

the Church. The different almanacs are as usual excellently got up, and will continue to meet the need which they have supplied for so many years.



The Rev. G. H. Morrison contributes a preface to a new work by the Rev. W. D. M. Sutherland entitled, "Ideals for the Christian Life." In a number of brisk and stimulating essays, the author sets out ideals which cannot fail to stand the reader in good stead in the making of all that is noble in character and personality. Mr. Robert Scott announces the volume for immediate publication.



## The Books of Chronicles.<sup>1</sup>

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FIFTEEN years have now elapsed since the appearance of the first instalment of the International Critical Commentary. Three books of the Old Testament have been treated by British writers, and eight by American commentators. If the present rate of progress is maintained, those of us who live till 1945 may hope to see the completion of the British portion of this leisurely undertaking, for seven more works on the Old Testament are assigned in the advertisement to English and Scotch editors.

It is a natural result of this method of publication that a new book in this commentary should appear to those who are abreast of the times as something like an anachronism. The volume on Chronicles has been delayed by causes which every reader must regret, for its principal author, Professor Curtis, has suffered from illness followed by partial loss of vision, and it is probably for this reason that the book seems to represent more truly what was believed in certain circles some years back, than what is generally believed to-day. Or perhaps it might be more accurate to say that the beliefs it mirrors were and are those of certain limited circles, but in the interval that has elapsed since Professor Curtis began his task the views of other circles have been powerfully reinforced by new arguments and facts, and have found fresh and influential support, with the result that current opinion on the Old Testament is taking a direction never contemplated by our author. I do not know that I can illustrate this better than by quoting a few sentences from the volume, and then placing in juxtaposition with them extracts from a recent utterance by a Harvard critic who has also contributed a volume to this series, Professor C. H. Toy. I draw especial attention to the great difference of *tone* between the two writers, which

<sup>1</sup> "The International Critical Commentary": "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles." By Edward Lewis Curtis, Ph.D., D.D., Professor of the Hebrew Language and Literature in the Divinity School of Yale University; and Albert Alonzo Madsen, Ph.D., Pastor of the First Congregational Church at Newburgh, N.Y. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. 1910.

appears to me even more significant than the actual statements made. Professor Curtis<sup>1</sup> writes :

" This supposition of Keil . . . breaks down completely if the results of recent scholarship in reference to the sources of the canonical books can at all be trusted, since these sources always appear in Chronicles in the same combinations in which they are found in the canonical books, and never, apparently, otherwise. . . . Gleanings from Gen. xxxv., xxxviii., xlvi., representing P, J, and R, appear in 1 Chron. ii. No one, however, has ever seriously argued that the chronicler had access to the sources of the Pentateuch, since, forsooth, to Keil and those of his school the Pentateuch had no sources in the modern sense " (p. 20).

Professor Toy, on the other hand, writes as follows :

" Several writers have recently dwelt on the fact that the Septuagint and other ancient versions differ considerably from the received Hebrew text (the Massoretic) in the use of Divine names. . . . The Septuagint translators, it is commonly supposed, followed their Hebrew text faithfully, and this text is equally authoritative with the Massoretic. . . . It is concluded that the latter is not a trustworthy guide for a division of documents based on Divine names. . . . While this point calls for a more thorough examination than has yet been given it, the conclusion just stated is not out of keeping with the tone of modern criticism. As is well known, critics generally hold that our Hebrew text has suffered greatly from scribes and editors in the process of transmission. It is agreed that Divine names have been changed in Chronicles, Psalms, and elsewhere—why not in the Pentateuch ? . . . I do not pretend to defend all the arguments and conclusions of recent works on the Pentateuch. They sometimes disagree among themselves, and sometimes press analysis too far, and make difficulties where there are none " (*The Christian Register*, April 28, 1910).

These extracts from an article in which Professor Toy was avowedly defending (*not* attacking) what Professor Curtis calls " the results of recent scholarship " must impress every reader. In place of " assured results " we have a " point " that " calls for a more thorough examination than has yet been given it. " In lieu of the " consensus of scholars " we have " arguments and conclusions " that cannot be defended, and works that " disagree among themselves, and sometimes press analysis too far, and make difficulties where there are none. "

The question of the historical character of the patriarchs is similar. Thus, with regard to the existence of Abraham, Professor Curtis writes : " The basis for this belief seems somewhat sentimental " (p. 70). Perhaps if he had read the discussions of Orr and Eerdmans he might have felt more inclined to write that " the basis for the denial seems not even to have the support of sentiment. " Certain it is that throughout his book Professor Curtis is essentially one-sided, attending to the opinions of a particular group of men and to no others. Indeed, an unfortunate bias runs through the commentary, and sometimes leads to the strangest results. Perhaps the following note on 1 Chron. ii. 54 *et. seq.* gives as good an instance as any of the workings of our author's mind : " The mention of the scribes *shows clearly* that we have a post-exilic notice, since it is *doubtful* whether families of them existed earlier. " <sup>2</sup> How can a doubtful premiss lead to a certain conclusion ?

While this volume represents a great deal of hard work, it is unfortunate that the space should not have been allotted in such a way as to give more

<sup>1</sup> It appears from the preface that Professor Curtis is " solely responsible for the work, " though some portions have been written by Dr. Madsen under his direction.

<sup>2</sup> P. 98. My italics.

information. The following is typical of a great many notes: "Another entirely obscure genealogical fragment" (p. 112). Undoubtedly, that is all that any commentator can say of a great many passages in Chronicles, but when we find large numbers of such remarks combined with a refusal of recent archæological information, we feel that our author has misconceived his task. On p. 113 we read: "A very readable exposition of these obscure verses in the light of the discovery of jar handles in South Palestine inscribed with names similar or identical to those here given is presented in the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, 1905, by R. A. Stewart Macalister." But surely the material facts ought to have been incorporated in the volume before us, together with some estimate of Mr. Macalister's views and references to subsequent discussions of the subject. If necessary, a conventional sign could have been adopted to denote that verses were hopelessly obscure or corrupt, and the necessary space could have been gained in this way. After all, one goes to a commentary for the information that is available, and notes that add nothing to the reader's knowledge are no consolation for the refusal of such information. It is the business of a commentator himself to provide an exposition of his author in the light of all the available information. Closely connected with this criticism is another—the entire absence of extended notes on special points. Such notes are among the best features of some other volumes of this series; and though it is possible to carry the practice of writing them too far, they are often necessary to the proper exposition of a book. In reading this volume I have missed them sadly, for there are certain matters that require a more systematic treatment than can be given to them by Professor Curtis's system. For instance, the Chronicler's data as to the Levites should have been collected and discussed separately. Some general view of his statements as to the sacerdotal organization should have been provided. His interest is admittedly largely institutional (p. 16), and accordingly an adequate exposition of his work would embrace a good deal more historical and legal matter than is to be found in this commentary. There is, indeed, little in the book that will add much to the general stock of knowledge. It will not rank with the best commentaries of the series of which it forms part. Some of the contributors to that series have held it to be part of a commentator's duty to march ahead of lexicographers, archæologists, etc., but this volume is not informed by any such aspiration. It contributes a little to the textual criticism of the book, but here again it certainly falls below the level of the best work of recent years. There are only two logical positions in this matter: the one is to follow the Massoretic text closely; the other, to use all the available materials systematically and continuously, with a view to getting as near the author's autograph as possible. Professor Curtis does not really occupy either of these two positions, and accordingly his book represents a somewhat unsatisfactory transitional stage.

A considerable amount of attention is necessarily devoted to the sources and historical character of the book. It cannot be said that Professor Curtis has much sympathy with the Chronicler. Here, for instance, are extracts from p. 255 (on 1 Chron. xxii. 2-19): "This chapter is a free composition by the Chronicler, full of general and exaggerated statements, with a number of short quotations from earlier canonical books woven together. No careful,

definite statement suggests a trustworthy historian, or even the use of an earlier source . . . the Chronicler's description must have been drawn by inference from the older canonical books, assisted by a vivid imagination." And, again, on verses 2-5: "Not a studied account of material prepared for the Temple, but rather a careless list of such things as happened to occur to the writer." These particular sentences were probably written by Dr. Madsen, and if so, they show that he, too, shares the Professor's views and feelings towards the Chronicler. It seems to me that men who hold such views would do better to comment on some author with whom they feel more sympathy; for without sympathy there can be no insight.

And this brings me to the principal matter that I desire to discuss.

It is to be observed that the Chronicler himself twice refers to a "midrash" as an authority. The following extract from the article "Midrash" in the "Jewish Encyclopædia" throws some light on the meaning of this expression:

"A term occurring as early as 2 Chron. xiii. 22, xxiv. 27, though perhaps not in the sense in which it came to be used later, and denoting 'exposition,' 'exegesis,' especially that of the Scriptures. In contradistinction to literal interpretation, subsequently called 'peshat, the term 'midrash' designates an exegesis which, going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious. . . . The divergence between 'midrash' and 'peshat' increased steadily; and, although the consciousness of this divergence may not have increased in a proportionate degree . . . it was never wholly obscured" (vol. viii., p. 548).

Of the countless millions of Jews who have used this term through the ages, one only has produced work that was deemed worthy of inclusion in the Canon. That one was the Chronicler. It is reasonable to suppose that he knew the meaning that the expression had in his own time, and the only question that can arise is whether that meaning was or was not the same as in later times. If we found such a word as "allegory" employed by a narrator to designate one of his sources, it would be fair to inquire whether he used the word in the sense that appears natural to us, or in some other sense, and the answer would be determined by internal evidence. If it then appeared that the narrative based on that source really was allegorical in character, we should conclude (1) that he had in fact used the word in the sense with which we are familiar, and (2) that his original public would have understood this as well as we do.

Now, any thinking reader of 2 Chron. xiii. will, I imagine, agree that it is not literal history. When, therefore, we find the only authority referred to in this chapter designated by the appropriate term "midrash," it seems impossible to doubt that the expression is used in substantially the same sense as later, and that the Chronicler and his original readers appreciated this as well as could any modern.<sup>1</sup> The real meaning of the chapter must be sought in such phrases as, "But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him;" "And, behold, God is with us at our head;" "O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord, the God of our fathers." And so it came about that Talmudic authorities did not question the canonicity of Chronicles, but treated it as a book intended for the particular kind of

<sup>1</sup> R. V. "commentary" entirely fails to convey the meaning of "midrash."

spiritual exposition which is designated "midrash." This is really what is meant by the harsh and unsympathetic paragraph of the "Jewish Encyclopædia," which Professor Curtis summarizes in the following sentence :

" While in rabbinical literature Chronicles was regarded with suspicion, its historical accuracy being doubted by Talmudic authorities, and it being held to be a book for homiletical interpretation, yet its canonicity, as some have thought, never seems really to have been questioned " (p. 2).

Failure to grasp this truth has led to the most perverted views of the Chronicler, his work and its historical and religious value. I suppose that, after what has been said, my readers will have no difficulty in appreciating 2 Chron. xiii. Let us glance at another instance: In 1 Chron. xxv. we are told that David instituted certain Levitical musical services. Verse 4 brings us to a list of names. Though there is a good deal of corruption, it is absolutely certain that many of these names are not proper names at all, but Hebrew words including some verbs like "Giddalti" (I have made great). It is generally agreed that originally these words formed a consecutive sentence, but owing to the state of the text the exact details are not clear. The reading favoured by Professor Curtis is rendered by him as follows :

" Be gracious unto me, O Yah, be gracious unto me ;  
Thou art my God whom I magnify and exalt.  
O my Help (or, Thou art my Help) when in trouble, I say,  
He giveth (or, Give) an abundance of visions."

This rendering will do as well as any other for the purpose of my illustration. It will then be followed immediately by verse 5, "All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God," etc. Now, I ask, if this were an English book, would any English reader think there were men who were literally called by such names as "I magnify," etc.? Would he proceed to infer that the author of the book believed this to be literal history, or for one moment imagined that his readers could suppose it to be so? Would he, then, charge him with "deliberate invention or distortion of history," or seek to defend him against such a charge by insisting that he has "worked everywhere according to sources"?<sup>1</sup> Or would he inveigh against his "law-crazed fancy"?<sup>2</sup> Or would he write a note saying, "Why what was possibly an ancient prayer should thus be resolved into proper names cannot be determined"?<sup>3</sup> How many readers of the "Odyssey" wonder that *Oδυσσεύς* could have been regarded as a name by Odysseus and the Cyclops—or the Greeks who listened to the Rhapsodists? What would happen if the "Pilgrim's Progress" were edited on such lines? Or is it really supposed that a Hebrew-writing canonical author could be so ineffably stupid as to write words like "I magnify," "I exalt," etc., *in his own language* without understanding what he was writing? Read the lines of the prayer as conjecturally restored, and consider: were not all these in a very deep and spiritual sense the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God? Can any Temple service do more than establish such communion between men and God? The chapter may be corrupt, the details are not in all cases clear, but the bed-rock meaning is as plain as could be desired. When the Chronicler is tried for this falsification of history, all who have ever spoken in

<sup>1</sup> See J. Wellhausen, "Prolegomena," Eng. trans., p. 222 (quoting Dillmann).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Curtis and Madsen, p. 278.

parable or allegory will be his companions in the dock. Shall we speak of law-crazed fancy or spiritual insight?

The above represents the most important and far-reaching criticism that can be made on the book—fatal lack of comprehension of the Chronicler's aims, purpose, method. Yet perhaps reference should be made to one or two other matters. Considerable attention is devoted to the question of the Chronicler's sources and the allotment of different passages, and a number of guesses are retailed at some length. The answer to all this has been given by Professor Curtis himself in a criticism of a theory of Winckler's: "In reality no one can decide the exact basis of any unknown work. Many and extensive volumes may lie before an author whose work is restricted and meagre" (p. 23). It is a pity that the Professor did not bear these remarks in mind throughout his volume.

Of more importance is the misconception of the relation of the Chronicles to the Law. The former book does not really represent P in operation, as I have recently shown in an article on "Priests and Levites" in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for July, 1910. Unfortunately, Professor Curtis has entirely misunderstood Num. iii. 28-32 (p. 268). This passage relates merely to desert services of transport. His commentary, however, proceeds on a series of assumptions as to the meaning of the provisions of the Law with regard to the priests and Levites which are absolutely untenable, and this, in turn, affects his view of the sources and his historical estimate.

Other matters of which I had wished to say something would take me too far. The type of the book is often inconveniently small, especially in the references to Biblical verses in the small print notes. Misprints are numerous, but harmless. In conclusion, a word of praise must be given to the unusually full English index, which is by far the best feature of the book.



## Notices of Books.

THE CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY AMID THE MODERN PERPLEXITY. By Principal A. E. Garvie, D.D. London: *Hodder and Stoughton*. Price 7s. 6d. net.

Dr. Garvie has collected in this volume a series of papers which he has contributed from time to time to various magazines. But the book in no way suffers from this fact; it is bound together by a common thought throughout. He writes from amid the *Modern Perplexity*; he has sought to keep himself informed of the many conflicting currents and modern thought. But he remains a convinced Christian; he is able to retain the *Christian Certainty*, and he would have others enjoy the same conviction. The book is one rather to read and ponder over than to pass in review. It will cause difference of opinion from time to time. We shall not always follow exactly Dr. Garvie's lines, but we shall ever be thankful for the bracing tonic which his words will administer to those who are harassed by the doubtings and difficulties of present-day thought. The first section of his book he heads "Constructive," the second "Critical." It is the right order, but it is the more difficult order. The first chapter is headed "The