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gives more meaning to the groaning and travailing of Creation when we see that the outcome was man. There is fresh interest in the elaborateness of the intricate economy of Nature when we understand part of it at least as the foundation which has rendered man possible. Moreover, there are discomfiting features in every man which become more intelligible when we recognize them as anachronisms inherited from a *distant* ancestry. The evolutionist interpretation makes both the good and ill in the mingled yarn of life more understandable.

Professor THOMSON is very cautious in his statements on the religious side. We think he might perhaps have gone even further than he has done on his own premises. But the very caution of a scientific man who believes is in the end an asset and will have more influence on those to whom science presents real difficulties in the way of belief.

Some Misunderstood Psalms.

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I.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

BAETHGEN regards the psalm as a community hymn, in which personified Israel speaks, and he assigns it to the Exile, when the people could regard their life as at an end, and themselves as beyond the reach of Yahweh (v.[6]). The only real support for this view is to be found in v.[5b], where the writer speaks of himself as a man destitute of power. No individual, Baethgen thinks, could describe himself as 'like a man,' though a community could. That would have force, if the speaker said he was like a man. It has none, since what he does say is that he has become like an impotent man and continues with the addition that he is already as good as dead.

Further, to regard this as a community psalm, admitted to the psalter by the priesthood in the period of the Exile, does not agree very well with the conception we are generally asked to form as to the attitude of that time. In the Exile it is as a rule supposed that the priests were diligently preparing the code which was to govern the life of the community, so soon as it had returned to Zion and reconstituted the temple worship. So confident were they of the future. Yet at the same time they adopted into their psalter a hymn which is unique in the national literature in that it is wholly destitute of hope. Did the priests, who were bending all their energies to foster a Zionist movement, damp it down in this fashion?

The hymn can only be construed as the utterance of an individual, who was suffering from severe (v.[8]), dangerous (v.[4]), and long-continued (v.[16]) sickness. He is so reduced that he is impotent and as good as dead (v.[5]), indeed, he can think of himself as already dwelling in Sheol (v.[7]). His sickness is regarded by himself and all his world as the evidence of God's peculiar anger (vv.[8. 17]). As such, it has made him תועבה, an object of horror (v.[9]), and therefore hateful to Yahweh and Israel.[1] He is shunned by all his fellows (v.[9]), even by his dearest friends (v.[19]). He is כלא, isolated (v.[10]); and this, like the similar word עצור in Jer 36[5], probably implies incapacity to take part in public worship. The entire description agrees, as Kittel recognizes, with leprosy, and with nothing else. Leprosy was regarded in old Israel as the proof of the Divine anger, and it brought exclusion from the civil and religious life of the nation.[2]

Further, the psalm is a prayer for delivery from sickness, and, as such, has analogies with several other psalms, notably with Ps 38. What, however, is most significant is, not its likeness to, but its distinction from, these other similar hymns. In the first place, the psalm has nothing to say about sin, either by way of confession or by way of prayer for forgiveness. The speaker believes that his sickness is the proof and the outcome of the Divine

[1] Cf. for the specific sense of the word, Dt *e.g.* 12[31] 14[3].

[2] For the law, cf. Lev 13[46]; for the practice, cf. 2 K 7[3] 15[5].

anger, but he does not even suggest that this anger must be due to his sin. Indeed, while he bows before the awful wrath of Yahweh, he does not ask after its reason. Accordingly his prayer is wholly confined to a petition for relief from his dreadful condition without mention of forgiveness.[1]

Again, the psalmist says nothing about the hostility or opposition of other men, a feature which is so common in other hymns of the type. He speaks, it is true, about his dreadful isolation, but he expresses no indignation nor even any surprise over the fact that men shun and abhor him. Their attitude appears as merely constituting one feature of the awful lot which in His inscrutable providence Yahweh has assigned to the man.

Thus the psalm takes us back to a time before men in Israel had connected calamity or sickness with guilt, and when they could and did still think of Yahweh's anger as an unaccountable mystery. For such an attitude we need to go back to 1 S 26^{19}, 2 S 6^{7} 24^{1}. And with this early date agrees the entire absence of belief in immortality, in the sense of ethical immortality. Only one verse (v.[11]) appears at the first glance to contain a vague hint of the possibility of the dead rising 'up' to praise God. In reality, however, the word contains no thought of immortality: it is the common word used about men, who rise up to offer thanksgiving, cf., *e.g.*, 78^{6}. Indeed, the psalm offers a singularly valuable contribution to our knowledge of the primitive thought of Israel about death. Sheol is the nether pit (vv.[5·7]), given over to darkness. It lies in the depths (v.[7]), the word which is used in Ex 15^{5} of the sea: and according to Job 26^{5}, Sheol is under the waters. In this land, remote from light and deep sunk beneath earth and sea, there is no acknowledgment of Yahweh. The dead have no relation to Him. The psalm goes so far as to say that they are beyond His יד—His reach (v.[6]). One might hesitate to conclude too much from this single phrase, were it not that the speaker goes on to ask whether God's wondrous doing finds any recognition in the darkness (v.[13]). Evidently he acknowledges God's power to do what He will, for his one appeal is that God should intervene to recover him from the very brink of the grave. But, if he should once pass that bourne, he enters a region where even this power can avail nothing. Now in this respect the psalm goes beyond what any other psalmist has pronounced on the subject, and holds a more primitive position than so early a prophet as Amos takes. For Amos (9^{2}) is able to declare in the name of Yahweh that, 'even if men dig into Sheol, thence shall my power (יד) take them.'

Yet, though the dead pass into a region which is beyond the reach of Yahweh, this only constitutes their supreme loss; it does not imply their non-existence. In order to be relegated to Sheol and fall outside the Divine care, they must continue to be. What the psalm presents is the primitive conception of an immortality which was destitute of all ethical content. It is the attitude of an earlier Israel before the rise of the prophetic teaching. Sheol is still neither heaven nor hell: it is the abode of all the dead, and, since it falls beyond the reach of Yahweh, it holds no reversal of earthly conditions, no promise of reward, nor fear of penalty.

I suggest that the psalm is the primitive cult-hymn for the use of lepers. Being ritually unclean and permanently so, they could not come near the congregation, nor take any part in festival or sacrifice. Their service was limited to a lonely and heart-broken prayer for mercy, for the uncovenanted grace of Yahweh. Even for these the cult of Israel found such place as it could. It might be that their prayer should move the Lord to lift His hand, to heal them, and to restore them to Israel. What the hymn reminds one of is the leper-slot in mediæval churches, through which these men, who were far off from any friend and whose only associate was darkness, might see in the elevation of the host the symbol of a mercy which might reach even to them.

Such a view serves to explain certain remarkable features in the psalm. Thus it accounts for the feature which has impressed every student of the hymn, its unrelieved gloom. Nowhere does there arise in it any gleam of hope. Now to a body of men, whose very existence was תועבה, an abomination to Israel and to Yahweh, the old cult of Israel with its conception of the physical character of holiness could offer no hope except the relief of utterance. It helped them to this, to say what was the burden of their tortured and lonely souls. But, before any hope could come to them, they must be restored from the disease which separated them from Israel and which was the evidence that the Divine anger rested on them. Hence we find the explanation of another feature in the psalm, viz that it does not pray for forgiveness, but for healing

[1] Contrast in this connexion such psalms as 51 and 130.

and restoration. Before the men could benefit from sacrifice or ritual-offering, they must be made capable of sharing in these things. And, in order to share in the blessings of Israel's worship, they must be healed of the leprosy which made them incapable of any share.

Again, there are two minor matters in the psalm which may thus be explained. In its heading it is described as 'belonging to the Korahites' and as a 'maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.' Apparently, then, it found its way into the greater psalter from two smaller collections, both of which were of Levitical character. Now it was the Levites who had charge of everything that concerned the leper (cf. Dt 28^4). And it also becomes easier to understand why this cult-hymn, which retained the primitive conceptions as to guilt, uncleanness and immortality, remained unchanged, with no effort to adapt it to the higher thought of the later period. It was a cult-hymn from the beginning, intended, not for the use of the whole community, but for the exclusive use of a small body of men. The hymns which were sung at the festivals for the use of all Israel were modified to meet the needs and the widening thought of those by whom they were used. But who would re-write the lepers' psalm? Nor was it easy to recast or to alter an utterance intended for such men. Before that could be done, it was necessary to break entirely with the fundamental conception which lies behind it all, the idea that holiness or capacity to join the congregation and approach the altar depended on physical things. And, though the new law with its new rubrics adopted much from the prophetic teaching, it never broke entirely with the idea that physical uncleanness could bring down the anger of Yahweh.

Literature.

THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

We sometimes say in a vague way that the Early Church did this or that, thought this or that. It is *a priori* unlikely that bodies of Christians so much alive as those of the early centuries remained everywhere and always of the same mind on the big practical questions of the Christian life. It is obvious, then, that any scientific study of the history of the early Christian attitude to the world must take account of the different conceptions prevailing at different periods of time, or in different geographical areas, or in both. In *The Early Church and the World* (T. & T. Clark; 21s.), Professor C. J. Cadoux, M.A., D.D., chooses the chronological principle of division, and makes a separate study of six successive periods, the first being the time of the ministry of Jesus, and the last the years from 250 till 313.

Speaking generally, the subjects studied under each period are the same. They include the Christian attitude to the world in general, to eschatology, to ethical principles, to the state, to war, to the sexual and family life, to property, to slavery and other social customs. The volume is the result of wide and accurate reading, careful and fruitful thought. Abundant references to authorities are given, but are in large measure relegated to footnotes as they ought to be.

Those who have been accustomed to think of early Church history as the study of metaphysical problems, the importance of which is not always obvious, and of the growth of ecclesiastical institutions, will learn from this vital volume to take a larger view of the subject. The problems of the early Christians were not always the same as ours; even where there is much similarity, the conditions in which they had to solve them were often widely different from those that face us. Yet it is all to the good that we should know the way they went, pay our tribute to the courage and wisdom they so often showed, learn to recognize just where and why they left the path that was marked out for them.

Among the very interesting sections of the volume is that which tells of the beginning (in the period 180–250) of the serious discussion by Church leaders of the extent to which Christians were debarred from the ordinary occupations of life. Could a Christian, for example, be an idol-maker, or an incense seller, or a school teacher, giving instruction on heathen deities, and could he keep the pagan holidays? To many missionaries,