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***Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah.* By John Eaton. London, SPCK., 1979. Pp. xii + 132. £4.95.**

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*Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah.* By JOHN EATON. London, SPCK., 1979. Pp. xii + 132. £4.95.

THIS is an important and exciting book. John Eaton takes his cue from Engnell's description of Deutero-Isaiah as a prophetic collection of traditions of a liturgical kind, 'not a cult liturgy, but a prophetic imitation thereof', of which the passages usually designated the Servant Songs form an integral part. Building specially on his own previous work in *Kingship and the Psalms*, the results of which are summarised here, Eaton expounds Isaiah 40-55 and 60-62 on these lines. The Servant is seen as a form of Davidic hope in liturgical categories, a treatment which makes good sense of 55.3-5. The prophecies originate in a community rather than deriving from a single prophetic figure. The whole argument is set out lucidly in an eminently readable presentation, in which footnotes are abhorred and the biblical evidence clearly marshalled.

The reviewer has always been highly sceptical of the cultic theories surrounding the autumn festival, and it is a tribute to this book that he found himself attracted to the hypothesis as never before and at times almost wishing it might be true! Of course it may be true, but again it may not. For it is inevitably the fruit of a great deal of imaginative reconstruction and interpretation, and it must be said that the solid evidence required to prove the hypothesis is simply not available. The strength of the case lies in its cohesiveness and comprehensiveness; its weakness is the inevitable extent to which supposition has to be built on supposition. The strength of the chain can be no greater than that of its weakest link, and such instances as the interpretation of 2 Samuel 15 and 20 in terms of processional routes or the association of the grateful animals of Isaiah 43.20 with the idyllic picture of 11.6-9 smack of forced exegesis.

What are the chief doubts that persist? First and foremost the question, which is not raised in this book or in much that is written on the autumn festival, why the considerable material we have in the Old Testament about this festival makes no mention of the cultic drama which is supposed to have characterised it, or (with the exception of the post-exilic Zechariah 14) of the supposedly dominant theme of divine kingship! More particularly, why should the bystanders be so amazed at the change in the Servant's fortunes (53.1) if this were a regular part of the ritual? How can the ritual suffering of the king have atoning efficacy without contradicting the theology of Psalm 49.7f? Why, if this festal drama is the main inspiration for these prophecies, are they not set out in an order which more clearly reflects the structure of the drama?

Inevitably too there is room for difference of opinion over details. A different analysis could sometimes suggest a different interpretation, e.g. if 41.21-42.9 were expounded as a single block of material the Servant could be seen as Yahweh's crowning proof of his divinity. The brave attempt to wrestle with the equation of the Servant with Israel in 49.3 has not produced a final solution of this problem. It may be felt that insufficient recognition has been given to either the impress of an individual prophetic genius on these chapters or the extent to which they are addressed to the contemporary situation.

But even if this book has not succeeded in overcoming one reviewer's scepticism, it has given him furiously to think! At the very least it has underlined the importance of the cult as the essential background to these chapters, and it is a work which no student of Deutero-Isaiah can afford to ignore. Misprints in references were noted on pages 42 and 44.

A. GELSTON (*Durham*)

*Biblical and Near Eastern Studies. Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor.* Edited by G. A. TUTTLE. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1978. Pp. xii + 300. Price not given.

THIS ill-assorted volume well illustrates the publishing confusion characteristic of the Festschrift as a genre. Dr LaSor represents that not uncommon combination, a background in popular fundamentalism (cf. the bibliography of his works, pp. 276ff.) united with an interest in biblical languages and near eastern studies. Among the writers of the 22 contributions, some are the regular writers without whom no conservative evangelical publication would be complete; but others come from quite different directions. The most important biblical scholar to contribute is Brevard Childs, but his essay is almost identical with a chapter in his recent *Introduction*. One essay is extremely long (J. Carmignac's 62 pages on medieval and modern translations of the Lord's Prayer into Hebrew); some others are very thin and brief. Some of the subjects are excessively technical, as with an essay on suffixes in Hurrian (!). Again, some of the essays are at best mediocre in quality, if not extremely poor. Biblical scholars will find useful ideas in M. H. Pope's note on a Ugaritic parallel to Exodus 7.19, G. T. Sheppard's essay on the understanding of Deuteronomy in Sirach, A. R. Millard's thoughts on 'Text and Comment', and B. Zuckerman's study of some points in the Job Targum. None of the contributions could be called theological.

JAMES BARR (*Oxford*)