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EDITORIAL

THE PULPIT BIBLE

IT is a tribute to our wealth of Old Testament scholarship that so many valuable contributions from our own denomination appear in the present issue of *The Fraternal*. The willing service thus rendered is, needless to say, much appreciated. The only reward offered is the usual one for us—the gratitude of editors and readers.

Our introductory word is an appeal for a more generous use of the Old Testament in our public worship. We think, not only of the sermon material available in this classic; nor even of the exposition of the varied books. We have in mind, rather, the public reading of this section of Holy Writ. The sympathetic and understanding rendering of the stately and beautiful diction of the Authorised Version has it in its power to enthral an average congregation, and to impress them with the appropriateness of its message for our own day and generation.

The introduction of such exercise by a brief explanation of the circumstances in which the words were first uttered may well take the place of the verse by verse commentary beloved of our fathers. This is all the more needful when it is remembered that, for far too many, listening to the preacher's reading constitutes their only acquaintance with the Word of God.

In recent times the second lesson has often been replaced by a talk to the children—an alteration which is not wholly an improvement. A shortening of the address would make possible a more adequate reading of the Bible. That might well be to the advantage of the young as well as to the older folk.

The Lectionary of the Church of England secures that regular worshippers do hear portions from the whole of the Book, and not merely passages favoured by the preacher, or such as provide a context for the sermon. If the following articles should contribute to a better understanding of the Old Testament, and a deeper sense of its worth to mankind, then once again our magazine will have justified production. It would be an enrichment of our ministry if our pulpit Bible—the Old Testament as well as the New—showed signs of devoted and regular use.

THE PROPHET AND THE WORD OF GOD

“THE prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad” (Hosea ix, 7). “He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. . . . Is not My word like as fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. xxiii, 28 f.). Between the lines of these two quotations lies the substance of this essay—the prophet, the spirit and the word. The word of God was the thing that mattered most to the true prophet for therein lay the power of God.

Now it is agreed on all sides that the prophetic period in the life of Israel was creative. Whether we regard it as *the* creative period in her life, or whether we think of it as one phase in a history which was ever renewing itself in creative activity, its dynamic element remains unquestioned. The prophets were “men of God,” and wherever or whenever they worked in the name of God there God Himself was working in creation or in redemption. Creation, with all that it implies of conservation, transformation and redemption, is of the essence of God’s activity. He may work directly in His own person or He may choose man as His agent. We have come to regard the category of spirit as an all-inclusive one to describe the means of God’s *effective* contact with the created world. The purpose of this essay is to weave the dynamic idea of the word of God into our conception of the inspiration of the prophet.

Prophetic activity has, from very early times, been explained as one of the special results of possession by the spirit of God. There is mention enough of the spirit of God in the writings of, or about, the prophets, to justify this. It was Isaiah who gave us the classic definition of God’s substance as spirit (xxxiii, 3). The story of Micaiah attributes the utterances of the prophets, at least of the false prophets, to the putting of a spirit into their mouths (1 Kings xxii, 23, cf. verse 24). Elisha was endowed with the spirit of Elijah, ultimately derived from God, in so unmistakable a fashion as to provoke the remark, when his followers met him, “The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha” (2 Kings ii, 15). The spirit, when it “clothed itself with” a man, enabled him to behave and to work in a manner impossible for him as an ordinary man; under its compulsion he could achieve prodigious feats of endurance and strength. Inasmuch as prophetic life involved superhuman effort and capacity spirit-possession is a proper category of description for it, but on examination of what the prophets themselves say we shall have to treat the spirit conception as a portmanteau and put other things into it.

What do the prophets themselves say? They speak about God’s direct contact with them, speaking to them and laying His hand upon them, but they make little or no reference to His spirit. That is to say, they do not encourage us to think in terms of **the**

spirit of God as a mediatory power, but rather to think of God Himself in person directly conversing with His prophets and directly impelling them to their prophetic work.

There are three facts to be borne in mind as a necessary background to what has just been said. The first of these is that the Hebrews conceived of God personally and locally (but not necessarily localised). He moved freely in and out of the world of men and was human in form though not in substance. He had no need of mediatory forces or beings unless He so chose. The second fact follows naturally from this and it is that the prophet, and indeed any Israelite, could move in and out of God's presence provided only that God was not at that moment hiding Himself. The pious human mind, however, instinctively shrinks, and always has done, from over-great familiarity and directness in the things of God : custom therefore soon began to limit communion between man and God to dream and vision. The prophets stood outside custom : communion with God was a real and a direct experience. Jeremiah certainly felt no need to put his experience of God at first remove, so to speak, from ordinary life, but boldly claims that the true prophet, over against the false, is one who has " stood in the counsel of Yahweh, that he should perceive and hear His word " (xxiii, 18). There are, of course, many qualities with which a man must be equipped before he can confidently walk into God's council chamber, but given the equipment, such as the great prophets had, the rest is a direct and vivid experience. The third fact to be kept in mind is that of the concrete dynamic of the spoken word as conceived by Hebrew thought. For us it is the *written* word which is all-important because it perpetuates what is thought and said and can be used in evidence. For the Hebrew it was the *spoken* word which counted because it was charged with the personal power of the utterer : it was dynamic and was carried forward to achievement by the personal strength which thus lay behind it. The greater the personality the greater was the strength of the word. The word of the prophet—even his own word—was dynamic and was charged with the power of a more-than-ordinarily endowed person. How much more, then, was the word of God dynamic ? " Is not My word like as fire ? and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ? " (Jer. xxiii, 29). God's spoken judgment becomes effective in the release of the forces of destruction that fulfil it : " Yahweh shall roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither." (Amos i, 2, cf. Jer. xxv, 30.)

With these things in mind, let us return to the writings of the prophets and we shall find that the greater prophets say little or nothing about the spirit of God and a very great deal about the word of God. The only pre-exilic prophet, apart from Ezekiel,

who stands by himself, in whose book the spirit is mentioned as the source of inspiration, is Hosea, and then it is in the words of a popular taunt: "The prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad" (ix, 7). Such a reference takes us back to the times when men performed prodigious acts or indulged in frenzied behaviour which were ascribed to the oncoming of God's spirit. Time and again, however, the prophet speaks of the word of God coming to him, or of God having spoken. This is not mere figure of speech. The reception of the word of God by the prophet was an auditory and sensory experience. When Isaiah saw God in the Temple he also heard Him speaking. As Jeremiah became aware of his life-long vocation to be a prophet, Yahweh touched his mouth and put words into it. Even Ezekiel, in whose book, as it stands before us, the spirit does play a significant part (providing a ferry service between Babylon and Palestine, as an undergraduate recently put it), speaks of seeing and eating a roll of a book. "Son of man," he heard, "eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel" (ii, 8—iii, 3). The dynamic inherent in God's word is expressly articulated not only in such passages as refer to creation by fiat (Gen. i; Ps. xxxiii, 6), but also, and picturesquely in the familiar comparison with the rain from heaven (Is. lv, 10 f).

This emphasis on the reception of God's word by the prophets is so marked that one scholar has suggested that in it we have a new category of mediatory idea, and that whereas early and late prophets ascribed their inspiration to the spirit of God, the reforming prophets attributed theirs to the coming of the word of God. It is not necessary thus to posit a new category, first, because the idea of the word of God does not belong to any period in particular, and second, because the experience of God was so intimate and personal an affair that neither its nature nor its categories and defining terms were mapped out. The source of inspiration was God: if it was a matter of being gripped by a great personal *power* the right word might be either spirit of God or hand of God; but Amos simply says that God took him: if it was a matter of speech and oracle-giving the right word might be either voice of God or word of God.

In this connection it is tempting to accept one of the many etymologies that have from time to time been suggested for the divine name Yahweh. In form the name is third person masculine singular of the incomplete tense, and if, as has recently been argued, the root can be shown to mean "speak," "declare," then the name may bear the meaning, "He declares," or "He speaks." In any case, whether supported by etymology or not, the fact remains that Yahweh is the One Whose utterance is powerful and effective and Whose word the prophet dare not hold back (Jer. xxvi, 2; cf. xlii, 4). He summons created things into being

at His call or by His word and determines the course of events by His predictions. The prophet is the vehicle of the full creative power of Yahweh as he gives utterance to the words entrusted to him. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos iii, 8).

L. H. BROCKINGTON.

THE SOUL OF THE PROPHET—THE MASCULINE APPROACH TO RELIGION

A MOVEMENT of soul, such as prophecy, is truly known only at its highest and best. It had its roots in far-off times, primarily in divination, often to issue in magic or worse—charlatanism. In Israel, however, the development struck higher levels. From divination (e.g. Urim and Thummim) it moved on to the Seer (e.g. Samuel), thence to the Canonical prophets. That profound movement of the soul was due to the redeeming initiative of the Living God. As a result, the great prophets of Israel emerge as unique in the spiritual history of man. Had Israel not produced these extraordinary men, it is safe to say that the history of civilisation would have been totally different. They saved the soul of Israel, and they have done much to save the soul of the world. The message of the prophets and the principles of civilisation are inextricably interlocked, and if the former is ignored or denied, the latter are in gravest peril.

Their all-inclusive name is "Men of God." In their worship and obedience manhood rose to its highest stature. They had been reared by history, heredity and environment, but until their great hour, it seems, God had been traditional, but then He made Himself real. In so doing He re-made them. As He became to them the Living God, they saw the whole world alive with His life. The Transcendent God was seen as immanent, though they did not use such abstract terms. In diverse ways they heard Him speak as never before, and once known and uttered by them it seemed to possess creative force that made either for judgment or salvation. They read history as either. They were able, therefore, to interpret and proclaim the nature and purpose of the Living God to their day and generation. They were never automatons, and it was He Who had first sought them out, not they Him. Paradoxically, the more they stressed His sole mind and will, the greater they themselves became.

It follows that they must not be classed with mystics, though prophecy and mysticism have things in common. For instance, the conception of the Deity differs with each. In mysticism He is static, with the prophets He takes sovereign initiative. Similarly, their goals differ. In mysticism, it is union to the degree of

absorption; in prophecy, it is communion, as of spirit with spirit. In essence, it is the difference of masculine from feminine. Mysticism is feminine in nature and mood, but prophecy is robustly masculine, a mood and attitude not required by the former. Mystic language, liturgy and aesthetic cult are not natural to the prophet. Far from seeking to be absorbed in the divine as a rain-drop in the ocean, the prophet is often seen as in conflict of will with God; there is reluctance under pressure, even a challenge to His right over a man. Jeremiah, for example, levels almost a tirade against Him for having "deceived" him. Again, the ethical and spiritual note is profoundly different in prophecy from that in mysticism. The mystic bears within him the assumption that he is "a spark of the Divine," with the result that sin's dark entail of tragedy is minimised. To quote Anselm: "Thou hast not pondered sufficiently the exceeding gravity of sin." The prophet, however, grows daily conscious of the moral gulf or rift between man and his Maker.

This bears on the debatable theory of ecstasy as of the essence of prophecy. One admits that ecstasy is observed among the lesser and earlier prophets; that the phenomenon is somewhat traceable among the greater prophets. But, as in the case of Saul, ecstasy is marked as contagious, and there are grounds for believing that it was "caught," as it were, from the Canaanites during the Settlement, but later held down in firm control by the canonical prophets. In short, ecstasy is not central to prophecy, but incidental, ephemeral, and peripheral. Ecstasy is one with mystical rapture, essentially feminine in nature and mood. The term is Grecian, as is its psychology and connotation, not Hebraic as is prophecy in Israel. Ecstasy involves a certain disintegration of normal mental processes, a loss of conscious balance, a suspension of judgment, a fixation of bodily function, a swooning and lessening effect rather than mental and spiritual uplift. Now what was normal to the prophet was not this experience as fundamental, but deep communion with the Divine, an intense quickening, a clarifying of faculty, a piercing quality of ethical and spiritual vision, an ardour of will and purpose, and, even in his symbolic acts, the evidence of a trained and conscious faith at work. They were men of God in co-operation with His mind and will. Ecstasy was incidental, if at all.

Through such character and witness the prophet became direct evidence of God's perennial initiative with men. None of them (as Sanday said years ago) ever became a prophet because he desired that office for himself. On the contrary (e.g. Jeremiah), only under severe pressure did they dare assume prophetic office. That deep sense of divine initiative is epochal and vital. On that fact the modern world divides, and the issue seems to narrow daily. Only on deep religious levels can it be understood and

accepted. The value, therefore, of this prophetic experience and witness is immeasurable. The future of faith stands or falls by its validity. To awaken this age to its reality, the modern preacher would do well to let these men of that far-off age present their faith and challenge through him. They were great men: Moses the deliverer; Elijah the challenger; Amos the Puritan; Hosea the lover; Isaiah the Patrician; Micah the reformer; Jeremiah the New Covenanter; Habakkuk the questioner; Ezekiel the Father (or Child) of Judaism; Deutero-Isaiah the world-evangelist; and so on. Where these men come into their own, a new age is born.

They are best named as "Seer" and "Proclaimer," for only what was made real to them did they proclaim, and only death was able to quench such utterance. They spoke as from the mouth of God, and He was not dishonoured in their word. They walked down a street, as it were, entered places of business, sat by the camp fire, worshipped in the temple or at a "high place," and by what they saw and heard became appallingly aware of a national and personal breach with God. With terrific clarity they saw the nexus of sin and penalty, of idolatry and punishment, of injustice and inexorable retribution. Thus religion that had become formal and liturgical now became personal, ethical and spiritual. For they had been made to stand before the Living God, and had been drawn into His Council. They saw that He would use strange instruments to carry out His holy will, such as Assyria at one time, Babylon at another, yet would He be holy still. They struck hard! Only repentant conformity with that will could bring salvation out of judgment, and the time was short.

Prediction, therefore, was inherent in all such proclamation. Through sight had come insight and that involved foresight. Thus there was bred within their mind an eschatology of a Kingdom of God on earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Some of their predictions were not fulfilled; others only partially; but not a few were so fulfilled that fulfilment became one of the tests of prophecy. Their vision of God's "remnant" is the quintessence of ethical optimism. Yet were they realists to the core, for they had seen God. They might despair of man because of his sin and frailty, but never of God. In Him they won an unquenchable hope. Thus they knew that judgment was conditional, for in repentance and turning man would find the salvation of his God.

They were the incarnation of all they sought to proclaim. Thus in character and word they became the mediators of His grace. In faith and loyalty they obeyed to the last stretch of will, holding on through shame, obloquy, desertion and death. Not they, but the false prophets alone let down people, cause and God. There are those among us who have caught their spirit, and in

that sense these men, now long dead, are our contemporaries. The future of our communion may depend upon the answer we give to the implicit challenge of the great prophets. If it be required of any church that it become prophetic, surely it is the Baptist.

Bibliography: A valuable list is given in T. H. Robinson's "Prophets and Prophecy" (Duckworth). Of many others: Heiler's "Prayer"; Fleiming James's "Personalities of the Old Testament"; most recent, Knight's "The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness."

F. CAWLEY.

THE MINISTER'S STUDY OF SCRIPTURE, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

IT is the prime conviction of worshippers in the evangelical tradition that they gather around the Word of God. They aim to set forth the worth of God not primarily by seeking to bring an offering worthy of God, but by receiving the Gospel and the grace of Jesus Christ through the Bible and in the Holy Spirit.

It therefore follows that ministers of the Gospel should be expert in the knowledge of Holy Scripture, and should expound it with authority. It is a matter of great encouragement that so many ministers can now handle the Greek New Testament, and that an increasing number have some facility in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed it is remarkable how many men, especially the older ministers, express their regret that they did not pursue Hebrew in College more diligently. That such observations are not merely polite remarks made to a Hebrew tutor is shown by the note of genuine regret often discernible in the speakers.

Knowledge of the original languages of Scripture remains the ideal for every Baptist minister, but in the absence of that knowledge, the English versions provide the text books for our sermons and meditation. It will surely be agreed that we should all be familiar with the principles of translation by which the English translators have produced the Authorised and Revised Versions. Consider, for example, these two illustrations. Psalm viii begins with the words, "O LORD our Lord . . ." Why, as so often in the Old Testament, is the word LORD also printed as Lord, that is, once in capital letters and once in small letters? The difference in printing marks a difference in the Hebrew words used. LORD, in capital letters, renders the divine name, Jehovah, or, more correctly, Yahweh, whereas Lord simply renders a title, Lord. So Psalm viii really begins with the words, "O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth"; such a rendering makes the reference to "thy name" quite clear, for it is a reference to the first word of the verse. Without that information consider, for example, how easy it is to miss the point in the dramatic story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii).

The scene on Carmel ends with the twice repeated confession of the people, "The LORD, he is the God." The sharpness of the conflict between the personal God of Israel and the other god, Baal, is realised when the confession is read. "Jehovah is the God, Jehovah is the God."

Consider, too, the use of italics in the Authorised Version. In the A.V. of Psalm cxvi, 12, we read,

"What shall I render unto the LORD,
for all his benefits toward me?"

where the word "for" is in italics. This means, in this case, that there is no equivalent for the word "for" in the Hebrew. To omit the word "for" makes nonsense of the present rendering, and in fact the proper rendering is,

"How shall I render unto the Lord,
all his benefits toward me?"

Such a rendering affords a different conception of worship and opens up interesting possibilities. It is not a *quid pro quo* which is involved, but the returning to the Lord of His own benefits to us, which returning is seen in the lifting up of the cup in the next verse.

For further examples, R. C. Trench, "On the Authorised Version of the New Testament," 1859, may be consulted; also T. Chase, "The Use of Italics in the English Bible," in "Anglo-American Bible Revision," 1879.

The second essential is that ministers should make certain parts of the Scripture their very own. They should know the Scriptures thoroughly, but they should also "possess" certain parts of it, certain parts alike in Old and New Testaments. The late Dr. J. C. Carlile once gave a Baptist Students' Conference in London some very sound advice. He advised us in our early ministerial years to compile for our benefit and for our own eyes, a commentary on one of the books of the Bible. At the commencement of his own ministry he had taken the Second Isaiah, and written his own commentary on it. He went on and I remember his very words after almost twenty years, "If you were to call me at 1 o'clock to-morrow morning, and ask me to preach a sermon in five minutes' time, I should take some text from Isaiah xl-lv. No doubt it would be a poor sermon, but it would serve." Such advice was a welcome confirmation of my own habit, already started when a student and maintained ever since, whereby I scrutinised Scripture, word by word and letter by letter, until portions of it are my own. We tend to do this so easily in regard to the New Testament; why not the Old Testament? Choose the stories of the deliverance from Egypt or the life of David in the Court History, or the Second Isaiah, or a Book of the Psalms, then use as many commentaries on that particular book as you can.

Study the portion verse by verse in the light of the Versions, the grammar, the historical setting. Discover what each commentator has to say about each verse or section, and come to your own decisions on knotty points. There is no work so rewarding as the meticulous study of the text, for as you serve it in this way, you master it.

It is thus that ministers come to "possess" a certain field of the Scripture, to understand its meaning, to enter its atmosphere and to become themselves adequate bearers of the word to others. A minister's study cannot be too well equipped with commentaries, at least one on every book of the Bible should be the aim, and among these the commentary or commentaries which ministers themselves write will take their place.

Besides the general acquaintance with the English Scriptures, and the detailed knowledge of some selected book, there is also that indispensable concordance study. There are very few expository sermons which should be attempted without some preliminary concordance work. The perpetual charm and attraction is that you never know what you will find. Concordances are not treasuries of texts which enable us to find certain texts, they are warehouses which must be searched, for in them are concealed the patterns of doctrines and the stores of the great Biblical ideas.

A minister, for example, has consulted every reference to "blood," or "covenant," or "remnant," or "word," or "glory." He has classified them into groups of related references, and has written up his findings. He knows the ground, and in a fraternal or conference a point comes up, and he is able to speak with authority. It may be said that this is specialist work, but it may be fairly claimed that it is the work every minister must do. Every minister has his own favourite theological country, or is partial to one or other of the great doctrines of the faith, and how necessary it is to ground that doctrine, not merely in reading, not merely in the classic Christian formulations of the doctrine, but also in our own Bible study of the terms of our favourite doctrine. It is scarcely necessary to add that the material for any Biblical idea is not confined to the actual terminology of that idea.

So often we are called upon to repeat the words, "in memory of Me." There is the world of difference between merely repeating them, and repeating them in the light of, and with the personal authority of, one's own examination of the verb "to remember" in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and the Prophets. In this way we discover that "to remember" is "to commemorate," and "to commemorate" is "to actualise" the Gospel. Remembrance is the "regeneration of (the) theme" of the Gospel in the believer, it is the glad tidings coming to new life in the experience of those who are in Christ. In the same way, we appeal for conversions because we believe that Christ died for all, but how

surely that appeal is grounded in the Word of God, when we recall the word "return" and have mastered its Biblical distribution and significance.

Concordance work is of fundamental importance because it lays foundations for life-long understanding of doctrines, and for a sound Biblical approach to our particular theological delights, our ministerial duties, and above all our task of preaching the Gospel. Is it asking too much that we should have done the concordance work on all the principal terms in Jesus' first text, Mark i, 14 f?

One of the readiest illustrations is the Greek verb which in its deponent middle means "to proclaim glad tidings." The proper and safe approach to this verb is from the use of the equivalent verb in the Old Testament. Here the indispensable link is Hatch and Redpath's concordance to the Septuagint, the Greek Version of the Old Testament Scripture, and also helpful, and a book which no minister should be without, is Abbott-Smith's "Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament." We learn from these books and the Hebrew Bible that the Hebrew word "to proclaim good tidings" is "bsr," one of the forms of which also means "flesh," etc. Our concordances illustrate the usage of the word "bsr." Unfortunately Young's concordance gives no illustrations of the usage of "bsr" in the "Gospel" context, and the references have to be sought under "tidings." With the "secular" usage we are not concerned, though some are very significant, but there are certain religious and, in the Old Testament, mainly late, examples which are very important.

Among these there are five passages in the Second Isaiah, four of which are very important. In Isaiah xli, 27, God gives a herald of good news to Jerusalem. The content of the good news in this passage is a reference to Cyrus, but twice, in xl, 9, and lii, 7, the content of the good news is divine. In lii, 7, the herald sums up his message in the words, "Thy God reigns," and in xl, 9, the phrase is "Behold your God." Thus the theocentric account of the good tidings, of the "Gospel" in Second Isaiah, is the Kingship and Presence of God. The unknown prophet of the exile can proclaim the good tidings, "Thy God reigns," and our Lord preached the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. It is not too much to say that we owe the word and the idea of the Gospel to Second Isaiah, and this claim does not deny the new Gospel content of the Incarnate One, but rather prepares us for the Presence and Kingship of God in Christ.

In the religious texts discovered since 1929 at Ugarit, that is, Ras Shamra, on the Syrian coast, north of Phoenicia, texts which belong to about 1500 B.C. and are of great importance for the study of Canaanite literature and religion, both the noun and the verb of "good tidings" are used. There are several references.

to the announcement of good tidings, especially as from one god to another, or of the birth of a desired child. One notable example is the way in which the goddess Anath has to convey to the god Ba'lu the glad tidings that he is to have a temple of his own, an announcement which in this context probably means the renewal of this particular god's kingdom.

Morgan Edwards, founder of what is to-day known as Brown University, Rhode Island, U.S.A., was true not only to the Bristol College tradition, to which he belonged, but also to the ideal of the ministry, when he said, "The Greek and Hebrew are the two eyes of a minister, and the translations are but commentaries, because they vary in sense as commentators do."

G. HENTON DAVIES.

THE LIVING LAW

THE Old Testament falls into three distinct parts: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. This division is somewhat obscured in our English Versions, but preserved in the Hebrew Bible. In both, the Law is the first five books—Genesis to Deuteronomy. For Jewish thought, the Law is the most important portion of the Old Testament; "the Rabbis declared that the Prophets were Torah, the Psalms were Torah, indeed the whole was Torah." Christian thought, on the other hand, has paid more attention to the Prophets, and among the writings, to the Psalms. Indeed, the Law has been, and still is, somewhat of an embarrassment to many Christians. It is true that much of that embarrassment is unnecessary, as when, for example, the book of Genesis was required to prove or disprove scientific theories with which it is not concerned. Nevertheless it is fair to ask whether the stories of Genesis have, for the most part, any real relevance to the Christian experience, other than as illustrations for sermons. Questions arise much more readily about a considerable part of the legislation in Exodus to Deuteronomy. What possible interest can the Christian have, or ought he to have, in the detailed description of the Tabernacle and its furnishings, the selection of the priests and their clothing? Has not the Christian Church abandoned the whole sacrificial system, the dietary laws and the majority of the ceremonial directions with which so much of Leviticus and Numbers is concerned?

To recognise this is not in any way to belittle the permanent value of the ethical requirements, still less the great religious insight of such commandments as "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. vi, 5), and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix, 18). Such considerations have led many to say, or to suggest by their practice, that it were better to retain those parts of the Law which are clearly of permanent value, and leave the rest

for those who are interested in the academic study of Israel's religion.

This, of course, raises a further question. Have we the right to adopt such an attitude towards so considerable a part of the Bible? Is the Law no more than the deposit of an ancient faith, having no more authority for the Christian than the scriptures of other religions of the world? Many of us would shrink from such a conclusion, even though it might not be easy to rebut it. The Law is part of the Bible; as part of the Christian Scriptures it has been regarded by the Church as part of the divine revelation. Are we justified in making our own standards the yardstick by which revelation should be judged? It need hardly be said that the fact that the Law is uncongenial to modern secular thought is no criterion. This is not to retreat into obscurantism, or to adopt a totally unchristian attitude by saying, "This is the word of God and therefore we must not ask questions about it." It does, however, suggest that there may be another approach to the Law which shall do justice to our Lord's words about it, and to the teaching of the New Testament generally. We do well to remember that the Law was by no means a burden to the devout Jew. Many of the Psalms bear witness to the deep religious joy with which the pious received it. It could, of course, become a burden, but there have been Christians whose lives, though orthodox in belief and irreproachable in conduct, have suggested to their fellows that Christianity was a negative, restrictive and burdensome faith.

Our Lord severely criticised contemporary interpretations of the Law, e.g. on Sabbath and divorce, but He was emphatic that He came to fulfil the Law. St. Paul vigorously condemns those who would fasten the Law like an intolerable burden on the Christian Church, but speaks of the Law as permanent, holy, and mediating life. Perhaps our greatest mistake is to think of the Law as unrelated to the life of the religious community to which it was given. Thus we think of it as a static code. Indeed, the translation "Law" may have been partly responsible for our misunderstanding; the Hebrew "Torah" suggests that we have here the divine direction of the life of those who willingly accepted His rule in the land wherein He had set them. It must be seen in relation to life under the rule of God. Indeed, that is the way of interpretation to which our Lord drew attention by insisting that the Law must be understood and obeyed in the spirit of the "first and second commandments," love towards God and love towards one's neighbour.

Our generation is immensely indebted to the patient scholarship of the last 100 years, which has helped us to distinguish the main strands in the Pentateuch. We see it now as the final product of centuries of loyal and devoted response to the rule of God, a process which began in those creative days of the Exodus under

the leadership of Moses, reaching its final form in the post-exilic era. It retains those permanent elements which had been accepted from the earliest days of Israel's history; it includes that deeply religious interpretation of earlier Torah which we call Deuteronomy, an astonishing feature of which is that it appears to have come from a time during which Israel was passing through its most severe trial—the years immediately preceding the Exile. It received its final shape during that period in which every inducement was being brought to bear upon the pious Jew to merge his religion into the more powerful and politically more important religions of his day. The "separation" had to be made, or Israel's religion lost, and it is to the everlasting credit of post-exilic Judaism that it made that "separation" and remained loyal to the Rule of God. Beneath the algebraic symbols, J, E, D, and P, lies a life of devotion to the will of God, in which faith was tested almost beyond endurance, yet supported almost beyond expectation. To those who see these strata in the Pentateuch in terms of the life and faith of Israel, they tell in eloquent terms of God working among men, choosing and purifying a people, seeking from them an ever-deepening trust and obedience; and of man, often blundering, often disloyal and ungrateful, yet also hearing and obeying as the Word of God sounds more clearly in his ears. Always there is the faith that the will of God is relevant to the historical situations which Israel must meet, that His will is supreme, and that it is the highest and noblest function of His people to render loving and reverent obedience to Him. The Torah, then, whether in its early form, as for example in Exodus xxxiv and Exodus xx-xxiii, or as it shows the deepening and enriching influence of the prophets in Deuteronomy, or in its final form, including all this in the "Priestly" presentation of post-exilic days, is seeking to express in the language of man the grateful and adoring spirit kindled by the Spirit of God.

God is King; and it is the highest destiny of man to live under the divine rule. Israel has been chosen and redeemed by God to actualise His rule in the world. The circumstances of Israel's life changed through the centuries, socially, politically and religiously, from the relatively simple conditions of the Exodus period, through the monarchy period and into the post-exilic era. During these centuries this people had developed a national consciousness, had received the profound impact of the prophetic revelation and had passed through the terrible experience of invasion and exile. It is one of the glories of Israel that her religious institutions, as reflected in the Torah, were able to meet the crises of Israel's history. That is one way of saying that it is the Law of the *living* God. In obedience to it, Israel was able to maintain her distinctive witness, saved from merging her life and religion in the confusion of races under the Persian and Greek empires, strengthened to be steadfast against the active hostility of such as Antiochus Epiphanes so that in the

fullness of time One could come Who should fulfil the purpose of God expressed and preserved in Israel's faith.

In the light of this we may turn to note the loving care with which the vestments of the priest, the furnishings of the Temple and the details of sacrifice are described. Nothing is too small for notice, no effort is too much to make, so that the worship may be worthily offered by the penitent and redeemed congregation. The great feasts, especially the Passover, became sacraments of God's saving and redeeming work for men and were celebrated with joy and gratitude. It was fitting that the first-fruits of the soil and flocks should be brought to Him Who gives all, in glad acknowledgment that God, not man, is the Lord of the world. Dietary laws, circumcision, Sabbath, become the objects of special concern because they emphasised distinction between Jew and Gentile, and were constant reminders of the Jew's responsibility to be loyal to "that which was delivered unto him." The Law was the expression of the covenant-relationship created and maintained by God.

"More to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold :
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

A. S. HERBERT.

THE COVENANT ISSUE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

WHATEVER be the relative value of the records which have come down to us in the work of the different schools of thought which lie behind the historical books of the Old Testament, it is significant that in each case the covenant ceremony at Sinai-Horeb (Exodus xxiv) is found to mark the actual beginning of Israel's national history. It is important, therefore, that we should ask ourselves what exactly was the significance to the Hebrews of the particular term which we render by the word "covenant."

The etymology of the term is a matter of dispute, and so need not detain us here; for it can have little bearing upon the question which is our immediate concern. The point of basic importance, which unfortunately tends to be overlooked, is that it signified the acceptance *upon oath* of mutual responsibility. Indeed, the term for "oath" may be used by synecdoche as a synonym for "covenant." (Cf. (a) 1 Samuel xx, 8, with 2 Samuel xxi, 7; and (b) Ezekiel xvii, 11-21.) The binding power of a covenant thus lay in the words of the oath by which it was consummated; and, although we have no recorded example of the wording of such an oath, there can be no reasonable doubt that in general it at least implied, if it did not explicitly invoke, a curse upon the participant if he should fail to keep faith. Accordingly, as one might expect, it is this principle of keeping

faith which is essential to the maintenance of a covenant ; and the Hebrews expressed this idea by means of a phrase which is translated in the standard English versions by such words as " to show mercy " or " to deal kindly," but is better rendered by the expression, " to show devotion."* In other words, we find a recurrent emphasis upon the fact that in entering a covenant one pledges oneself to "keep faith with " or " show devotion to " one's partner or colleague.

The terms of the covenant whereby the nation of Israel came into being appear to have been inscribed upon stone tablets or *stelae* of the type familiar to us from archaeological discovery (e.g. the *stela* of Mesha), and they are enshrined for us, of course, in the familiar words of the Decalogue (Exodus xx, 1 ff). The purpose is obvious enough, i.e. the formulation of the basic conditions for establishing right relationship (Hebrew: *tsedheq*) between man and God on the one hand (the first four commandments) and between man and man on the other (the remaining six commandments). The covenant under discussion thus implies the willing recognition of the fact that one's fellows within this society have definite claims upon one, and, what is more, that these are conditioned by an over-ruling claim to allegiance which is made by Him Who is " the enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness " (Matthew Arnold).

The account of the ceremony which was current in Israel during the early years of the monarchy may seem somewhat distasteful to us; but for the Hebrews, to whom blood was essentially " life " (e.g. Leviticus xvii, 11, 14), the sacrifice of oxen and the scattering of the blood over both altar and people was eloquent of the latter's oneness with God in the new life upon which they were entering; it was indeed " atoning " blood.

Of course we must grant that all this was limited in outlook, that (to all appearances) it was on a narrow, national scale. The point, however, is that it was a beginning; it implied the willing recognition of an ordered world—not the ordered world of the scientist, perhaps, but at least a moral order which found its sanction in God. Yes, let us grant this narrowness of outlook; but let us then read on through the Old Testament, this book of the " Old Covenant," and learn how a few prophetic individuals, responsive to the guiding voice of God, recognised that this circumscription of outlook should have been but temporary, that it was Israel's mission as the Servant of God so to continue in steadfast devotion to Him that, having made this ideal an actual fact in its own national life, it might ensure that the particular should become general, that what was local should become

* The use of the term " devotion " as a rendering of the Hebrew word *chesedh* has been defended by the writer in a paper given before the Society for Old Testament Study at Cardiff in September, 1946.

universal—in short that (to use a form of thought which is by no means peculiar to the New Testament) God's Kingdom should come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What happened? Let the sacred historians tell us—the editors of Judges and Kings, who, looking back over the course of Israel's history, saw nothing but a trail of broken pledges. Let those prophets tell us, who, surveying the contemporary scene, found falsehood and lack of faith, injustice and oppression, hatred and cruelty, all rampant in the land. Five or six hundred years have passed, and we find Amos driven by the voice of God to arraign his contemporaries

because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept His statutes, . . .

because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes. (ii, 4, 6.)

A few years later Hosea sums up the situation in a striking phrase, saying that Israel is like "a deceitful bow" (vii, 16). For him Israel has indeed missed the mark! More than a century later Jeremiah again, like his predecessors, can find nothing but corruption in the life of his people, even the recognised religious leaders being false to their trust.

From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely (vi, 13).

However, as Jeremiah ponders the situation, and wonders how the ordered world which God wills can be created out of this appalling chaos (ch. iv, 23 ff), the voice of God comes to him in the vision of a new covenant which shall prove effectual because it is inscribed, not on a tablet of stone, but on the very heart of man.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I shall make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I shall put My law in their inward parts, and I shall write it upon their heart; and thus I shall become their God, and they will become My people (xxxii, 31 ff).

In other words, the only operative covenant is that which is made with the individual, who, by admitting personal responsibility towards God and his fellows, is willingly enrolled in the service of God, and, what is more, shares in a true fellowship of believers. The same step towards the recognition of a moral order sanctioned

by God! The same narrow limitation, perhaps, to national boundaries! Nevertheless it is a pledge of devotion which is of vastly different quality from that made with the sacrifice of oxen. In fact it is an "atonement" which can be made only through the complete sacrifice of one's self, an individual's utter surrender to the will of God. The ideal is that of the psalmist, when he turns to God in prayer, and says*:-

Thou dost not delight in sacrifice;

Should I bring a burnt-offering, it would give Thee no pleasure.

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

(li, 16 f.)

Finally it remained for the great prophet of the Exile, whose words are preserved for us in Isaiah x'-lv, to transcend these narrow boundaries of the state and unfold God's plan in its universal scope. Listen to the voice of God as it makes itself heard (a) in its commission of him who should fulfil Israel's vocation as the ideal Servant of God, and (b) in its challenging conception of a universal fellowship of believers.

I, the Lord,

have called thee in righteousness,

and grasped thy hand;

I have guarded thee, and given thee

for a universal covenant,

for a light to the Gentiles;

To open the blind eyes,

to bring the prisoner from prison,

Those that sit in darkness

out of the prison house.

(xlii, 6 f.)

"Out of the prison house"—that is it! A new and a better covenant, whereby the fetters of sin should be broken and mankind's habit of selfishness should be snapped!

Yet that is not all; for we also learn from the same prophet the inevitable costliness of this challenge, i.e. the fact that he who thus responds "wholeheartedly" to the voice of God cannot so oppose the selfish habit of the human race and snap the bond of sin, thus giving to man a new character, without bearing in his body the mark of man's inhumanity to man and man's rejection of God. In the hymnology of the cultus it had been customary to think of God as the "Shepherd of Israel" (Psalm lxxx, 1), and the individual had been wont to comfort himself with the thought, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm xxiii, 1);

* In verse 17a the usual rendering is that of both the Authorised and the Revised Version, i.e., "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit"; but the consonantal text of the original also admits the translation which is given above.

but our prophet, as he looks down the long vista of the wasted years and contemplates the final issue, is forced to say of this suffering Servant,

All we like sheep have gone astray;
 we have turned every one to his own way;
 And the Lord hath focussed upon him
 the iniquity of us all.

(liii, 6.)

God's world being what it is, however, this could not be otherwise, could it?

AUBREY R. JOHNSON.

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN WORLD RELIGION

HOW did religion begin? As a pure monotheism or as a dim terror of the unknown and the "uncanny"? We do not know, and speculation, while interesting, does not really help us much when we are trying to consider its actual history. Probably many elements have contributed to its structure, and none of them can be described strictly as being its source. But there is comparatively little doubt as to the most primitive form in which we may actually know it, whether from history or from existing beliefs. We cannot go back, with any degree of confidence, behind an animism. Properly speaking even this, in its strictest form, has nowhere survived. It should mean a belief in group spirits, a mass of indeterminate beings among whom no individual can be singled out for personal identity, a tremulous sense of a vague "They" who haunt man's life and surround him on every side. It is usual to distinguish three main classes, the spirits of the upper air, those of the earth, and those of the dead. Traces which seem to be unmistakable appear in the language of several known and historical religions. From time to time we come across divine names which are found only in the plural. In old Italian religion, for example, we have words like *Penates*—"cupboard spirits" and *Manes*—"spirits of the dead." There is even a hint in the Old Testament that *Elohim* was originally used in almost the same sense as *Manes*. Here, and also in some aspects of Chinese religion, we have clear indications of a true animism.

In actual fact, however, as a rule these animisms have taken a further step into what is sometimes called polydaemonism. While the groups and classes are still recognised as species, individuals are singled out and located in particular spots, or associated with particular persons. Once more the old Roman religion furnishes us with a number of examples. Every farm had its own "Terminus," the guardian spirit of its boundary. There was a "Hercules," who kept the farmyard wall, and even the dung heap had its tutelary spirit. Inside the house the central family symbol was

the "Vesta," the hearth on which the fire was kept burning. The vague ghost-world made its contribution in the form of individual ancestors, and here we have another parallel with Chinese belief. The earliest forms of Semitic religion known to us offer further examples in fertility spirits like the Baals and spirits of the wild like the Els. Polydaemonism is a type of religion which has been very widely spread, if not universal, and its phenomena are beyond dispute.

A "higher" stage is reached when we come to a true polytheism. Here we have "high gods," no longer limited to a single place or human group, but maintaining their identity wherever they are found. In some instances we can trace the development of this belief from the polydaemonistic forms. In Semitic religion, for example, we have a curious history of the Baals and Els. In Palestine the former remained as fertility spirits, members of a species, while in Phoenicia, the city, Baal became almost a high god, and certainly did so in Mesopotamia. On the other hand, the Palestinian El attained this kind of universal rank, while in Mesopotamia the word became little more than a determinative indicating a divine being of any kind. And at the beginning of the Christian era most of the religions accepted by civilised man were nominally polytheisms.

To-day, Hinduism is the only great surviving polytheism. A faith of this kind is always unstable. It may be officially adopted, but animistic ideas die hard. Greek religion, with its glorious Pantheon, had beneath it the constant sense of more or less vague and generally malevolent spirits. Anyone who has lived in close contact with the ordinary Indian knows how far life is dominated by the fear of "Bhuts." Moreover, a polytheism fails to satisfy two of the great human instincts, the intellectual demand for a unity and the moral demand for righteousness. So we have the less cultured classes sinking back into a primitive animism, and the higher type of mind tending to a purely atheistic, and usually pantheistic, philosophical system. Men like Euripides, Lucretius and Siddharta became absolute atheists in their demand for goodness and clear thinking. Both Greece and India developed an absolute and idealistic monoism, which either had no room for the gods or else subjected them to the same law of ultimate individual extinction as that which governed the fate of man. It was probably such a compromise with a pure metaphysic which enabled Hinduism to survive.

Thus, in a measure, the wheel has gone round its circuit, and, for the common mass, we are back again in something very like an old animism. But there was one religion which broke away at a tangent. That was the faith of Israel. When we first meet it, we are in the midst of a world still in the polydaemonistic stage. Baals and Els are to be found on every side, as place-names so often

show. But this people had a single El as their national Deity. They had come into contact with Him very early in their history; indeed, it was through Him that they became a social and political entity at all, and the great Covenant of Sinai (or Horeb) marks the beginning of a movement new in the story of man's relations with God.

It was in the nomad age that Israel met her God. She brought Him with her when she entered Palestine. But there were dangers in the new order to which she was there introduced. She gradually took to agriculture and civic life, and found the Baals already in possession. It was not safe to annoy them by neglect, and, if they were not duly worshipped they would withhold their aid in farm and town. So the first temptation was to abandon the national El in favour of the local Baal. It was only the stern logic of events which brought Israel to see that she must worship her own God, whatever else she did. For Palestine was, then as always, exposed to raiding tribes from the "wilderness," the sort of people the Israelites themselves had been. The Baals were a disintegrating force, the national God of Israel a unifying and inspiring power. In His name all Israel was one, and could meet and repel any ordinary invader.

But this did not end the peril. It was only natural that Israel should put her own God on the same level as the Baals and, indeed, some of the "high gods" worshipped in addition to the Baals. The result was an elaboration of cultic forms, especially of sacrifice, and a frightful lowering of the moral standard. The God of Israel came near to being a Baal; indeed, the term seems to have been applied to Him in the families even of such enthusiasts as Saul and David.

It was the great prophets who made a successful stand against this subtle corruption of Israel's true faith. They looked back to the nomad age as laying down certain basic elements in religion and morality, which must at all costs be preserved. They attacked the general laxity in commercial practice and social life, they denounced sacrifice as carried on at the great shrines, and condemned the immorality associated with the temples. Their standard was the Mosaic ethic, not merely as a verbal formula, but as a compendium of moral principles which needed reinterpretation with every fresh complication in the social order. Their teaching, delivered with passionate intensity, was summed up by a great prophet in the words, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?"

So matters stood when the great calamity of the Exile put an end to the independent political life of the nation. One of the great demands of the human spirit was satisfied; there was for Israel now no contradiction or even divorce between religion and morality. But the Exile itself brought a new lesson. Far away in Mesopotamia Israel came into contact with a vaster world of men and gods than

she had ever known in her own land. She thought she had left her God behind, and she found that He was still with her. So, at last, she realised His universality, and by the time that her worship and some measure of national life were restored the greatest among her had seen that there was only a single God, He Who had brought her out of Egypt, given her life, and taught her the great lesson of an ethical monotheism which she had to give to the world.

The story does not end there. But Israel had achieved a unique belief in the one living and true God, Who was also supremely good. It was only when Jesus came that the full implications of her belief were manifest, but it is to her that man owes the spiritual background against which alone the perfect revelation of God could be seen.

T. H. ROBINSON.

RECENT TRENDS IN THE STUDY OF THE PSALTER

WHEN I was a student the chief interests in the study of the psalms were the determination of the date of their composition, and the fixing of their original poetic form. In the hands of some scholars the latter led to much arbitrary treatment of the text to make it conform to the editor's ideas of the structure of the psalm, while so far as the date was concerned, many crowded large numbers of the psalms into the Maccabean age, and others assigned most of them to the Persian age. There was a general agreement that few, if any, of the psalms came from the pre-exilic period.

To-day there is less interest in the date of the individual psalms, but a much greater readiness to believe that a considerable pre-exilic element survives in the Psalter. Some writers go so far as to assign almost every psalm to the pre-exilic period. It must not be supposed, however, that this represents a return to conservative views, since it is often coupled with views of the original nature of the psalms which are anything but conservative. Moreover, we know that in the first century B.C. psalms very similar in character to those of the Psalter continued to be written. It would be surprising if no such psalms were written from the exile to the first century B.C., and equally so if they continued to be written, but everything written during that period failed to survive, while earlier and later psalms did survive.

The dominant interests to-day are the determination of the purpose and use of the psalms, and the view taken of the date is rather a corollary from that. For this shift in interest we are particularly indebted to two scholars, Mowinckel and Gunkel. The Norwegian scholar, Mowinckel, argued that the psalms were written for a cultic purpose, and almost without exception each had a definite use in the ritual of Israel. To the headings he

assigned a cultic meaning, and held that particular psalms accompanied particular cultic acts, which were there indicated. Many of the psalms he held to have been designed to counter spells which the worshipper thought had been put on him by sorcerers, who thus involved him in misfortune and disease. By repairing to the shrine and praying through these forms to God, he hoped the power of the spells might be broken. Moreover, many of the psalms were in Mowinckel's view associated with an annual enthronement festival, similar to the Babylonian New Year festival and closely related to the old Canaanite fertility cult festival, though integrated into the worship of Israel's God. Gunkel, while agreeing with Mowinckel in assuming an annual enthronement festival as the background of some of the psalms, did not agree that all the psalms were written for a cultic use in the worship of the shrine. He studied the types of the psalms, and by their classification sought to get to their meaning, finding four main types which yielded others by combination. These four main types were public and private songs of thanksgiving and lament. He held that the national songs were older than the individual, and the songs of thanksgiving older than the lamentations, while the purer types were older than the mixed.

It is doubtful if these conclusions are sound, though it is undeniable that Gunkel's work has been most stimulating and fruitful in turning attention to the significance, rather than the date, of the psalms. It is probable that many of the psalms reflected actual experience, either national or individual, even though we cannot recover the precise circumstances that gave them birth. For that very reason they are the better able to be the expression of our approach to God. But it is doubtful if we can put blessing and misfortune, or the emotions to which they give rise, in any chronological sequence. On the other hand, Gunkel is probably right in holding that not all the psalms were written for cultic purposes, and that many were used in the quiet of the home.

Mowinckel's views have been contested by a number of scholars, yet they are likely to influence permanently the study of the Psalter, however much they may be criticised in details. He is almost certainly right in emphasising the ritual use of many of the psalms. The "Myth and Ritual" school of British scholars has stressed the accompaniment of ancient ritual acts by the recitation of texts, which both interpreted the meaning of the acts and were regarded as integral to their due performance, and has also followed Mowinckel in placing Israelite ritual in the setting of ancient oriental usage. Others, however, question his reliance upon a Babylonian and Canaanite basis for the interpretation of the psalms. That there are similarities between Israelite and Babylonian psalms is certain and not surprising, and these have been especially studied by the Swedish scholar Widengren. On

the other hand there are differences of spirit that Driver and Castellino have insisted on. Moreover, the Ras Shamra texts have now yielded a number of verbal and other parallels to the psalms, not only making it increasingly certain that we must study Hebrew psalmody in the wider background of ancient culture and worship, but throwing light on obscure passages in the psalms.

It should be added that amongst Scandinavian scholars there is a return to a Messianic interpretation of many of the psalms, but a Messianic interpretation associated with the Canaanite fertility religion and the myth of the dying and rising Nature god, and therefore poles asunder from the older Messianic interpretation.

It is certain that whenever the psalms were written, they were collected in the post-exilic period, and probable that they were used in the worship of the Second Temple. It is therefore more fitting that we should seek to relate the cultic use of the psalms to that post-exilic ritual than to an assumed pre-exilic enthronement festival which post-exilic Judaism must have repudiated. Pfeiffer observes: "The fact that post-exilic Jews, deprived of a Davidic king, should in these . . . psalms glorify Jehovah as their sovereign, hardly proves the celebration of a religious drama in ancient times. In post-exilic times such a pagan festival is, of course, inconceivable." Hence Welch took up the fruitful idea of Mowinckel, but related it to the worship of the Second Temple, and argued that many of the psalms take a new meaning if they are read as the accompaniment of ritual acts prescribed in the Pentateuch. Thus he interprets Ps. cxvi as the liturgy that accompanied the sacrifice for the payment of a vow. Similarly Ps. li could well have accompanied a sin-offering and have served to call forth from the offerer the spirit which would make the sacrifice the true expression of his spirit. It is of interest to note that before the work of the "Myth and Ritual" school Welch was insisting as strongly as they that "liturgy . . . was regarded as being of equal importance with the rite with which it was connected," though applying the principle so differently.

Professor A. R. Johnson, again developing ideas of Mowinckel's, has argued for the probability that there were in Israel "cultic prophets," who composed psalms for use in the ritual, and that in the post-exilic period they were reduced to the status of singers in the Levitical choirs. To these "cultic prophets" he assigns the composition of some of the psalms.

It will be seen, therefore, that present-day study of the Psalter is concerned with the Canaanite and oriental background out of which Hebrew sacred poetry developed, and with the cultic purposes for which the psalms were used. Its primary interest is not to regard them as the deposit of history, but as the vehicle of religion, and it thinks of them not as hymns, casually sung for edification, but as integral elements of cultic acts and as the vehicle of the heart's approach to God.

H. H. ROWLEY.

BIBLE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

THE Empress Helena is recorded to have made excavations to find the site of the Holy Sepulchre in the fourth century A.D., but Palestinian archaeology proper began when an American, Edward Robinson, rode through Palestine on horseback in 1838 with a Bible in his hand and with Eli Smith, a missionary, as his companion, and attempted to identify the sites of places mentioned in the Book; most of his identifications have stood the test of the past century of excavation. In 1865 the Palestine Exploration Fund was founded and some young officers in the Royal Engineers—Wilson, Warren, Kitchener, Conder—began a survey of the country. Since then Palestinian archaeology has become truly international. M. Clermont-Ganneau, an attaché at the French Consulate in Jerusalem, obtained in 1868 a copy of the famous Moabite stone giving the Moabite account of the war with Israel related in 2 Kings; he also identified the site of ancient Gezer by discovering rock inscriptions in Hebrew of the words, “boundary of Gezer.” In 1878 the German society, Deutsche Palästina-Verein, began to publish its journal and a German scholar, Sellin, who held an office in Vienna, began work in Palestine in 1899 at Taanach; other Germans soon followed at Megiddo and Jericho. For America, Harvard University sent Lyon and Reisner to Samaria and commenced operations in 1908; a Danish group undertook digging at Shiloh in 1926. Thus British, American, German, French, Austrian, and Danish scholars have co-operated in Palestinian excavations and valuable work has been done also by the Roman Catholics—particularly the Dominican Fathers of the Ecole Biblique—and by the Jews from the Hebrew University at Jerusalem.

Six weeks spent at Tell el-Hesi in southern Palestine by Flinders Petrie in 1890 revolutionised archaeological research. It was the first attempt to examine the inside of one of the many artificial hills or tells in which the remains of buried cities lie one below the other in successive strata. He had discovered during excavations in Egypt the value of broken pieces of pottery for putting these successive layers into chronological order. Pottery once broken was valueless to the thief or treasure hunter and was allowed to remain where it was thrown; but fashions in pottery changed considerably; there were differences in texture, in the finish of the inside and outside of pots whether by polishing or by the use of a thin colouring or wash; shapes and forms also changed. These changes in pottery remains were used for the relative dating of successive strata in a site, and, by comparison of pottery at different sites, for the dating of civilisations all over the country. In 1920 the British set up the Department of Antiquities in Palestine, methods of digging and of recording finds were standardised, and only competent field archaeologists who

were willing to abide by the rules were allowed charge of excavations, because a site, once dug, could never be put back as it had been before, and the evidence provided by it was gone for ever.

Excavations in Palestine have lighted up the Bible background for thousands of years, from long before Abraham to after the death of Jesus. We have realised that the date given for creation in the margin of the A.V. of Genesis i, 1, 4004 B.C. (a date worked out by an archbishop and so one that Baptists can safely ignore !) is far removed from truth; we can form a clear picture of the Palestine into which Abraham led his followers, Joshua brought his Israelites, and in which the great prophets delivered their timeless messages. We know something of the way writing and literature developed in the land long before Moses; income tax receipts from Samaria teach us much of life and religion under Ahab, and court-martial documents found in the guard room at Lachish shed new light on the days of Jeremiah. There are glimpses of the paganism of the aristocrats in the time of Jesus and of the superstitions of the common people who heard Him gladly; and it is possible that in the Garden Tomb and Gordon's Calvary we can worship where the Easter Gospel was first proclaimed.

Outside Palestine in the neighbouring Bible lands excavations began earlier than in the country itself. When Napoleon invaded Egypt he took scholars and a scientific expedition which began elaborate exploration in the Nile Valley, and as early as 1799 the famous Rosetta stone, which made it possible to read the languages of Egypt, was found by a French soldier about thirty-five miles from Alexandria. In 1887 a peasant woman accidentally discovered at Tell el Amarna the first of over 400 tablets containing foreign office correspondence of the Egyptian government in the fourteenth century B.C., and making that period one of the most clearly lit centuries in Palestine's history. In 1896 at Thebes there was found the stele of Merneptah containing the earliest mention of Israel yet found outside the Bible; and in 1904 letters and documents of a Jewish military colony at Elephantine, near Assuan, were found, throwing considerable light on Palestine in the fifth century B.C. From Egypt came also ancient literary remains written on papyrus and preserved for centuries in the dry sands. The first Biblical one, discovered in 1836, was some pages of the Psalms from about 600 A.D., and from 1896 to 1906 many papyri were found, especially at Oxyrhynchus in the Fayum, where was discovered the tantalising leaf from a third century book of the Sayings of Jesus, which included the now well known saying: "Jesus saith, Wherever there are two they are not without God, and wherever there is one alone I say, I am with him. Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood, and I am there." Early fragments of Old Testament and New have been of considerable help to scholars in Biblical research.

On the other side of Palestine, in Mesopotamia, there are also remains that have helped us to understand the Bible and interpret its message. From very early days Greek writers mentioned the inscriptions and remains which needed no digging to bring them to light, but the serious study began in 1765 when a German, Niebuhr, copied the trilingual inscription at Persepolis, and another German, Grotefend, began to translate it. Later an Englishman, Sir Henry Rawlinson, of the East India Company, went to Persia in 1835 and copied the Behistun inscription 300 feet up on an almost inaccessible rock face in which Darius had left his record in Persian, Susian, and Babylonian. Excavation began with another member of the East India Company, C. J. Rich, in 1811, and it was continued by French and British. Among the most important finds may perhaps be mentioned the Deluge and Creation tablets found by George Smith in 1872-3; the records of Assyrian and Babylonian kings from Tiglath Pileser I in the twelfth century B.C. to Cyrus in the sixth; the code of Hammurabi found at Susa in 1901; and the excavations of many cities which have enabled us to reconstruct the history and religious life of Mesopotamia from the fourth millennium B.C. We have discovered that our Old Testament Hebrew is greatly indebted to the early language of this eastern neighbour and a flood of new light on grammatical forms, syntax, and the meanings of words is assisting the scholar in his interpretation of the Old Testament. The "enemy's" propaganda reports on some of the historical events recorded in the Old Testament can be put alongside the Bible story and we can get a bit nearer the truth, which is always the first casualty in war. Perhaps more important is the recognition that there was a mass of near eastern literature, law, and even religious forms and patterns, that has influenced considerably the way in which Old Testament writers have expressed their message—just as the God Who was incarnate in Jesus used the clothes and language of a particular age, so the God Who spoke "in divers portions and divers manners" through prophets, priests, and law-givers in the Old Testament clothed His message in particular literary and thought forms.

From Syria and northern Mesopotamia at the north of Palestine has also, during the last few decades, come a wealth of information to help us see the Bible in its setting. Syria was the gateway through which most of the ideas and influences from outside entered the holy land. Thousands of tablets from Mari on the west of the middle Euphrates—over 20,000 of them—have been discovered since 1933 and take us back to the third millennium B.C. and the early background of the patriarchal narratives and link up with hundreds of tablets found at Nuzi, east of the Tigris. They throw light on the Hebrews, their traditions and their customs. Most important of all for a closer contact with the Old Testament have been the excavations at Ras Shamra, on the Syrian coast south

of Alexandretta. There French excavations since 1929 under Schaeffer have given us clear pictures of the kind of culture that the invading Israelites found in Canaan when they entered; we can understand some of the survivals from that ancient culture taken over by Israel and incorporated in her own religion—survivals such as seasonal festivals that have remained even in Christianity; and in many ways we have had to revise our theories of the development of Biblical literature and religion.

Events of the past hundred years have continually made the Biblical archaeologist exclaim, "the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth on, and from, His word."

J. N. SCHOFIELD.

BAPTIST STUDENTS' FEDERATION

WE urge our ministers to note the following details concerning Baptist societies in University centres. It is important that young people, on going up to the 'Varsity, should know of the activities of the B.S.F. Full particulars may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, R. N. Walters, Jesus College, Cambridge.

| <i>University</i> | <i>Society</i> | <i>Ministerial Contact</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Cambridge ... | Robert Hall ... | Rev. J. McLaren Cook |
| Oxford ... | John Bunyan ... | Rev. W. W. Bottoms |
| London ... | John Clifford ... | Dr. F. Townley Lord |
| Bristol ... | Edward Terrill ... | Rev. F. C. Bryan |
| Newcastle and Durham | David Fernie ... | Rev. F. G. Little |
| Leeds ... | Rushbrooke ... | Rev. H. H. Williams |
| Glasgow ... | Jervis Coats ... | Rev. R. Guy Ramsay |
| Sheffield ... | John Fawcett ... | J. L. Aston, Department of Metallurgy, St. George's Square |
| Manchester ... | Man. Univ. Soc. ... | Rev. J. W. Townsend |
| Edinburgh ... | Baptist Students' Association | Rev. C. C. Patterson |

MERCY ON THE TREASURER

The Treasurer has received about 800 subscriptions for 1948, leaving about 700 still to be paid, in addition to 50 which were not sent in 1947. It is particularly requested that members and correspondents should not delay forwarding moneys until the autumn, when a busy minister is wholly occupied with Church work. Have mercy on our Treasurer!

“ CONCERNING THE MINISTRY ”

My dear Friends,

In my Presidential Address to the Baptist Assembly I said, “ We British Baptists should aim at a minimum income for fully accredited married ministers of not less than £6 per week, viz., £312 per annum, with adequate children’s allowances.”

We all rejoice that through the beneficent working of the New Home Work Fund that ideal has been almost reached. Heartfelt thanks are due to M. E. Aubrey, B. Grey Griffith, the General Superintendents, and others, who have toiled unceasingly for that Fund.

We of the Baptist Insurance Co., Ltd., are glad to think that we have helped in the achievement of this happy position, for in the past four years the Company has made Grants to the Baptist Union which, with recovered income tax, have amounted to £12,362. We have also covenanted to grant at least £1,750 per annum for twenty years, on which the Union will recover tax.

If you have placed your insurances with us and influenced your church officers to place their own and those of the church, you have, in Pauline language, been fellow-labourers or helpers with us.

My Presidential Address was delivered in 1944. The rise in the cost of living has put the figures out of date. Our aim now must be a minimum of **£350**, with children’s allowances, as speedily as possible.

May the summer days give you physical and spiritual enrichment.

Yours sincerely,

SEYMOUR J. PRICE.

To the Members of the
Baptist Ministers’ Fraternal Union.

BAPTIST CHURCH HOUSE,
LONDON.

Dear Brother,

The New Home Work Fund has died. But the Baptist Home Work Fund is born. And the good work begun by the first will be continued by the second.

1. A letter has been sent out to all the churches asking for the nomination of some person to represent the Fund, to whom communications can be sent and from whom information may be expected. It is, of course, most important to secure the right person: energetic, enthusiastic and understanding.
2. We also need to secure the adherence of all our organisations in the Scheme.
3. From time to time notices have appeared or will appear in the *Baptist Times* concerning the place of Ministers in the Scheme. Early application for any necessary forms will be helpful.
4. A word of thanks to many who have written letters of appreciation.

If at any time there is anything in which I can help, please write.

Yours sincerely,

B. GREY GRIFFITH.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Teaching of the Church regarding Baptism. By Karl Barth.
Translated by Ernest A. Payne. 64 pp. (S.C.M. Press.
2s. 6d. net.)

At first sight Baptists will leap at this book and want to quote it *in extenso*. They need, however, to beware. In fairness to Prof. Karl Barth they should recognise that baptism as he describes it is different from baptism as most baptists understand it. The section dealing with the order of Baptism is, however, an undisguised plea for what he calls a "reinstatement: instead of the present infant-baptism, a baptism which on the part of the baptised is a responsible act."

Baptism is defined as a representation of "a supremely critical happening," namely, "a threat of death and a deliverance to life," by participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. As one would expect, Barth sees baptism as one with the Word of God, part of the Church's proclamation (like preaching), and here its potency lies. It has no independent potency of itself—the power is not in the water but in the water and the Word together. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and the Roman and Anglican Churches are criticised for making too little of the place of the Word in baptism.

To Barth baptism is not an indispensable medium; it is not essential to salvation, since the word and work of Christ can make use of other means. Nor is water baptism of itself causative or generative—a means of rebirth. "Baptism is no more a cause of our redemption than is our faith." Rather the word and work of Jesus Christ are the gift of salvation which is recognised in baptism. Barth emphasises the objective reality of baptism and it is here that he has something which Baptists would do well to ponder. For him, however, the nature and meaning of baptism are fundamentally independent of the order and practice. Baptism is baptism however and upon whomsoever administered. No rejection of the order by the Church and no repudiation of

its obligations by the baptised can invalidate it. It operates irresistibly so that though a person becomes a Mohammedan, a Hitler, a Stalin or a Mussolini, he continues to stand under its sign. How Barth distinguishes between this and the Roman doctrine of baptism as an *opus operatum* (which he rejects) it is difficult to see. There appears to be need for thinking at a deeper level, the level of personality. How do the word and work of Jesus Christ become operative for persons? Is the subjective side of baptism related to the mode and order of baptism only and not to its essential effectiveness? These are questions that need to be answered.

As regards the order of baptism Barth makes an open plea for the baptism of believers by immersion, that being the form of baptism committed to the Church by her Lord Who is also the Lord of baptism. Barth opposes re-baptism—Anabaptists of every kind, Roman or evangelical. But he sees in infant baptism a “clouded baptism.” Correct baptism requires the responsible willingness and readiness of the baptised. Infant baptism is arbitrary and despotic, “an act of violence.” “Neither by exegesis nor from the nature of the cause can it be established that the baptised person can be a merely passive instrument.” That is clearly seen in the New Testament, where “one is not brought to baptism; one comes to baptism.” Barth dismisses the usual arguments for maintaining infant baptism, mostly extraneous to the New Testament: Christ’s blessing of the children; “households” like that of the Philippian jailor; the confession of faith by godparents; the seed of faith in the child; the gift of faith to the child by baptism; the need of pious parents for comfort; the fear of unhealthy forcing of conversions; scrupulosity; or a premature separation of the sheep from the goats. He asks, is not the real stumbling block the fact that infant baptism gives the Church a hold over the people as a national church, the church of the masses? And would not the Church be healthier if she recognised herself as a believing and faithful minority?

The whole Christian Church will be grateful to Prof. Karl Barth for so frankly and courageously bringing this subject to notice, though his treatment of it will cause some frenzied twitterings in the paedobaptist dovecotes. English-speaking Christians will be grateful to Prof. Ernest A. Payne for undertaking and so admirably completing the work of translation.

The Changing Congo. By L. Gwendoline Pugh. Illustrated. 32 pp. (Carey Press; 2s. net.)

After more than thirty years in Congo, Mrs. Pugh describes the amazing changes she has seen in that time, the most remarkable being the transformation of people by the power of the Gospel, and the growth of the Christian Church.

In the Days of Thy Youth. By W. G. Branch. 168 pp. (Carey Press; 5s. net.)

Another book by one of your ministers who has already become known as a writer for young people. This is a series of challenging chapters setting out the claims of the Christian faith and life.

Myself and My Creed. (Senior Lessons.) 301 pp. (The Religious Education Press, Wallington, Surrey; 5s. net.)

Forty-three lessons on the Christian Faith, based on the Apostles' Creed. Although intended for use in day-schools, the book would be admirable for any group of young people. It has been written and approved by both Anglicans and Free Church people. In these days when there is need for better doctrinal teaching to young people this book will be welcomed by ministers and Sunday School workers.

WALTER W. BOTTOMS.
