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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

In the last week of September the British Society for Old Testament Study held its eighteenth meeting at Keble College, Oxford, and the interest of the occasion was greatly enhanced by the presence of many distinguished Old Testament scholars from other lands. In point of numbers as well as quality Germany was particularly well represented, both in the papers read and in the subsequent discussions. Professor Volz of Tübingen spoke on 'The God of Moses'; Professor Hempel, who has succeeded the late Professor Gressmann in the editorship of the 'Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft,' spoke on 'The Type of Piety peculiar to Old Testament Religion'; Professor Eissfeldt of Halle discussed Old Testament narratives; Professor Gunkel was represented in his absence by a paper—translated and read by Dr. T. H. Robinson—on 'A Re-investigation of the Chronology of the Psalms in the Light of Literary History'; and Professor Hans Schmidt of Giessen discussed certain Old Testament prayers.

Holland was represented by Professor Eerdmans of Leiden with a paper on Deuteronomy; France, by Professor A. Lods of Paris, who spoke on the rôle of magical ideas in Israelite mentality, and Professor Causse of Strasburg, who dealt with the development of the Jewish diaspora in the fifth century B.C.; while America was represented by Professor J. M. P. Smith of Chicago, who criticised the current translations of Gn 1^{1-3}. Britain was admirably represented by Mr. Driver and Dr. G. A. Cooke of Oxford, Professors Bevan and S. A. Cook of Cambridge, and others; and alike in the discussion of the religion, the literature, and the language the British scholars offered contributions which were entirely worthy of their distinguished guests. The representatives of each nationality felt that they had learned much from one another. The conference furnished a fine illustration of the power of scholarship and scientific interests to bring the nations together.

One of the most thought-provoking papers was that of Dr. W. O. E. Oesterley on 'Israel and its Religious Environment'—a paper which raised the problem of the relation of Israel's religious thought to that of other nations. It is pretty generally acknowledged that Israel adopted and assimilated, if not much, certainly something from the nations with which she came into contact. But is this all? As others influenced her, did she not also influence others?

That is the interesting problem to which Dr. Oesterley has also addressed himself in *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament* (S.P.C.K.; 6s. net). The discussion turns round the teaching of the Egyptian sage Amen-em-ope, which was first published four years ago by Sir Ernest Wallis Budge; and by his vivid account of this book and its historical implications Dr. Oesterley has rendered a valuable service to all students of the Old Testament. The book belongs to the

Wisdom Literature, it is marked by an extraordinarily high moral and religious tone, it has remarkable affinities with the Book of Proverbs, and very especially with 22^{17}–23^{14}, and it was possibly known to, and used by, Ben-Sira.

A few quotations will reveal its affinity with the Book of Proverbs both in style and in thought:

Better is a bushel which God giveth thee
Than five thousand wrongly gained.

Again:

When thou hearest good or bad (of people)
Put it aside as though thou hadst not heard it:
Place the good upon thy tongue,
But let the evil be hidden within thee.

The golden rule is set forth in this graphic picture:

Suffer not a man to be left behind in crossing the stream,
While thou hast room and to spare in the ferry.

Rich alike in faith and beauty is the saying which announces the joy of the life hereafter:

How happy is he who hath reached the West
And is safe in the hand of God.

That there was some kind of relationship between the Wisdom Literatures of the ancient Oriental world seems beyond all doubt. The following quotation from the words of Achikar irresistibly recalls a passage from Proverbs: 'Withhold not thy son from the rod if thou canst keep him from wickedness. If I smite thee, my son, thou wilt not die; and if I leave (thee) to thine own heart, thou wilt not live.' Surely this must be more than accidentally related to the words in Pr $23^{13f.}$:

Withhold not correction from the child,
For if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die.
Thou shalt beat him with the rod,
And shalt deliver his soul from Sheol.

The evidence justifies Dr. OESTERLEY in maintaining that there was much community of thought and religious conception between Israel and other nations in regard to things which used to be regarded as the unique possession of the former; and the explanation lies in the fact that the scribes of various countries, who would be naturally chosen to travel on diplomatic business to the courts of other lands, would have frequent opportunities of coming into contact with one another.

In particular, there was admittedly very considerable intercourse between Israel and Egypt, and in his third chapter Dr. OESTERLEY carefully traces these contacts from the time of Solomon, who married an Egyptian princess, to the time of Jeremiah, when Israelitish colonies are known to have been established in Egypt. This contact must have been peculiarly powerful in the time of Isaiah, when there was a definite pro-Egyptian party in Judah. The fact that it was primarily a political contact would not exclude the interchange of religious influences and ideas.

This general influence, however, is not sufficient to account either for the singularly close resemblance between Amen-em-ope and the section of Proverbs already referred to, or for the no less than remarkable ethical and religious quality of the teaching of the Egyptian sage. Indeed, so remarkable is it that Dr. OESTERLEY can 'assert without fear of contradiction that the like is not to be found elsewhere in the ancient literature of pre-Christian times, with the one exception of the Hebrew Scriptures.' It would be idle, he thinks, to expect any trace of the influence of the religion of Israel upon foreign religions until the teaching of the eighth-century prophets had had time to fructify. But after that it becomes both possible and probable.

Some Egyptologists, indeed, place the book much earlier—in the tenth century, or even the sixteenth—while others place it later, as late as the Persian or even the Greek period, but Dr. OESTERLEY decides for a date later than the eighth century rather than before it, and thus accounts for its singularly high tone. 'Assuming that the Egyptian book was written after the high ethical teaching of the prophets had taken root and fructified among the finer spirits of their nation, it is *à priori* more

likely that Amen-em-ope would be influenced by the Old Testament writers than *vice versa*.'

The possible or probable relationship of the Teaching of Amen-em-ope to the Old Testament is not exhausted by its demonstrable relationship to Proverbs. Dr. OESTERLEY shows that that relationship may extend to the Book of Deuteronomy and the Psalms, if not further. Certainly the analogies between the first psalm and the Egyptian book are many and curious; those with Ps 22 are not quite so convincing. Even in Proverbs there are differences as well as points of contact. If between the Egyptian proverb—

> It (*i.e.* riches) hath surely made for itself wings,
> As an eagle that flieth heavenwards,

and the Hebrew—

> They have made for themselves wings like geese,
> And have flown into the heavens,

the relationship is as good as undeniable, despite the characteristic difference, on the other hand, the Egyptian book has nothing, either good or bad, to say about women, who so frequently appear in the pages of Proverbs.

But some of the phenomena can only be explained on the assumption of direct, and not merely general, influence. In some cases it is beyond all reasonable doubt that the compiler of Proverbs, or the author of the section in question, copied directly from the teaching of the Egyptian sage, though this sage in turn appears to have been profoundly influenced by Hebrew writings and 'so impressed by their spirit and teaching that he absorbed them, and, perhaps unconsciously, reproduced them to some extent in his own writing.'

Doubtless the theory of Hebrew influence upon foreign religions can be carried too far. It is surely carried too far, for example, in Professor Duff's suggestion that Æschylus' 'Prometheus Vinctus' is simply a Greek version of Is 53. But when we remember the perpetual contact of Israel with foreigners all through the centuries from the days of Solomon, who was visited doubtless by wise men as well as women from other lands, to the days of Nehemiah, who held office of the Persian court, we can be quite sure that Israel not only borrowed but gave, and thus—often perhaps all unconsciously—fulfilled the missionary dream of the great unknown prophet of the Exile.

One of the urgent needs of the present day is to secure a synthesis of Christianity with the modern outlook. This is not merely the aim of Modernism, but of all thinking men of every school. If we are to present the gospel to our own generation we must do so in terms which it can understand and appeal to thoughts and convictions which it possesses. Every generation has been engaged on such a synthesis, even the second generation of Christians, even St. Paul himself; only to-day our conditions and our world view are our own. We have to reckon with an outlook created by modern science and modern psychology.

This problem will not be solved merely by a revival. In spite of the revivals of the past, competent and sympathetic observers detect a steady and gradual decay of religious influence in European civilization, and these revivals have not been able to check, or at least to stop, the decline. And the reason (one reason at least) is, according to Dr. W. R. MATTHEWS, that both the Evangelical and the Catholic revivals stood apart from the general advance of the human mind. We are told that there are signs of a new revival of religion. Let us hope that this is a true prophecy. But of one thing we may be sure, that it will not come until some sort of understanding has been arrived at with the modern mind. The old revivals arose in the lives of men sure of the basis of their faith in an infallible Bible. That basis has been shattered, and a revival can only come to us if and when we attain a similar certainty on a different basis. A revival cannot come to people who are disturbed and uncertain and vague about the fundamental facts of faith. Here is an additional reason for the necessity of the synthesis already referred to.

Dr. MATTHEWS, who possesses one of the acutest minds in the Church of England, faced this problem at the recent Birmingham Conference of the Modern Churchmen, and his essay is published in the current number of *The Modern Churchman*. Most of his paper is occupied with an analysis of the two terms in the suggested synthesis, Christianity and the modern outlook. What is Christianity? That would seem an easy question to answer, but, as he points out, there are two views of it. One is that of the Liberal Protestant who says that Christianity is the faith of Jesus, consisting of two master thoughts, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. Dr. MATTHEWS rejects this view on the obvious ground that Christianity from the earliest days has been not the faith of Jesus, but a faith *in* Jesus.

The second view is that Christianity is an experience which he describes as consisting of four things. It is (1) an ethical monotheism, a faith in God, the Supreme Value and the Sustainer of all true values. (2) Its salient peculiarity is that it has found God in Christ, who claims not only our loyalty but our worship. (3) It is a religion of redemption. This is the secret of its continual influence on the world and on the life of man. And (4) it is a fellowship. It is deeply hostile to the idea that the life of the spirit is one of solitude. A Christian outside the Church is an anomaly. A Christian who does not feel his need of the Church is an anomaly.

But we must relate this experience to all that we otherwise believe to be true. We must harmonize our Christian experience with the knowledge of Reality that comes to us from modern knowledge. And so we turn to the modern outlook. The modern world has been made by science, and what dominates us to-day and creates our atmosphere is the scientific method which is inductive, a reasoning from observed facts to conclusions.

There are three characteristics of the modern view created by this inductive method. One is its attitude to authority. It will not bow to authority in the older sense. The only authority it recognizes is that of fact and experience. And so we cannot come to the modern mind with an infallible authority *ab extra*. But, when we base our appeal on the facts of experience and on the massive and persistent phenomena of religious life, we present a challenge which the modern mind has to face.

Further, the modern mind does not regard with favour fixed and comprehensive views of the universe. And thus it finds no attraction in a theology which forms a closed and completed system. It can understand an attitude that confesses ignorance, and, basing itself on experience, advances slowly to an ever deeper insight. Modernist theologians are often accused of vagueness, but no answer is better than a wrong answer, and a vague suggestion is often more spiritually fruitful than a dogmatic assertion which closes the avenue to truth.

The third characteristic of the modern outlook is its acceptance of the principle of continuity. The evolutionary conception of the world is one application of this principle. And here one sees the signs of a religious synthesis in the gradual approach of an interpretation of evolution which regards it as creative and teleological. This bids fair to deepen and purify our conception of God and of His relation to the world.

Dr. MATTHEWS does not devote much space to the task of relating these two terms, but what he says is suggestive. He finds that in all its four 'moments' the conception of Christianity will be affected. Evolution will, as indicated, enrich our faith in God, though much obsolete metaphysics will have to be given up. Redemption, again, will have to be approached and interpreted afresh by the avenue of psychology. The Christian fellowship has to be related to the modern social consciousness. But of one thing we may be sure. We do not want a new religion. We believe in the finality of the Christian gospel. Yet this message has to be related continuously to the whole mind of men. This synthesis will not be easily made. Nor will it ever be complete. And what we have to do is to preach the gospel (which is *the* answer to the problem of this enigmatic world) as something not aloof and incomprehensible, but as growing out

of the life and thought of our day as their completion and their crown.

Not even Dr. Gerald H. RENDALL, with all the will in the world, can throw light on Ja 3^6, a standing crux of commentators. In the Revised Version the verse reads: 'And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell.' The last clause (φλογιζομένη ὑπο τῆς γεέννης) has probably for its background in the mind of the writer the actual figure of burning in the valley of Hinnom. Yet, as Dr. RENDALL remarks in his work on *The Epistle of St. James and Judaic Christianity* (reviewed in another column), the association of Gehenna with the tongue seems strange and unnatural.

The meaning of the penultimate clause is still more obscure (φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως) 'Setting on fire the wheel of nature (R.V.), the course of nature (A.V.), the round circle of existence (Moffatt)'—what does it mean? In favour of the rendering, 'the round circle of existence,' partial parallels may be cited from Orphic or Neo-Platonic or Pythagorean language, but these throw no real light on the difficulty. Nor do the wheels in Ezekiel's vision help us, nor the idea of cycles of metempsychosis, nor the fact of the ignition of chariot wheels by friction with the axle.

Dr. RENDALL has searched in vain for clues from medical or mystical or metaphysical diction (Aristotelian, Platonic, or Neo-Platonic), and he thinks it would be hard to improve on A.V. 'course of nature,' whatever that—as he adds—may mean.

'More or less as a counsel of despair,' he says, 'I suggest that ὀπόν for τροχόν would carry out the opening metaphor and give coherence to the whole. The word is not Biblical, but is used metaphorically of the sap and vigour, the vital forces, for example of youth (ἥβης); the meaning would then be that the tongue, like a fire igniting a mass of wood, sets on fire and burns up all the vital juices that contribute to the making of man, and along the charred embers play the flickering flames of Gehenna.'

What may be urged in favour of such a rendering? It preserves for γένεσις that sense of man's natural and spiritual growth which it has in 1^{23} (R.V., 'beholding his natural face in a mirror'), besides continuing the previous figure; and it gives intelligible expression to the sense imputed to ὁ τροχός as 'the impelling power of human nature and life.'

And what may be urged against it? A corrupt text is presupposed. The emendation consists in the substitution for ὁ τροχός of an unusual word. If the unfamiliar ὀπόν were misread as ὄχον, why should it not have remained at that? Further, do not 'the flickering flames of Gehenna' play upon the tongue itself, and not upon the 'charred embers' of the body?

Montanism.

LIVING ISSUES FOR TO-DAY.

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THIS is a discussion of Montanism, not a history. The mere history is exceedingly obscure. More interesting and important is it in any case to try to estimate Montanism from the *terminus ad quem* than painfully to trace it out from the *terminus a quo*; to get the logic of it rather than the chronology; to grasp the real significance of it which only Time made clear, rather than to record the swaying to and fro of opinions regarding it from the second to the fourth century.