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Christian is never seen in a better light than in his defence of an absent brother.

The descriptions of Leviathan and Job's horse are introduced in a somewhat odd fashion. The former is understood by Bunyan as a symbol of the devil, while the latter is apparently irresistible from its sheer literary strength and vividness. From the Book of Enoch downwards, these picturesque passages have tempted the allegorist; and, as Ewald says, 'the strangest things have been imported into the description.' Job is a wonderful piece of writing even as a book of nature. It touches upon the ways of many birds and beasts, among which are the war-horse and the Egyptian crocodile; which, as Leviathan, we see here on its way towards those many conceptions of dragons which delighted the imagination of the Middle Ages. In the Book of Job the argument is simply, 'If the creature God has created be so terrible, who will stand before God who has created him?' Bunyan does not pause to define the original meaning or connexion of these brilliant descriptions. It is their brilliance that has fascinated his ear and eye, and he brings them in because he enjoys them so. In the notes to Professor A. B. Davidson's Commentary on Job there is a remarkable rendering of Renan's translation of the two passages, which is well worth reading.

It is well for us that the happy thought of introducing these figures occurred to Bunyan, for it led him to the closing passage of the whole narrative of the discussion—undoubtedly one of the finest pieces of writing that ever came from his pen. The author of *The Heavenly Footman* gives us his plea for humility in 'such footmen as thou and I are.' It needs no comment, and once read it can never be forgotten. It is a masterpiece of appreciation of a soldier's humility. And it closes with two practical advices which sum up the moral of the entire story. First, never to go out unharnessed, and especially never to leave one's shield behind. Second, never to go alone. And the latter advice falls back into the teaching of the 23rd Psalm, 'I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.' The ultimate defence of every Christian man is the presence of God with his soul. No wonder if that closing note breaks out into Bunyan's most unrestrained eloquence.

# The International Critical Commentary on 'Esther.'[1]

By Rev. J. A. Selbie, D.D., Aberdeen.

The most diverse opinions have been held about the Book of Esther. No book of the Bible has secured a stronger hold on the affections of Jews, none has been more repugnant to the feelings of Christians. Luther uttered a characteristically hostile judgment regarding it, and it would be a real relief to many if the book had never obtained admittance to the Canon. Yet, in spite of many objectionable features, and the absence of any positive moral or religious value, the Book of Esther possesses significance for the study both of Judaism and of Comparative Religion; and even the ordinary reader of Scripture may study it with profit if he apprehends its standpoint and aim. To guide him to the latter he will find a welcome aid in Professor Paton's Commentary, regarding which we have no hesitation in saying that it is the first work of the kind which has made it possible for English-speaking students to understand the Book of Esther.

After treating of the place of Esther in the Hebrew Bible and in the Septuagint, respectively, Professor Paton deals at length with the text. The special feature in this department is the presence in the Versions (LXX, Old Lat., Vulg., Pesh.), Josephus, the Talmud, and Targums, of a number of remarkable additions to the Massoretic text. These additions, which have hitherto not been readily accessible to the student, have been collected by Dr. Paton, and introduced (in translation) at the appropriate places in the Commentary. In this he has certainly rendered a valuable service, and has added materially to the interest of his pages. Passing to the sphere of

[1] *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther.* By Lewis Bayles Paton, Ph.D., D.D., Professor of O.T. Exegesis and Criticism, Hartford Theol. Seminary, Hartford, Conn. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908. Price 10s. 6d.

'Higher Criticism,' our author first gives an outline of the book, and then proceeds to discuss the identity of Ahasuerus, by whom the writer is shown, beyond all reasonable doubt, to have intended Xerxes. The purpose of the book is 'to commend the observance of the feast of Purim, by an account of the way in which this feast originated.' There has never been much controversy about the unity of the larger part of the book, but reasonable doubts have been expressed as to whether the section $9^{20}$–$10^{3}$ comes from the same hand as the rest of the narrative. The reader will find this question carefully discussed by Professor Paton. Little difference of opinion prevails as to the propriety of assigning the date of the book to the Greek period, and, as our author shows, the later part of that period has stronger claims in its favour than the earlier. The author was certainly a Jew, and, it is suggested, may have come from Persia to reside in Judæa. The historical character of the book is subjected to a careful examination, as the result of which 'the conclusions seem inevitable that the Book of Esther is not historical, and that it is doubtful whether even a historical kernel underlies its narrative.'

Owing to the importance of the Feast of Purim in the Book of Esther and in later Judaism, one turns with interest to Professor Paton's examination (p. 77 ff.) of theories of the origin of this feast. The various theories of a Jewish origin (theories which, from widely differing standpoints and for very different reasons, can claim in their support names like Bleek, J. D. Michaelis, Cheyne, Johns, P. Haupt) are pronounced unsatisfactory. Nor will a Greek origin meet the case. Much more plausibility belongs to theories of a Persian or a Babylonian origin. Here we meet with Lagarde's and Schwally's identification of *Purim* with the Pers. *Farwardīgān*, which Dr. Paton is disposed to question. More striking are the attempts of Jensen and others to connect Purim with Babylonia, and to find the prototype of the story of Esther in the Gilgamesh Epic. Dr. Paton's conclusion, after a survey of all the various theories, is that, 'while the feast of Purim is probably borrowed either directly from Babylonia, or indirectly by way of Persia, no certainty has yet been reached as to the precise Babylonian feast from which it is derived.'

The next sections deal with the canonicity (where attention is called to the well-known absence of the name of God, and to characteristic Jewish attempts to evade this damaging admission) and the interpretation of the book (where all the relevant literature is catalogued); and then comes the Commentary proper, which for clearness and good sense leaves nothing to be desired. Last but not least come the three indexes, which will materially facilitate the use of the Commentary and add to its value. These include: (1) Hebrew words; (2) names of authors and books cited; (3) subjects; (4) Biblical passages.

# The Great Text Commentary.

## THE GREAT TEXTS OF DEUTERONOMY.

DEUTERONOMY xxxiii. 27.

**The eternal God is thy dwelling-place,**
**And underneath are the everlasting arms.**

### EXPOSITION.

**'The eternal God.'**—The God *of old*, literally *aforetime*. The word denotes what is ancient rather than what is eternal. It is often used of the Mosaic age, or other distant periods of Israel's past (Ps $44^{1}$ $74^{2.\ 12}$, Is $51^{9}$, Mic $7^{20}$), and even of a former period of a single lifetime (Job $29^{2}$). It is used also of mountains (Dt $33^{15}$), the heavens (Ps $68^{33}$). Besides the present text it is used of God in Hab $1^{12}$, Ps $55^{19}$ (where the R.V. is 'he that abideth *of old*').—DRIVER.

**'Thy dwelling-place.'**—The word 'thy' is not represented in the original [Driver accordingly has the more general translation, 'a dwelling-place']. The word translated 'refuge' in A.V. is a feminine form of the word translated 'dwelling-place' in Ps $90^{1}$, 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.' That Psalm is also attributed to Moses, the man of God. The same word is used of the 'habitation of Jehovah' in heaven (Dt $26^{15}$).—WALLER.

**'Underneath are the everlasting arms.'**—Not only is God a dwelling-place for His people, He is also their unfailing support. His almighty arms are ever beneath them, bearing them up, and sustaining them, alike in their prosperity and in their need. For the figure, see Hos $11^{3}$, Is $33^{2}$ $51^{5}$, Ps $44^{4}$ $89^{22}$.—DRIVER.