

and which nothing in all the universe, save his own self-willed perversity, is able to alter or defeat. This does not mean that one who believes in God has no troubles. On the contrary, he may have to all appearance more than his own share of troubles. But trust in God has a wondrous power to transfigure and glorify the hard experiences of life. The man who trusts in God recognizes these as the stages, painful but necessary, through which the divine purpose in his life is being wrought out to its grand completion. Did we but comprehend God's Plan in our lives, we would not merely acquiesce in the hard and painful experiences which He appoints us, but would welcome them and would not wish to escape them even if we could. 'I would rather,' says George MacDonald, 'be what God chose to make me, than the most glorious creature that I could think of. To have been thought about—born in God's thoughts—and then made by God, is the dearest, grandest, most precious thing in all thinking.' When God's Plan concerning us is at last complete, we shall then see clearly, as now we can only foresee dimly, if at all, what a lovely and precious use our sorrows have had, how they have been wrought with the joys into the finished fabric of our lives, and how

immensely poorer we would have been had we been spared them.

Let us grasp this inspiring truth, that our lives from first to last have been thought out and planned by Supreme Wisdom and Supreme Love, and that our disappointments, our failures, our sufferings, all that now makes our lives appear so sad, so empty, so purposeless, are needed in order that we may be fit for the ultimate glory which our Heavenly Father has designed for us. It is difficult to believe this, but it is unspeakably worth believing. It is a thousand pities that by our cowardice and unbelief we so often miss the good which God means for us, and instead of growing gentler, stronger, and purer by our hard experiences, are embittered, weakened, and disordered. Let us trust God completely. Let us accept our places in the world, with all their discomforts and disadvantages, as the very places which He has appointed for us, and in which alone we can be fashioned according to His sacred and beautiful Plan. Be sure that, were that Plan revealed, no one of us would exchange his present lot, so painful and so disappointing, for the brightest and fairest that the heart of man could imagine.

The International Critical Commentary on 'Numbers.'

BY REV. J. A. SELBIE, D.D., MARYCULTER.

PROFESSOR BUCHANAN GRAY needs no introduction to students of the Old Testament. His admirable work on *Hebrew Proper Names*, and his numerous articles in the *Dictionary of the Bible* and in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, have thoroughly established his reputation as an exact scholar and an original interpreter of Scripture. We have been awaiting with eager expectation his commentary on Numbers, and we find it to be precisely what we had looked for. Until recently no O.T. commentaries of the slightest scientific value have

been published in this country; and, as far as the Book of Numbers is concerned, Dillmann and Strack are the only two German commentaries that have been available, although Baentsch (in Nowack's *Hdkom.*) and Holzinger (in the *Kurzer Hdcom.*) are expected shortly. Dr. Buchanan Gray has thus required to collect his materials very largely at first-hand. This, however, is precisely the kind of work in which he excels. When we add that Dr. Driver has read the proof-sheets of the book and given the author the benefit of numerous suggestions, it will be felt that nothing more is needed to justify the fullest confidence in the methods pursued and the results reached in the work before us.

¹ *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers.* By G. Buchanan Gray, M.A., D.D., Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis in Mansfield College, Oxford. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903. Price 12s.

The Introduction deals with the title of the Book; the scene and period of the incidents it relates; its connexion with the preceding and following Books, etc. After an analysis of the Contents of the Book, we are introduced to a study of the sources. Here, it is needless to say, our author adopts the conclusions to which modern scholarship has assented with practical unanimity. 'Numbers (and more especially that part of it which is contained in 10¹¹⁻²⁵) is, like Genesis and Exodus, mainly derived from two earlier works. These works were (1) a compilation (J E) which was made at the end of the seventh century B.C., and consisted for the most part of extracts from a Judæan collection of stories (J) of the ninth century B.C., and a similar collection (E) made in the northern kingdom in the eighth century B.C.; and (2) of a priestly history of sacred institutions (P^s) which was written about 500 B.C. The combined work (J E P^s), or in some cases, perhaps, P^s before it was united with J E, appears to have been gradually but considerably enlarged by accretions (P^x and P^s), chiefly of a legal, but in some cases also of a quasi-historical, character.' In the following paragraphs the extent of these various literary elements in Numbers is briefly considered.—Our author's treatment of the text of the Book will meet with general approval. He can discover 'no apparent justification' for Professor Cheyne's 'assumption of far-reaching corruption of the text and mutilation of (perhaps) the great majority of the names in the Book.' A very large proportion of the conjectural emendations with which the *Ency. Biblica* and *Critica Sacra* have made us familiar, are declared to be 'altogether void of probability,' when 'judged by any hitherto recognized principles of textual criticism.' With this verdict few, we imagine, will have any quarrel.

The next section of the Introduction treats of the historical value of the Book of Numbers. Here Dr. Buchanan Gray is at once cautious and frankly outspoken. He recognizes that the sources of the Book, particularly J E (although even the latter compilation is centuries later than the period described), may quite well preserve reminiscences of actual historical events and conditions. That they do so to a much larger extent than some historical critics are prepared to admit, we have not the smallest doubt. We are quite at one, however, with Dr. Buchanan Gray when he points out that even 'such facts had only too many opportunities

of being distorted, or placed in a wrong light, as the stories were told and retold during the five or six centuries that must have separated J E from Moses.' In any case, the traditions embodied in the Book of Numbers are the earliest that have been preserved by the Hebrews as to the nomadic period of their existence, and it is from these that we must endeavour to reconstruct the picture of the conditions that prevailed prior to the settlement of Israel in Canaan. It is quite possible that a good deal may yet be accomplished in this department by the discovery of fresh materials. Dr. Buchanan Gray wisely, we think, declines to build much upon the allusion to Israel (*Ysiraal*) on the stele of Mernptah discovered at Karnak in 1896.

The important question of the place of the Book of Numbers in the history of the Religion of Israel is very judiciously handled. Owing to the composite character of the Book, the religious development is unequal in the different parts. In the early sources we encounter a great warmth and intensity of popular feeling for Jahweh, but the conception of Jahweh is very limited. Far from being the only God that exists, He is simply the God of Israel in the same sense in which Chemosh is the god of Moab. Religious customs and practices bear the same naïve primitive stamp. There are certain passages, too (notably 11^{16, 17a, 24b-30, 12, 22-24}), which contribute materially to our knowledge of the early Hebrew theory of prophecy. A very different conception of Jahweh presents itself in the priestly sections of the Book. Here the prominent thought is that of the Divine holiness or unapproachableness; the spontaneity of the religious life of earlier days is lost.

The Commentary itself follows the plan now familiar to possessors of the series to which it belongs, the text being expounded in larger or smaller groups of verses according to the subject-matter, while special points are dealt with in more detail in smaller type. It is unnecessary to say that as a commentator Dr. Buchanan Gray leaves nothing to be desired. Special interest attaches to the treatment of some points such as Ordeals, Treatment of Hair, Holiness, Defilement by the Dead, etc., on account of the light thrown upon them by the way in which such works as Tylor's *Primitive Culture* and Frazer's *Golden Bough* are utilized. The much controverted question of the Balaam oracles is handled very satisfactorily. Dr.

Buchanan Gray's conclusion is that 'it is probable that the verses contained in 24¹⁸⁻²⁴ were inserted after the completion of J E. But there can be little doubt that the rest of the poems formed an original part of J E. Whether the editor of that work derived them from J or E is less certain: he may have derived some of them from other sources. But, be that as it may, the poems themselves (except 24¹⁸⁻²⁴) are scarcely of later origin than the eighth century B.C.'

We have said enough to indicate the characteristics of this commentary, which worthily sustains the reputation of the 'International' series, and which may be heartily commended to all who wish to learn what the latest scholarship has to say regarding a somewhat neglected and often ill-understood Book of the Old Testament. It will at once take, and will probably long hold, its place as *the* commentary on Numbers for English readers.

Contributions and Comments.

Babylonian Monotheism.

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

THE interesting note on the Babel-Bibel controversy in the September number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES gently rallies me on my agreeing with Professor Delitzsch in discovering monotheism in a certain tablet. I think this is due to a little misunderstanding. When I wrote the Introduction to the English edition of *Babel und Bibel* I tried to avoid giving any indication of my own views on the points raised by Professor Delitzsch. But I did venture to characterize the position in which Professor Jensen found himself, with reference to that tablet, as 'humiliating.' It does not follow from anything that I have said that I agreed with either view of the tablet.

What I take to be the progress of the discussion is this. Delitzsch said, after pointing out what he considered evidences of monotheism, 'in spite of all this, and notwithstanding that free and enlightened minds taught openly that Nergal and Nebo, moon-god and sun-god, the thunder-god Ramman, and all other gods were one in Marduk, the god of light, polytheism—gross polytheism—continued throughout three thousand years to be the Babylonian State religion.' Professor Jensen fastened on this sentence, giving it a slight turn. He says, 'free and enlightened spirits, so Delitzsch tells us, taught openly that the Assyrian-Babylonian gods Nergal (who revealed himself in the crescent of the waning moon and in the planet Mars) and Nebo (the god of the planet Mercury), moon-god and sun-god, the thunder-god Ramman (*i.e.* Adad), and all other gods were one in Marduk, the god of

light. This would, of course, be one of the most momentous discoveries that has ever been made in the history of religion, and it is therefore extremely regrettable that Delitzsch conceals from us his authority. Nothing of the kind is to be gathered from the texts to which I have had access—that I think I can confidently affirm. Whence has Delitzsch his knowledge? Will he—no! we can hardly indulge the suspicion—simply have gone too far in this sensational assertion, as others have done in similar cases? If not, we earnestly request him, therefore, as soon as possible, to publish word for word the passage which robs Israel of its greatest glory, in the brilliancy of which it has hitherto shone, that it alone of all nations succeeded in attaining to a pure monotheism.'

Now that was a rash remark. It is Jensen who says that, if the tablet says what Delitzsch quotes, it means monotheism. The tone is that of one who, secure in the completeness of his own knowledge, suggests that no such passage exists, or has at least been misunderstood. Delitzsch gives the reference accordingly in the notes, and takes Jensen at his word. 'Provided Jensen abides by what he has said, Israel is now indeed robbed of this its greatest glory.' Jensen was neatly caught, I think. I hinted therefore that it was dangerous even for one of the foremost of Assyriologists to assume that he knows all that there is behind Professor Delitzsch's assertions. Jensen's further attempts to show that the tablet meant something different from what Delitzsch says, seem to be a last resource, and will surely carry no conviction to anyone. At anyrate, I fancy most will agree with me that