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NOTICES OF BOOKS.

THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY.—
 CHRONICLES. By Edward Lewis Curtis, Ph.D., D.D.;
 and Albert Alonzo Madsen, Ph. D. (T. & T. Clark.) 12s.

This volume may at once be described as the most scholarly and satisfactory exposition of the Book of Chronicles that has appeared in recent years. The problems involved in the study of the character and structure of the book are treated in a thorough and broadminded spirit. Ample material is presented to the expert student for the enlargement of his knowledge of this part of the Old Testament, and the ordinary reader is not neglected. A considerable portion of the introduction and practically the whole of the Commentary proper can be mastered by the reader to whom Hebrew is an unknown tongue. There are no doubt a bewildering number of abbreviations, but doubtless this was inevitable. The key to Dr. Curtis's standpoint is given in the preface in which he writes, "The Books of Chronicles are secondary; they are of interest mainly through the new view which they give of Israel's history compared with the earlier narratives" (p. vii.). It is its late composition and supplementary character that led to this Book being placed at the close of the Hebrew Canon (p. 2). The estimate of Jewish writers concerning Chronicles is summed up thus; "while in rabbinical literature Chronicles was regarded with suspicion, its historical accuracy being doubted by Talmudic authorities, and it being held to be a book for homiletical interpretation, yet its canonicity, as some have thought, seems never to have been questioned" (p. 2). The Author is held to be the same as that of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the date is approximately fixed as 300 B.C. The chief point of interest in the introduction centres in Dr. Curtis's estimate of the plan, purpose and historical value of the Books of Chronicles. "The writer is of the same school as the author of the Priests' code. Equally with him he delights in all that pertains to the ministry of the sanctuary. He also has the same fondness for statistics, and exhibits repeatedly similar exaggerations" (p. 8). "He made more universal (*i.e.*, than earlier writers) the connexion between piety and prosperity, and wickedness and adversity, heightening good and bad characters and their rewards and punishments, or creating them according to the exigency of the occasion" (p. 9). "The picture which they (*i.e.*, the Books of Chronicles) give of the past is far less accurate or trustworthy than that of the earlier Biblical writings; indeed, it is a distorted picture in the interests of the later institutions of post-exilic Judaism; and the main historical value of these books consists in the reflection of the notions of that period" (p. 14). If this verdict is supposed by any reader to be unduly severe, it only needs that Chronicles should be studied in connexion with the Books of Samuel and Kings, and it will at once appear that Dr. Curtis is fully justified in his estimate of the later record. It was the earlier historical books, together with a midrashic history of Israel, that formed

the sources from whence the Chronicler derived his information. His own additions to the older sources are, Dr. Curtis says, readily detected by peculiarities of diction and the frequent use of set phrases. The Hebrew text is stated to be "in fair condition, though by no means up to the standard of many of the older Old Testament books" (p. 36). The closing section of the introduction deals with the subject of "The Higher Criticism and Literature." Owing to their supplementary character and the prominence given to genealogical details, the Books of Chronicles "have never been a favourite field of study and investigation, hence their literature has always been relatively meagre" (p. 44). We are given a summary of the opinions of Eichhorn and De Wette as to the sources and historic value of the Books, and a very exhaustive list of the literature dealing with this part of the Old Testament. The student who, with his Hebrew, or even with his English Bible open before him, carefully peruses this volume of the *International Critical Commentary* cannot fail to learn much as to the meaning and purpose of the Books of Chronicles.

T. S. B.

THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY.—

GENESIS. By John Skinner, D.D. (T. T. Clark.) 12s. 6d.

Amongst the English commentaries on the book of Genesis there is little doubt that Dr. Skinner's volume will hold a foremost place for many years to come. Since the appearance of the English translation of Dillmann's work in 1897 and Dr. Driver's admirable book in the *Westminster Commentaries*, nothing has been produced which could at all rival the present contribution to the study of the most fascinating book in the world. Dr. Skinner wisely follows the method adopted in Driver's *Deuteronomy* (in the same series), and relegates all etymological discussions to footnotes. There is a rich abundance of "extended notes" on all the larger questions raised by "Genesis," such as, "The Divine Image in Man," "The Hebrew and Babylonian Sabbath," "Origin of the Cain legend," "Circumcision," "The Shiloh Prophecy of xlix. 10" and "The Zodiacal theory of the Twelve Tribes." The standpoint is frankly, though not radically critical; and, as in Dr. Driver's *Genesis* so also in this volume Dr. Orr comes in for some severe handling. Dr. Orr has replied to both critics in the *Churchman* (October, 1910), so that students can weigh for themselves the force and justice of the attack and defence, and draw their own conclusions. Dr. Skinner's criticism of Dr. Orr, in the present volume, is mainly in connexion with the use of the Divine names. Modern critics believe J and E to be independent recensions of a common body of tradition, while Dr. Orr maintains that they were recensions of a single document, differing in nothing but the use of Jehovah and Elohim. To this opinion Dr. Orr stoutly adheres in his article in the *Churchman*; and says (p. 738) that he "finds little in Dr. Skinner's pages to remove his doubt as to whether these sources are really distinct." But Dr. Skinner points out (p. xli.) that the difference between J and E is not confined to the divine names; that there are differences of conception, slight but