

BOOK REVIEWS

Adams, Charles J., ed., *A Reader's Guide to the Great Religions*. New York: The Free Press, 1965. xv + 364 pp. \$ 9.95.

The student of religion who is alive and sensitive to the breadth of his study is conscious of the vast amount of material in various languages which is available to him and open for his investigation.

A Reader's Guide to the Great Religions is an attempt to provide critical descriptive bibliographies to eight major religious traditions. The eight essays are written by authorities on various religions, as follows: "Primitive Religion" by Charles H. Long, "The Religions of China (excepting Buddhism)" by W. A. C. H. Dobson, "Hinduism" by Norvin J. Hein, "Buddhism" by Richard A. Gard, "The Religions of Japan" by J. M. Kitagawa, "Judaism" by Judah Goldin, "Christianity" by H. H. Walsh, and "Islam" by Charles J. Adams.

Each contributor to this volume has selected and organized basic reading material (primarily in English) which he considered to be the most useful for understanding the history and forms of religious life in his area of specialization. The material selected includes reference works, English translation of the scriptures, major periodicals, and introductions to the whole tradition, as well as special studies on historical periods, geographical areas and individual topics. The editor calls attention in the preface to the fact that technical works found in each area of specialization are omitted since the primary intention is to introduce the reader to the background and major area of study and the work that has been done and is being done.

In a publication of this nature it is not unnatural to expect such problems as the limitations of space, scope, and language; these are self-evident in the different chapters. It is also to be expected that each essay will reflect the author's special interests in his choice of material on individual topics in his field. Most of the chapters are approximately 30 pages in length, except the one on the religions of China which is only 14 pages, in contrast to the one on Buddhism, which is 78 pages long.

The volume as a whole evidences thoughtful general planning and an editorial flexibility which is highly commendable. Adams' excellent preface and model chapter on Islam were found by this reviewer to be particularly stimulating and illuminating.

The authors have labored carefully at the challenging assignment of providing the general reader with comprehensive and up-to-date bibliographical essays on the various religions treated and the cultures which they have engendered, and the entire volume is a model of

excellent scholarship. It is a much-needed tool for the student of religion, and is indispensable for the scholar who wants to keep abreast of his colleagues' field of study.

Montreal, Quebec

WALTER DOUGLAS

Barr, James, *Old and New in Interpretation*. New York: Harper and Row, 1966. 215 pp. \$ 5.50.

Barr's Currie lectures for 1964 deal with the basic problem of Biblical studies: the unity of the Bible. Undeniably the OT is the one which in a more definite way creates the problem; thus even though the sub-title reads "A Study of the Two Testaments," Barr concerns himself primarily with the Old. The question is this: Since to do what the NT did with the OT is no longer possible, understanding the OT as we do today, how do we establish a valid relationship between it and the NT (pp. 129-131)? Barr's main thesis is based upon the "soteriological function of the tradition" (p. 27). It is the tradition that "provides the matrix for coming divine acts and the impulse for their very occurrence" (p. 156). Therefore, it is "basically a simplistic approach" (p. 19) to see the uniting link between the testaments in acts done by God. The function of the tradition "is not mainly to point back to a series of events from which the tradition has originated, but also to form the framework within which an event can be meaningful" (p. 20). The structure of tradition is supported, according to Barr, by "situations." "It is in situations that God moves to call for a response, a response which in turn moves the tradition in some new direction" (p. 26).

These situations are "real in themselves" (p. 155). They do not form part of a wholly preplanned scheme. They are not prefigurations; neither are they promises waiting for a fulfillment, least of all if all Israelite history is understood as promise. One reads: "There is no actual prediction or prophecy of which we can say that Jesus is the intended content" (p. 153). Barr introduces the term "situations" in order to maneuver himself into a position in which "the multiplex nature of the Old Testament tradition" becomes more manageable. A situation may be indeed an act of God in history, but it can also be an event in the consciousness of a prophet, a social confrontation, a crisis in thought, a cultic situation, or indeed the almost unmanageable development of questioning and answering in the circles of the wise.

Old and New in Interpretation is Barr's latest book produced in America; and it was written, he tells us, with two things in mind. The procedure for writing was "motivated ultimately by my perception of my students' problems and difficulties" (p. 12). More directly, the book represents an attempt to enter into dialogue with the authors of the essays which appeared in B. Anderson's *The Old Testament and Christian Faith* and C. Westermann's *Essays on Old Testament*