

ago. Its subject is 'Exegese,' and it embraces the literature in that department for the year 1897.

'Exegese' is a wide term, embracing not only commentaries and similar helps for the study of the books of Scripture, but works in Grammar, Lexicography, Textual Criticism, Archæology, Geography, etc. etc. It is almost incredible how exhaustive and careful the work is. Far from being a mere catalogue of books, the *Jahresbericht* always contrives to give the reader a correct notion of the contents and aim of the latter. THE EXPOSITORY TIMES appears very frequently in its pages, not one of the contributions of scholars like Cheyne, Driver, Baudissin, Jensen, Hommel,

Nestle, König, etc., escaping notice; nay, even papers of far minor importance are not only noticed but their contents summarized. We cannot imagine any more useful guide to the student. The Old Testament Literature is dealt with by Professor Siegfried of Jena, the New Testament by Professor Holtzmann of Strassburg, than which no names could command greater confidence. The *Theologischer Jahresbericht* is published by Messrs. Schwetschke & Sohn, Berlin and Braunschweig, and in our own country by Messrs. Williams & Norgate, London and Edinburgh.

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The Lord's Supper under a New or an Old Aspect.

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THE sacrament of the Lord's Supper as Jesus appointed it was a transfigured Paschal Feast; that is to say, the Passover was its starting-point. For the Paschal meal just ended was its occasion; or, if any deny that this was the actual Paschal Feast, it will be conceded that the occasion was a supper eaten in lieu of it. The Lord's words treating the bread as His body and the wine as the blood of the new covenant, are plain allusions to the Paschal sacrifice. And that the first disciples understood Him so is proved by the language they held. To cite two examples, by St. John's quotation of the Paschal law in connexion with the crucifixion, 'A bone of it shall not be broken,'¹ and by St. Paul's appeal, 'Our Passover hath been sacrificed, even Christ, wherefore let us keep the Feast.'² This then is beyond dispute, and the primary associations by which the Christian sacrament is connected with older Hebrew rites must undoubtedly be considered those which link it with the Passover.

But are these the only associations which connect it with the earlier religious usages of Israel? It may well be that while the leading thought in the Master's mind as He gave the form to that act of communion which He provided for His followers was this, there were other ideas associated with ancient religious practice which He meant to

embody also. If so, even though they were subordinate, to recognize them is to enrich the Christian ordinance with a fuller significance. The object of the present paper is to point out such a group of associations with the past. If their presence in Jesus' thoughts that night of institution cannot be proved, may it not, at least, be deemed probable?

Scattered among the prophetic writings of the Old Testament are several allusions showing that in Israel, as in so many other races, men were accustomed to make 'offerings for the dead.' In some religious cults these offerings have obtained the greatest prominence; e.g. among the ancient Egyptians,³ who laid the utmost stress upon the piety of children who brought such sacrifices to their deceased parents, it was so; among the Chinese it is so still; and the customary libations which the Romans made before the Lares and Penates afford further familiar illustration. In Israel, however, these offerings acquired no such leading importance. Owing to their general likeness to practices followed by the heathen, to their liability to superstitious abuse, and to the obliteration of ancient ideas in later times they were not regulated but discouraged by the fully developed law. But the references made to them by the prophets are enough to show they were commonly

¹ Jn 19³⁶ (Ex 12⁴⁶).

² I Co 5⁷.

³ Cf. Page Renouf's 'Hibbert Lectures,' p. 132.

practised in Israel down to the Exile at anyrate, and some evidence of their being still in use after the Return may be adduced. This must be borne out by quotations :—

The prophet Hosea, threatening North Israel with captivity in Egypt and Assyria, declared that in the land of their exile 'They shall not pour out wine offerings to the Lord, neither shall their sacrifices be pleasing unto Him. Their bread shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted.'¹ This meant more than merely bread eaten during the prescribed days of mourning, for not only is the 'bread of mourners' mentioned as parallel to offerings and sacrifices, which the ordinary food taken during the period of mourning would not be, but it is regarded as polluting those who eat it, not as being polluted by them, which implies that the bread stood in closer relation to the dead than did those who ate it, as offerings for the dead would, though common food eaten in days of mourning would not.

In the Deuteronomic Law relating to the presentation of first-fruits a prescribed form of profession is given for those who brought them to the sanctuary. A part of this profession runs, 'I have put away the hallowed things out of mine house. . . . I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I put away thereof being unclean, nor given thereof for the dead.'² The giving of offerings for the dead is plainly considered usual, and is in no way condemned although it was unlawful to take for this purpose the 'hallowed things' which were due as offerings to the Lord.

In a charge laid on Jeremiah to stand aloof from the doomed dwellers in Jerusalem, and hold no intercourse with them in their social joys or sorrows, it is said, 'Both great and small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them: neither shall men break bread for them in mourning to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother.'³ All the acts here cited as the ordinary observances in Jerusalem on occasions of death are acts of sacrificial communion,—the blood bond, the hair offering, and the bread and wine of fellowship notwithstanding the severance of death.

¹ Hos 9^a.² Dt 26¹⁴.³ Jer 16^b.

Similarly on his wife's death Ezekiel is bidden, 'Neither shalt thou mourn nor weep. Sigh, but be silent; make no mourning for the dead. Bind thine headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.'⁴ That is to say, the prophet was to forego all those natural acts of sorrow at the death of one near and dear to him, which but for this special injunction he would have done; and in this he was to represent the distress of Jerusalem when her children should lie unburied and unwept in her streets. Of such acts eating the bread of men—to wit the 'bread of comfort' eaten as an offering for the dead—was one.

To the foregoing passages may be added two maxims from the book Ecclesiasticus :—'A gift hath grace in the sight of every living man, and for a dead man keep not back grace.' 'Good things poured upon a mouth that is closed, are as messes of meat laid upon a grave.'⁵ These show that offerings for the dead were familiar enough when the proverb was coined, though it may be questioned whether Hebrew or foreign customs are in view.

Such incidental references as these to offerings for the dead establish the fact that they were the ordinary practice in Israel down to the date of the Exile at anyrate; perhaps, too, that they survived later, though possibly after their original significance was lost, even as 'wakes' and 'refections' of mourners linger on among ourselves. But in days when these rites were the general practice in Israel what was their meaning? what object had those who made offerings for the dead in view?

With many races the chief motive for such offerings was the belief that the food would nourish the life of those departed. In many barbarous lands the practice is still found of killing at the graveside of a chieftain his wives or slaves or else his horse, that they may accompany him into the unseen world and prove of service to him there as here. Food and weapons likewise were often buried with the corpse, that they might afford sustenance or defence on the long journey amid unknown needs and perils entered upon in death. And wherever continual offerings and libations were made to the departed, either in the household as among the Romans and the Chinese, or at the grave as with the old Egyptians and many others, it may be assumed that the animating

⁴ Ezk 24^{17, 22}.⁵ Eccus 7³³ 30¹⁸.

idea was that the dead needed food and drink like the living,—though perhaps in more sublimated forms,—and that it must be an act of piety and devotion to supply their needs. But in Israel it is not offerings of this nature that are met with. There is no evidence that such gifts were still brought at intervals for perhaps long after the dead had passed away. The ceremonies in question were connected with the death or burial. Moreover, the food and drink were not viewed as oblations for the service of the dead, but were consumed by the mourning friends in part. These were, in short, funeral feasts, in which the living were as much concerned as the dead.

Among Semitic peoples there is always some sense of a bond of fellowship as formed between any persons who share a common meal. Anciently this idea was far more widely prevalent, and had more force, the food of which all partake so that it enters into the life and tissue of each being supposed to constitute a real community of nature. Among the Arabs of to-day this is still a living belief, and hence the sacred obligations which rest upon one who has given or received hospitality, even though it be no more than a pinch of salt which has been shared. And wherever ties of foster-kindred are respected they are founded on a like belief. This is the idea which lay at the root of Hebrew sacrifice. The slaying of the victim did not constitute the sacrifice, nor even the presentation of its life-blood with the burning of some portions of its flesh: to these must be added the sacrificial feast, in which the kinsmen or the group of worshippers shared among them the other parts of the victim offered in a meal taken in common, of which the holy flesh formed the substance. The lamb or other creature offered thus became a fresh bond, on the one hand between the several worshippers, and on the other, between them collectively and the Lord, to Whom also it was given by means of fire or libation. Every sacrifice was thus an act of communion, both between men and between the Lord and men. The most sacred sacrifices involved, as a rule, the oblation of Life that there might be communion of Life; but even in the case of meat-offerings and libations of oil or wine the purpose was the same.

Now the 'offerings for the dead' practised in Israel were sacrifices in this sense, with a view to those whom death had severed from the living.

They were acts of communion intended to cement again kinsmen or friends who had been parted by the veil which separates the seen from the unseen world,—to cement them together with ties of food and fellowship such as bound the living to one another.¹ They differed from other sacrifices only in this, that they had no relation to the Lord. The bond which men sought to renew in these funeral feasts was not one uniting them with Him, but one uniting them with such as had been lost to sight through death. The 'bread of comfort' and the 'cup of consolation' were received by mourners as means of restoring the broken connexion and renewing the interrupted communion with the departed in a sacrificial feast. These rites were therefore no less innocent and no less helpful for their purpose than other sacrifices to begin with. But as the original significance of sacrifice was forgotten in later times, and it came to be regarded as essentially a tribute of worship, the danger of these offerings for the dead lapsing into ancestor worship and superstition increased, and all sacrifices which were not offered to the Lord were increasingly discountenanced. Perhaps the enforcement of the law of the central sanctuary as the one acceptable place for sacrifice, even more than the dislocation of Israel's life in exile, accounts for the rapid and almost complete disappearance of these funeral feasts during the two centuries between Josiah's reform and that of Nehemiah.

Few words will be required, when once their purpose is appreciated, for showing how readily these ancient 'offerings for the dead' might find a new fulfilment in the Lord's Supper. That sacrament was instituted on the eve of the Master's death, and in full view of what the morrow was to bring. St. John's introductory words are, 'Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father';² while all the Synoptists place the ordinance immediately after the warning that one of the twelve would prove the traitor. What more natural than that He should appoint them at that moment, and others who should believe on Him through their word thereafter, a sacrificial service on the ancient lines which might be an act of communion between them who lived yet in this world and the Master they must lose in death? His words

¹ Cf. W. Robertson Smith's *Semites*, p. 304.

² Jn 13¹.

exactly accord with this intention, for He said, 'Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth Me no more; but ye behold Me: because I live, and ye shall live. In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.'¹ What better fitted to impress the truth He laboured to bring home to them, that death was for Him not the end, but that He would rise again and be ever with His followers, than such a transfigured 'offering for the dead' as might become a continual pledge that death was no real division and the living here might reach out to the living Master gone hence? It is to be noticed, too, that the bread and wine which He employed in the Christian rite, while no more than accessories of the Passover at most, were just the elements of the ancient offerings for the dead. They lent themselves at once in this light therefore to become the 'bread of comfort' and the 'cup of consolation' received by believers in an act of communion, restoring and continuing their relation to the Master who was dead and is alive for evermore.

If it be thought that such a revival of a religious practice long since disused implies more of anti-quarian feeling than the Lord Jesus would have entertained or His disciples appreciated, it may be enough to reply that almost the same objection might be urged against the ordinance of a transfigured Passover for Christian use, which is a fact acknowledged. For though the Passover was still a living institution among the Jews of the first century, while offerings for the dead were not, the fundamental idea of sacrifice as an act of communion which fitted either rite to receive a new creation at His hands, and to serve the purpose Jesus had in view, had been almost as completely obscured in the one case as forgotten in the other. But if with that pellucid insight of His into the spiritual meaning of Israel's past He seized on the central purpose of the Passover to make it the vehicle of a higher grace, is it hard to believe that He discerned also the true significance of those offerings for the dead, practised anciently and mentioned in the Scriptures, and pressed them also into service?

At anyrate this supposition affords a key to a saying which it is otherwise difficult to explain.

¹ Jn 14¹⁹.

As He gave the cup after supper Jesus said, 'Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'² Considered in relation to the Paschal sacrifice just before referred to, the saying is not easily understood. Would the Paschal Lamb Himself share with believers the cup drunk at the Paschal Feast? Was the living Lord hereafter to partake with His disciples in His own life's blood? But considered in relation to the 'offerings for the dead' the saying is most natural. For the last time Jesus was sharing the cup with His followers under the conditions of intercourse which were familiar; next time they drank of it in accordance with His appointment, He in the kingdom of God, which is beyond observation, would drink of it, not as formerly, but in a new and spiritual act of communion, uniting the living with the Living despite death.

Some slight confirmation of the view put forward may perhaps be found in comparatively early Christian practice. In the fourth century the Lord's Supper was sometimes celebrated at the graveside. And in both East and West, though forbidden by repeated councils, the consecrated bread dipped in the wine was often placed in the lips of the dead. Sometimes the holy bread was buried with the dead, and Basil sanctioned this.³ If in these times there was any lingering understanding of this sacrament as an offering of communion with the Master which bridged over death in the ancient way, it would be more naturally used when brethren had died for joining in fellowship with them likewise.

It only remains to repeat what was said to begin with. The aspect under which the Lord's Supper is here presented, as a transfigured 'offering for the dead,' does not pretend to be more than subsidiary. The Paschal aspect of the Christian rite is primary. But there seems no reason why the sacrificial feasts both of the Passover and of mourners may not alike have been present in the thoughts of the Lord Jesus, and have conspired to suggest the form He gave to that sacrament of communion in which He desired ever to associate His disciples with Himself.

² Mk 14²⁵; St. Matthew (26²⁹) says, 'drink it new with you.'

³ Cf. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 'Funeral Rites.'