

Reviews

THE PROPHETIC ACHIEVEMENT, by C. F. Whitley; A. R. Mowbray, 42s.

This study of the prophetic movement has all the merits which the reader of Professor Whitley's *The Exilic Age* would expect: an orderly, almost scholastic presentation of his case, with the different schools of thought carefully listed, a thorough grasp of the relevant literature and a fresh and clear approach.

In his preface, the author explains that, after the spate of writing on various aspects of the question—psychology and para-psychology of the prophets, structure, transmission, *Sitz im Leben*—it is time to attempt the task of placing the prophetic 'message' in the context of Hebrew religious history. Thus he is faced at once with the question whether the prophetic teaching was original or the organ of tradition. The problematic is broken down into specific questions: is 'classical' prophecy continuous with the ecstatic phenomena of the settlement and early monarchy? (ch. 1); was their teaching based on the Sinai covenant and the sacred amphictyonic traditions? (ch. 2); were they against the cult in itself or merely against the current perversion of true worship? (ch. 4); were they the absolute originators of monotheism (5) and the doctrine of individual moral responsibility (6)? There are other chapters on Basic Principles, the Divine Justice, Repentance and Grace, a discussion of the Servant question in Is. 40 ff and an appendix arguing a post-exilic date for all eschatological thinking in the Old Testament, but the problem of tradition and originality is uppermost.

Whitley answers this question of originality with a decided affirmative. Thus, in his treatment of prophetic psychology, after criticising the opposing positions of Jepson and Hölischer on the relation of the canonical prophets to the professional *nebiim*, he concludes to essential discontinuity. His acceptance (in this chapter) of the wide variety of inspirational agencies and modes of communication is not far from St Thomas' basic distinction between *accepti rei* and *iudicium de re accepta* (in *de Prophetia*) and all that flows from it.

Moreover, the author's emphasis on the theological advance made by the prophets in respect to their predecessors has the advantage of reminding us of the existence of a development of doctrine *within* revelation which we tend too easily to forget. What, however, remains highly questionable is the derivation of this conclusion from the premise of the total bankruptcy of traditional faith and a view of the Sinaitic covenant as purely a product of later theological elaboration. The arguments adduced in favour of this latter thesis will be familiar to readers of Noth-von Rad and cannot be rehearsed here. They have been subjected to a thorough criticism by Artur Weiser and a growing number of Old Testament scholars—Mendenhall, Zimmerli, Beyerlin and others—and there is some evidence that the tide is beginning to turn against this view. Much is made here of the fact that the word *berit* (covenant) occurs only twice in the

eight century prophets (Hos. 6. 7; 8. 1) both of which texts are, for the author, inauthentic. Though the present reviewer would agree with this verdict in the former case—though for a different reason from that given—there seems to be in general rather too little caution in the use of text surgery; thus the inaugural vision of Isaiah (ch. 6) is inauthentic, Ezek. 1. 3 ‘intrusive’, etc.

One might, in any case, question whether the relative absence of the word is so significant. Walter Beyerlin has shown in his study of Micah, for example, how basic Covenant-interpretation is in this book despite the absence of the word *berit*, and it is interesting that a passage like Micah 6. 1-8, where the condemnation of cult seems total, is cast in the *Rib*-pattern of a forensic procedure, which takes us back at once to a covenant agreement. There is also the continual use of covenant terms—*mishpat*, *sedaqah*, *hesed* in particular—which takes one back at once into the old, traditional, amphictyonic worship which had the purpose, ideally at least, of preserving and actualising the sacred traditions. Von Rad himself refutes the view that the new, profane order introduced by the monarchy swamped the old dispensation, and it is interesting as a parallel how the Davidic *berit* (2 Sam. 7) is subtly but unmistakably linked with the Sinitic *berit*, thus affirming the continued divine guarantee, despite the profoundly modified situation. For these and other reasons the alternative view, that what the prophets did was to radicalise and actualise the Yahwism in which they had been brought up, remains unaffected by the author’s arguments.

A similar problem is raised in the chapter on ‘The Prophetic Attitude to the Cult’ (incidentally an eloquent witness, this word, to the debt we owe our German colleagues, but what is wrong with *Worship*?). Professor Whitley gives a very fair view of the discussion, quoting Professor Rowley who disagrees with his view that the pre-exilic prophets rejected worship *as such*, but he does not dispose convincingly of the formidable objections to this thesis which he in all fairness states. Not enough is said of the relation of cult to the traditions of the tribes and of the historicisation of the Canaanite agrarian calendar and the tensions which this caused. Again, though the awkward fact of the retention in the Priestly edition of the openly anti-cultic passages of Amos and the rest is mentioned, there is nothing on the criticism of the post-exilic sacrificial system made in the canonical writings of that time, Malachi in particular. This should surely provide a useful clue. There is also the fact that Deuteronomy, certainly the heir of the great prophetic tradition, seeks not to eliminate but purify and radicalise the cult-idea in the face of the very general perversion of the same, especially in the North, into a determinist, *do ut des* type of religion. The papyri of Elephantine show us how far local variations could deviate from the great tradition. This radicalisation and centralisation is continued and completed in the New Testament, in the worship ‘in spirit and in truth’ and the old order is, in fact, superseded, as Hebrews is at pains to show.

Reservations of this kind should not obscure the fact that the author’s survey, always stimulating and well-informed, will serve as an excellent stimulus to a

more careful consideration of one's own views on the prophets and a more attentive reading of the most fascinating and difficult part of the Old Testament.

JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP, S.D.B.

MEMORY AND TRADITION IN ISRAEL, by Brevard S. Childs (Studies in Biblical Theology No. 37), S.C.M., 8s. 6d.

The latest of the excellent series *Studies in Biblical Theology* to appear takes the form of a study of the Hebrew root *zkr*, remember. This is one of many such studies to appear of recent years; the author tells us that he was unable to consult those of Kessler (1956), Schottroff (1961) and de Boer (1962)—a pity in this last case, since de Boer's study sets itself roughly the same purpose. Rather surprisingly, there is also no reference to O. Michel's article in the *Kittel Wörterbuch*.

The first chapter consists of a lexicographical analysis of the occurrence of the word in the Old Testament. Childs distinguishes in the use of *hifil* (causative) a cultic and forensic semantic area, in both of which the basic idea is not just memory in the ordinary psychological sense but *to utter, to mention* the name in a liturgical context, for example. One instance would be 2 Sam. 18. 18 where Absalom is speaking of his mortuary pillar. de Boer goes even further than this and takes the idea of naming, mentioning as the basic sense of the root as a whole, like Akkadian *zakâru, zikru*. Later on, this is confirmed in the rather thin-looking comparative survey (p. 23-28), though not all the conclusions for exegesis which one would have expected are drawn from this. The short chapter which deals with the Hebrew psychology of memory takes up Barr's recent criticism of the attempt to work back from word study to mental patterns, of the kind allegedly made by Pedersen, but could have brought out more clearly, one feels, the much wider basis from which Pedersen began. In speaking of a pre-logical mentality in primitive man Childs has also overlooked the fact that the great anthropologist Levy-Bruhl abandoned this view later in life.

With the discussion of this verb used in the Old Testament with God as subject, Professor Childs comes to a point of great theological interest. By using form-criticism he is able to show how this usage predominates in the Psalm of Individual Lamentation, usually in the imperative, and in the Hymn, usually in finite forms. This is of great interest as pointing to a leading motif in Hebrew prayer, the call to God to remember. One might go a little beyond the author's position and hazard the view that, side by side with such usage as in Gen. 40. 14-23 where the meaning is obviously: 'put in a word for me', there are other cases in which *Remember me!* is connected basically with the vocabulary of ancient royal protocol, reflected in texts such as 1 Sam. 1, 2. 19; 2 Sam. 19. 20. This leads on to the *Remember me!* of the criminal crucified with Jesus, whose eye had caught the inscription over the cross (Lk. 23. 42), with the interesting comparative material available; but this, of course, lay outside the author's scope.