

## REVIEWS

reviewer that, for all the vigour and persistence with which he pursues his theme, the picture that emerges is not a convincing one. Many uncertain interpretations, both of the Hebrew and the Greek material drawn on for comparison, are here presented as obvious, and the book, although containing observations of real worth, is marred by quite improbable combinations and conclusions. In fact, it may well be that the real link with the *Testaments* is to be found in those parts of the latter which are original and Jewish; it may also be that the doctrines expressed in the later Christian interpolations have no immediate bearing on anything in the Judean manuscripts, but belong properly to the New Testament era. After all, the interpretation of the Judean material is still a matter for debate.

Admittedly, this cautious approach would be in agreement with a view of the composition of the *Testaments* which was proposed long ago (cf. above), but the Judean manuscripts do not, in the opinion of the present writer, yield the evidence for the thesis propounded in the book under review. This may seem a somewhat conservative attitude, but a new theory is not necessarily a good one.

P. WERNBERG-MØLLER

CYRUS H. GORDON, *New Horizons in Old Testament Literature*. 1960. Pp. 32. (Ventnor Publishers, Ventnor, N.J. Price: \$1.)

This short pamphlet, containing the Christian Theological Seminary Lectures given in Indianapolis, Indiana, in February 1960 by the Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Brandeis University, comprises a vigorous and succinct account of the new framework for biblical studies suggested by recent archaeological discoveries. A major note is struck by the remark (p. 11): "From the standpoint of factual scholarship, I have no doubt that the revolution in our knowledge of the patriarchal age exceeds by far the magnitude of the changes [derived from the Qumran scrolls] in our understanding of Christian origins." The patriarchal age, the rediscovery of which "dawned during the 1920s when an American expedition found cuneiform tablets at the ancient town of Nuzu near Kirkuk, Iraq", was demonstrably "sophisticated" and "literary", and many a supposed "oddity" in the Pentateuchal narrative finds an easy explanation in the manners and customs of neighbouring peoples. Yet since "Palestine is as much a Mediterranean country as it is a sector of Canaan adjacent to Egypt", later biblical Jewry is to be seen as a "part of this community of Mediterranean peoples"; and we are offered many striking parallels and suggestive analogies between the worlds of biblical and classical scholarship.

But the "narratives are of primary importance for the ideas...they convey", and Professor Gordon has much to say on the moral and religious side of the Bible. He notes that "historic monotheism is the product of worldliness, not of the primitive mind" and that "the early chapters of Genesis constitute a cosmogony designed to account for not only the origin, but also the significance, of the Order of Things". He shows us therefore the "overtones" in the narratives of the creation and the flood; the "sophisticated internationalism" of the patriarchal period; the reason why Ikhnaton's monotheism failed to become universal; the nature of the "right social action" inculcated through the "examples of the fathers"; the many "lapses" of the great, and the frank recording of them (in contrast with the unmixed

adulation characteristic of the annals of, say, the Babylonian kings) which created what we call history; and, finally, the "cosmic end" which is to follow history and which gives "abiding meaning to the universe and our lives".

Altogether, a most vivid and stimulating set of lectures on which the author is to be warmly congratulated.

LEON ROTH

NORMAN BENTWICH, *The Jews in our Time*. 1960. Pp. 176. (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth. Price: 3s. 6d.)

Norman Bentwich is a prolific writer and highly competent in the Jewish field. Within its compass, this summary is excellent, accurate and lively yet balanced. For the author has that rare quality, a humane mind, befitting one who for years was Professor of International Relations at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Bentwich's book is divided into seven chapters, of which two deal with the history of the Jewish People; one with its geographical and economic distribution and the remainder with aspects of its contemporary existence; "The Jew and his Neighbours"; "The Modern Jewish Contribution"; "The Religious Background"; and "Israel and the Jewish People".

The first two chapters provide a good potted Jewish history, with some ingenious parallels: "It is notable that the codification of the Roman Law and tradition by the Emperor Justinian I was made about the same time as the later Talmud" (p. 21); or "... Alexandria... which in antiquity played a part like that of New York Jewry in modern times..." (p. 20). But whether the Jews are "the most historical of peoples" (p. 9) is open to argument. It depends on what you mean by historical. Persians, Indians and even Greeks have similar claims.

Some of Bentwich's comments on lesser-known aspects of Jewish history are fascinating; but their sources are not always clear (sources are not quoted in a book of this kind). For example, what is the authority for his assertion (p. 12) that "it is likely that many of the Phoenicians... adhered to the one free kindred nation. The Jews in that age were resolute in their proselytising... The commercial bent, which gradually came to mark Jewish development... was possibly due in part to the adhesion of other Semites who for generations had been carriers of commerce and marines"?

On the other hand, it is good to be reminded that Gaon Saadya translated the Bible into Arabic in the tenth century and broadened the cultural links between Arab and Jew. Bentwich, himself a good modern European, naturally stresses the fact that the Jews were among the first good Europeans. They were the honest brokers of philosophy and science. "In the earlier period of Arab civilisation they translated into Arabic the thought of the ancient Greco-Roman world; later they translated it into Latin for the Christian scholars" (p. 23). Bentwich points out how much we are indebted for our knowledge of Jewish life in the Diaspora during the Middle Ages to the discovery at the end of the last century of the *geniza* of Old Cairo by Solomon Schechter.

On p. 28, the author deals with classical Hebrew as one of the learned languages, together with Greek and Latin, in earlier centuries in the West. There was a lectureship at the University of Oxford from the fourteenth