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OLD TESTAMENT NOTES.

A NEW theory of the date of Habakkuk is suggested by Duhm in his recently published commentary (Tübingen). Past criticism has started from the allusion to the Chaldeans, but objection is taken by Duhm to the redaction and textual emendation which is required on the view that the book belongs to a time shortly after the battle of Carchemish. This view also raises serious historical difficulties. The expression "bitter and hasty nation" (i. 6) could only be applied to the Chaldeans *after* the destruction of Jerusalem, and they can scarcely have been designated "hasty." The foe which Yahweh is sending is an unexpected one, whereas the Chaldeans had long been known to Judah, and their approach, in fact, had been viewed as a friendly relief. Finally, their faces are set *eastwards* (i. 9), and so long as it is believed that the invaders came from Babylon towards Judah, the wording is inexplicable. Consequently, Duhm looks for a period when writers could borrow from Micah or Jeremiah (ii. 9, 10, 12), when the internal condition of Judah would suit the language, and thus rejecting both the Chaldeans and the friendly Persians decides in favour of the *eastward* invasion of Alexander the Great. It is possible that the precise allusion to the Chaldeans is a gloss, otherwise, if the name of the enemy were known, כשדים should perhaps be emended to כתים or כתיים; comp. 1 Macc. i. 1, viii. 5. With this conclusion, we are to compare, further, his view of the date of Isaiah xiv. 29–32.

Baentsch's *Altorientalischer und israelitischer Monotheismus* (Tübingen) is, as the sub-title announces, a plea for a revision of the prevailing view of the development of Yahwism in Israel. He confesses in the Preface that it is an attempt

to swim against the stream; it may be viewed, he admits, as a deplorable relapse; but when a literary critic like Baentsch feels himself bound to state honestly conclusions which he recognizes to be contrary to the usually accepted results of literary criticism, it is evident that his plea deserves the most careful consideration. Perhaps, his plea should have been given a somewhat more elaborate dress than his short sketch allows. Baentsch has thoroughly assimilated all that has been taught by Winckler, Hommel, and Jeremias regarding the astral religion of the ancient Oriental world.[1] His first object, therefore, is to show that undercurrents of monotheism are to be found in Babylonia (especially in the priestly speculations, p. 27) and in Egypt (in the short-lived reform of Amenophis IV.). Palestine, in the nature of the case, can hardly have remained untouched by these currents; and specific evidence forces him to accept the view that it was under Babylonian influence. Baentsch's next step is a discussion of the traits which distinguish Yahwism from the monotheistic tendencies which have been found to prevail (pp. 42–48). The rest of the book is devoted to a reconstruction of the history of Israelite monotheism (pp. 48–109).

Abram, a Babylonian, from Ur-Kasdim and Harran; Joseph, in Egypt, son-in-law of the priest of On; Moses, associated partly with Egypt and partly with Midian, a district in touch with Minaean culture—these are the three great figures which indicate the tendency of Israelite belief. The traditions of Abram himself point to Canaanite rather than to Israelite origin (p. 54)—the same may also be true of Joseph (p. 82)—and the lunar motives in the narratives of the former reveal no complete break with the old Babylonian astral religion (pp. 60, sqq.). Even later, the letter of Ahiyami (recently found at Taanach) shows that early

[1] On this new tendency in criticism, see EXPOSITOR, Jan. p. 93, seq.

monotheistic ideas continued (pp. 40, 57 seq.). The Minaeans had their moon-cult, and the names Sinai and Sin alone proclaim Babylonian influence in a district with which the Hebrew tribes were so intimately associated. Thus, Yahweh even in Sinai was a complex deity (p. 68), his relation to the moon-goddess Sin is a delicate problem (p. 73 seq.); and Baentsch argues that Yahweh from the first was partly astral, and partly (as a tribal god) a deity with purely ethical characteristics. To make Yahwism a practical religion, another factor is needed, and in the traditions of Moses—although of much later date (p. 83)—the required motive power is found.

Thus, Baentsch sketches on broad lines, though with rather a disregard for details and internal difficulties, the new reconstruction of Yahwism (see p. 104). It will be viewed with mixed feelings. If modern criticism has belittled the religion of the early Hebrew tribes (p. 79), has failed to grasp the rise of Yahwism (p. 105), has regarded the monotheism of the patriarchs as due to later theory (p. 53), or has underestimated the civilization of the inhabitants of Canaan, this is precisely what has been repeated frequently by those who are not literary critics. But Baentsch writes from what may be called the purely archæological standpoint: "The culture of the ancient East," he remarks, "constituted a great, comprehensive and imposing unit of which Israel formed an organic part, to the extent that its history, culture and thought cannot be apprehended without taking this fact into account." This may or may not be true, it is at least evident that two considerations have to be borne in mind.

In the first place, such a proposition requires the most thorough investigation. *If* astral religion and all its concomitants spread into Palestine, we may be perfectly certain that the less remote features of Babylonian cult and thought

were not absent, and Delitzsch and his followers are right in their contention that Palestine was a Babylonian domain. On the other hand, it could have been under the influence of Babylonia without being touched by the monotheistic tendencies—priestly speculations, as they have been called. It is a problem which should be approached without prejudice, least of all should it be handled with the idea of substantiating "tradition," since if we are to conclude that Palestine was thoroughly Babylonian, the legitimate inferences, however favourable to isolated details, will hardly be favourable to the great body of tradition as a whole.

Thus, in the second place, Baentsch begs the question and draws conclusions which he proceeds to force into the literary evidence. The natural interpretation of the Old Testament narratives in the light of criticism leads to inferences relating to Israel's religion and history. The writings must reflect both the conditions of their age and the views which were held at different times or among different circles. The views may or may not have been historically correct, and external evidence (e.g. from Babylonia) might disprove their accuracy. But it is self-evident that a truer idea of the tendencies of Israelite thought will be obtained by continuous testing of the stages of criticism than by a reconstruction which assumes that the view taken by the Israelite writers must inevitably have been that which the Babylonian evidence has suggested. No one would contend that all the inferences from a criticism of the unmistakable phenomena in the Old Testament writings are final, or would hesitate to resign those which are proved to be untenable; but the test of any reconstruction is its ability to explain the stages in its growth and to account for the present form of the evidence, and by this must Baentsch's structure be tested. Nevertheless, his book shows some very evident weak points in the usually

accepted reconstruction [and] will serve the purpose of stimulating inquiry in three directions: The extent of the influence of the surrounding civilizations upon the Israelites; the position of Canaan before and during the entrance of Israel; and the natural interpretation of the Old Testament evidence, including the criticism of the views held by the writers themselves regarding the worship of Yahweh.[1]

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[1] Here Baentsch is suggestive rather than conclusive. He does not appear to make sufficient allowance for the fact that the O.T. evidence is *Israelite*, and when he distinguishes between Canaanite and Israelite features he does not make it perfectly clear upon what grounds he bases his distinction. When it is recognized that much of that which is regarded as specifically Israel was common to Palestine (or to old Semitic usage), that is to say, was indigenous, it would seem to be more methodical, to test theories of *Israelite* religion by eliminating all that which is not distinctive. Incidentally, it may be added that Baentsch accepts the view that the ark was an empty throne (in accordance with the cosmological theory set forth by Dibelius). This, however, is far from being a certainty, and Budde deals fully with the question in an elaborate article in *Theolog. Stud. u. Kritiken*, July.