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Reviews

Abraham and David, by R. E. Clements. S.C.M. *Studies in Biblical Theology* Second Series No. 5. 1967. pp. 96.

Dr. Clements, who has recently joined the Cambridge Faculty of Theology, offers us under the above title a study of Genesis 15 and the place and meaning of that chapter in Israelite Tradition. In his Introduction he commits himself to a traditio-historical investigation, but is thankfully aware of the dangers of subjective interpretation that attend both that method and archaeological investigation too.

After a study of Gen. 15 as an oracle of assurance with possible royal motifs, Dr. Clements proceeds to a confident and valuable study of the historical significance of the Abrahamic Covenant. This third chapter is very helpful indeed within the limits imposed by his method. The collocation of Abraham and David in the title too, itself shows how the " recovery " of Abraham is proceeding.

The author's fourth chapter traces the transmission of the tradition and enables him to show how the original tradition of Abraham, of Mamre and its God, was later inherited by new settlers in the Mamre area and eventually passed on by Judah to the whole Israel of David's days. In this way Dr. Clements is able to trace the line from Abraham to David, and to support his argument by reference to a number of facts which link Abraham and David. Two final chapters assess the Abraham covenant and the Covenant tradition itself in Israel. Dr. Clement's study is a good example of the strength and weakness of one of the prevailing modes of O.T. interpretation, and he places us all in his debt for his insights.

G. HENTON DAVIES.

The Gospel, the Child and the Church, by four members of the Radlett Fellowship, Stanmore, Middlesex. The Radlett Fellowship. 1967. Pp. 24. 2s.

The authors of this little booklet, *The Gospel, the Child and the Church*, claim that the recent report produced for the Baptist Union and entitled *The Child and the Church*, represented the views of some who had " departed radically from the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ". They felt it their duty to rebut these views, " to expound the gospel as it is found in the Bible ", to present their own views " concerning the relationship of the child to the gospel and to the church ", and to make suggestions to the Baptist Union concerning the attitude it should take towards the heretics in its midst.

Although the booklet was published out of a concern for the Gospel

and not simply to engage in controversy for its own sake (cf. preface), this well intentioned claim is not confirmed by what follows. For one thing it is clear that it is a particular interpretation of some aspects of the gospel that the authors are defending and it is little short of arrogance to say that those who do not accept their views represent a force destructive of the Christian religion (p. 24). For another, not once but frequently, inferences are drawn from statements in the Baptist Union report which are quite unjustified when seen in their original contexts. The authors of *The Child and the Church* are accused of rejecting the idea of original sin (p. 11), of minimising the work of Christ (pp. 2-3), of teaching that all men will be saved (p. 4) and of rejecting the idea that children may make a responsible decision for Christ (p. 6). The reviewer can only recommend that the discussion under fire be read again to disprove these assertions. To assume that the members of the Radlett Fellowship have misunderstood the intentions of the Baptist Union report is probably more charitable than to say they have deliberately misrepresented it for polemical purposes. Nevertheless it is difficult to resist the feeling that sometimes they are being wilfully pedantic and tendentious (p. 2-3).

The most disappointing feature of the Radlett study is the rather inadequate treatment of its own views in chapter 4. It says nothing of value that has not been said before, it half-heartedly treats of Infant dedication which it claims is on the way out, and throws up a few questions for further study. One feels that if the authors had concerned themselves with these, they would have made a more worthwhile contribution to the debate.

One final word: pages 10 and 11 of the Radlett study contains an assertion which will surely not pass without comment even by those who are "conservative" evangelicals. "The primary purpose of the atonement was to reconcile God to the sinner. This makes possible the reconciliation of the sinner to God." Surely not? But perhaps my N.T. is different from the one Radlett uses! In mine Paul says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself". Have they found a variant reading which says "reconciling himself to the world" and are they thinking of publishing this important manuscript?

H. W. TRENT