

BOOK REVIEWS

Ackroyd, Peter R., *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* "The Old Testament Library." Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968, xv + 286 pp. \$ 6.50.

A careful study and interpretation of the inner nature of the period of the exile and restoration has been needed for some time, and the book under review will be illuminating for all who take the sixth century B.C.E. seriously. The author, Samuel Davidson Professor of OT Studies, Kings College, University of London, is aware of the problems involved in such an effort: The historical events of this period are not always clear-cut, and the literature of the time is plagued with an abundance of difficulties which make any serious historical reconstruction an almost sheer impossibility. Nonetheless, with admirable courage he tackles the sources themselves, and showing a certain impudence towards the accepted ideas of the secondary literature which he has brilliantly mastered, he maintains that the issue at hand is not essentially a problem of history but one of attitude. Ackroyd's evaluation of Israelite thought concerning the destruction of the Temple, the collapse of the Judean state resulting in the breakup of the community, the exile, the restoration, the new community, and the new age is deceptively compact in content and demands the careful attention of the reader to follow the line of argument. The effort by the historian and theologian will, however, be amply rewarded.

The contents of this book, originally given as the Hulsean Lectures at the University of Cambridge in 1962, represent a significant critique of Christendom's perennial failure to reconcile history and dogma as far as the Hebrew Bible is concerned. By fabricating the period 587-165 B.C.E. as "background of the New," Christian scholars have been false to the historical data, and originated the fallacy that Judaism is not a worthy successor to the Biblical tradition. By detaching himself from the devices of the Christian apologists, the author is able correctly to assess the positive value of cult, rite, and law, the three major elements of exilic and post-exilic Judaism. Furthermore, he avoids the common scholarly pitfall of viewing Hebrew prophecy as derived mainly from the eighth-century writing prophets, and he insists that the later prophets—especially Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah—are legitimate, respectable examples of a unique movement in the history of Hebrew thought which must be seen as a whole and not piecemeal as is often done by the apologists.

In chapter one (pp. 1-16) the author raises the significant question of what constitutes the exilic age, and he presents the scope of the present study including the sources used. This is followed by a short

review (pp. 17-38) of Judah's historical position against the background of the Neo-Babylonian empire under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadrezzar. This chapter shows an awareness of the latest developments in the field, whether linguistic, historical, or archaeological. Chapter three (pp. 39-49) discusses the response of the Jews in Judah and Babylonia to the calamity of the age, and it posits four types of reaction: (1) Return to older cults; (2) Acceptance of the religion of the conquerors; (3) The recognition of divine judgment; (4) The disaster and the "Day of Yahweh." The fourth chapter (pp. 50-61) is an attempt to characterize the attitude of the Jeremiah tradition to the exile, but since we can never be sure just what part of the material belongs to the years before the calamity, and what part to the years following 587, we are inevitably led to the conclusion that the reconstruction of the prophet's attitude towards the destruction of the state and his outlook towards the future must only be tentative.

The next chapters (pp. 62-102) are devoted to the philosophies and teachings of the historians and theologians of the exilic age: The Priestly Work (incorporating the Holiness Code, Lev 17-26), and the Deuteronomic History, which views the divine Torah as the fundamental expression of Israel's obedience, and at the same time the tool of divine intervention and salvation. The seventh and eighth chapters (pp. 103-137) are some of the most important in the book. They offer a discriminatory account of the attitudes of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah to the present catastrophe and to the future restoration. Ezekiel expresses the thought that it is the exilic position of the nation that enables God's name and nature ("I am Yahweh") to be vindicated to Israel and beyond Israel to the nations of the world. A similar view proclaiming that the people of Yahweh is always under judgment is found in the writings of Deutero-Isaiah, who envisions the fortunes of Israel as part and parcel of God's divine plan for the restoration of Zion and the judicious salvation of the nations.

The following section, "The Restoration and its Interpretation" (chapters ix-xi; pp. 138-217), comes to grips with the reality of the return and attempts to probe against the background of the political and economic situation of the time the thinking of those who were living in an era of divine favor rather than one of wrath, such as marked the previous generation. There is much which is fresh and original in the author's discussion of the narrative complex of Hag, and Zec 1-8. His picture of a restored Israel centered on the Temple, the most potent symbol of divine presence on earth, and needing to reassure itself that Yahweh's covenantal relationship was not broken in the exile, cannot fail to stimulate. One may not agree with all of Ackroyd's opinions concerning the messianism of Haggai and the visions of Zechariah, but the author is able to discern what is central and what is peripheral and often challenges the reader to re-examine familiar notions. The oracular and Psalm material not previously investigated (*e.g.*, Is 13-23; Jer 46-51; Ob; Mal; Pss 44,

74, 79, 137, etc.), but which are dated to the sixth and early fifth centuries are now briefly analyzed because of their relevancy to the contemporary thought concerning the exile and restoration. In such a study as this, it is right that no detailed discussion of these passages is given, since this would suggest a greater stress upon the material than is called for, particularly since it has been acknowledged by Ackroyd that *some* of these reflect the great debacle of 485 B.C.E. The book ends with an interesting and comprehensive statement of which part has appeared in a slightly different manner in the *CJTh*, XIV (1968), 3-12, on the importance of the exile and restoration in the history of Hebrew thought, which touches upon NT thinking but surprisingly avoids rabbinic logic.

Despite the fact that the author's thesis is at times overdrawn and repetitious, it represents the kind of tedious labor which is in the best tradition of English literary scholarship. It provides direction and substance for a mature analysis of the cultural and intellectual history of Israel during one of its most elusive and important epochs. The nature of this type of investigation as well as the literary and exegetical problems involved in the primary literature consulted reveal a number of questions, however, which the author has left unanswered. For example, Ackroyd discusses the messages of Haggai and Zechariah to the people, but what is the relationship of the original Haggai and Zechariah utterances to each other, and to those who fixed them in writing? What is the origin, nature, and history of the blocks of oral tradition that had gone into the making of the narrative history and the prophetic speeches found in the prophetic literature? How do we relate the extra-Biblical prophetic phenomena, the value of which has been much discussed in recent years, to the Haggai and Zechariah traditions? How is the evidence of the post-exilic prophets to be evaluated if one takes seriously the claim that they pointed the way to the later pseudepigraphical apocalyptic writings? Also, one misses in the section on Haggai a fuller investigation on the similarity between the third-person form narrative with the first-person reports found in Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah; and one looks in vain to find references to the medieval Jewish commentaries of Rashi (1040-1105), Rashbam (1085-1160), Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164), Redak (1160-1235), Nahmanides (1194-ca. 1270), Gersonides (1288-1344), and their schools whose daring hints at understanding the exilic and post-exilic age foreshadow and border on important aspects of Ackroyd's thesis. Nonetheless this volume, enriched with indices to the names, subjects, scriptural loci, select bibliography, and a list of abbreviations, is an invaluable contribution to our understanding of that obscure period between the fall of Jerusalem and the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah.