

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Reviews.

The Prophets and Their Times, by J. M. Powis Smith. Second edition, revised by W. A. Irwin. (University of Chicago Press. Cambridge Press, 15s.).

The late Dr. J. M. Powis Smith, the original author of this work, which first appeared in 1925, was born in London and brought up in this country. At the age of sixteen he migrated to America alone, and seven years later he became a Baptist. His work should therefore be of particular interest to British Baptists. He was a Professor in the University of Chicago, and the author of a number of works, of which some are well known in this country. His work on the Prophets was not very widely known over here, however, where the comparable work of a British Baptist, Professor Theodore H. Robinson, has held the field. It may be hoped that in its new form it will be more widely known over here. Dr. Powis Smith died ten years ago, and his work has therefore been revised by Professor W. A. Irwin. In its new form it may be warmly commended as a competent and readable introduction to the study of the Prophets that takes into account recent work bearing on them.

In the section dealing with the book of Ezekiel the revision is drastic to a degree. This is because the book of Ezekiel has attracted so much attention to itself in recent years. The chapter which treats of it is almost wholly new, and the views of the original author are abandoned for the presentation of Professor Irwin's views. These are much influenced by the treatment of Hölscher, who denied to Ezekiel any but passages written in a particular kind of poetry. Professor Irwin does not go so far as this, though he denies a great deal of the book to Ezekiel. Few writers to-day maintain the unity of Ezekiel in the way that was common twenty-five years ago, indeed, and some considerable re-writing of this chapter was to be expected in any attempt to bring it up to date. Professor Irwin's views do not wholly coincide with those of any other writer, however, so that this chapter is an original contribution to the discussion of the problem. So much of the book does he deny to Ezekiel, that he is able to regard it as the fruit of Judaism, rather than its source—"not the father, but the child, of Judaism."

In the other chapters the revision is less drastic, though everywhere there are marks of the editor's hand. Recent archaeology is laid under contribution, but most scholars will regret that in a work of this kind, intended for general circulation, the view of Torczyner that the unnamed prophet of the Lachish letters

should be identified with Uriah is recorded, without any indication that it is almost universally rejected as quite groundless.

In treating the book of Hosea, Professor Irwin makes much use of recent lines of study, but introduces some fresh views again. Chapters i. and iii. are sometimes treated as parallel accounts of the same incidents, written in the third and first persons respectively; sometimes they are treated as successive incidents in the prophet's relations with Gomer. Here, however, they are treated as quite separate incidents, with two different women, both of whom were Temple prostitutes.

Of greater interest, perhaps, is the reaction against the "ecstatic" view of prophecy. Professor Irwin does not deny, indeed, that early prophecy was ecstatic, but he will not allow that prophecy was fundamentally ecstatic throughout its history, as some interpreters have maintained in modern times, notably since the appearance of Hölscher's work on the Prophets in 1914. In this he is in line with recent tendencies, which are away from the "ecstatic" theory, though Professor T. H. Robinson still firmly maintains it. But when Professor Irwin describes the prophets as "great religious thinkers," or "at most . . . mystics," we must again demur. The prophets themselves would have vigorously repudiated the view that their message was the fruit of their own thought, and any conception of them in such terms rests on a very inadequate understanding of the psychology of prophecy.

It must not be supposed, however, that the book deals merely with critical questions of this kind. It also unfolds the message of the prophets in the setting of their times, and here the hand of Dr. Powis Smith is more largely seen, since recent study has less affected this. Nowhere is the book written in a technical way that will be irksome to the non-specialist, and while there are many points which the specialist will want to examine, it is written primarily for the general reader, with an interest in the Bible. It should help him to get a clear and vivid picture of the times of the prophets, and to see them as religious figures of the highest significance. It should help him to understand their fundamental message, both to their own times and to all generations. It is therefore heartily to be welcomed, and it may be hoped that in its revised form it may have a fresh career of usefulness.

H. H. ROWLEY.

The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God, by Aubrey R. Johnson (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 2s.).

This is a scholar's pamphlet for scholars, and shows that meticulous care for detail which is the hall-mark of technical scholarship. Dr. Johnson is one of the ablest of the younger men

devoting themselves to Old Testament study, and we shall look to him to uphold and to enhance the Baptist tradition in this field. All that he has so far published combines exactitude with the vision of wider horizons, without which scholarship can easily become pedantry.

In the present pamphlet, he begins with the Hebrew conception of man, on the sound principle that theology will always take its colour from the contemporary psychology. He shows that the Old Testament offers no such thing as sheer individualism in the modern sense; the single person is conceived as the member of a group to which unity is ascribed, whilst something of himself extends to the other members of the group, and even to inanimate objects associated with it. Dr. Johnson then proceeds to apply this conception of "corporate personality" to the idea of God found in the Old Testament. He points out the extension of divine activity which is suggested by the ideas of "Spirit," "Word," "Name," and is seen even in the association of the Ark with God. He reminds us of the plurality of the Hebrew word for "God" (*Elohim*), of the way in which "the Angel of the Lord" interchanges with the Lord Himself, and of the representation of God through a prophet who speaks on God's behalf. The heavenly council of "the sons of God," and the apparent identification of it with God in His deliberations and utterances support this corporate extensiveness. Of course, the writer is not attributing polytheism to prophetic religion, whatever may have been true of some phases of the popular or even official religion. But he is preparing us to see that a hard-cut "monotheism" patterned on modern ideas may miss the fluidity of the ancient conceptions, and may make the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation unnecessarily difficult.

In greater or less degree, all ancient ways of thinking differ from our own, and we are generally wrong when we believe them to be identical. The work of the scholar will always be needed, even in practical interests, to remind us of these differences and to open up new possibilities in our vision of ultimate truth. Dr. Johnson has here given us a good example of fresh and independent thinking built on a basis of exact data.

H. WHEELER ROBINSON.

John Henry Muirhead. Edited by John W. Harvey. 215 pp. (George Allen and Unwin, 15s. net.)

Muirhead was Professor of Philosophy at Birmingham University from 1897 till his retirement in 1921, and he is perhaps best known to many readers by his *Elements of Ethics*. He edited the Library of Philosophy series, wrote several books and

innumerable articles in educational and philosophical journals, and at the end of his life was regarded with affectionate veneration by those who knew him. An unfinished autobiography was found among his papers, and this has now been completed and published by J. W. Harvey, Professor of Philosophy at Leeds, with the subtitle "Reflections by a Journeyman in Philosophy on the Movements of Thought and Practice in his time."

Muirhead was a Scotsman trained at Glasgow (where he came under the influence of Edward Caird) and then at Balliol (where Jowett was still Master, and T. H. Green was the chief philosophical light). After a spell as Assistant in Latin at Glasgow University, he entered Manchester College to train for the Unitarian Ministry. The College was then at Gordon Square, London, with Martineau as its head and James Drummond and Estlin Carpenter as the other tutors. In London he was the intimate of people like Graham Wallas (whose sister he married), Bosanquet, Sidgwick and F. H. Bradley. He helped to found the Ethical Society and later became a lecturer at Royal Holloway and Bedford Colleges. Then in 1897 he entered on his chief work as the first Professor of Philosophy at the newly-constituted University of Birmingham, where he had among his close friends Joseph Chamberlain, Sir Oliver Lodge and Bishop Gore.

Muirhead was thus linked up with a distinguished circle, and he introduces us to many of his intimates. He did a useful work, but, gifted though he was, he is justly described as a "Journeyman in Philosophy." He never reached the dignity of the Gifford Lectureship, and his work never attained the thought-quality of say F. H. Bradley, or Samuel Alexander, nor did it have the stylistic charm of, say, Henry Jones.

"Green is the tree of life, grey all theory," he quotes from Goethe, and yet, as his own record proves, a teacher of Philosophy need not be a recluse, and it was his aim all along to bring his ideas into living contact with life.

HENRY COOK.