

(*Language Truth and Meaning*, pp. 311-2). But surely if the 'classicism' represented in conceptualism' and 'deductivist logic' is being overcome, do we not have to seek 'another starting-point' altogether (as Heidegger would say), rather than simply fuse Scholastic metaphysics and transcendental method (a short-hand and brutal summary of what Lonergan seems to be doing)? In the end one cannot help wondering, a little sadly, how much the

great septuagenarians who have done so much to free Catholic thought from the grip of Wolffian structures can now help in initiating a different, and necessarily post-'metaphysical', way in theological method.

The text contains some charming misprints: 'the evolutionary tree' (page 7), popularizers who 'similify' (page 8).

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ISRAEL IN EGYPT, by Siegfried Herrmann. *Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series: 27.* SCM Press, London, 1973. 98 pp. £2.

Why and how did the Exodus tradition come to hold so important a place in the faith of Israel? This is the question Professor Herrmann sets out to answer. His study is more one of *Israel de Aegypto* than of *Israel in Aegypto*.

Modern scholarship has set aside the immediate—and naive—answer that the events themselves were of such a spectacular nature that they naturally shaped (or compelled?) belief in Yahweh's activity and so became the foundations of a new religion. A careful untwining of the literary strands and a critical appreciation of the poetic and mythological reduces the Plagues, the Passover, the Crossing of the Reed Sea and the encounter at Sinai to scarcely more than 'ordinary' events. The problem of their subsequent importance and the inadequacy of this type of reductionism are thus highlighted. It is no solution either to claim that it was the immediate results of these bare events which invested them with more than meteorological or natural significance for, in the short term, the results were extremely limited. The movement of Hebrews both into and out of Egypt was of almost no significance to the Ancient World: neither migration shook the foundations of history. Moreover, it seems increasingly probable that only four of the twelve tribes actually participated in the Exodus and that the other groups had settled in Canaan some while before. It was not until some two centuries after the entry of the Exodus tribes that the disparate groups were welded together by David (c. 1000 B.C.). The presence of three founding fathers—Abraham, Moses and David—in the biblical narrative reflects the complex origins of the nation; the continuity between them is superficial and imposed. And, further, any clear reference to the Sinai Covenant disappears until the 'discovery'

of the Book of the Law in Jerusalem in 622 B.C., which makes it questionable how much this part of the Exodus tradition played before then.

Unfortunately Professor Herrmann provides no satisfactory answer to the problem, confining himself to the scale of the events and their interpretation. He whittles away at the various layers of the biblical account until he reaches a plausible—but nonetheless hypothetical—reconstruction of the bare events consistent with what we know of the political and social structures and ethnic movements of the time. Event and interpretation are painstakingly untwined. But while it is true to conclude, as he does, that these events were important for Israel not because of their scale but because of the depth to which they were experienced, both at the time and especially later, he fails to look further. We need to know the history of the tradition among the people who nurtured it, and not merely some abstract history of its literary and theological development. The tradition cannot be fully understood apart from its community. In particular, we need to know how it was that an exclusively Israelite (or Northern) tradition came to be taken up and fostered by Judah, why it was that these events were recalled and meditated upon and given founding significance by a people who had not participated in them. The problem of the role of the Exodus tradition cannot be satisfactorily answered until we know considerably more about the relationship between Israel and Judah, an area still largely un-researched.

Professor Herrmann presents us with valid and often valuable exegesis, but at the end it proves a disappointing—and expensive—excursion.

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