

"The Bible Is Human," Louis Wallis.
Columbia University Press, New
York, 1942. 303 pp. \$2.50.

Here's a viewpoint which is quite different in many respects from that expressed in the pulpit of most evangelical denominations.

Mr. Wallis contends "that the real nature of Bible history has been obscured by dogmas of synagogue and church alike, as well as by a new conventionalism of critical scholarship; and that the secular experience of Israel in the land of Canaan furnishes the foreground not only for democracy, but for the social gospel also.

In any study of history, says Mr. Wallis, all nations should be examined in the same objective spirit. Therefore Hebrew history should not be denied its proper place.

Unfortunately, Hebrew history is bound up with our inherited ideas about God and morality. For most of us, these ideas are predetermined by conventional ideologies and dogma.

Mr. Wallis says a general or popular impression exists that when the Hebrew nation emerged from the wilderness into Canaan, they exterminated all the previous inhabitants, and divided the country among the Twelve Tribes.

But in Judges, we discover, a great many Canaanites were not killed, but remained to live and intermarry with the Israelites. Thus, Israel arose exactly the same as all other nations evolved, namely through a coalescence between two or more parent races; there are no pure nations anywhere in the world.

Mr. Wallis skillfully traces man's progress through the prehistoric ages on through the pre-Hebrew period—developing the economic point that the most important features of progress were when man began to accumulate a surplus, banishing the hand-to-mouth existence of the stone age.

Life developed from groups to communities or cities. These cities became separate city-states, walled in and fortified. Canaan had six large walled cities before the Israelites came.

Mr. Wallis' detail on the manner in which the scrolls and writings of the Old Testament were kept, is voluminous and historically valuable.

The scrolls were held by different families for long periods of time. If a descendant disagreed with any part of the narrations he did not destroy them, but merely prefixed his account of the story. Later, when the scrolls were compiled by other scribes, or came into a

new owner's hand, the added matter was often entered into the text.

After a time the scrolls were brought together in a single collection and edited. They were generally accepted by religious authorities. Later generations accepting this, no further changes were allowed. Whereupon began the process of interpolation, which has continued in some form, orthodox or critical, up to our time.

After a lifetime of research and critical analysis, Mr. Wallis takes issue with a great many of these accepted interpretations. Many hundreds of years have often elapsed between events and compilations. And a great many times the scribes' "interpretations" of history were made as the former thought it should have been, not as facts actually were.

By the time Jewish thought arrived at the New Testament period, the sense of man's immortality had become widespread. This helped pave the way for the Christian era.

Mr. Wallis in "The Bible Is Human," has added his bit to the roll of modern writers who have been secularizing the Bible. Fables and parables have disturbed many a scientist; religion, on the other hand, has strengthened the hand of many. This book, part history, part analysis, brings new food for thought to that book which has had the record for most consistent high sales.

HERBERT KNOWLES

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