

Sheôl,' it is difficult to say whether 'my soul' refers specifically to the immaterial element or be equivalent to *me*; in other words, it is difficult to say whether death be contemplated, or that great crisis called the day of the Lord, which introduces the people and the individual as part of it into the final condition of blessedness. Individualism was really never full born in the Old Testament, which pursues the destinies of the people of God collectively; while we, having death more in view, pursue the destinies of the individual. There may thus be two classes of passages: (1) Passages which, though spoken perhaps by individuals, express the hope of the living people, and refer to that great change which the day of the Lord introduces, and which the individual, as part of the people, shall experience without tasting of death. And (2) passages where the individual contemplates dying, but expresses the hope that he will not, like the ungodly, fall into Sheôl, but have another destiny. The words of Ps. lxxiii., 'God is good to Israel,' might assign it to the first class. Ps. xlix. has two peculiarities: (1) its opening verses imply that its teaching on immortality is no more merely a hope or aspiration of the soul, but a dogma, a firm conviction. And (2) it seems to start from the assumption that death is universal. If this be the case, the words 'God will redeem my soul from Sheôl' must refer to what happens to the godly at death. Ps. xvii. may even go further. At all events, in all these poetical passages, the real point is the difference between the ungodly and the righteous in their relation to God. This difference arises and is observable in this life; whether the unchangeable consequences of the difference be realised at the great crisis of the day of the Lord and the judgment, the national view of immortality still prevailing, or at the death of the individual persons, the idea of death coming in and the destiny of individuals in particular

being pursued, may need discussion. Thus it may appear that even the earlier prophecies furnished general *ideas* and categories, which were taken up into Christian teaching. These ideas received greater precision in an individualistic sense in later prophecies and in the poetical literature, and probably still further precision in the same direction through the thought of pious minds in the period lying between the close of the Canon and the Christian era.

It has always been felt strange that the Pentateuch, which gives the constitution of the people of God, should be silent on death and immortality, or only refer to the popular idea of Sheôl. And this may seem doubly strange when the Pentateuch is brought down to a late period in the people's history. The truth may be that the Pentateuch, just like the poetical books, is secondary and a reflection of the prophetic teaching. Deuteronomy reposes on Isaiah and the prophets of the Assyrian age, and the Priests' Code on Ezekiel. The constitution which they furnish for Israel is the embodiment of the prophetic conceptions. But the conceptions of the prophets are ideal, their pictures of the true Israel are pictures of Israel of the future, Israel of the perfect and final state; in other words, of Israel in what may be called its condition of immortality. The legislation seeks to impose this ideal upon Israel of the present. Of necessity, when applied to the conditions of the actual Israel, the ideal became broken and a thing of patches; nevertheless, its outline and general scope was preserved, and sustained the aspirations of the people.

Dr. Salmon's work has been put forth by the publishers in a style worthy of its importance. A few trifling errata occur, only one of which is worth mentioning. On p. 208, 'the Day-star, the Sun of the morning,' read *Son*.

The Expository Times Guild of Bible Study.

WITH the month of November the Guild of Bible Study enters upon its seventh session. The purpose of the Guild is to encourage the systematic study as distinguished from the mere reading of Scripture. Two portions are chosen, one from the

Old Testament and one from the New; and those who undertake to study, with the aid of some commentary, one or both of these portions of Scripture between November 1896 and September 1897 are enrolled as Members of the Guild.

Names of those who are willing to make this effort are sent to the Editor at Kinneff, Bervie, N.B. There is no fee or other obligation.

As the study proceeds, Members may send short papers (if they so find it convenient) on some passage in the books chosen. If possible, the best of these papers will be published in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. But whether they are published or not, the best ten papers will be chosen at the end of the session, and books will be presented to their writers, selected by themselves out of a list which the publishers will send them.

Papers received during the session 1895-96 have now been examined, and those sent by the following are judged to be most meritorious :—

- Rev. Martin J. Birks, Brinnington Rise, Stockport.
- Rev. Hugh H. Currie, M.A., B.D., Keig, Aberdeenshire.
- Rev. J. Edwards, 14 Whetley Grove, Bradford.
- Rev. E. Hall, Poole, Dorset.
- Rev. J. Harries, M.A., Wesleyan Manse, Dundee.
- Rev. Alfred Huddle, M.A., Leyton Rectory, Essex.
- Rev. F. Jarratt, Goodleigh Rectory, Barnstaple.
- Rev. D. Macfadyen, M.A., Hanley.
- Rev. J. MacGillivray, B.A., B.D., Montreal.
- Rev. H. Northcote, The Vicarage, Feudalton, Christ Church, New Zealand.
- Rev. John Reith, B.D., Rickarton Manse, Stonehaven.
- Rev. James Smith, M.A., Tarland.

Papers were received from laymen also, but they did not reach a high standard this year. The twelve volumes will accordingly be sent to the above by Messrs. T. & T. Clark, who will arrange with the writers as to their selection.

There is considerable difficulty always in the choice of the portions of Scripture for a new session. Many things have to be taken into account ; but perhaps the most important thing is this, that at least one reliable modern commentary should be available for study. Now it is generally recognised that the ablest commentary that has ever been published in English on the *Book of Deuteronomy* is Professor Driver's in 'The International Critical Commentary' series (T. & T. Clark, 12s.). We have used the book daily since its issue, and with ever fresh surprise at its completeness, accuracy, and devotional suggestiveness. It is no doubt somewhat expensive to the working student ; but it is worth a library of lesser books. We have accordingly chosen *Deuteronomy* as the Old Testament portion of study for the coming session.

The same consideration has fixed *St. Mark's Gospel* for the New Testament. Professor Gould's commentary in the same series (10s. 6d.) is not the masterpiece Dr. Driver's is. But there is little doubt it is the best in existence in English. To those, however, who wish a less expensive and less exhaustive work, Professor Lindsay's volume in the 'Handbook' series may be recommended. It is published by Messrs. T. & T. Clark at 2s. 6d., a very small price for an excellent book.

Merenptah and the Israelites.

I.

BY PROFESSOR F. HOMMEL, PH.D., LL.D., MUNICH.

THE recent sensational 'find' of the Merenptah inscription has already formed the subject of discussion by the discoverer, Flinders Petrie, as well as by Spiegelberg, Steindorff, and others. My own investigations have led me to the following results, which are of the highest importance for the history of Israel :—

The newly-discovered text mentions a disaster that has overtaken *Isr'äl* (written with the determinative for 'people'; cf. for the form of the word the Assyrian *Sir'il*). This reference must certainly

be understood of the Israelites, but *Merenptah himself was never in Palestine*, and neither Seti I. nor Ramses II. (his immediate predecessors), in describing their Palestinian campaigns, make any mention of that people. Hence we must think of the *Israelites as not yet settled in Palestine at the date of the inscription*. In other words, the Exodus must have taken place shortly before—favoured probably by the complications which arose upon the death of Ramses II. (Ex. ii. 23). This becomes clear when we compare the two accounts we pos-