

It is here that we come apparently closest to a grasp of the distinctive meaning of the traditio-historical movement. Admittedly foolish things have been done and excesses perpetrated in the literary analysis of the Old Testament; the literary critics themselves are fully conscious of it, and require little reproof from a rival movement to emend their ways. In fact one gains the impression that Nielsen's polemics against obsolete methods of literary criticism. But the latter has from the first recognized that ultimately we must deal with the books as a whole. In engrossment with analysis this large unity has often been given less attention than it deserves. Also the place of the conceded "editor" was commonly less than this unity properly demands. For cogent protest at these points we may well be grateful to the Scandinavians. But their "attempt with all [one's] might to reach an understanding of the [sensible] motives" of the final creators of the Old Testament books is subject to the same excess that the analysts perpetrated in the opposite direction. The three examples of traditio-historical method which Nielsen gives leave just this uneasiness, in every case, though probably most clearly in regard to Micah, chapters 4-5. He undertakes to show how the successive sections of the passage fit together in an intelligent plan. At numerous detailed points the plan is not at all apparent, much less convincing.

We can well be grateful for any light that Nielsen and his colleagues can throw on the obscure question of the final formation of the Old Testament books, whether we are to call it assembling, editing, or authorship. Not less will be welcome any and all valid information or reaction toward a better understanding of their ultimate origins and their transmission to the final editors or authors. Beyond any detail traditio-historical study can and does contribute significantly to the methods and conclusions of Old Testament scholarship, not least by its emphasis upon facts and views that have received less than their due. It is a valid addition to the total of our common endeavor to understand the mystery of ancient Israel's career. But it provides no talisman or magic to lead us inerrantly to the truth. On the con-

trary it is subject to all the excesses that have marred the work of the literary critic. In fact its basic disparagement of this latter is at the same time a confession of its own error; for the two must not be set in opposition. We go forward not by choosing one or the other but by accepting both.

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Ancient Israel. By HARRY M. ORLINSKY.
Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press,
1954. Pp. 193. \$2.50 (cloth), \$1.75 (paper).

Professor Orllinsky has here given us a lucid and excellent account of the history of ancient Israel from its earliest beginnings to the establishment of post-exilic Judaism subsequent to the work of Nehemiah and Ezra. Written for the series, "The Development of Western Civilization," so the editor informs us, it was designed for college survey courses. It is eminently suited to this function, but as well should prove illuminating and highly rewarding for the general reader.

The value of the book is enhanced by an introduction that points out with fine emphasis the unique place and creative influence of the Bible in our culture. A similar appraisal is merited by the nine-page sketch of "Suggestions for Further Study." In a "Chronological Summary" Orllinsky somewhat characteristically avoids adjudicating the arguments of Thiele and Albright, but instead lists both systems in parallel columns. He cannot be criticized for failure to take account of Thiele's article in *Vetus Testamentum* published after he wrote; but the additional information which Thiele there adduces was known and it demonstrates conclusively that Albright's system is untenable.

Orllinsky shows himself, as we expect, conversant with the immense bulk of knowledge that has continued to pour upon us through archeological and other media since the close of the first World War. However, readers will be arrested, with varying reactions, by the use that he makes of these facts. In his attitude toward the Bible as historic source material