

tained elevation of his thought and style. He does not drop to the trivial or the flippant. The stream flows on at full tide. Here is food for the soul, food that is wholesome and fattening. Let us hope that these volumes may have a large sale both among preachers and laymen. Every Sunday school library would be richer for the presence of the whole list of forty volumes. God gird the author with strength to complete his great task.

A. T. ROBERTSON.

A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms.

By Charles Augustus Briggs, D. D., D. Litt., Professor of Theological Encyclopaedia and Symbolics, Union Theological Seminary, New York, and Emilie Grace Briggs, B. D. Vol. I. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1906.

This scholarly volume by Dr. Briggs is worthy of a place in the International Critical Commentary Series to which it belongs. It contains an able Introduction to the Psalter and a critical commentary on the first fifty Psalms. The author states in the preface, "This commentary is the fruit of forty years' labor." No one who studies it with care will, for a moment, doubt that years of diligent and scholarly toil have been spent in its preparation, though he may differ widely from the author's views of historical interpretation and particular exegesis.

Again says Dr. Briggs: "The commentary will show that Roman Catholic commentators have rendered valuable service which has been too often neglected by modern Protestants, and that the older British interpreters are the real fathers of much of the material for which modern Germans usually receive credit.

"For more than thirty years I have given much attention to Hebrew poetry. For a long time I had to battle for it alone against unreasoning prejudice. I have lived to see a large proportion of American scholars adopt essentially the views which I represent."

The following quotation shows the religious views of the author at their climax of orthodoxy and spirituality:

“The Psalms are among the most wonderful products of human genius. No other writings but the gospels can compare with them in grandeur and importance. The Gospels are greater because they set forth the life and character of our Lord and Savior. The Psalter expresses the religious experience of a devout people through centuries of communion with God. I can not explain either Gospels or Psalms except as books of God, as products of human religious experience, inspired and guided by the Divine Spirit.”

The learning displayed is marvelous, the style lucid and vigorous, the spirit devout and critical.

As is usual with the critical school of which Dr. Briggs is a brilliant exponent, he assumes hypothetical positions with the calm assurance of those who stand on the solid rock of fact and history.

If any one will read the volume with both eyes open, and not take for granted that the author is correct in his historical disposition of the Psalms and in their minute interpretation, he may be greatly aided in the apprehension of their literary structure and beauty.

One has to be very careful lest too much dissection result in mutilation; analysis may destroy vitality. Historical dislocation may rupture the religious organism of the Psalter. It seems to me that these dangers are not avoided by the learned commentator.

In speaking of the various glosses found in the Psalter he says: “Psalms expressive of piety and protestations of integrity are modified by insertions of confessions of sin and pleas for forgiveness. Protestations of innocence are inserted in Psalms which lament the sufferings of the people of God from vindictive and cruel enemies.” It seems to the reviewer that such “confessions”, “pleas” and “protestations of innocence” were more likely inserted by the composer than by a subsequent compiler. This conclusion is more probably correct from every consideration, literary, historical, psychological.

Again: “Early Psalms were adapted to the supremacy of law by legal glosses, to the times of Hebrew wis-

dom by legal glosses, to the Maccabean times by lamentations for defeat, imprecations upon enemies, and other warlike expressions appropriated to the period of persecution and conflict."

It is well to note that legal ideas need not be considered glosses, but inherent in the original unless we violently wrest the law from its historical position and give it a later date than is justified by the Biblical record. Then, too, it is worse than a gratuitous assumption to consider the Maccabean times as pre-eminently suited to evoke lamentations and imprecations. They appropriately belong to periods far earlier, as is indicated by the thought, spirit and historical suggestions in the Psalms.

We are not surprised to read that by editing "many of the Psalms have lost their original literary form. They express varied states of mind, differences of experience, inconsistent situations".

This is what many of the Psalms are to those who believe in the critical editing process. In regard to the authorship of the Psalms, Dr. Briggs states that "no Psalm can be regarded as earlier than David and few belong to his time".

"In the New Testament David is used as the equivalent of the Psalter, and as such personified in the references to particular Psalms. Questions were not raised as to authorship or editorship." Again: "There were no good reasons why Jesus and his apostles should depart from these opinions, even if they did not share in them. There was no reason why Jesus, as a teacher, should have come to any other opinion on this subject than his contemporaries held. This was not a matter in which his divine knowledge would have influenced his human training. He was doubtless not informed as to matters of criticism which did not confront him in his day." Then, the opinions of Jesus even on important Biblical questions and history may be rejected at will by his modern followers. If Christ was not acquainted with the truth in the Biblical realm, it is difficult to see how any one can follow him

implicitly and rationally. He may be better informed than his contemporaries, but not better than ours, seems to be the critical conclusion. It is remarkable how widely Dr. Briggs, misrepresents the traditional school, and then evidently fancies that when he has refuted these misrepresentations he has established his own radical position. He speaks of "the still prevailing traditional opinion that David wrote all the Psalms." This is news for the traditionalists. It is amazing that Dr. Briggs should make such a statement. They do believe that David wrote many of them, but that a larger group were written by others, according to the most reliable external and internal evidence. As opposed to the conservative school Dr. Briggs says that critical opinion shows that "David wrote few, if any, of the Psalms, the most of them being post-exilic." He ventures to criticise this position, dares to think of "pre-exilic and even Davidic Psalms". "The Psalter represents many centuries of growth in the historical origin both of its Psalms, extending from the time of David to the Maccabean period, and of the various minor and major Psalters through which they passed, from the early Persian to the late Greek period, before the present Psalter was finally edited and arranged, in the middle of the second century, B. C."

The periods of assignment are as follows:

1. The early Hebrew monarchy before Jehoshaphat, seven Psalms attributed to David, 7, 13, 18, 23, 24b, 60a, 110.
2. Twenty-seven to the period of the Hebrew Monarchy.
3. During the exile thirteen were composed.
4. Thirty-three were composed during the early Persian period.
5. Sixteen to the Middle Persian Period, the times of Nehemiah.
6. Eleven to the late Persian Period.
7. Early Greek Period, twelve.
8. Later Greek Period, forty-two.

9. Maccabean Period, eight.

This gives a total of 163 Psalms, because some of the Psalms are regarded as composite, and the different parts are assigned to what is regarded their appropriate historical position. It is interesting to note the use of the divine names in the Psalms. We call attention to only one of them, *Yahweh*, *Jehovah*.

“It is not used by P until Ex. 6:3. But J uses it from the beginning of his narrative and possibly explains it as meaning ‘the everlasting God’. Gen. 21:33. It is used cautiously by E (about 163 times) but constantly by J (about 499 times), and by P after Ex. 6:3 (about 781 times). D uses it apart from his phrases about 211 times. In the prophetic histories it is used sparingly by E, but constantly by J D and R.”

This is a refreshing improvement over the contention of some critics and shows the folly of adopting a mechanical scheme that will not permit a writer to use any one of the divine names at pleasure. To give R all the credit for knowing the meaning of the divine names is to fly in the face of genuine historical exegesis. The inspired writers when considered in the light of their Biblical representation were eminently competent to use *Elohim*, *Yahweh*, etc, according to the thought intended to be expressed.

Dr. Briggs' discussion of the religious contents of the Psalter is admirably presented, and his contention for its canonicity well sustained.

He gives a suggestive treatment of the history of interpretation of the Psalms from the Apostolic Fathers down to the present day.

In fact, practically every question that Biblical criticism has raised receives careful treatment from the pen of an able Hebrew scholar and diligent Bible student.

The commentary is far more in harmony with conservative views in its exegesis than one might infer from the general position taken by the author. He is incisive, suggestive and often helpful. But he too often destroys the flower by unsparing, unsympathetic and unjustifiable

vivisection and presents to his readers a withered form of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley.

BYRON H. DEMENT.

The Origin and Permanent Value of the Old Testament.

By Charles Foster Kent, Ph.D., Woolsey Professor of Biblical Literature in Yale University. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1906.

In this work the author's aim is to set forth in popular style, for the benefit of busy pastors, Sunday school teachers, and Christian workers in general, what he considers the origin and permanent value of the Old Testament. It is not intended as an original contribution to the critical study of the subject. Prof. Kent simply gathers up the conclusions of modern scholarship and presents them in this popular form. In general, he accepts the positions of the advanced critics with reference to the date and authorship of practically all the Old Testament books. The traditional view is set aside with remarkable ease and grace, notwithstanding the doubts which some critics modestly acknowledge with reference to many of their conclusions. The literary analysis of the Hexateuch into the J., E., D., and P. documents is followed according to the well known theories of the divisive school of critics, without any notable pause to consider any difficulties which might be encountered, for instance, in the Book of Joshua. The early narratives J. and E. are prophetic in character, and are based upon traditions mostly oral, and have been written not for any historical purpose, but for an ethical and spiritual end. Hence they are filled with allegory and parable and idealized history, and we need not ask any foolish questions as to the events and persons and dates—the sermon is the thing, get that! Not until the days of Solomon is there anything that more than approximates authentic history.

As to the other portions of the Old Testament, the author follows closely the path blazed through by this same radical school. There are more than two Isaiahs, Zechariah is not a unity. The Book of Daniel was writ-