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but the reader of this biography will not think the less of Robertson SMITH for that. He had given his heart once; he had given it to that Church to which he believed God was speaking through him as clearly as He had spoken to the ancient Jewish Church through the prophets; and when the disappointment came he was not the man to stay himself upon fellowships or flattery.

Positive Theological Research in Germany.

By Dr. PAUL FEINE, Professor of Theology in the University of Halle-Wittenberg.

THE esteemed editor of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES has, as the result of a letter which I was commissioned by some of my colleagues to send him, requested me to arrange for an account of the work of the so-called Modern Positive Theology in Germany being written for his readers. As my colleagues, whom I asked to do me this service, are at present fully occupied in other directions, I shall attempt to step into the breach myself.

There is something unsatisfactory in separating the various theological tendencies and reporting on only one part of theological research. For we must realize clearly that theological learning is a whole, a unit. The fact that different currents declare themselves within it constitutes its wealth and its progress. It is the mutual discussion of the various views and the comprehensive working out of the reasons for one or the other conception that give an impetus to theological study. To speak quite frankly, we regard it as a blessing that God has ordained that scientific theology should proceed in this way.

But the fact remains that in theological research sometimes the one and sometimes the other branch presses forward with greater energy. In German theology at the present day a remarkable swing of the pendulum is taking place, inasmuch as, on the part of positive theology in particular, important works have been completed, greater undertakings are being planned, and new and promising lines of thought have been opened up. In that fact we have undoubtedly a good reason for now giving a summary account of the work of positive theology; and all the more so because such an account will at the same time be a discussion of the results of the research of liberal or radical thinkers. On account of the close connexion between English and German theology, this movement in Germany is sure to awaken interest in England. Yet it would seem that, in the sphere of English theological research up to the present day, the works of the liberal rather than of the positive theologians have become known.

I have singled out the department of Old and New Testament Study, as well as of Systematic Theology, since to these fields the above refers in a special degree.

I.

The Old Testament.

About thirty years ago the conception of Old Testament literature and religious history held by J. Wellhausen and his followers began to gain supremacy. It was founded upon detailed critical investigations of sources, and took up, in regard to the history of religion, an evolutionary standpoint. With the fixing of the date of the Pentateuchal sources at a relatively late time, it was considered that a firm basis had been gained for the dating of the contents of these documents and for the analysis of the religious development discovered in them. But this made necessary a construction of the history of Israel differing essentially from the traditional one. The low religious notions of primitive peoples were used as the standard for judging the original form of the Israelitish religion. It was maintained that the Israelites, like all Semites, were people of the desert, and that desert races make no advance in civilization even in thousands of years. So the Patriarchs were held to be adherents of animism and fetishism. Even at the time of the Bedouin life, the foundation of religious and separate national development was laid by Moses; but there was as yet no question of real monotheism, of a moral idea of God, of any connexion between the new national religion of the people and the religions of the neighbouring races, the Babylonians and the Egyptians, or of

the theocratic laws of the Priests' Code. According to Wellhausen, the God of Israel came to be distinctly recognized after the occupation of the land of Canaan, in conflict with the Canaanite gods. David in establishing his kingdom had raised Him from being the God of a particular race to be the God of the country; but it was the prophets of the eighth century who first appeared with an entirely new religion. It was by them that ethical monotheism, 'the religion of Israel,' was created. In the legislation of the priests, following upon the time of the prophets, this faith remained authoritative, but through the development of the worship in the direction of exact legality it was soon degraded from its high position.

This general view of the history of Israel seemed to be established by a multitude of particular and detailed investigations; and by means of judicious popularization it made its way into cultured circles as the only justifiable conception. No new and original ideas came to light in connexion with it. The thoughts of the master were reproduced and the conception was more clearly worked out in detail. In two directions, however, the situation has altered in recent years: (1) Efforts have been made to bring the Old Testament and the religion of Israel into line with the ever-increasing mass of knowledge on the subject of ancient Eastern civilization, and (2) the soteriological importance of Israel is being more clearly recognized and brought forward.

1. The first-named movement is represented in a peculiar way by Hugo Winckler and Alfred Jeremias.[1] These we shall only mention briefly, as Winckler, the leader of the movement, does not really stand for theological interests. Winckler calls attention to the fact that in the time in which Abraham is usually placed, the whole of the Near East represented one unbroken circle of culture, of which Babylon was the chief and central point. Thousands of years before, it had perfected its civilization; at that time it was at its zenith; and, centuries later, the Babylonian language was still the language of diplomatic intercourse in the Near East, in Canaan and Egypt, as well as among the Hittites. The position of Israel was especially well-defined through its relations with the great powers of Assyria and Egypt, and the lesser powers of Tyre and Damascus. Winckler maintains that the historical narrative of the Old Testament must be understood in the light of the culture of the ancient East as a whole. He adds that the personal narratives are simply the form in which religious doctrine is presented, the O.T. documents being really polemical writings of a religio-political nature; and that the view of life there represented has its root in the Babylonian astral religion. But Winckler's main hypothesis is this. The image of heaven is very like that of earth. What takes place in the celestial or astral sphere is very like what takes place in the earthly. We find astral suggestions in the Book of Judges, in the narratives of the patriarchs and in the story of Joseph. The names of the three first kings of Israel, their lives and their history, are depicted according to the scheme of astral mythology—the moon = Saul, the sun = David, Venus = Solomon. Finally, according to Winckler, the prophets play an essential part in the politics of their time. Amos worked in accordance with the political spirit of Ahaz in the north, Jeremiah was a friend of the Chaldæans, and so on.

Winckler found favour with a number of theologians in his demand for an investigation into the far-reaching effects of Babylonian culture. This movement is usually called Pan-Babylonianism. On the conservative side a sympathetic reception was given to his protest against the treatment of the Old Testament from an evolutionary point of view, and especially against the way in which a cut-and-dry view of the history of civilization and religion was brought to bear on the Old Testament sources and was to be proved correct by the use of literary criticism. But an objection arose from the fact that, according to his way of thinking, a historical conception of many persons and things could never be acquired; they had to remain for ever shrouded in the midst of astral-mythological legend. Moreover, the whole conception of the Old Testament traditions as politico-polemical writings, or as polemical writings in the interest of a special monotheistic doctrine, was rejected. Jeremias, who is otherwise closely allied to Winckler, holds firmly, as against Winckler, to the historicity of many of the persons mentioned and of the narratives contained in the Old Testament, in spite of his acceptance of astral mythological motives; and in the same way he calls attention to the superiority of the Old Testament over the other documents of ancient Eastern intellectual life.

Winckler has taken much interest in the recover-

[1] Cf. *Die Theologie der Gegenwart*, vol. i. 1907, p. 11 ff.

ing of the remains of the civilization of the ancient Hittites. At the present moment he is working with other scholars at the scientific inferences to be drawn from the rich discoveries made since 1905 in Boghasköi, near Angora in Asia Minor. Then, again, our knowledge of ancient Egypt is increasing by means of thorough investigations. All the material gained in this way is made use of by most of the representatives of Old Testament scholarship for deepening our historical and theological knowledge of the Old Testament. I shall mention on the side of historical criticism, as examples, the names of H. Gunkel and H. Gressmann; among conservative theologians, E. Sellin, who has himself conducted several excavations in Palestine, and R. Kittel, who has written an account of the value for O.T. research of all the excavations which have been made up till now.

2. It is more difficult to characterize the second of the above-mentioned movements, positive study in its narrower sense. Yet in spite of great differences in its separate representatives, certain fundamental similarities present themselves. All of them make the demand for a real scientific view of the O.T. They recognize the great importance for the religion of Israel of Oriental culture, of the intellectual currents and the history in which Israel was involved, and are ready to draw the corresponding historical conclusions for the O.T., even though these conclusions contradict the traditional view. On the other hand, however, they give greater importance and credence to the tradition contained in the O.T., and are sceptical with regard to evolutionary schemes and constructions. But their distinctive characteristic is this, —they put a different value upon the O.T. as a revelation from most of the representatives of the critical school. They see in O.T. religion the dispensation of God's redeeming will, and so establish important differences between it and the Oriental religions surrounding Israel. In the details, of course, there are manifold shades of difference. Some accept the results of literary criticism to a large extent, without sharing Wellhausen's conclusions with regard to religious history; others combine their belief in revealed religion with sound religio-historical evolutionism; others, again, go absolutely their own way, and belong to the above-named group only in respect of undefined hypotheses. Some of the positive scholars of the present day agree with theologians of other schools in this, that they do not regard as the chief task the division of the books of the Bible into their separate sources, the fixing of the composition of these and of the manner in which they were combined by subsequent editors, but rather the tracing back of the materials of Biblical writings to their first stages as literature; indeed, even back to the times of oral tradition on the one hand, or oral or literary borrowing from other peoples on the other.

The battle against the historical reconstruction of the religious history of the Israelites has been successfully waged. The inaccuracy of the thesis that the Prophets of the eighth century were the first to establish ethical monotheism has been proved by exhaustive inquiries into the writings of the Prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, etc., in their relation to Moses; cf. the works of Ed. König, *Die Hauptprobleme der altisraelitischen Religionsgeschichte*, 1884; Robertson, *The Early Religion of Israel*, 1885, German ed. by K. von Orelli; R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. i. 1888; S. Oettli, *Der Kultus bei Amos und Hosea*, 1895; E. Sellin, *Beiträge zur israelitischen und jüdischen Religionsgeschichte*, vol. i. 1896, p. 34 ff.; F. Giesebrecht, *Die Geschichtlichkeit des Sinaibundes*, 1901. In these works it is proved over and over again, as E. König in the magazine *Die Reformation*, 1912, No. 8, p. 115 f., has lately shown, that the Prophets of the eighth century, according to their own evidence, claimed to be merely reformers. They were aware of a Divine mission which led them to urge their contemporaries to return to the religion founded long ago in the early days of Israel, and to protest against all religious and moral backsliding among smaller or larger sections of their people.

In these investigations it has not been denied that the Prophets had also to supplement and intensify the Law and to remould and thereby spiritualize the prophecies. These arguments have been adduced with such penetration and are so comprehensive that they made an impression even on the representatives of the Wellhausen School. For B. Stade in his *Alttestamentliche Theologie* (vol. i. 1905, § 105) expressed his opinion that in the view which sees in the Prophets of the eighth century a confirmation of the work of Moses there lay some grain of truth; and P. Volz, who with regard to Messianic prophecy had formerly represented in a radical way the school of literary

criticism, offered in his work, *Mose: Ein Beitrag zur Untersuchung über die Ursprünge der israelitischen Religion*, 1907, what is almost 'a vindication of Moses in the field of religious history,' a vindication which could scarcely have been written with greater enthusiasm by a representative of the Positive School. In the same way as König, Robertson, Sellin, and others, he proves from the Jahwistic and Elohistic document that in the post-Mosaic and pre-prophetic period of religion, in spite of lower tendencies which were then present, Jahweh was worshipped as a celestial divinity, as a God of individuals, and as a moral personality and guide of destiny; and from that he reasons *a posteriori* back to Moses and his work. He regards Moses as the founder of the Jahweh religion, which recognized Jahweh as the moral God of the world and already discerned the connexion between religion and morality.

But after the position of the Prophets and Moses in the history of religion had been placed in a different critical light, it was necessary to go still further back to the religion of the patriarchs. Here, again, the Wellhausen scheme has broken down. It is denied that the patriarchs were still merely on the level of polydæmonism, of ancestor-worship and fetishism, in that they worshipped holy mountains, streams, trees, and stones as the seat of Divine beings. Attention is called to the fact that, according to tradition, Abraham separated himself even from his relatives just on account of his religion, so that with Abraham a new religious force entered into history, and that this is no other than faith in the unseen God. This faith gives Abraham a unique position, and points to him as the first representative of the true religion of Israel. Besides, it is now recognized through the influence of present-day ethnological and evangelical scientific research, that the evolutionistic idea of progress from lower to higher degrees of religious culture was a mistaken *a priori*. Not only does belief in a good and supreme Divine Being appear at the beginning of religion among the ancestors of the Indogermanic race, but in races which are at a lower stage of civilization, we find, beside all their polydæmonism, high conceptions of the Godhead; in particular the presence of a belief in a supreme Divine Being, who has power over heaven and earth, has been established in the case of very different primitive peoples, as the South Australians, the Bataks in Sumatra, and various negro tribes in Africa.

A short time ago E. König published a collective work on the whole mass of problems pertaining to the O.T.: *Geschichte der Alttestamentlichen Religion*, 1912, and in it he has given a detailed and comprehensive criticism, from the standpoint of revelation, of the conception of Wellhausen and that which treats the O.T. from the evolutionary point of view of religious history. We may mention also for the introductory questions: E. Sellin, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 1910, in which the judgment of the O.T. documents in favour of tradition is discussed; and for history, R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*[2]. The publication of a large commentary on the whole of the O.T., under the editorship of E. Sellin, on the same lines as Th. Zahn's *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, has also been planned. The reasons for this undertaking are, according to the prospectus issued by the publishers (A. Deichert), chiefly the following: The exhaustive commentaries in circulation at present do not, with all their scientific significance, make a sufficiently vivid and direct impression on their readers of the uniqueness of the O.T. religion and its literature, of its superiority to all other ancient Eastern religions, and of its lasting and undying content in spite of all temporal development. Again, the last decade has brought forth in many of the branches of O.T. research, through the continuous and rapid opening up of the ancient East, quite new problems and perspectives; and to these more justice may be done by an absolutely new treatment of the O.T. writings than by a re-editing of the old commentaries. Procksch, Lotz, and König have undertaken to treat the Pentateuch; Wilke, Isaiah; Sellin, the Minor Prophets and Proverbs; Kittel, the Psalms. The first volumes of this commentary may be expected shortly.