

BOOK REVIEWS

Ahlström, Gösta W. *The History of Ancient Palestine*. With a contribution by Gary O. Rollefson. Edited by Diana Edelman. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. 990 pp. Paper, \$29.00.

This very sizable volume is without question the *magnum opus* of one of the most notable Nestors of Old Testament studies, Professor Gösta W. Ahlström. This meticulously researched book is among the most ambitious scholarly undertakings in this discipline in recent years. Ahlström's long and illustrious career in biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies was the invaluable apprenticeship which turned out the craftsman who hammered out this careful synthesis of archaeological findings and literary interpretations. In concert with Ahlström's anchoring in the developmental model of history, archaeological results are used extensively to corroborate historical reconstruction based on literary sources. The trained eye of a master is evident in the attention to scholarly detail which enhances the finished product.

The introduction sets out the principles of historiography which guided Ahlström in the research for this book. This chapter is a valuable contribution in Palestinian and biblical historiography. Students are alerted to ancient usages of literature and reminded that the concern of the ancient author may not necessarily have always been historical.

Chapter 1 introduces the geography of Palestine, and following this chapter Ahlström incorporates a chapter by Gary O. Rollefson on the prehistoric period. This generous recognition that there is room for a chapter on the prehistoric period in a volume dealing with the history of Palestine is a gentle hint that we need to recognize that "prehistoric" does not mean a *quaestio incognita* any longer. This chapter is of great usefulness in bringing together a concise discussion of the most recent excavations which contribute to our understanding of the emergence of civilization in Palestine and the greater Near East. In courses dealing with the history of Palestine this topic is often omitted in many seminaries. The reason for this omission is either a lack of knowledge or theological fears of long chronologies. This chapter exceptionally ably deals with the first of these reasons and provides a clear and concise synthesis on the prehistory of Palestine. As far as the second reason, fear of long chronologies, is concerned, the whole volume, not just Chapter 1, through its introduction and subsequent treatment of the topic, attempts to show that most ancient literature, including the biblical text, does not give us primarily a historical account, even when it appears to discuss history. This usage of literature is important to keep in mind. After all, it is through the use of various types of literature that the authors of the biblical text communicated the word of

the Lord. In spite of this effort on the part of Ahlström and Rollefson there are undoubtedly many who still find the earth to be flat.

The twenty-one chapters are arranged in a descending chronological order, the normal traditional approach to history. While the discussion is chronological in its sequence, there are several occasions when there is a need for stepping back in order to cover the same timespan for a different ethnic group or national entity. This is especially true for the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron I Period and the rise of nation-states in Palestine, in both Cis- and Trans-jordan. These six chapters, 5 through 10, provide a comprehensive presentation of one of the most burning issues in current biblical studies as well as archaeological interpretation.

Ahlström, who was rooted in the historical approach to the study of the Hebrew Bible, provides a model for the integration of archaeological data in the interpretive process of the biblical text. With a forthrightness not uncommon in Scandinavia and the technical prose of a virtuoso, he states his positions and gives good reasons for them as well as a rationale for the erroneous positions of his colleagues in the discipline.

It should be no surprise that many of the positions taken by Ahlström along with his methodology are controversial. His arguments, however, are always based on a tightly reasoned presentation of both textual and archaeological evidence, and deserve the closest attention by all who are serious about the history of ancient Palestine as well as the biblical text.

When compared with other works on ancient Palestinian history the difference is quite significant. Ahlström's treatment of ancient history is more balanced and incorporates the latest archaeological data in most cases. There are some surprising omissions which only demonstrate that a project of this magnitude is hard to keep under complete control. In chapter 15, "Transjordan in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries," in an otherwise acceptable treatment of this emerging history, Ahlström omits any reference to the excavations of Jonathan N. Tubb when he discusses Tell es-Sa'idiyeh. Likewise, there is a loud silence concerning the survey work of J. Maxwell Miller in his discussion of the Moabites.

Ahlström has written an impressive volume which will bring much pleasure to his guild of colleagues as well as the common reader interested in ancient history. But it is the student who will receive the greatest benefit from this work with its superior treatment of the topic, demonstration of a careful methodological approach regardless of confessional attitudes toward the biblical text, and a nearly complete bibliography serving as a passage to greater depths in any given historical period of ancient Palestine. Here much can be learned and there is much to stimulate further research.

The presentation of the book by Fortress Press is appealing for a volume of this size. The typesetting by Sheffield Academic Press could have been checked a little more carefully. Numerous typographical and syntactical errors mar an otherwise superior work. It is with great pleasure

that this Norwegian gives the highest recommendations to this book by a Swede of exceptional stature.

Andrews University

J. BJØRNAR STORFJELL

Anderson, Ray S. *Ministry on The Fireline: A Practical Theology for an Empowered Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993. 228 pp. Paper, \$14.99.

The author, by his own admission, has attempted to set an agenda for discussion on the need to reform present theological education, in order to produce better equipped students and help local churches become blazing fires for Christian mission instead of merely smoldering embers. A second goal of the author is to attempt to heal the breach between evangelical and pentecostal belief systems by centering a mission theology on the Pentecost event, as opposed to the event at Calvary. Thus missions exemplifies a continuing praxis of the Holy Spirit in the encounter between Christ and the world for the sake of reconciliation. For Anderson, Pentecost is a very pivotal point from which we can look back upon the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth and to look forward to Incarnation theology and power for the instituted church. Anderson sees the Pentecost event as the beginning point when the Holy Spirit revealed the inner life of God and how theology and mission should be completed (24). Without a pentecostal experience in the life, the believer is "like a barge of coal anchored to the shore." For the church to be both incarnational and pentecostal in its theology and praxis, Anderson teaches that it must rediscover the dynamic relation between its nature and its mission, and that can happen only for those who receive the Spirit of Pentecost as their point of origin and means of empowerment. Anderson feels that Pentecost, not the great gospel commission, is the conscious ingredient in the mission thinking of the early church and that Pentecost should determine the nature of the church. Without denying the importance of Pentecost, the desire to unite pentecostal and evangelical beliefs will raise serious questions for those who are rightly concerned about the tendencies of pentecostalism to exalt personal experience above biblical truth. There are other points in this book, however, that deserve consideration.

First, the author states that there is a lack of emphasis upon relying on the presence, power, and direction of the Holy Spirit in the mission of most present-day churches. Second, much more healing of our fragmented lives could come as a result of the church praying for the Holy Spirit to heal through the person and presence of Jesus Christ, the source of the healing (Acts 1:8). Third, despite all of the preaching, written literature, pastoral calls and hours of study that pastors and laity engage in, the power