to hypostatise the State as though it were a sort of human non-charitable Church. The only society which may be said in a real sense to transcend its visible and living constituent members is the Church herself, the Body of Christ indwelt by his Spirit.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT AND MODERN STUDY. Edited by H. H. Rowley. (Clarendon Press; 25s.)

The Society for Old Testament Study has produced a volume of essays dealing with discovery and research in the last thirty years. The contributors are specialists of the front rank; but all belong to English- or German-speaking countries, and none is a Catholic. Each in his particular field gives a thorough, though very condensed, account of the new material that has come to light, of new methods of study, and of development or changes of opinion among scholars, at least Liberal-Protestant scholars, during a generation.

The bulk of the essays will be of use chiefly to specialists. Meanwhile, of greater concern to most of us is the editor's Introduction, a bird's-eye view of the whole field; the essay on 'Old Testament Theology' by Professor Porteous; and one might add the Epilogue entitled 'The Old

Testament and the Modern World' by Professor T. H. Robinson, but that it is too homiletic. Professor Rowley's 'Introduction' brings out the contrast between the positions of non-Catholic Old Testament scholarship thirty years ago and today. Then there was wide agreement on many questions, e.g. the courses of the Pentateuch and their approximate dates; interest in Old Testament theology was slight; the pre-exilic prophets were held to mark the climax of Israel's religious history, which afterwards declines. Now, the scene has changed; there is far less agreement; much new knowledge has been gained, and, even more, new methods of approach have been attempted. In general, the tendency is conservative: critically conservative, the Professor insists, with no basis in dogma. That Church authority and tradition might be a guide to research is not so much as considered by the Editor, even when the Liberal school is tending to traditional conclusions.

Not that the main results of Liberal criticism should in turn be ignored by Catholics. They are the fruit of painstaking and scientific labour; and the more extravagant theories correct themselves in course of time. Much new light has been shed on old problems, as Professor Rowley makes clear. It is not claimed that this always removes the difficulties; sometimes they are increased. But there are great gains: archeology has proved the histories of the patriarchs to be credible, and shewn the possibility that the Old Testament poems are much older than some critics had thought; our knowledge of the heathen background of Israel's religion is enriched, and some of the forms this religion took are thus explained, though not of course its content of revelation. The sharp antithesis the critics had set up between priest and prophet has been softened; prophets are now thought to have had their place in the official worship, while many prophetic and even historical writings may have been meant for Temple use; that is even more true of the Psalms. Most important is the recognition of ancient traditions underlying the written sources of the Pentateuch, both narrative and laws. The definitely religious bearing of all the records have become clear; as Professor Rowley says (with perhaps unconscious humour) 'running through a great deal of the work of our period has been the treatment of the Old Testament as a fundamentally religious book'.

Of great interest is Professor Porteous's essay on Old Testament theology. It reviews the increasing stream of non-Catholic writing on this subject, and fundamental questions as to the treatment of the Old Testament are raised. Though here and there one finds a thoroughly Protestant tendency to separate scientific study from faith, the best non-Catholic writers are moving the other way. Eichrodt, for example, insists that historic research must take revelation seriously; its task is to

examine Israel's religion not merely in its external growth but in its inner structure and enduring ideas. More than this, it is theology, based on the New Testament, that should guide the historian in his study of the Old. Proksch stresses the dominant part that faith in Christ must play in all historical judgment. Wheeler Robinson teaches, as complement to this, that revelation though of static and permanent truth was bound up with the dynamic movement of Israel's history. Hence the importance of establishing the true course of events. But he seems to have feared the formulation of what was revealed; we must expect, he wrote, 'not a series of propositions *about* God, but a disclosure of God himself, so far as the event can disclose him'. Surely such a disclosure, to be utilised, must first be formulated? Professor Dodd, and the writer of the essay, also emphasise the bond between revelation and history; while none of this last group of writers neglects the supernatural element in revelation, or man's moral response that is an integral part of it. Finally they agree that it is the Church which offers the Bible as the authoritative record of revelation; it is in the Christian fellowship that we are heirs to the Old Testament and can understand it. This is a long way both from the purely naturalistic approach of some older critics, and from the pietism that ignores history altogether. It is not far from the Catholic position, where the guidance of corporate faith and authority is the condition not only of the devotional study of the Old Testament but of the most fruitful scholarship.

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UNLESS SOME MAN SHOW ME. By Alexander Jones, Scripture Professor at Upholland. (Sheed and Ward; 8s. 6d.)

A good book about the Old Testament. It is not every day that one has a friend's book to review, or that one can say so unreservedly how charming a book is. The approach is clever, and the whole manner holds one's attention all the time.

The section about inspiration and its implications covers ground that is rarely covered except in seminary courses, and the exposition, though providing what the textbooks provide, is so delightfully readable. And all that up-to-date material on literary forms, and the questions of symbolism in O.T. customs, is most valuable, as are also the applications to Jonas and the Canticle. Chapters ix-xii (including xi: 'Serpents and things') on the problems of Genesis will help many a puzzled Bible-reader and teacher. Most happy is the '*Divertimento*' (as the author calls it) on Biblical numbers (666 and all that). And the last chapters on the Temple and Judaism are so wise and so full of charity.