

## BOOK REVIEWS

Epp, Frank H. *Whose Land Is Palestine?: The Middle East in Historical Perspective*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970. 283 pp. \$ 3.95 (paperbound).

This book calls to attention what is too often overlooked in assessing current tensions in the Middle East; namely, a long and relevant historical background. After two introductory chapters, the book gives a helpful historical survey in a series of chapters whose titles furnish the clue as to their content: "The Claims of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"; "The Claims of Islam"; "The Claims of Christianity"; "The Claims of Zionism"; "The Claims of the British"; "The Claims of the Arabs"; "The Claims of the United Nations" (this chapter includes some notations on the U.S.A.'s position); "The Claims of Israel"; and "The Claims of the Palestinians." Virtually no relevant matter is overlooked in this historical survey, and various vital items are highlighted with tables and maps (there are 18 tables and 13 maps).

In such a vast survey, it is not surprising that the author should make occasional errors in detail (for example, it was not Nebuchadnezzar, but his father Nabopolassar who struck the death-blow to Assyria [see p. 64]; and various dates given in the chapter on "The Claims of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" surely are not based on the most up-to-date chronology). But such errors seem trivial in view of the main thrust of the work in providing necessary historical background for an understanding of the Middle East situation as it exists today. Moreover, the book manifests a certain balance in outlook which is especially commendable in view of the rather common tendency of writers on the subject to charge their work with emotional overtones.

In a final chapter entitled "The Claims of God," the author appeals for the kind of Christian involvement which, among other things, renounces claims to any holy places in Palestine (pp. 238, 239). Christians should, he feels, lay aside the distortions which are altogether too common in Christianity and "first of all, accept their Messiah and become Christians" (p. 255). Moreover, their "prophetic contribution" should mold public opinion regarding (1) justice for the Palestinian Arabs, (2) security for the Jews, and (3) restraint of the Powers and the boosting of the United Nations (pp. 256-263); but this "contribution to peace does not end, or perhaps even begin, with the spoken word. . . . The bold word must be accompanied, as it always has been in the best of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, by the sacrificial deed" (p. 263). This sacrificial deed may mean "philanthropy for Jews and Arabs," but it also means more: "The present Middle East conflict, however, calls for the deed that goes beyond the ordinary and the usual. It calls Christians back to the central theme of their

faith, namely, that of a man laying down his life for his friends and his enemies. . . . The Middle East situation confronts us with the historical fact that many Jews and Muslims have died or sacrificed their rights on behalf of Christians. Christians can now make a contribution to peace only if they become willing to die and sacrifice on behalf of Israelis and Arabs (pp. 263, 264). A specific application, says the author, would be "entering the arena of war on both sides and sharing the insecurity that the conflict brings" (p. 264). What is meant is not fighting in behalf of either side (rather "it is time for Christians to leave all their guns at home"), but an "unarmed peace force" standing by and helping each side as it is attacked by the other (*ibid.*).

There is a great deal of sound food for thought in Epp's concluding chapter, but he also manifests therein some rather unrealistic idealism. Furthermore, his major contribution in this book is, in my opinion, his careful analysis of historical backgrounds; and he tends to become weaker as he analyzes the present situation. Indeed, at times he appears to be somewhat ignorant of forces currently at work; as for example, in suggesting that the "large and virile Christian Arab community in the Middle East" is an asset for the West by providing "a strong bridge to the Arabs" (p. 235). Apparently he is unaware of Christian-Muslim antagonisms among the Arabs themselves (sometimes nearly as great as Arab-Israeli tensions), to say nothing of the diminutive position of Arab Christianity in some of the Arab countries (Arab Christians do not everywhere enjoy the prestigious status they hold in Lebanon, for example).

On the whole, this reviewer must highly commend Epp's publication. He would concur with the writer of the Foreword, John H. Davis, International Consultant and Former Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, that this "is a book that needs to be read widely by the public, particularly by those persons in governments and on delegations to the United Nations who have responsibility for formulating policies that pertain to the Middle East" (p. 5). Regardless of how impractical one may consider *some* of Epp's suggestions in his last chapter, his interest in providing historical background is surely a vital concern. To such background the book is for the most part devoted, and herein lies a contribution which should not be ignored by anyone interested in the Middle East, past or present.

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Froom, LeRoy Edwin. *Movement of Destiny*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971. 700 pp. \$ 9.95.

With this book LeRoy Edwin Froom climaxes his career as a research-author, denominational apologist, and counselor to Adventist ministers. *Movement of Destiny* attempts to speak both for Seventh-day Adventists (SDA's) and to them.