

will be difficult for anyone treating the subject not to come into direct or indirect dialogue with Cassidy.

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Craigie, Peter C. *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986. 351 pp. \$18.95.

Peter Craigie attempts throughout this work to present the views of both modern, mainline, historical-critical scholars and traditional, conservative scholars on OT literature. Thus one finds fair and concise descriptions of varying views on composition and date for each OT book. In this respect, *The Old Testament* is a work of great balance. Craigie often sees value in positions with which he may not agree, and he offers a level-headed critique of entrenched positions on both the liberal and conservative sides of scholarship.

The work is divided into five parts. Part 1 introduces the book and deals with "The Phenomenon of the Old Testament." It contains brief but informative discussions of the nature of the OT, the titles of its separate books, the canon and formation of the entire Hebrew Bible, its languages and chronological perspectives, the preservation of its texts, its place in contemporary religions, and its relationship to the humanities. In the latter two sections Craigie illustrates the pervasiveness of the OT's influence in modern secular society and thus demonstrates the need to understand the OT.

Craigie excels in part 2, "Background of the Old Testament Period," in which he describes the important civilizations of the ancient Near East that contribute to an understanding of Israel's culture and literature. In the first half Craigie places the summarized OT story in the context of historical developments in the great civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. In a second subdivision he discusses the value and admitted limits of archaeology in enhancing our understanding of the OT.

Part 3, the longest portion of the book (150 pp.), deals with the individual OT books. Here, in conformity with his opening remarks on canonization, Craigie deals with the literature in its Hebrew canonical order.

Craigie describes the "Content of the Old Testament" in part 4 in chapters entitled "The History of Israel" and "The Religion and Faith of Israel." Here the reader is confronted with problems and perspectives in the study of Israel's history. Craigie recognizes that the historical narratives are written from a theological perspective, using (from the modern his-

torian's point of view) incomplete sources. Even given the differences in scholarly opinion on matters of authorship and date, Craigie strives to offer the modern scholarly consensus on Israelite history. This history is composed of the so-called "pre-historic" and "historic" periods. Genesis through Judges represents those OT narrative works belonging to the former period. Craigie admits that there is greater consensus regarding the history of Israel contained in the books in the second category.

Having laid this foundation, Craigie then discusses each of the main historical periods that gave rise either directly or indirectly to the content of the Hebrew canon: those of the patriarchs, the Exodus and Sinai, the settlement of Canaan, the united and divided monarchies, and the exile and restoration. Here Craigie's position is conservative, as expected, and well-informed.

In the second chapter of part 4 ("The Religion and Faith of Israel") the author acquaints his reader with the components of ancient Israelite cult, common religious beliefs and ideas, the prophetic contribution to the faith of ancient Israel, and the place of the Wisdom traditions. One will come away from this section feeling less estranged from the peculiar idioms of such Biblical formats as the classical prophetic books and the Psalter.

The "Epilogue" orients the student toward the modern study of the OT and includes a useful annotated bibliography of books for the study of OT literature, history, and culture. Besides the Scripture index, there is a general index keyed to biblical names and topics.

An example of Craigie's balanced approach may be seen in his treatment of the composition of Isaiah. He recognizes that there are reasonable grounds for the hypothesis of multiple authorship, such as differences in historical perspective and literary style (pp. 153-154). Conservative scholarship's attempt to maintain the unity of the book's authorship, Craigie admits, represents "a minority position within biblical scholarship as a whole" (p. 155). On the other hand, he also recognizes that the author or editor has done nothing to confirm the modern notion of multiple authorship. This fact suggests that Isaiah is to be read and comprehended as a unit.

Craigie has packed a tremendous amount of useful information for beginning and advanced students into a relatively small space. *The Old Testament* is helpfully illustrated throughout with maps, chronological charts, script figures, and museum photos. The book is intended primarily for undergraduates. Craigie's work should make the OT far more accessible to a wide audience of pastors and educated laity.

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