
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

WITH every fresh book that is published, the problem of the Psalter grows more perplexing; and the improbability of reaching results which will be universally regarded as 'assured' will certainly not be diminished by Professor R. H. KENNETT's discussion of the problem in his recently published collection of *Old Testament Essays* (Cambridge University Press; 12s. 6d. net). The chapter which deals with 'The Historical Background of the Psalms,' and which covers no less than a hundred pages, is much the longest and most elaborate in the book. The whole argument is marked by the wide knowledge, and the conclusion by the daring and originality, which we have long been accustomed to expect from the Cambridge Professor.

For in the realm of Old Testament investigation Dr. KENNETT goes his own way, which is not seldom a lonely way. Besides the chapter on the Psalms, this volume contains chapters on The Jahvistic Document, Ezekiel, The Jewish Priesthood, The Altar Fire, The Day of Atonement, and The Origin and Development of the Messianic Hope; and on every one of these themes Professor KENNETT has something unconventional to say. Any one who will contrast, for example, his treatment of the Messianic Hope with that of Canon STOTT in the volume 'From Abraham to Christ,' which has appeared almost simultaneously, will see how little Dr. KENNETT cares to tread the beaten path.

A writer who defends the thesis that the Jahvist document, or at any rate the first draft of it, was written between 621 and 604 B.C. as a counterblast to Josiah's reformation, that the Elohist document was drawn up about 650 or perhaps somewhat later for the benefit of the heterogeneous population of Samaria who had then been brought to accept the religion of Jehovah, and that the date of the Chronicler is late in the second century B.C., is certainly not lacking in courage.

There are other equally challenging statements, which will give readers of a conventional type considerable food for thought. Perhaps the most startling is that made in the chapter on The Altar Fire in connexion with the story of Elijah's sacrifice. It is this: 'There is no difficulty in supposing that at this ancient sanctuary (*i.e.* Carmel) the altar fire had been habitually kindled by the same method as the altar fire at Jerusalem, and that a supply of naphtha was kept on the spot for the purpose. This method may have been unknown to the Tyrian priests; or, if it was known, and they had naphtha available, there may have been something in the atmospheric conditions which caused them to fail. We need not suppose that Elijah would have been very scrupulous in the means he employed to bring about the victory of Jehovah over Baal; nevertheless it must be remembered that he doubtless sincerely believed that fire kindled by means of a mirror reflecting the sun's rays was really fire from heaven.'

It is hardly necessary to say that Dr. KENNETT is not here drawing upon his imagination, but that he rests his case upon an important but little known passage in 2 Mac 1^{19-36}, which expressly says that on another occasion, after the Exile, the altar fire had been kindled by 'a thing which Nehemiah and they that were with him called Nephthar, which is by interpretation, Cleansing; but most men call it Nephthai.'

We therefore approach the discussion on the Psalter with high expectations of an unconventional treatment, and assuredly we are not disappointed. The conclusion, towards which the whole argument converges, is that there is no valid reason against the theory that the Psalter, as we have it, is a hymn-book, or rather a collection of hymn-books, belonging to the Maccabæan age, and that the date of its compilation may be roughly set about 130 B.C.

In another essay the case for the late date is thus succinctly summarized. 'The three main divisions of the Psalter, namely, Book I., Books II. and III., and Books IV. and V., were all compiled in the second century B.C., the first two collections being originally *synagogue* collections subsequently taken over by the Temple. I believe that Book I. emanated from a Judæan synagogue (or synagogues) and that the Elohistic recension of Books II. and III. (with the exception of Psalms 84–89) is due to this collection of Psalms having been written down in a district in which the population was largely heathen, and where there was a constant danger of the profanation of the sacred name by the heathen.'

In defence of this thesis Dr. KENNETT displays much originality. It is universally admitted that Books II. and III. represent an Elohistic recension. Dr. KENNETT asks at what period that recension finds its most natural explanation. He reminds us that, while Malachi and the Priestly Code have no hesitation in writing the *tetragrammaton* (יהוה), by the time the LXX translation of the law was made אדני had come to be substituted in pronunciation for יהוה: in other words, the practice seems to have originated sometime between the middle of the fifth and the beginning of the third century B.C., and it is doubtless to be connected with the advent of the Hellenism introduced by Alexander (332 B.C.).

But though between 332 and 270 B.C. the Jews had ceased to pronounce the *tetragrammaton*, through fear that it might be irreverently pronounced by the heathen who had heard it on Jewish lips, there is no evidence that they had as yet any scruple in writing it. That scruple would only emerge when Jewish books were in danger of profanation by the heathen. When was that? The only period within our knowledge, argues Dr. KENNETT, when Jewish books were exposed to the peril of destruction was the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175–165 B.C.).

The difference between Book I. where יהוה is freely used, and Books II. and III. where אלהים predominates, is not due to a difference of date, but of locality. The psalms in the former collection were compiled for the synagogues *in Judæa*, where, from 165 B.C., the worship of Jehovah was a *religio licita* and the Scriptures were in general safe from profanation; those in the latter collection reflect the situation of the Jews *outside Judæa*—in Galilee, Idumæa, etc.—where, from 168 to 141, any Jewish Scriptures would be in danger of being profaned by the heathen.

There are psalms, Dr. KENNETT admits, such as Ps 23, which might have been composed at any date of a period covering several centuries; but, he contends, wherever there is an unmistakable reference to some historical background, this reference can be explained without doing any violence to the language from the known history of the second century B.C. He proceeds to substantiate this thesis by an examination, covering seventy-two pages, of practically all the psalms.

This part of the discussion will be scrutinized with suspicious care by those who are reluctant to believe that the whole of the Hebrew Psalter can be accommodated within a narrow space of

the second century B.C., and, skilful and plausible as the plea may be, they will rise from it, we fear, unconvinced. Take a few illustrations. Ps 15, we are told, would seem to have been composed in or shortly after December 165 B.C. Who is to have the custody of the recovered Temple? Not such people as Jason or Menelaus, but those who are loyal to the religion of Jehovah. But a psalm emphasizing the moral aspect of religion might surely have been composed at any time within or after the great period of prophecy. Naturally Ps 24 is also relegated to the Maccabæan period, to which 'every word of it is absolutely suitable.' Doubtless; but equally suitable to many another period.

Ps 40, with its apparent disparagement of sacrifice, 'is perfectly explicable in the mouth of those who are prevented from taking part in the prescribed ritual of the Temple,' but equally explicable as an utterance of the pre-exilic period, as indeed Dr. KENNETT practically admits when he says it is *based* on teaching of the great pre-exilic prophets. Again, Ps 46 'belongs apparently to the conclusion of the struggle about 141 B.C.,' Ps 51 'must be dated in the latest phase of the Maccabæan struggle.' And thus Dr. KENNETT pursues his intrepid way through the Psalter to a conclusion which would be vigorously repudiated by many of the best Old Testament scholars, who are becoming increasingly convinced that there is not a little pre-exilic material in the Psalter.

Dr. KENNETT conducts his difficult argument with skill, but we should be sorry indeed to find ourselves driven to accept his conclusions: for that would mean that nearly a millennium had passed, leaving practically no record in sacred song of a religious experience admittedly unique. We find it impossible to believe that a people so poetically gifted, even in the eleventh or twelfth century B.C., as the Song of Deborah shows the Hebrew people to have been, and so religiously endowed as to produce the incomparable prophets of the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries B.C.—a people, too, so tenacious of the religious treasures of the past—should have left no trace of the songs in which for centuries they had lifted up their hearts to God.

Last year Congregationalists held a Conference at Oxford to discuss the basis of faith. The topic selected was Authority, and it may be remembered that, for outsiders at least, the results of the discussions were singularly meagre and unsatisfactory. The report of the Conference gave one sympathetic reader the impression of men groping in a dim twilight; the general effect on the outside lay world cannot have been very heartening.

Another Conference has been held in the same place this year, and the same subject was again considered. We are reminded of an incident that took place in Edinburgh about forty years ago, when secularism was rampant and aggressive throughout the country. An Edinburgh minister of some eminence as a preacher engaged in open debate with prominent secularists, and came off second best. Professor Calderwood of the Moral Philosophy Chair in the University was in the chair, and at the close intimated that a second meeting would be held the following Sunday, and that he himself would take up the cudgels for Christianity. The debate took place before a crowded audience, and Calderwood, who was an ideal man for the purpose, overwhelmed his antagonists both by his knowledge and his readiness of speech.

The story is recalled because something similar has happened at Oxford. This second Conference has been in every way far more satisfactory than the first. For the most part the speakers were clearer in their statements, and far more confident and positive in their attitude. Those who read the report which appears in *The Congregational Quarterly* for October will find some real help in the papers. Some of the names are new to us; others are those of well-known Congregationalist leaders, like Dr. Vernon BARTLET, Dr. SELBIE, and Dr. Sydney CAVE. But all the papers are good, and one gains the impression that the Church has something definite and valuable to give to the world.

The four sources of authority are discussed in turn, the Bible, the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Science. So far as the Church is concerned it was made perfectly clear that Congregationalists have no use for authority in the form in which it is interpreted in the Roman Church—as a power to compel thought and require submission. The claim of any one Church to such authority is disproved by history, and it is equally disproved in practice, for the Spirit of God has never in the Christian era been confined to one channel: a theory of authority which obliged one-half of Christendom to unchurch the other stands self-condemned. Attempts to justify it in the end impugn the integrity of the Holy Spirit. In addition to that the claim of one Church to indefectibility and infallibility sounds ridiculous in face of patent facts.

As an infallible authority the Bible cannot claim any similar allegiance from Christian minds. This was a matter of general agreement at the Conference. The reasons are obvious to educated minds. They are almost taken for granted at such a Conference. The Bible, as a record of a revelation of God, is a human medium, with all the imperfections that attach to everything human. It is also the record of a growing revelation, and it is impossible at any stage short of the highest (in Christ) to say of any stage of the revelation, 'this is the final truth about God.' And so the Bible is put aside as a final and infallible authority. Few scholars will question this conclusion. But it has to be remembered that vast multitudes outside such a Conference are still unenlightened as to the facts which compel the conclusion, and if the Bible is to be set aside as a final authority, its true claims to our reverence and faith must be made clear to the ordinary religious mind.

If the Church and the Bible do not give us the authority we seek, is that to be found in ourselves? One of the speakers said that 'our ultimate authority in religion is found within and not without. We can accept as authoritative for us only those facts or truths which win the assent of the reason and conscience and are vindicated in history and experience.' But the question at once arises, 'Who is to decide what truths are thus authenticated?' And it must be admitted that the speaker found little support in the Conference. It is true that we can accept as authoritative only what commends itself to our reason and experience. But, on the other hand, there are times when the inner light is darkened—such times as those of deep distress or disaster. It is well to emphasize the subjective side of authority, because reason and conscience are good watch-dogs, and nothing ought to settle in our minds that they do not pass. But we must not, as it was pointed out, emphasize this subjective side to the prejudice of the claims of a real objective authority.

And this brings us to the question: Is Jesus Christ the final and absolute authority? Nothing in the Conference was so really satisfying as the way in which this question was handled and the conclusion to which it led. It was discussed in two papers, one by Dr. Sydney CAVE, the other by the Rev. T. C. RAE, a minister at Norwich. Dr. CAVE is shy of the word 'authority.' He does not seem to like it. He prefers to speak of 'revelation,' and he says that when we speak of Christ as Divine 'we are not so much assenting to a statement of a creed as affirming a way of life; claiming that the values for which He stood are eternal and Divine; that God is as He was; that the holy love His life and death reveal is the final secret of God's character and rule, and so must be the standard by which we face our problems.' This is not altogether satisfactory, and does not touch the crucial point.

The Rev. T. C. RAE was more robust, and his paper seems to us to be one of the best read at the Conference. 'Christian history bears witness,' he writes, 'with unwavering voice to the fact that men and women, in every age, have been so conscious of the constraint of Christ, that He has become for them the regulative authority of their every thought and deed. . . . Subjecting themselves to Christ's authority, men find themselves in the *Divine* presence and entering into an ever-deepening knowledge of God . . . the conscious-

ness of Jesus also vindicates the claim that in Him men meet the authority of God.' For this writer Christ is the Authority we seek, and the final one. And he does justice to the element of subjectivity that must enter into any such relation of submission when he points out that 'before an authority can be valid for me it must be experienced as an inner power.' The authority of God is the authority of constraint, for it exists to command the will and the heart. 'Such authority, therefore, can be tested only by its power to achieve its purpose.'

It would not be too much to say that this was the main positive conclusion of the Conference. That is why it was so much more successful than its predecessor. It is true that the mind is left putting questions. We may ask, for example, which picture of Christ is to constrain us, for there are at least three in the New Testament—the Synoptic, the Pauline, and the Johannine. The answer to this is given by implication in more than one paper. The Living Christ is the final authority for us, authenticated in His claims and in the experience of the ages. Another question that rises in the mind is, Can we be sure that the picture of Christ presented to us is historical? This question was not raised in the Conference, but it was repeatedly answered by anticipation. The picture of Jesus is self-authenticating. Look at Him, study Him, face Him, and He reveals Himself.

Such conferences as this recent one are bound to be fruitful when so positive a note is struck, and when we are assured that the Church has a great message for the need and the hunger of men. Miss Mary GLOVER, who writes some impressions of it in *The Congregational Quarterly*, says that it left her with a quickened sense that we may be standing upon the threshold of a wonderful time. Science and scholarship have both cleared the way to God. No Christian generation since the first has seen Jesus of Nazareth as clearly as we may see Him. We have only begun to understand Him; but we realize that in this present year of our Lord, 'God is doing things.'

An interesting, useful, and suggestive, if also provocative, book appears under the name of Mr. E. E. KELLETT, author of 'The Story of Myths.' It is entitled *A Short History of the Jews* (Routledge; 7s. 6d. net), and its aim is to give a *rational* account from the standpoint of modern Old Testament criticism of the development of Jewish history, beginning with Moses and ending with the reduction of Jerusalem by Titus. 'We know roughly why Athens rose and why she fell; why Greece was able to resist Persia but could not resist Philip of Macedon; why Rome thrust back Hannibal but succumbed to Alaric. And, unless we discover the *natural* reason why the Israelite people resisted Philistia but fell to Nebuchadnezzar, and why, though scattered by Titus, it still lives in conscious unity though dispersed, we may have been reading an interesting tale, but we certainly have not been reading history.'

It is an elaborate Introduction, considering the compass of his sketch of Jewish history, that Mr. KELLETT supplies. It contains a survey of the nature of the sources from which the succeeding narrative is drawn, and also a preliminary outline study of the story of Israel, especially as it bears on early Jewish literature. His apology for the amount of repetition thus involved might be regarded as merely ingenious were it not also true and convincing: 'If brevity is the soul of wit, repetition is the heart of understanding.' It is a saying which the teacher or preacher would do well to remember. Many a good exposition misses its mark because the expositor knows not, or will not condescend to employ, the art of repetition.

A feature of the book, which adds much to its interest, is the large use Mr. KELLETT makes of literary and historical parallels from English and classical literature. For example, speaking of the writer of the Book of Judges, he finds a true parallel to him not in Tacitus, still less in Thucydides, and not even in Plutarch: 'Could we find an Icelandic Saga, based on oral tradition, in which the Sagaman sought to convey an ethical or religious lesson, we should have nearly the exact parallel we wish.

Nearest of all is perhaps one of those Lives of Saints, such, for example, as Eddi's "Life of St. Wilfred," in which the pious writer's aim is only secondarily to tell the literal truth, and primarily to exalt the merits of his hero and further the great cause of the Church, with which he believes the good of his country to be inextricably bound up.'

Mr. KELLETT's critical position is well illustrated in the foregoing words, and two further quotations will serve still further to illustrate it. The first may be taken as a reminder that when criticism—even advanced criticism—has done its work, a substantial core of historical truth may remain in the Biblical narrative: 'Moses was rightly regarded by Israel as its true founder; and few more influential men have ever been born into the world than this half-legendary leader of a small wandering clan. So great was his name among his own people that they ascribed to him a long and most complicated set of laws, and the composition of five volumes to which they paid a reverence even more profound than that yielded by Islam to the Koran. This reverence, despising the dust of death and the darkness of centuries, is sufficient to prove the greatness of the man.'

The second quotation may be taken as a reminder that even advanced criticism does not necessarily stand for radical conclusions, and incidentally as illustrative once more of the wide sweep of Mr. KELLETT's net in its search for literary and historical parallels. Of David the outlaw and warrior he writes: 'That such a man should also have been a poet—that in the midst of these scapes and perils he should have composed any of these Psalms which have been ascribed to him, might seem utterly impossible. To Westerners, indeed, it is so. We can hardly picture William Wallace, during his flight from Falkirk, as making an elegy on his misfortunes, or the Black Prince, during the pursuit after Poitiers, as chanting a pæan of triumph. But the Eastern mind is different.'

Then comes the reference to which we have been leading up: 'We think of Babar, in one of his many flights from murderous foes, escaping into a cave, watching the enemy ride harmless by, and then sitting down to compose a lyric in the language and manner of Hafiz. There is much in the great Mogul Conqueror that reminds us of David; and we can only wish that the resemblance had been yet closer, and that the Hebrew, like the Mohammedan, had left us his own authentic memoirs.'

Nathan Söderblom.

By Professor M. Tor Andrae, D.D., University of Stockholm.

If it is fortunate for a country that its reputation abroad depends upon the most typical and genuine representatives of the race, then Sweden and its churches may consider themselves fortunate indeed that the Archbishop of Upsala is one of the small number of Swedes of to-day who have a place amongst international personalities. For he is a genuine Swede to the depths of his being.

Hätsingland, a very old district of Sweden, the land of the white high-towering birches, and of the dark blue lofty mountains, is his native land. 'Hätsingland,' thus he writes himself, 'has two landscapes in the grand style. One is the valley of the river Ljusnan. In its ceaseless movement the river is symbolical of the activity and energy which characterize the inhabitants of this well-to-do district. For timber, which is here one of the principal sources of revenue, the river is an indispensable roadway. The second great landscape is the basin of the Dellenseen, a world in itself, which maintained an isolated existence longer than the rest of the district round about Ljusnan, a world whose dreamy stillness lends its impress to the people.'

The family to which Söderblom belongs springs from peasant stock in the valley of Ljusnan. His remarkable activity, zeal, and energy might thus be regarded as an inheritance from the land of the