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does not the Group go beyond the teaching and practice of Christ Himself? The writer cannot find in the Gospels any such demand. What Christ did demand was that we should go to the man or woman we had wronged, acknowledge our fault, and make restitution as far as we could. The only place in the New Testament, so far as we can ascertain, where Christians are urged to confess their sins to one another is in the Epistle of St. James, and there the reference may be to Christ's teaching mentioned above. To attach the special Group meaning to 'confession' in the famous passage in the Epistle of St. John, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' seems scarcely honest. The reference has always been taken to be confession to God in secret. What the New Testament does demand is that we shall confess Christ, that we shall not hide our discipleship; and the emphasis which the Group places on this element of Christian duty is much needed in our day.

To demand, on the other hand, open confession of sin 'in concrete reality' as a condition of the full enjoyment of forgiveness is to demand a sort of penance as a condition of forgiveness; and this is absolutely contrary to the whole teaching of the Protestant churches, which have always rejoiced in the 'free grace' of God to men in Christ.

To adduce as a ground for the special teaching of the Group on 'confession' the incident of our Lord's washing the disciples' feet, as the author of *He that Cometh* does, is to many minds an example of special pleading. It is not the lesson our Lord Himself draws from it. He makes it plain that He is giving His followers a lesson in humility. No service, however humble, to another disciple is to be regarded as beneath us.

There is so much power for good in the Group Movement that it is a pity that its leaders should

alienate the sympathy of many who are in hearty accord with them by adding to their teaching on fellowship, sharing, and witness certain tenets which many feel are not warranted either by the teaching of Christ and His apostles or the long experience of the Christian Church.

In the matter of Guidance, for most of us the well-tried ways are best. These are the way of prayer, of careful study of, and meditation on, the Scriptures, of hearing the Word, of the leading of providential circumstances, of thinking things out, and of taking counsel with those who are experienced in life and in God's ways.

Probably the Oxford Group does not mean to belittle the development and use of the intellect in guidance, but the impression made upon the mind by some of their publications seems to bear that construction. In this connexion the words of one of the chief missionaries in the recent Mission to the University of Cambridge are to be commended. Rev. Dr. Maltby spoke of guidance in some such words as these: 'As far as my experience of guidance goes, it comes to us not when our mind is a blank, but when we are busy thinking; not when our mind is at its lowest, but at its highest.'

Not only when we are busy thinking, but also when we are busy acting, guidance comes to us. There are situations constantly arising which were quite unforeseen. We are plunged into them without the possibility of seeking guidance beforehand as to what we ought to do. We are obliged to act on the spur of the moment; and our first action may immediately bring about a second situation still more difficult in which we have to act. All that is possible for us is an inward ejaculatory prayer; and it is in such circumstances as these that the Spirit can use well-thought-out principles deeply embedded in the character to give us guidance.

Psalm cxxvii. 2.

A NEW EXPLANATION.

BY PROFESSOR SAMUEL DAICHES, PH.D., LONDON.

ONE can, I submit, say without hesitation that Ps 127² has not yet been explained. The Revised Version translates: 'It is in vain for you that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the

bread of toil: for so he giveth unto his beloved sleep (or, in sleep).' This translation reflects the general interpretation. The sense is supposed to be this: it is vain to rise early and to work late

and thus to eat the bread of toil (or sorrows); this God gives unto His beloved in his sleep. See Delitzsch, Baethgen, Kittel, Gunkel. This would, however, be a very strange doctrine; see Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, p. 553, bottom. And—and this is most important—the words do not say this. By no stretch of imagination can this meaning be pressed out from the text. Seeing that the general interpretation is unsatisfactory, some commentators have resorted to emendations; see Gunkel, p. 554. Duhm, *Die Psalmen*, 2nd ed., p. 438, translates כֵּן by *genug*, and in the notes by *das Richtige*, and strikes out שָׁנָא at the end of the verse. König translates כֵּן by *Richtiges*. Neither suggestion makes the verse more intelligible. See for the various interpretations of כֵּן and שָׁנָא König, *Die Psalmen*, pp. 202–3. For a short and concise summary of the general interpretation, see Kittel, p. 447. In the last sentence of that summary Kittel seems to feel the weakness of the interpretation.

I venture to offer the following interpretation of Ps 127². The verse is to be divided into two equal halves. The first half ends with the word שָׁבַת. And the phrase לֶחֶם הָעֵצִים is part of the second half of the verse. The first half of the verse, שָׁוָא שֹׂמֵר מֵאַחֲרֵי שְׁבַת, is to be viewed in the light of Is 5¹¹. Is 5¹¹ reads as follows: 'הֲיִי מִשְׁכִּימֵי: בבקר שָׁכַר יִדְרֹפוּ מֵאַחֲרֵי בִנְיָף יִין יִדְלִיקֵם: 'Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that they tarry late into the night till (or that) wine inflame them.' The main idea is: they rise up early and sit up late to no good purpose. עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁכִּימֵי קוֹם is parallel to מֵאַחֲרֵי שְׁבַת, בבקר, and מֵאַחֲרֵי שְׁבַת. Cf. also Pr 23³⁰: 'למֵאַחֲרֵי עַל הַיַּיִן, They that tarry long (late) at the wine.' 'Strong drink' and 'wine' are not mentioned in Ps 127². But the people, no doubt, understood what the Psalmist meant. Is 5¹¹ shows that the phrases מֵאַחֲרֵי בִנְיָף and מִשְׁכִּימֵי בִבְקָר were used in connexion with the drinking of wine and spending the time at banquets (cf. Is 5¹²). And so were the phrases מֵאַחֲרֵי שְׁבַת and מִשְׁכִּימֵי קוֹם used. In other words, the מֵאַחֲרֵי שְׁבַת and מִשְׁכִּימֵי קוֹם were people who spent their time uselessly, idled their time away. They were idlers. Ps 127^{2a} therefore says: 'It is vain for you who rise up early and sit up late (and drink strong drinks, or, do nothing useful).' This is no good. You neither work nor sleep. You idle away your days, and at night you have no rest.

In the second half of the verse the Psalmist gives expression to a thought which is in direct contrast to the thought in v.^{2a}. V.^{2b} has to be understood

in the light of Ec 5^{11a}. Ec 5^{11a} reads: מחוקה שֵׁנָה, 'Sweet is the sleep of a labouring man.' This idea, I suggest, is contained in Ps 127^{2b}. And the Psalmist expresses it in his own original way. That עֵצֶב also means 'work,' 'labour,' is clear from Pr 14^{23a}: 'בְּכָל עֵצֶב יִהְיֶה מוֹחָר: 'In all labour there is profit.' In Pr 5¹⁰ the same word is used in the same sense in the plural: 'וְעֵצֶבֶיךָ, 'and thy labours.' Cf. also Job 10^{8a}: 'יָדֶיךָ עֲצֹבוּנִי וַיַּעֲשֶׂנוּנִי: 'Thy hands have framed (worked) me and fashioned me.' The translation of Ps 127^{2b}: 'אֲכָלִי לֶחֶם הָעֵצִים כֵּן יִתֵּן לִי יְהוָה, 'I shall eat the bread of labour (literally, labours)—thus he giveth unto his beloved sleep.' The Psalmist says here poetically what is said more prosaically in Ec 5¹¹. The Psalmist expresses the idea beautifully. Before v.^{2b} a 'but' is to be understood. And before כֵּן one can see the gesture made by the Psalmist. כֵּן has its full meaning of 'thus.' 'Those who eat the bread of labour—thus (through the labour, by which they eat their bread) he gives to his beloved sleep.' Those who labour for their bread are the beloved of God. כֵּן refers back to לֶחֶם הָעֵצִים. Cf. the use of כֵּן in Ps 127⁴ and in Ps 128⁴. In Ps 128⁴ כֵּן is used in exactly the same sense as in Ps 127^{2b}, and also refers back to preceding words, namely, to v.³. The transition from the plural to the singular, and also from the singular to the plural, is frequent in the Psalms. Cf., e.g., Ps 17⁹⁻¹¹ (plural) with v.¹² (singular), and Ps 14^{1a} (singular) with v.^{1b} (plural). The Psalmist expresses the idea in such a beautiful way that it becomes richer than the idea contained in Ec 5¹¹. There it is said simply: 'Sweet is the sleep of a labouring man.' Here the idea is expressed: he who works and eats the bread of his work is beloved of God, and peaceful sleep is his reward. Ps 127² is, therefore, to be translated: 'It is vain for you that you rise up early and sit up late (and idle away your time); ye that eat (or, those who eat) the bread of labour—thus does he give unto his beloved sleep.'

One may ask: how does this thought fit into the context? I venture to say that it fits in very well. Vv.³⁻⁵ in Ps 127 are similar in thought to vv.³⁻⁴ in Ps 128 (the blessing of children). And v.^{2b} in Ps 127 is similar in thought to v.³ in Ps 128: 'When thou eatest the labour of thy hands, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.' Ps 127² contained, or reflected, a well-known saying contrasting the idler (and the uselessness of idleness) and the worker (and the blessing of work). One can safely say that Ps 127²⁻⁵ and Ps 128 contain the same ideas (happiness of work and

blessing of children). It is very probable that Ps 127¹, 'אם ה' לא יבנה בית שוא עמלו בוניו בו אם ה' לא ישמר עיר שוא שקד שומר ' Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it ; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain,' has its place in this Psalm because of the word שוא. V.² begins with שוא. And v.¹ has twice the word שוא. And, in addition, one might say this : v.¹ tells us that God builds, that God guards ; in other words, that God works. Work is therefore divine. Work and the blessing of work come from God. In other words, the work of man has to be under the will of God. V.¹ would thus contain the fountain-thought for the whole Psalm. The connexion between v.¹ and v.² would then be perfectly clear. V.² must not be strained, as it has been, to receive a meaning which is supposed to harmonize with v.¹. As a matter of fact, the meaning generally

given to v.² does not harmonize with v.¹. One must bear in mind that the main ideas of the Psalm are contained in vv.²⁻⁵, and not in v.¹. And Ps 128 harmonizes with Ps 127²⁻⁵. Ps 127¹ stands there, as said, because of שוא, and also because God is the builder and guardian of house and town, of the world, and because the blessings in Ps 127²⁻⁵, and in Ps 128, come from God. Without God nothing can prosper. When one looks deeply into v.¹ one sees this idea, which is the fountain-idea of the Psalm. Only good work, only godly work, can be called work. And only the man who works can expect a blessing. Hence v.^{2a} : it rules out idlers and idleness. V.^{2b} establishes the divine character of work by man.

I submit that the explanation offered here gives a satisfactory meaning to Ps 127², and makes the whole Psalm clearer.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Varia.

JOHANNES FICHTNER¹ has set himself the double task (i) of showing the intimate connexion between the Wisdom literature of the Hebrews and that of the ancient Oriental world, and (ii) of tracing the development within the Hebrew literature itself. He succeeds in making clear that, under the influence of the Law, international 'Wisdom' received among the Hebrews a distinctively nationalistic stamp. But from the outset Hebrew 'Wisdom' was differentiated from international 'Wisdom' (i) by its uncompromising monotheism, and (ii) by its interlinking of morality with religion : to it the fear of the Lord was the beginning, indeed the essence, of wisdom (Pr 1⁷ 9¹⁰). In Israel the ethical factor in 'Wisdom' was more prominent than either in Egypt or Babylon, of which the former emphasized rather worldly prudence and the latter the cult. Proverbs has no active interest in the cult (but cf. 3^{9f.}), but with the growing dominance of the Law, the cult gains in prominence, as in Sirach. Also the eudaemonistic motive tended to diminish in importance with the increasing joy in

the Law as the expressed will of God and as His gift to Israel : in Ps 119, for example, the way is prepared for the later alliance between 'Wisdom' and the Law. Problems raised by the moral order, in which retribution was not always obvious in this life, gave rise to speculations about the future, the beginnings of which can be seen in Job and Ps 73, though these are in no way influenced by Egyptian ideas. Fichtner finely shows that the ultimate nature of Hebrew 'Wisdom,' which was determined by emphasis on the Law, was historically conditioned by the struggle with Hellenism, which is reflected not obscurely in Ps 119^{97ff.}. The discussion abounds in interesting quotations from the 'Wisdom' literature—all of which is carefully tabulated—of Egypt, Babylon, and Israel.

The second part of Schmidtke's book on Israel's Entry into Canaan² might be described as the German counterpart to Garstang's 'Joshua-Judges,' and it is none the less valuable that it reaches different conclusions on some important points : Schmidtke, for example, who sets the Exodus in

¹ *Die Altorientalische Weisheit in Ihrer Israelitisch-Jüdischen Ausprägung*, von Johannes Fichtner (Töpelmann, Giessen ; RM.6.80).

² *Die Einwanderung Israels in Kanaan*, von Friedrich Schmidtke (Otto Borgmeyer, Buchhandlung, Breslau ; M.8).