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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

BIBLICAL and theological science in this country has been greatly enriched by the publication of studies which were originally presented to the world as a course of lectures delivered on famous foundations. To name only two, the publication of the Bampton and the Gifford Lectures is always eagerly awaited by those who are genuinely interested in the progress of theological thought. The Schweich Lectures are not yet so well known, and their sphere is a more restricted one—they are confined to some aspect of Biblical archæology; but the twenty-three volumes which have already appeared constitute an imposing series, and to any real student of the Bible, and especially of the Old Testament, they are indispensable.

The latest addition to the series is, in a way, unique. It is entitled *Ancient Hebrew Social Life and Custom as indicated in Law, Narrative, and Metaphor* (Milford; 6s. net); the lectures were delivered in 1931 by the late Canon R. H. KENNETT, and their publication has been supervised by Professor F. C. BURKITT. Their uniqueness consists in this, that, while earlier volumes have sometimes travelled beyond Israel for their main theme or their illustrative material—for example, to Egypt, Babylon, the Arabs, the Samaritans, the Hittites—this volume confines the discussion rigidly to Israel and the Old Testament, leaving out of account, on the one hand, modern customs, and, on the other, discoveries of archæological investigation.

At least that was the lecturer's aim; fortunately he has not been entirely faithful to it. For out of his ample store of knowledge of both ancient and modern customs he lets occasional side-lights fall on his central theme. For example, in illustrating Nathan's parable, in which the lamb drinks out of the poor man's cup, he tells us that 'even to-day guests who partake of the courteous Bedouin hospitality may be offered milk from the vessel out of which he has seen the goat drinking a few minutes before.'

He also offers many modern analogies. If the witch of Endor had a fatted calf in her house, 'a like state of affairs has lasted in Irish cabins till recent times.' The mixed provender referred to in Is 30^{24} suggests that grape-skins, etc., used in the making of wine, were sometimes mixed with the provender, 'somewhat as brewers' "grains" are nowadays given to cows.' Illustrating the dances of the girls at Shiloh by the May Day dances which innocently perpetuate a pagan rite, he remarks that 'there is a strong probability that both the Shiloh maidens and the Thanet little girls were alike celebrating something that did not originate in mere *joie de vivre*.' On the difficulty of ascertaining by etymology the exact meaning of the various items enumerated in Is 3^{18-23} of a Hebrew woman's articles of dress and toilet, he facetiously comments thus: 'It would be interesting to see the conclusions at which an expert etymologist would arrive, if with nothing to guide him but etymology

he attempted to interpret a catalogue of an Oxford Street or Regent Street drapery firm!' Again, 'the châtelaine of a mansion, so charmingly described in the Book of Proverbs (31), would have stood no nonsense, nor would any one have attempted it with her.'

The aim of the lecturer was to sketch the life of Hebrew men and women from birth to the grave, and to give an account of the various activities in which they might engage. This aim has been achieved with extraordinary success and on the basis of an almost incredibly minute acquaintance with every detail and allusion, however incidental, in the Old Testament. There must be many hundreds of references in the footnotes which justify the statements in the text, but they are woven together with almost miraculous skill into a continuous whole. Here are two illustrations of the skilful combination to which we refer. We are told that 'a few fortunate people have wells in their courtyards. The water from such wells appears to have been drawn by means of a rope and pulley.' The first statement is supported by 2 S $17^{18f.}$, and the second by Ec 12^{6}. As a second illustration may be cited the statement that arrows which were sharpened and rubbed smooth were, at least sometimes, poisoned. The first two statements rest on Is 5^{28} and 49^{2}, and the third on Job 6^{4}. Only a consummate master could have woven together so skilfully allusions so distant and disparate from one another.

The tabulated subjects of the lectures, numerous as they are, really give little idea of the wealth of information they convey. The first lecture, while professedly confined to birth, early years, and marriage, deals, for example, with naming, circumcision, weaning, education, human sacrifices, betrothal, concubinage. The second lecture, besides the intimate discussion of houses, furniture, food, meals, banquets, clothing, mourning, and death, deals in detail with the fire and water supply, beds, tables, pots, cups, lamps, the grinding of corn, milk, baking, vegetables, wine, oil, sandals, hairdressing, music, dancing, and sundry other items. The themes which come up for discussion in the third lecture, which deals chiefly with occupations, are hunting, agriculture, land division, workers in wood and metal, goldsmiths and silversmiths, mechanics, barbers, fullers, perfumers, physicians and apothecaries, jewellers and workers in precious stones, and administration of justice and law. The lectures together constitute a most vivid transcript of Hebrew life, its training and sport, its trades and professions, its habits and customs: their purpose is not to raise or settle problems, but to furnish information and thus to revivify that ancient life.

We are told, for example, that the reason why *seven* children were commonly regarded as the maximum number that a woman might be expected to bear is connected with the long period of weaning which was habitual in the ancient Hebrew world. We are reminded that though little is said, more is implied, about mother love, and to the four passages given in proof might be added the immortal story of Rizpah in 2 S 21. Those—if there be any—who still think that Jephthah did not contemplate a human sacrifice as an expression of his gratitude for victory are justly reminded that 'fatted calves do not ordinarily go out of the door of a house to meet a returning conqueror.'

On the vexed question of writing it would be possible to differ from Dr. KENNETT. He thinks that the presence of a *sôphēr*, or 'secretary,' at the court may be reasonably taken as suggesting that reading and writing were not necessarily royal accomplishments. But the modern State, too, has its secretaries, home and foreign, whose existence, however, would hardly justify the corresponding inference. Reading and writing, if not necessarily royal accomplishments, would be still less universal accomplishments, and it is very doubtful, according to Dr. KENNETT, whether most children learned to write. But the allusion in Jg 8^{14}—a passage to which he refers, but to which perhaps he hardly allows sufficient weight—to a lad, caught quite casually, who was able to *write down* certain names (with inexcusable conservatism, the R.V. retains the wholly misleading translation 'describe') seems to point to a more general acquaintance

with the art of writing than it has been usual to accept for that early period. Quite delightful, however, and far from improbable, is the suggestion that the oft-quoted words 'precept upon precept, line upon line' (Is 28^{10}), cleverly rendered by Whitehouse 'law on law, saw on saw,' may be intended to recall a spelling-lesson at school: thus צ *ṣadhe* ו *waw* spell צו; ק *ḳoph* ו *waw* spell קו—these words suggesting a connexion with the words for 'filth' and 'vomit' in v.^{8}.

For once we have a book on the Old Testament which can be read with ease, profit, and pleasure, by one who has not even a bowing acquaintance either with Hebrew or Old Testament criticism. True, there are one or two points of which the student of Hebrew will take note—that *gibbor* is not necessarily a warrior but may at times mean 'a gentleman,' and that *naḥal* does not mean 'to inherit.' Practically the only critical reference in the book is one from which we feel inclined to dissent: it is this—that 'Samuel's rebuke of the people for asking to have a king is clearly the work of one who perhaps belonged to the age of Nehemiah, and who desired that the government should be in the name of the priestly class.' But the book—which is furnished, by the way, with an elaborate and admirable index of both passages and subjects—postulates, as we have said, no knowledge of criticism or chronology. Though Hebrew life was modified in the course of centuries, as all life must be, both by internal progress and by the impact of alien influences, there is about it a curious and undeniable continuity: and the elements of which that 'fairly persistent culture' was composed are here set forth as only a scholar who was complete master of this material could exhibit them.

Twenty-two years before the delivery of these lectures Dr. KENNETT had already, in his capacity as Schweich lecturer, delivered a course on the Book of Isaiah, in which his fresh and unconventional criticism was applied to some of the most difficult literary and historical problems on the field of the Old Testament. It is all to the good that this later book, in virtue of its broad human interest, will appeal beyond the scholar to the man in the street and in the pew.

'Three Essential Elements in All Religion' is the heading of a useful section of President W. Douglas MACKENZIE'S recent volume entitled *The Christ of the Christian Faith*.

The first element is the sense of human need or the desire for some form of good, physical, moral, or spiritual; the second is the conception of some object Divine and super-human who satisfies that need; the third is the attitude and conduct of man by means of which it is believed that the desire for good is met by the God who is conceived of as its possessor and dispenser. The grade of each religion, it is added, depends upon the degree of clearness or crudeness, of ripeness or unripeness, with which those elements are emphasized and developed. This is especially evident in the case of Buddhism, Muhammadanism, and Christianity.

First of all, these three religions have sprung from certain views of the supreme need of human nature which must be satisfied. This may be viewed negatively, in relation to evil, as deliverance from suffering, sin, and death; and positively, in relation to good, as the attainment of a blessed and eternal life in union with God. Buddhism is defective on both sides; so also is Islam. Christianity presents a view of sin and holiness, of deliverance and perfection, of man's present relation to Nature and the life to come, which obviously surpasses the other two, correcting, supplementing, and sublimating them from point to point.

In the second place, each of these religions presents us with a definite view of the function which its founder exercised in his effort to satisfy the needs which have been described. He must be viewed as exemplar, or prophet, or redeemer, or as a combination of two or all three of these. Buddha was primarily an exemplar of the process of enlightenment, though later Buddhism tended to enlarge his authority into that of a prophet,

and his experience into that of a redeemer. Muhammad was primarily a prophet, inspired with definite and direct messages from God. Christianity views Jesus Christ as the direct and perfect exemplar of the character of God the Father, as the full revealer of religious truth, and also as the redeemer whose personal experience, especially in His death on the Cross and in His resurrection, changed the moral relations of God and man.

In the third place, each of these religions has come to believe in its founder as one who stood in definite and superhuman relations with the eternal God, though Buddha himself was wholly concerned with a system of ethical culture for the attainment of deliverance, and Muhammad claimed only to be the prophet of Allah. From the first, however, Christianity believed its Founder to be a superhuman being, one who had become incarnate. As thus an incarnate, Divine personality, He exercised all the functions of exemplar, revealer, and redeemer, distinctly and with ideal completeness.

It is of the utmost importance, adds Dr. Douglas MACKENZIE, that we should not attempt to minimize the astounding nature of this central and supreme feature of the Christian Faith. We gain neither the respect of the 'modern mind,' nor the peace of our own hearts, if we shrink from seeing in this the supreme miracle of human history and the essence of Christianity.

'Sharing' is the watchword of all systems to-day, political and religious alike. It is said that in Oxford the undergraduates are divided into two bodies, the Communists and the 'Oxford Groupers,' and it is this watchword that they have in common. In his suggestive and eminently charitable book, *Sharing* (S.C.M.; 1s. net), Mr. T. W. PYM, who is known favourably by his contributions to religious psychology, uses the word in the religious sense. He does not belong to the Oxford Group. His attitude to the Group is friendly but critical. With his convictions, and his religious attitude, he could not very well be a member (a term the groupers reject). His idea of sharing is wider than theirs.

Mr. PYM believes in sharing, but does not accept the claim of any particular method to be exclusive and universally valid. This, he admits, exposes him to criticism from two sides, the Anglo-Catholic and the Group. The Anglo-Catholic insists that Confession and Absolution are a necessary part of the true Christian practice for every churchman. The grouper regards this as too individual and secretive a form of sharing. It ought to be social and public. But, on the other hand, the Anglo-Catholic deplores the insufficiency of the Group teaching about Divine forgiveness and about the place of authority in religion. Their attitude to each other is not so much hostile; it is rather an objection to the incompleteness of the other. And both would reject the word 'method' as applied to their practice. To the Anglo-Catholic the confessional is part of the Faith. To the grouper sharing is just primitive Christianity.

The important thing, however, is what they have in common, that all alike do find in some form of sharing a road to the heart of Jesus Christ. It is to this 'underlying intention' that Mr. PYM directs his reflections. He distinguishes three forms of sharing—sharing with one, Group sharing and Team sharing. The most common form of sharing is that of one person with one other. The person who shares does so because by 'making a clean breast of it' he may rid himself of an obsession or receive counsel about temptation. He feels the need to unburden himself to some one who will listen with sympathy and who will not 'leak.' The benefit is, in a word, liberation, and this benefit may not necessarily be religious. Merely to share something may be a tremendous relief. It tends to straighten out the tangle in one's own mind just to state the thing to some other person, even if no particular advice or opinion is forthcoming. One has got the thing 'off his chest.'

At the same time it must be firmly asserted that people who do not share in this way are not necessarily shirking. There are lots of people who by temperament and by conviction are quite free from any desire to share anything of their inner life. They do not need to share with any other

person in order to achieve release from sin or assurance that God's love includes them. Moreover, for some people this would be positively undesirable because injurious. Reserve is not in their case a temptation or a bad habit or a bit of selfishness; it is sometimes a divinely given protection of the personality; it is for some a curtain which no one else has any right to force aside. And it must be added that many sound people are repelled by the facility some others have in talking about themselves and their 'awful past.' What needs to be recognized is that the method is wholly inappropriate to certain people.

With regard to Group sharing, Mr. PYM very generously defends the Oxford Group practice from some of the commonest criticisms levelled at it. It is sometimes dismissed, for example, as an instance of 'mass psychology.' But even so, retorts Mr. PYM, why should not mass psychology be used in the interests of human redemption? Again, it is reported that sex matters form a quite disproportionate part of the experiences shared in public. But Mr. PYM has not found it to be so in an apparently extensive acquaintance with Group meetings. And, finally, the whole thing is condemned as 'over-emotional.' To which the answer given is that to condemn emotion is a brainless act; while if it is said that what is criticised is emotionalism, Mr. PYM has, on the contrary, found the Group meetings exceptionally free of it. The meetings were, he says, almost too 'matter-of-fact,' and he did not feel himself moved strongly at all.

Mr. PYM's sole criticism is that Group sharing is only wrong if it claims universal validity. There are people who have reached the desired religious blessing along another route, and to demand of them that they should adopt the Group way is to ask something like hypocrisy from them. Others may testify before us, but happily we have been *there* before them and along perhaps another road. And when this practice tends to be standardized and becomes a kind of fashion in a parish the disadvantages are obvious. 'I know a place where at a meeting for common sharing of sin the parochial clergy most simply and humbly testified to the value of the practice in making them realise their own want of fellowship. Their parishioners, however, may be excused for feeling as one said to me: "is it necessary to inform a parish-meeting that, though ordained ministers in the Church of Christ, they needed the Oxford Group Movement to teach that elementary Christian charity which they require of lay people as a prime condition of receiving the Lord's Supper?"'

The Team sharing is on a different plane. It is the pooling of experiences, of plans for the future, of moral lessons learned. This kind of sharing may have a real educational value. In regard to methods of handling individual people, for example. This kind of practice is spreading largely because of its ascertained worth. That which was (or might have been) a Group for the sharing of sin becomes a team for the purpose of corporate evangelism. People describe how they were led to deal with awkward situations. And all such information is shared against the background of frank admission by the sharer of his own mistakes. It must be added that the criticism which is freely and frankly interchanged is consciously subjected to the control of the Holy Spirit, and is therefore received humbly, good-temperedly, and with the intention to act on the advice given.

The rest of Mr. PYM's suggestive book is devoted to counsel which may help people in dealing with others who need direction or strengthening or liberation. Mr. PYM rightly insists that the clergy are not sufficiently equipped for spiritual direction. He thinks that many lay people might exercise this kind of ministry with good results if they were properly trained. In particular, he considers that the right type of women might be exceedingly useful in such matters, though he admits as a simple matter of fact that women are decidedly unwilling to 'share' with other women. They would, as a rule, far rather 'share' with the proper kind of man. On such matters, and on others of a cognate kind, Mr. PYM has much that is useful to say. Indeed, his whole essay is wise and kind and helpful, and ought to be read and considered both by clergy and by lay workers of all kinds.