

Linnemann, Eta, *Jesus of the Parables: Introduction and Exposition*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966. 218 pp. \$ 4.95.

The book under review is a translation (by John Sturdy) of the third edition (1964) of Eta Linnemann's *Gleichnisse Jesu: Einführung und Auslegung*, first published in 1961. It has also appeared in England under the title *The Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition* which better represents both the original German title and the contents of the book since it is a study of the *parables* of Jesus and *not* of the *Jesus* of the parables.

This book grows out of the author's dissertation written under the supervision of Ernst Fuchs and accepted by the Kirchliche Hochschule, Berlin. It was prepared for publication under a commission from the Catechetical Office of the Hannover Landeskirche whose commission was that it should be of help to "the teacher of Religious Knowledge" (p. xi). This commendable aim has been carried out with consummate skill. Excellence of organization and clarity of argument contribute greatly to this end. In the words of her mentor, the author "leads teacher and pupil together in their work on the text by showing them step by step how one deals with the text methodically as an expositor" (p. xi).

The book is divided into two main sections: Part I (pp. 1-48) deals with the "basic principles of parable interpretation," while Part II (pp. 49-128) attempts "expositions" of 11 parables (using the term "parable" somewhat more loosely than the author would wish!), in the process of which one sees the "principles" applied. There follow, in fine print, extensive "notes" (pp. 129-196) by which the reader is reminded, or made aware, of points of view which are similar to, or differ from, those of the author. Again and again in this section one comes upon references to, or quotations from, the works of Bultmann, Fuchs, Joachim Jeremias, Jülicher, Klostermann, and other German scholars who have given special attention to the parables of Jesus. The book includes an excellent bibliography and helpful indices of References and Authors. The Index of Subjects is quite inadequate.

In Part I (The Basic Principles of Parable Interpretation) a distinction is made, first, between *similitudes* (a similitude tells of "a typical situation or a typical or regular event") and *parables proper* (a parable tells of "some interesting particular case"); second, between *illustrations* (an illustration "produces an example," as in the case of the story of the rich fool, Lk 12:16-21) and *parables* (a parable "adduces a correspondence," as in the case of the story of the unjust steward, Lk 16:1-8); and, third, between *allegories* (an allegory says "something other than what it means," for example, the allegory of the royal wedding feast, Mt 22:1-14) and *parables* (a parable, in contrast, "means what it says," for example, the parable of the great supper, Lk 14:15-24). There is much here that is most helpful, but one wonders why, in the discussion of allegory, the author only refers to the work of Jülicher and makes no mention of the work of C. A. Bugge and

Paul Fiebig which calls for a considerable modification of Jülicher's conclusions at some important points (for example, Jülicher looks to Aristotelian prototypes rather than to Rabbinic models and as a result overstates the case when he claims that Jesus' parables could not have contained allegorical elements).

In what immediately follows, the reader's attention is drawn to the importance of recognizing the fact that the parables of Jesus "are subject to the laws of popular narrative" (here Bultmann is followed closely). The reader is also warned against the danger of misconstruing the "introductory formulas and applications." Thereupon, under the heading "The Structure of the Parable," Linnemann makes her own particular contribution to the on-going study of the gospel parables. She speaks of it as "the phenomenon of interlocking."

In the parable, the judgment of the narrator concerning the situation in question "interlocks" with that of the listener. Both evaluations become intrinsic elements of the parable. The choice of the material, the point of comparison, and the course of the narrative are primarily determined by the judgment of the narrator. But the estimate of the listener also leaves its deposit. These individual evaluations do not merely appear side by side in the parable, but are interlocked or interwoven in the single strand of the narrative. It is the author's claim that as long as we overlook this interlocking in the parables of Jesus "we have no access to what Jesus was really saying" (pp. 27 f).

Fuchs, in his introduction to the book under discussion, says (p. xi) that this is Linnemann's "own discovery" and adds that it is "one of far-reaching significance." Since she treats this matter so briefly here, it is to be hoped that she will develop it more fully in another study. She comes nearest, in this work, to illustrating the nature and significance of this phenomenon in her exposition of the parable of the prodigal son (pp. 73-81).

Also of particular value is her discussion of the parable as "language event," a category we have come to associate with the names of Fuchs and Ebeling. The successful parable is an "event" that decisively alters the given situation. It creates a possibility that did not exist before, the possibility that the listener may come to an understanding with the narrator. This possibility is significant even if understanding does not result. Even if the listener persists in his prior opinion, it is not "just as before." By his persistence he actually makes a decision; his opposition becomes explicit. Thus a successful parable is an event in a double sense; it creates a new possibility in the situation, and compels the listener to make a decision. This event is called a "language event" because "something decisive happens through what is said" (pp. 30-32). Linnemann is to be commended for a lucid statement of this significant concept.

The author's "Expositions," Part II, are, on the whole, and from the point of view of exegetical method, exemplary. Rarely does she run beyond the basic "principles" she herself has laid down. But she is not faultless. In her exposition of the story (illustration) of the

good Samaritan she allows the Lucan context to lead her to conclusions concerning the "meaning of Jesus' answer" which are foreign to the illustration itself, namely, with respect to the problem of justification (see pp. 55 f).

At times our author flies in the face of *communis opinio*. Take for instance her long note (almost four pages of fine print) in which she says frankly, "In my opinion there is not one saying of Jesus that speaks expressly of the nearness of the kingdom of God the authenticity of which is not at least disputed" (p. 132, n. 26). Surely this calls for further discussion.

Linnemann's *Jesus of the Parables* is at once a most interesting and important book. It is alive to the contemporary discussion concerning the meaning and significance of the parables of Jesus and makes a significant contribution to that discussion. The serious expositor of the parables, be he teacher or preacher, who will ignore this book will do so to his own loss.

Andrews University

JAMES J. C. COX

Schwantes, Siegfried J., *A Short History of the Ancient Near East*.  
Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1965. 191 pp. + 5 maps.  
\$ 4.95.

The aim of this book, as the author explains in the foreword, is to supply the need for a short and yet substantial history of the ancient Near East in the English language. With a background of sound scholarship in language, literature and history, the author has admirably met this need. Indeed, the uniqueness and appeal of the book centers on the fact that, unlike far too many academic textbooks, the work under review does not regard the pre-classical Orient as an historical prelude leading up to a more detailed study of the explosive fifth century and the birth of classical Greek civilization. Rather, the author presents early Near Eastern civilizations, prior to the advent of Alexander the Great, as possessing significance and fascination for their own sake. It is a majestically sweeping view of a world of long ago. To have the political histories of the various regions of the ancient Orient authoritatively brought together under one cover is an exceptional rarity reminiscent of James H. Breasted's popular textbook for high-school students: *Ancient Times: A History of the Early World*. Tastefully offered, augmented by striking illustrations (including a synoptic chronological chart), the book recommends itself for popular consumption both for those who desire an introductory acquaintance with ancient history and for those who simply may want a concise summary of the salient highlights of specific chapters of that history.

Perhaps the most valid complaint which can be offered has to do with the unavoidable results which are imposed by the compactness of the history. Since a wide time range must be compressed to fit under one cover, some conclusions come with arbitrary abruptness. Sargon