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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

SOME months ago we commented editorially on 'Ancient Hebrew Social Life and Custom as indicated in Law, Narrative, and Metaphor,' which represented the posthumously published Schweich Lectures of the late Professor Robert Hatch Kennett, D.D. Another volume—likely, we fear, to be the last—representing work of his, has just appeared, under the very competent editorship of Professor S. A. COOK of Cambridge. It bears the comprehensive title *The Church of Israel*, is published by the Cambridge University Press at 12s. 6d. net, and consists of a series of 'Studies and Essays' on Israel, The Origin of the Book of Deuteronomy, The Grammar of Old Testament Study, Old Testament Parallels to Christ and the Gospels, and the Last Supper.

In one form or another these Studies have appeared before, though some of them would be rather difficult to secure now, and it is a great advantage to have them here collected by the skilful hands of Professor COOK, who was a pupil of Kennett's, and who has shown his skill not least in the chapter on 'The Grammar of Old Testament Study,' in which he has adroitly woven together various sections and paragraphs from Kennett's writings to illustrate his favourite thesis that for the accurate interpretation of Biblical thought significant Hebrew terms such as 'righteousness,' 'sin,' 'covenant,' etc., must be rightly understood. In the editor's own words, 'the object of this volume is to collect—if not to rescue—some essays or articles which represent Kennett's most typical work, and illustrate his most distinctive contributions to Biblical study. They supplement his more specialized writings by essays of a simpler and more introductory character, suitable for readers less familiar with the details of Biblical criticism.'

The value of the book, especially for such readers, is enhanced by a long and interesting Introduction running to thirty-nine pages in which Professor COOK, besides paying an affectionate tribute to his former teacher, gives a clear and ample summary of his teaching. We can well believe him when he assures us that Kennett was a stimulating teacher. He brought a singularly fresh mind to the consideration of Old Testament problems, he felt the pressure of problems which others either had not seen or had practically ignored, and he offered the most unconventional solutions. Not only was he at no pains to keep to the beaten track, but he struck out paths of his own, on some at least of which he had to walk in solitariness. But what he says on any problem has always to be reckoned with, for his was a penetrating mind that was for ever striving to get behind the literature to the history which it seemed to presuppose; and when so good a scholar as Professor COOK admits that he has learned much from his recent close examination of Kennett's published and unpublished work, we may be sure that it is work which cannot be safely ignored.

But in that work there is not a little that will be bewildering to the readers whom Professor Cook has in view, and there is some of it that is by no means certain to commend itself even to seasoned scholars. Both classes of readers, for example, may be startled by the suggestion that it was 'doubtless' due to the writer of the Book of Jonah and to those who were like-minded, 'that Jews loyal to their religion now left the narrow district to which they had been restricted and settled not only further afield in Palestine, but also in more remote parts of Alexander's dominions.' The Book of Jonah is of inestimable importance, but hardly, we should have thought, influential in the direction suggested.

Again, it is well known that most scholars place the Jahwist document before the Elohist: Kennett not only reverses the order, but places the Elohist about 650 B.C., and regards it as an attempt to Israelitize the heathen population of central Palestine, while he regards the Jahwist document as a counterblast to Josiah's reform, and Jeremiah's denunciation of 'the lying pen of the scribes that wrought falsely' (Jer 8^8) as having that document in view. This is unconventional enough; and this even more so—that the book read before Josiah 'may have been a collection of Hosea's prophecies which had been brought to Jerusalem from Bethel when the persecution under Manasseh had come to an end.' Certainly 'torah' can as readily be prophetic teaching as technical 'law,' but in view of the reforms described in 2 K 23, which were conducted on the basis of the discovered book, it seems more reasonable to assume that the book was one containing laws aimed at the removal of the abuses indicated by the reform.

One of Kennett's most startling suggestions is that there is no reference to the Resurrection in Dn 12^2. Sleep, we are reminded, in the Old Testament is used of the sleep of death, while the famous vision of the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezk 37 treats exile as virtual death and burial; consequently 'those that sleep in the dust of the earth' need mean no more than 'those Jews who are living in heathen districts.' Considering the late date of this passage, which leaves abundant room for a belief in the Resurrection, this argument will seem more ingenious than convincing. Hardly less startling to those who have been taught to look for eschatology even in pre-exilic literature is Kennett's statement that it is his 'firm conviction that eschatology is not to be found in the *canonical* Scriptures of the Old Testament,' while with courageous consistency he extends this principle to the Gospels, remarking that 'whether there is any "eschatology" (in the strict sense of the word) in the Gospels is doubtful.'

Most improbable of all is Kennett's relegation of the Psalter as a whole to the Maccabean period about the middle of the second century B.C. Are we to suppose that the religious poetry of a whole millennium has left not a single echo? If, as the Song of Deborah puts beyond the shadow of a doubt, there was great poetry as early as the twelfth century B.C., and if, as we know from Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, there was noble religion at least as early as the eighth century B.C., is it conceivable that there was no great religious poetry in pre-exilic times, and, if there was, is it probable that it has all perished? Has nothing survived of those 'songs of Zion' that the Babylonians asked the Hebrew exiles to sing? We should be sorry to have to pay for a glorious burst of sacred song in the second century B.C. by ten centuries of silence; but this seems neither reasonable nor necessary.

While, however, there is much in this book that may be and will be challenged, illuminating remarks and fruitful suggestions abound. It is certainly startling but useful to be told—even though the statement may need some qualification—that 'Israelite sanctuaries before 621 B.C. were not superior to Hindoo temples'; and it was worth saying that the demand for the centralization of the worship would irritate equally those who believed in the numerous sanctuaries scattered throughout the land, and those who, like Jeremiah, repudiated the sacrificial system altogether.

For this is a point on which, in common with many

German scholars, Kennett expressed himself with great earnestness and emphasis. He maintains that by the great prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries, from Amos to Jeremiah, sacrifice is not only relatively but absolutely repudiated. It is not stated in Am $5^{21ff.}$ that 'Jehovah will not have sacrifice unless it is associated with righteousness, but that He desires righteousness and does not desire sacrifice.' This is said even more explicitly in Hos 6^{6}; and if it be contended that the phrase 'the knowledge of God *more than* burnt-offerings' implies a certain regard for the sacrificial system, he points out that a more precise translation would be 'the knowledge of God *as distinct from* burnt-offerings.' This conception of the prophet dominates Kennett's very suggestive discussion on the points of similarity between Jesus and the prophets.

Whether we agree—as, for example, with the contention that more imaginative consideration must be given to the religious condition of northern Israel after the Fall of Samaria—or whether we disagree—as, for example, with the statement that 'the extraordinarily graphic narratives of 2 Samuel can be shown both by literary and historical criticism to have no claims to be considered contemporary history'—this book is genuinely provocative in the good sense of that term. It is the work of a thinker as well as a scholar. How influential it will be, time alone can tell; but Professor Cook is probably near the truth when he says that 'it does not seem extravagant to believe that the value of Kennett's contribution will be ever more highly estimated and that he will have a rightful place in the annals of Old Testament criticism.'

There is a chapter in Professor A. D. Nock's *Conversion*, reviewed in another column, in which are considered the requirements and tenets of Christianity from the point of view of a pagan of the Roman Empire who had not quite made up his mind. Usually in the writing of Christian history paganism is viewed in the light of Christianity; here Christianity is viewed in the light of paganism.

Take first the moral demands of Christianity. We find that they are no stricter than those of the popular philosophy of the time, but based on other reasons and reinforced by a promise of new strength to fulfil them. The real novelty in Christianity was the motive which it supplied for good conduct—fear of God, devotion to Jesus, and love for one's fellow-Christians, who had been also delivered by Jesus from death and sin. And Christianity gave not only a motive, but also power to satisfy its requirements. It claimed that the baptized Christian received grace which, if he made reasonable effort, would enable him to live as he should.

'Stoicism had taught that there was in man a particle of the divine spirit as a thing inherently bound to be present in his nature. But this was in a sense something up to which he must live rather than something by which he must live. In any case, it was supposed to be present in all men. It may have been better psychology than the Christian view of the special gift of the Spirit, but it was less effective psychology.'

Pass now to the religious demands of Christianity. Notice first that the intending Christian was required to give up all worship of pagan deities. Such renunciation of idolatry was in line with speculative thought, yet against it was set the whole force of tradition and ancestral custom. Suppose a plague came? or a famine? or an inroad of the Goths? One recalls how Augustine in the 'City of God' had to repudiate the charge that the fall of Rome was due to the wrath of the dispossessed pagan deities. It must, then, have been a wrench to give up the veneration paid to idols, and, as we may add, no small sacrifice in many cases to renounce the public cult of the Emperor.

As for the positive teachings of the Christians, their doctrine about God the Father was easily acceptable. As early as Homer, Zeus is father to all men, Greeks and Ethiopians alike; as early as Hesiod he is the god of Justice, concerned with its maintenance on earth. And he tended to become a cosmic figure, like the one God of Judaism and Christianity. Nor was the doctrine about Jesus as the Son of God wholly repellent. Indeed, Justin

Martyr had to guard against a physical interpretation of the begetting of Jesus. Moreover, a son of a god could have a passion and resurrection—Zagreus, Attis, Adonis, Osiris.

There is another aspect of belief about Jesus which had its parallels in the world around. This is His place as a mediator between God and man. In a Mithræum, for example, there was sometimes a representation of the Sky-god or Eternity, but effective worship was addressed to Mithras, who stood between man and the Eternal silences. Yet there was a substantial objection to any idea of incarnation—of God or a power of Him taking human flesh and passing through birth and death. It should be remembered that the births of Attis and Adonis were placed in the mythical period, and that the existence of these gods began at their birth: they had no pre-existent glory to leave for us men and for our salvation. It was not easy for an ancient to think of immortality putting on mortality.

With a mere reference to Professor Nock's next point, that the argument in support of the claims of Jesus from the fulfilment of prophecy was very acceptable in the days of the Roman Empire, we turn to his last point: How did the pagan view the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? The doctrine denied the dearest hope of many, which was to be liberated from the trammels of the body. It is the deep cleavage between the Christian and the Greek outlook on the future state that explains the warmth of Tertullian's arguments for the soul's fallibility and its dependence on the body.

For the rest, the central ideas of Christianity were in general quite intelligible to the ordinary man from the world around. And it added to the effectivenes of early Christian propaganda that the apologists were men who were not the sons of Christians but had been converted to Christianity themselves, and that they represented Christianity as something which had come not to destroy but to fulfil. This was a valuable point of view. It squared with the general belief of antiquity in the wisdom of the past. 'The Christian householder brought forth from his store things old and new; the old was not obsolete and the new was not incomprehensible.'

In the *Hibbert Journal* for January there is an article, appropriate at the moment of publication and of general interest at any time. It is called 'The Young Man's World,' and is written by the Rev. R. A. Edwards. The writer begins in 'a delightful farmhouse sitting-room,' where the farmer's wife asked him what he thought of the modern age, and particularly what he thought about the neglect of Sunday. This set Mr. Edwards thinking, and, if the farmer's wife was not favoured with the answer he has given to us, it may be hoped she will have the opportunity of seeing in print the thoughtful review of our modern state to which her question led.

But Sabbath-breaking is only one of the counts in the indictment of modern youth. His cocktails, his late hours, his night clubs, his loose morals, his irreligion, all these, and more, are alleged against him. And not against him only. All these things are characteristic of our age. And there are seasonal protests against them, and condemnations of them, in pulpits and church assemblies. What are we coming to, it is insistently asked, when religion is being flouted, church-going abandoned, and the decent standards of living, consecrated by experience and divine authority, set at nought? 'A mad world, my masters.'

To meet this situation, to stem the flood, to win back the wanderers, the churches have tried every kind of expedient. We try vestments and candles and incense. We try a rigid simplicity. We improve our singing, and add solos and fiddles. We reduce the length of our sermons to a vanishing point, and curtail our prayers, lest the visitor to our church should be wearied. We strip every shred of the miraculous from our faith, lest the educated mind should be offended. We have become socialists to persuade the masses. We have welcomed the hiker with her bare head and shorts. We have 'brightened' our services by

preaching on the latest novel instead of the old-fashioned discourse from Holy Writ. And we have tried various permutations and combinations of these things. But can any one who thinks suppose seriously that all these things together will fill our churches?

Mr. EDWARDS is impressed with one thing specially, on which he dwells at considerable length. In every way the world is a different world from what it was twenty years ago. And we have not really grasped the significance of this change. Look at the lighter side of life—motor cars, the cinema, the spread of outdoor games, the habit of 'hiking,' the wireless, which in a few years from being an experiment has almost become a nuisance. And this lighter side, though obvious, is the least of the change. Add to that the huge crash of the older civilization epitomized in the War. Belief in politics and statesmanship has been punctured for the younger generation. There has come a gradual economic disillusionment. We see economic 'authorities' at loggerheads, and obviously incapable of supplying either an explanation of events or a cure for them. The youth of to-day has been born into an atmosphere of financial uncertainty.

What is even more fundamental is that things have gone far beyond the old conflict between the older and the younger generations. The younger generation has become acutely critical of the actual structure of civilization. Think of the plethora of new ideas that are being thrown into the modern world—ideas about Nature, matter, biology, the universe itself; ideas presented by the 'new psychology,' with its behaviourism, its psycho-analysis, its emphasis on sex, its refinement into illusions of many of our old certainties; political ideas of the most revolutionary nature, thrusting on us the clamant need of dictatorships, communist and fascist; ethical ideas of as revolutionary a kind which assume that Christian standards are outworn, especially the standards of sex morality. The net result in many minds is that Christianity is not so much a spent force as a discredited one.

Now, says Mr. EDWARDS, what we ought to grasp firmly is that all this is the environment into which our modern youth has been born. It was not *our* environment. Most of it is the fruit of the last twenty years. The youngster of eighteen or twenty has never handled an English gold coin. He cannot visualize a world without wireless. He has never travelled in a horse-drawn vehicle. The cinema is no novelty to him. The 'New Morality' is not new enough to shock him. And games on Sunday, which so disturbed the farmer's wife, are as old as the hills to him. *We* have a background on which to criticise these changes. But they are not changes to him. They are, and have been, part of his world. The young man did not make this world. It was there for him, with its buses, wireless, dances, cinemas, new morality, scanty bathing dresses, and all the rest of it. He is not rejecting the old-fashioned Sunday. He has never known it. We have so mismanaged things that only this modern rush and doubt and religious perplexity and uncertain moral standard have been presented to him.

What, then, has Mr. EDWARDS to say to the young man's guides, his pastors and masters? Two things. The first is, not to get excited or disturbed or depressed by the vagaries of our age. In the year 1747 Butler wrote, in the preface to the *Analogy*: 'It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious.' And Butler refused high office in the Church on the ground that it was 'too late for him to try to support a falling Church.' That was nearly two hundred years ago. And Christianity, and the Church, are to-day far more alive and more secure than in Butler's day. When many of the bombs that are lying about prove to be duds, the Faith will still be waiting for the young man.

And the second thing is this. 'After all, we need not bother too much about the "challenge" to Christian morals, for we know that these deep-rooted Christian things are not something ruthlessly fastened upon men and women from the outside, as it were, but part of the divine ordering of humanity,

part of the very stuff of which life is made. . . . The young man may stand bewildered amidst the ruins of a civilisation, his ears may be confused by too many advisers, and his nerves stretched to breaking point by the strain of modern life, but the Lord who was the Master of our Sunday peace looks at him and loves him, and if only we'd stop losing our heads, and adding to the impression of panic, we can trust that same Lord to bring him home.'

Recent Gospel Criticism, and our Approach to the Life of Jesus.[1]

I.

By Professor George H. C. Macgregor, B.D., D.Litt., Glasgow.

To-day, as always, the supreme aim of all N.T. science is the 'Quest of the Historical Jesus.' Never have books relating to Jesus been more abundant, or discussed by a wider public. On the other hand there has never, I believe, been a time when on the fundamental question of the origins of Christianity in the life of Jesus of Nazareth opinion has shown less of agreement. And when I say this, I am thinking not merely of the religious and theological differences which necessarily characterize men's estimates of Jesus. I am thinking mainly of the historical problem—and here both on the most essential aspects of the subject, and even on the methods to be pursued in studying them, there has been a complete disorganization of critical opinion. Accordingly there is a real challenge in the words of Maurice Goguel, writing in the Preface to his recent *Life of Jesus*: 'I think that the moment has come to take up again the problem of Jesus with a method adapted to the results which Gospel criticism has developed since the beginning of the century' (*Vie de Jésus*, 8). Can such a statement be justified?

Let us review the present situation:

And first we note the collapse of many of the 'assured results' of nineteenth-century source-criticism, and the hushing of the premature rejoicings of twenty-five years ago that the problem of gospel origins had been solved. To-day we are more humble. It is perfectly true that the 'two-document hypothesis' has stood the test of time. Mark and 'Q' still remain our two fundamental sources for the life and teaching of Jesus. But the problem has only been carried a stage farther back. To-day's question is that of the composition and sources of Mark and Q themselves—that is the *pre-history* of the gospel literature and the history of the primitive oral tradition of which our Gospels represent only one element. As E. F. Scott has put it: 'In Gospel criticism as in physics and chemistry the elements have to be determined before we can make anything of the combinations.' A more sensitive critical conscience forbids us to yield so readily as hitherto to the temptation to make the oldest Gospel normative as being the earliest biography of Jesus; for we see now that not even Mark is a primary document, but was composed from a hotch-potch of still earlier materials adjusted and organized by the Evangelist within what may be a more or less artificial framework. Such a conclusion is of course ruinous to all the famous 'Liberal' Lives, for it undermines the very foundation on which they rest. For if the setting and order of the various Gospel episodes can no longer be guaranteed, what use to attempt to connect them together and by psychological interpretation to introduce into the story of Jesus a coherence and intelligibility which the Gospel accounts themselves lack? The result is that to-day a vast number of critics—and by no means only those who would make of historical science an instrument of war against Christianity—profess concerning all that touches the life of Jesus, if not absolute scepticism, at least absolute agnosticism.

Now, what are the reasons for this chastened mood? The admission first, and this we owe mainly to Schweitzer, that the eschatological element in the thought of Jesus, so far from being an alien intrusion which one might light-heartedly eliminate, is one of the chief keys to the understanding of His life. The realization next that even Mark, the earliest Gospel, is a product of

[1] Inaugural Lecture delivered in the University of Glasgow, October 10, 1933.