

## Dr. Wheeler Robinson on "The Old Testament."

DR. WHEELER ROBINSON'S name on the title page of a book guarantees its scholarship, but it is not always so sure a sign that the book is one that "he who runs may read". His latest contribution to Old Testament studies is, however, not only scholarly, but a very readable book that can confidently be recommended to all who are interested in their Bible, whether they are professional Bible students, or belong to that growing number of laymen who are realising that they have missed much by ignoring the Old Testament.

The title of the book—*The Old Testament, its Making and Meaning*<sup>1</sup>—will remind those who have had the privilege of studying under Dr. Robinson's direction that "the leopard does not change his spots". His interest in Hebrew and Old Testament work is not that of an antiquarian; he has always emphasised on the one hand the need of recognising the permanent value of the Book and linking it with life in our own age, and on the other the fact that the Bible yields its deepest secrets only to the patient student. The proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament is that God speaks through it to-day; but His message comes most fully to those who understand the "Making" of the Book—to those who are willing and able to search out the exact meaning of a Hebrew word, the circumstances in which a passage was originally uttered, and its particular application to those to whom it was then addressed.

The book is primarily intended for the general reader, who does not want his attention distracted by numerous references to other books and the detailed discussion of the theories of other writers; but the list of books for further study makes the book equally useful to the more advanced student, and those who have the misfortune to be reading for examination purposes rather than for pleasure will welcome the valuable charts and summaries in the appendices. It is a sign of increasing interest in the Bible that there is a demand for books that present the positive message of the Old and New Testaments as it has been revealed by previous decades of critical study; but, as men are generally more interested in gold than in the processes it undergoes in the refiner's furnace, so they want the results of the research rather than analytical

<sup>1</sup> In the London Theological Library (University of London Press, Ltd., and Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 5s. net).

details or controversial matters. It is good that scholars of Dr. Robinson's standing should supply the need for these books.

Dr. Robinson's emphasis on results rather than on processes enables him to approach his subject in a new way and to avoid that dullness that usually characterises books that are introductions to the literature of the Old Testament; he is also able to garner here some of the harvest of his studies during recent years in the wider fields of theology and philosophy. The results of these studies are seen most clearly in the chapters on "Prophecy," "The Wisdom Literature" and "The Psalms"—which all who heard Dr. Robinson's broadcast talks will want to read. Some of the other chapters contain material that is more controversial. The standpoint of the book in these chapters is the one that in the last generation has become the orthodox position, and it is well that it should be re-stated, if only because—as Dr. Robinson mentions—it is now being seriously challenged, particularly in reference to the Documentary theory and the date of the patriarchal narratives and of Deuteronomy.

Perhaps two minor points may be mentioned. Was Amos a "Judaeian farmer," or was he not rather a casual labourer, moving about in search of employment, living for part of the year as a shepherd on the hills of Judah, and migrating to the Shephelah when the figs offered seasonal employment there—for the fig trees do not grow on the bare hills near Tekoa. And again, is it correct to say that the book of Kings covers four centuries from 970 to 586? Should not the last event recorded in the book, the release of Jehoiachin, be dated in 562 B.C.—a fact that may have some bearing on the statement on page 61 that the date of the compiler of the book may be put somewhere about 600 B.C.?

The book is part of a series that is being issued under the editorship of Dr. Eric Waterhouse by the London University Press as "The London Theological Library". It is a fitting companion volume to Dr. Robinson's earlier work on the *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* and, like it, satisfies a real need. Baptists may well be proud of Dr. Robinson and regard themselves as particularly fortunate in having him as Principal of the first Baptist College to be founded in one of the older Universities. It is to be hoped that our Denomination will shew its appreciation of him and his work by giving generously to the building fund for the new Regent's Park College, so that, at the time when he can make so large a contribution to scholarship, he may be released from the task of raising money.

J. N. SCHOFIELD.