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is the imaginative treatment of episodes based on sound scholarship. Here, again, though this experiment was more hazardous, the result is excellent. In addition to these merits we must mention the fine coloured plates which really illustrate the text and adorn it as well. With a book like this the final test is to 'try it out on the dog,' and if the verdict of a child of eleven is accepted then we must pronounce this a 'ripping' book. That is surely conclusive!

Canon Sell's commentary on the Old Testament is drawing near its conclusion. The spirit which inspired the earlier volumes is just as manifest in the latest, the commentary on *Exodus and Numbers*, published at Rs.1.12 by the S.P.C.K. Depository, Vepery, Madras. The Canon happily combines the critical with the expository faculty. He believes in the documentary analysis, and he sets forth the sources in a simple and eminently readable way; but he knows that of far more importance are the actual contents of the Biblical books, and it is on these that he spends his strength, as is fitting in a series intended for preachers. Exodus and Numbers are wisely placed together in this volume, as the intrusion of Leviticus robs the story of its continuity. The variety of these two books, containing as they do narrative, ritual, poetry, and tales of miracle, puts a commentator's power to the test, but Canon Sell, who keeps his eye always on the things that matter, emerges from the test successfully. There is an appendix on the Priestly account of the Tabernacle, which is in itself a valuable lesson on Higher Criticism. The Canon has the art of presenting controversial matter in an ironical spirit. The English clergy, who can obtain the book at the Church Missionary Society, Salisbury Square, London, would find it no less helpful than the Indian clergy, for whom the series is primarily designed.

Fifty-Two Short Sermons, ii., by Bishop Gilbert White, D.D. (S.P.C.K.; 6s. net), though not commended by an attractive title, ought to prove a most useful book. It is intended for the use of lay readers, and each sermon should occupy about a quarter of an hour in reading. The writer, being a Bishop of the Australian Church, has principally in view the needs of colonial life. The deplorable drift into paganism of fine young fellows on the outskirts of the Empire is one of the grave problems of to-day, and one might venture to suggest that here is a remedy of some value. Where an organized service is impossible, a sermon from this volume, read by an individual, or better still by a small group, Sunday by Sunday, would do much to keep the soul alive. The sermons are robust, interesting, and full of ripe Christian wisdom.

Some Misunderstood Psalms.

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III.

Psalm xx.

This psalm carries us back into the life of early Israel, for it is the ritual hymn which was employed at the opening of a campaign. Every nation has sought to put its army under the protection of the god of its national destinies, and Israel was not likely to form an exception. Nor did it, for Saul, before he went out to fight against the Philistines, gathered his army in order to offer a burnt-offering and peace-offerings (1 S $13^{9f.}$). Early Israel was less likely to omit some such form of religious service, because certain of its wars were called the wars of Yahweh, and the warriors, when on campaign, were consecrated or set apart to their task. The sacrifice, offered before going out to battle, may originally have served the double purpose of invoking the Divine protection, and of dedicating the fighting men.

This last feature, if it were ever present, has disappeared from our psalm. Yet the sacrifice not only remained, but formed the central rite in the ceremony. It is its presence as the culminating point in the whole, which explains the remarkable and otherwise inexplicable change in the hymn from the humble petition of vv.$^{1-5}$ to triumphant confidence in vv.$^{6-8}$. Without some reason for this

transition the sudden change remains a conundrum. The scene is the Temple at Jerusalem on the day before a campaign is opened. In the outer court the army, in whole or in part, is gathered in full war-array with the king at its head. Somewhat higher is the inner court, where the altar stands with the altar-fire ready. Facing the army, perhaps on the steps which led up to the inner court, is a choir of priests who chant the opening five verses of the hymn. Their chant is a solemn invocation of the help of Yahweh in the coming war, for the 'day of need' (v.[1]) is the day of peril in the actual battle. From the sanctuary behind them and from Zion may He send protection (v.[2]). And may He even now grant the assurance of that help by accepting the meal-offering [1] and burnt-offering (v.[3]). If Yahweh accept their gift and their self-devotion, they will triumph in victory and render fitting acknowledgment of His succour (vv.[4, 5]).

Here, in the earlier rite, it is probable that the king, advancing in person at the head of his army, brought his cereal and burnt-offering. Such royal offerings were customary at Jerusalem under the kingdom (2 K 16[15]), and on certain occasions the king himself officiated at the altar (1 S 13[9], 1 K 8[5, 22]). At least, whether by the king himself or by a priest, the sacrifices are brought; and a hush of expectation falls over the army, while the white-robed officiants carry out their functions. The culminating point in the ceremonial has been reached—will Yahweh accept the sacrifice, or will He, rejecting it, leave them to go without assurance of His help. Then, breaking the tense silence, a single voice is heard from the court: 'Now know I that Yahweh helps his anointed, he answers him from his holy heaven' (v.[6]). By some means the sacrifice has been proved acceptable, and men recognize that they go to battle with confidence in the Divine help.[2]

Yet vv.[6-8], which thus form an oracle, have their own history and receive explanation through comparison with earlier usage. When Ahab and Jehoshaphat reviewed their joint armies before the campaign against Ramoth-gilead, Zedekiah, at the head of a troop of prophets, promised them victory in the name of Yahweh (1 K 22). The incident, it is true, makes no mention of a sacrifice; but it brings the prophet into connexion with the opening of war, and that is elsewhere connected with a sacrificial rite. It is not improbable that, in the primitive period before such a rubric as our psalm became stereotyped, under the strain of the excitement at the thought of the coming war and at watching the ritual act, a prophet fell under the power of the Spirit and promised victory in Yahweh's name. When vv.[6-8] are construed as such an oracle, it is significant to note where all the emphasis lies. The weight is thrown on what Yahweh will do. Only His help can guarantee victory. While the king stands with his army at his back, and while that is as numerous and as well appointed as Judah can make it, confidence in the coming war comes from Yahweh alone. Even the saying that He will save His anointed wins peculiar meaning. For the king is more than the head of the people: as Yahweh's anointed, he is set over the nation for other ends than his own or theirs.

When the oracle has died away, the response of the army bursts out in the closing prayer of v.[9]: God save the king, and answer our prayer this day.[3]

Gunkel has drawn attention to the colourlessness of the psalm. It is full of touches which recall a more vivid, primitive life, but in itself it remains vague in the extreme. Thus there is no mention of any particular enemy. Yahweh is petitioned to further every plan of the king, but no special plan is mentioned. We are already far from earlier conditions. When Zedekiah promised victory, he said, 'Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper: for Yahweh shall deliver it into the hand of the king' (1 K 22[12]). When Miriam led her maidens out in a triumphal dance, she sang, 'Sing ye to Yahweh, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea' (Ex 15[21]). Instead of the concrete has come the general.

But the stereotyped character runs deeper. There is no longer room for the spontaneity of the prophet, roused by the presence of the army and the need of the hour. The oracle is supplied for

[1] Read מִנְחָתְךָ with LXX. Then the *minhah* and *'olah* correspond with Saul's sacrifice of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings.

[2] What the means of learning the Divine will may originally have been, whether the omen was drawn from the behaviour of the sacrificial victim or from the altar-fire, it is impossible to say with certainty. But the comparison of the Divine answer coming from heaven (v.[6]) with Elijah's saying, 'the God who answers by fire shall be God' (1 K 18[24]), seems to point in the direction of the sign coming through the altar-fire.

[3] So read with R.V. margin.

the occasion, and is chanted by one who has learned the words and their cadences beforehand. It has become possible to prescribe what the prophet is to say. There is no longer room for dubiety as to whether the sacrifice will be acceptable. It can be taken for granted that, since due precautions have been observed, the rite cannot fail of its effect. The hand of the ritualist is over all the hymn.

The theological attitude and language help to prove the same. Three times in the short hymn occurs the phrase, 'the name of'—our God, the God of Jacob, Yahweh our God. The use of the words, as Kittel suggests, gives the impression of their having been used as a battle-cry, much as the modern Muslim begins an undertaking *bismi-'llāhi*, in the name of God. And the selection of such a phrase serves to make more prominent that there is no trace of Yahweh going out at the head of Judah's army, either in person or through His surrogate, the ark. Instead, the petition asks that He send help, and, though He is still thought of as sending it from the sanctuary or from Zion, that is not because He is believed to have His dwelling there, for He hears and answers from His holy heaven. Evidently Yahweh is believed to have His abode in heaven. In the earliest battle-hymn (Jg 5) Yahweh still came from Seir to the help of His people. Yet men are conscious of His presence on earth, especially at certain holy places. And they are helping themselves out with the thought which is present also in Dt $12^{5.11}$, according to which God Himself no longer dwells on earth, but sends His name, His representative to the earthly sanctuary.

Everything points to the hymn being pre-exilic, since it dates from a period when the people still possessed a king who could lead his army to battle. Yet it must also belong to a time when the ritual was becoming stereotyped, and the theological thought was somewhat advanced. It may be set down to some date not far from the reign of Hezekiah. And then it becomes natural to notice the slight points of comparison between its thought and language, and those of Isaiah. In the psalm to count a burnt-offering fat (v.^{3} R.V.marg.) is a natural expression for regarding it as acceptable. The prophet (1^{11}) declares that Yahweh is satiated with the fat of fed beasts. What seemed to render it acceptable has no real efficacy. The psalm is able to say that neither chariots nor horses can ever ensure victory. Isaiah rises to one of the profoundest utterances of prophecy in declaring that 'the Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit' (31^3). To set the two alongside suggests a background for Isaiah's work. But it does much more. It shows the cult borrowing from the prophets. In form vv.$^{6-8}$ are modelled, like many other utterances in the psalter, on the prophetic oracle. But in idea and in ideals the influence is more profound. For the priesthood are using the higher conceptions of God's nature and character, which they owe to the prophets, in order to drive out of the cult-hymns the primitive elements which clung about the rites.

The hymn gives an interesting glimpse into the period of Israel's life, when prophet and priest were still working together and both were recognized as contributing to the nation's guidance. The central feature is still the old cult-practice with sacrifice and altar-fire. The great events of the nation's life are accompanied by the outward acts of worship. These outward things are generally the last which a religious people will suffer to disappear. But every outward act is accompanied by a rubric of the spoken word, which dwells on the meaning of the rite. What may be the purpose of the sacrifice which an individual or the congregation brings, what its efficacy shall be, what is the nature of Him to whom it is brought, what is the temper and attitude required from him who brings his gift—all these cannot find full expression in the mere ritual-act. But they find it in the cult-hymn, which accompanies each formal rite. And these cult-hymns, which largely compose our psalter, both in their form and in their content, betray the influence of the prophetic thought. The prophets were not able to abolish the cult-practice, even if they ever desired to do it. But it is their thought that influences the accompanying words, which are as essential to the worship as the outward rite. And they bring it about that, though the formal acts remain with little change, they are all changed, for they are supplied with a new meaning and intention.