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OLD TESTAMENT NOTES.

THE last two numbers of the *Mitteilungen d. vorderasiat. Gesellschaft* (1906) are monographs of more than merely technical interest. Part II. contains a valuable study of the oldest history of Cyprus by Reinhold Freiherr von Lichtenberg, in which he argues that Cyprus, Troy and Phrygia shared a common culture. The booklet is illustrated with pottery specimens, and, whilst appealing mainly to those interested in the problem of the Kefti and the Mycenaeans, bears indirectly upon the vexed question of the Philistines. In Part I. Winckler, on "der Alte Orient und die Geschichte," maintains his former views regarding the character of Oriental history-writing with his usual force. The value of his work lies chiefly in the appreciation of the fact that mythological elements floated about and attached themselves to one and another of the great heroes of antiquity—a fact, however, which can be admitted without the necessity of applying the mythological "key" to excess.

But the most important of recent contributions to the Old Testament, and one that is bound to attract considerable attention, is Ed. Meyer's *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (Halle a. S.), a bulky volume of nearly six hundred pages, dedicated to Nöldeke in honour of the veteran Orientalist's seventieth birthday. It is an elaborate investigation of the early period of Israel: the traditions of its origin, its sagas, and the growth of the tribes into a people. The introductory essay on the Moses-story and the Levites has already been published in a condensed form in the article to which reference has been made in these pages (EXPOSITOR, May, p. 479); other chapters deal with the

general scheme of Israelite mythology and genealogy, the patriarchs, the clans and tribes lying outside Israel, etc. Bernhard Luther, whose instructive study of Israelite tribes will be familiar to readers of the *Zeitschr. für d. alt-test. Wissenschaft* (1901), is responsible for a careful monograph on "The Yahwist," and for shorter studies on "The Romantic Element in Hebrew Narratives." The work, as a whole, is not easy to assimilate, and is so full of matter that it would be impossible to notice it at all adequately within these limits. Where nearly every page bristles with suggestions, it must suffice to designate the book as the most stimulating and instructive contribution which we owe to the well-known historian.

Eduard Meyer's position in the Old Testament field is already familiar, of course, from his *Geschichte des Alterthums*, vol. i. (a new edition of which is to be expected) and his more recent *Entstehung des Judenthums*. His thorough acquaintance with ancient history in general has given him the faculty of estimating intuitively the character of the literary material with which he has to deal, and prevents him from falling into the error of placing undue reliance upon special "keys" of investigation, whether metrical, genealogical, mythological or astral. But although his grasp of facts is comprehensive, and although his methods are illuminating, one may venture the opinion that where the Old Testament is concerned he does not make sufficient allowance for all the possibilities.

Perhaps the most instructive of his principles is the emphasis he lays upon the distinction between a nomad or pastoral folk and one that is settled and agricultural. This is important, because the differences show themselves in the respective traditions, and it is one of the most delicate of problems to determine the extent of the literature which has been written or revised under the

influence of nomadic ideas. Writings which have taken shape in a nomadic or semi-nomadic environment will ignore the culture enjoyed by settled communities, and it is scarcely necessary to point out that this has a bearing upon " archæological *versus* literary-critical " controversies. But, in addition to this, it is evident that at any given period two contiguous groups may be separated by a great sociological gap which will be reflected in the traditions of each, so that the sociological test *per se* is inadequate unless supported by other considerations.

Further, in such investigations as these undertaken by Meyer and Luther, it is evident that two points are of the utmost importance. First, where it can be shown that the sources are composite, it is necessary to consider whether the component parts do or do not imply different historical views ; and, secondly, since literary criticism has shown how abundant were the traditions which existed (whether written or oral), it is well to remember that isolated narratives cannot always be treated as though they represent the only view that was current. It is because of the limitations imposed upon the Old Testament student by reason of his material that certain well-known principles of historical research cannot be rigorously employed. To reject the impossible or improbable and to treat the residue as genuine is an unsound method, as has been wittily demonstrated when applied to such a story as " Puss-in-Boots " ; or to admit no evidence until it can be placed beyond doubt is a legitimate canon where the available material is abundant. But in dealing with the comparatively scanty remains of Hebrew history, more latitude must be allowed for the peculiar characteristics of the Semitic mind, and for the propensity to clothe historical fact in an unhistorical dress.

One is obliged to study the historical connexion in its

widest extent with the fullest recognition of such limitations as these, and the very fact that the evidence is so frequently composite renders it necessary in the investigation of any particular period to devote equal attention to other periods from which the relevant sources may date. The elaborate discussion of the early history of the southern clans which Meyer and Luther have provided will prove invaluable to those who have followed the studies of Steuernagel and H. W. Hogg, but it lacks completeness because little attention has been paid to the subsequent periods when the literary material was taking shape. Meyer's extremely careful sketch of Caleb, for example, will be helpful; but, so far as has been observed, no notice is taken of the fact that the important passages in Numbers xiv. 20 sqq., Deuteronomy i. 36, Joshua xi. 6 sqq., which betray particular interest in the clan, are comparatively late. This is a literary feature which is surely not without some significance for the study of a clan whose history is a blank between the time of David and the post-exilic period. Moreover, it is impossible to discuss the history of the southern tribes without a careful study of the course of the southern kingdom; and in view of the *dates* of the relative sources, it is assuredly necessary to devote more consideration to such factors as the prominence of the Philistine kingdoms in the eighth century, the overthrow of Amaziah by Jehoash (and all that it entailed), or —to mention only one other event—the great revolt in the days of Jehoram.

As regards the last-mentioned, it is unnecessary to strengthen the case by referring to the book of Chronicles —whose treatment of the entire period from Jehoshaphat to Amaziah is extremely remarkable—although it is to be regretted that Meyer should so freely pour contempt upon this unfortunate but fascinating book. Valuable as Meyer's

judgements are, one hopes that in this case his verdict is not final. It is true that Meyer in uttering his opinions is in excellent company, but it appears to be overlooked that the Chronicler's characteristic religious bias does not preclude the possibility that he has rewritten or revised old tradition. As everyone knows, it is a sound principle to judge the value of a literary source, where it is the sole authority, by an estimation of its contents where it can be controlled. A number of examples of the latter show that he was wont to use the older sources with or without revision, a few (notably 2 Chron. viii. 2, xxxii. 1–8) appear to have been misunderstood (by critics), and are associated with divergent views incorporated in the earlier books. Naturally, a number of cases remain where our ignorance or the Chronicler's fallibility enter into the question. At all events, the development of tradition which is characteristic of the Chronicler occurs repeatedly in the older writings, and to dub him an "inventor of worthless phantasies," or the like, as though it was necessary to fabricate new stuff where so much old tradition must have been current, is in the highest degree unreasonable.[1] The criticisms that can be launched against his

[1] Indeed, when we observe the Chronicler's didactic treatment of material already found in Kings, it is to be inferred (on the principle stated above) that such unsupported details as 2 Chron. xxiv. 23 sqq., xxv. 14–16 are the result of manipulation of old tradition and not the work of imagination. It does not seem likely that a writer who exercised no discrimination but copied all that came under his notice (e.g. xiv. 5, xvii. 6 contrasted with xv. 17, xx. 33) could have accomplished all the feats which are commonly ascribed to him. It is hardly probable that the books of Kings and Jeremiah have preserved all that was known of the history under the monarchy, and a careful study of these is sufficient to show the extent of conflicting tradition in their age. Often where the Chronicler appears to be at fault he is working on old lines; thus 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3 (twelfth year of Josiah) is undoubtedly untrustworthy, but finds its explanation in the opening words of Jer. xxv. 3, and although 2 Chron. xiii. 7 (Rehoboam's youth) directly contradicts the earlier 1 Kings xiv. 21, judgement must be suspended in view of 1 Kings xii. 8 and the LXX. in *v.* 24*a*.

book as a whole are in every respect applicable to scattered portions of the earlier books, and whether the question be one of contemporaneousness or of genuineness, so long as these earlier books contain much which is neither contemporary nor (often) absolutely genuine, it is uncritical to ignore the traditions which the Chronicler has utilized.

In conclusion, one may be permitted to cite one case where the Chronicler's evidence cannot be absolutely rejected by consistent criticism. The fact that Libnah revolted against Jehoram when Edom threw off its allegiance (2 Kings viii. 20, 22) implies that the Philistine plain was also involved. Concerted action between the two is intelligible, and recurs in the time of the great league against Ahaz. There is nothing unreasonable, therefore, in accepting the Chronicler's representation of Uzziah's success in 2 Chronicles xxvi. 6 seq. (see 2 Kings xiv. 22), and if he replaces "Edomites" by "Arabians," this is in view of the altered circumstances after the exile. Hence he cannot be far from the truth in stating that the Philistines and "Arabians" were stirred up against Jehoram (xxi. 16), and his representation of Jehoshaphat's sovereignty (xvii. 11) is consistent therewith, and is partly implied, also, in the early fragment 1 Kings xxii. 47. Under these circumstances, it seems scarcely likely that the Chronicler, in describing the prophet who warned Jehoshaphat of impending disaster, should have "invented" the statement that the seer belonged to Mareshah. This city on account of its position would evidently be in close touch with the subsequent revolt, and the conditions help and explain its appearance in the story of Zerah the Cushite (EXPOSITOR, June, p. 541). And not only is it probable (on other grounds) that the name of the seer's father, viz. Dodavahu, is really old,[1] but it is interesting for the history of the

[1] G. B. Gray, *Hebrew Proper Names*, p. 232.

southern clans that one of the Chronicler's genealogies (1 Chron. ii. 42, LXX., Meyer, p. 403 seq.) styles Mareshah the "firstborn" of Caleb, and thus associates the place most intimately with the clan.

This may, perhaps, serve as an example of the way in which the Chronicler's evidence can be controlled, and may substantiate the plea that, after due allowance has been made for his *religious* tendencies, the *political* events he records are as worthy of criticism as the relatively late narratives elsewhere in the Old Testament. Obviously there comes a time when the historian has to weigh the details of the Chronicler (2 Chron. xxi. 17, for example!), but the first duty is to collect the evidence and not to reject summarily, and without careful investigation, that which, from one cause or another, appears to be worthless.

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