

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWSPROFESSOR JORDAN'S NEW BOOK.
Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought.

At this "psychological moment" when the theological atmosphere is somewhat charged with the smoke and noise of the old battle between the sturdy defenders of modern Biblical Criticism and their equally staunch opponents, Prof. Jordan's new book has appeared very opportunely. This valuable contribution to the much vexed problem under debate is made in a handsome volume from the press of the T. and T. Clark Company, Edinburgh, who are well-known as probably the leading publishers of theological works in the English-speaking world—a fact that is in itself a proof of the importance of this new publication. Only a small number, comparatively, were privileged to hear the author's "Chancellor's Lectures" before the Theological Alumni Association of Queen's University, so that at the solicitation of some of his friends Prof. Jordan was urged to make these lectures the nucleus of a book for the advantage of the wider circle of his admirers. Such was the origin of the now completed volume before us, for whose appearance many of his friends have been long looking forward.

For the undertaking of such a task Dr. Jordan possesses, in an eminent degree, two qualifications which are, unfortunately, rarely combined in a single man. On the one hand, as his book abundantly testifies, he is a student and a scholar and is thoroughly acquainted with the rapidly growing literature on Old Testament subjects. On the other hand—and it is a nice question which should be given the position of honour—as many of the readers of *The Dominion Presbyterian* know, Prof. Jordan holds a high position among the foremost preachers of our church. Probably no man in the Presbyterian Church of Canada within recent years has done more for the cause of expository preaching. Indeed his whole book is a plea for the more earnest study of the half-neglected treasures of the Old Testament and for their reverent, sympathetic exposition from our pulpits.

His new book is written accordingly for a far wider constituency than for only the more scholarly-inclined members of our Christian ministry. There is nothing in it that any thoughtful Bible reader should not be able to follow quite readily, and it will appeal especially to those who have done a little thinking along the lines of recent Biblical Criticism. While the author takes vigorous exception to the views of some scholars who assail the Higher Critics and their methods there is little of the polemic in his arguments. Instead we find that the beautiful sense of literary appreciation and depth of real spiritual insight which are so characteristic of the man as his many friends and students know him.

Now, as to the book itself. Its purpose is to serve as "a general review of the Old Testament Problem." In the words of the preface, "the thought running all through the volume . . . is that in order to understand or expound

any passage of the Old Testament, and particularly the early narratives, it is necessary to form a clear idea of the place of this great book in the history and literature of the world. The endeavor to form such an idea brings us at once face to face with the fact that the increase in our knowledge of the earth and the life of humanity upon it compels us to modify some of our beliefs as to the nature of the Bible. Changes thus made at the demand of intellectual honesty turn out to be in the interests of the highest faith. Only by treating the book as real literature can we get at the heart of the people from whom it came, only thus can we grasp its real revelation. Prof. Mari has well said "that we are not compelled to renounce our belief in revelation because we cannot formulate a theory of it that is free from objection." This is the author's thoroughly consistent position and while we dislike to label him with the favorite title of the opponents of this position, that of Higher Critic, intended usually in no very polite and complimentary sense, still it is true that Professor Jordan stands frankly and fearlessly in defence of a reverent criticism and re-interpretation of the literature of the Old Testament.

Space will not permit anything like a general review of the book. Among the best of its fourteen chapters are those entitled "The Old Testament as a Problem," "Early Hebrew Religion," "Historical Development" and "Criticism and the Preacher." Speaking of "historical development," which of course must be the first thing recognized before we can think of the Old Testament as literature at all, the writer concludes: "And surely it is an essential part of the equipment of the modern preacher to learn to read this ancient literature in an intelligent, sympathetic manner; not for the purpose of giving mere lectures in history or of finding historical illustrations for his sermons, but now and then to re-create for his people the life of the distant past, and show them how in all ages the noblest, most earnest men and women have wrestled with the problems of the world not merely for the sake of getting a living, but to find life in the fullest sense—in other words, to find God, that they might know Him whom to know is life eternal."

In the chapter entitled "Modern Interpretation of Ancient Stories," speaking of the story of the hanging up of the seven sons of Saul and of the mother, Rizpah's devotion (II Sam. XXI.) we read: "Before a scene that is so real, so instinct with primitive ideas and elemental passion, our poor apologies shrink into silence. Why not frankly acknowledge that these people are seeking after God, and finding Him in their own way? Their science, their theology is different from ours, but they are in dead earnest; in the world about them and in their own lives they are determined to find the dread presence of the great Judge. We are in danger of losing Him in all this complicated machinery and tame conventionality; if we will cease pitying these ancestors of ours, cease apologizing for them and accept them as in some sense messengers of God, we may learn much from them."

It is in this spirit that the whole book is written. Surely in the hands of such men as Dr. Jordan this great heritage of ours is perfectly safe; nothing is being "cut out" of our Bibles, but rather much that has been long dead to any

real use or significance in pulpit and pew is being made to live and speak anew and the message is ever the same which ultimately unites all true believers in God, and makes creeds and dogmas and articles of faith fall into their true place in the perspective of the religious life.

In the latest "Expository Times" this highly complimentary tribute is paid to Dr. Jordan after a brief review of two recent periodical articles from his pen: "There is no man that we know of, not even Professor Sanday himself, who seems to have a more appropriate message for our day, or seems able to deliver it better, than Professor W. G. Jordan of Queen's University Canada." In the firm belief that we must depend upon just such men as the author of this recent book for the solution of the problem that is being debated so keenly at present, we feel that we can commend "Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought" to every honest Bible student and reader who is anxious to have light thrown on the many difficulties that arise out of the great literature of the Old Testament.

PRESBYTERIAN BROTHERHOOD.

Rev. J. W. Knox, M.A., Pembroke.

A very striking feature of modern life is the rise of the men to a new sense of their responsibility in connection with the work of the church. Their duty cannot be performed by proxy. They are awakening to the truth expressed by Carlyle years ago, "that each payment is not the sole relation of human beings." There are higher claims upon a man than the payment of debt. These higher claims for practical interest and personal service in the things of the Kingdom are being recognized as never before. The Laymen's Missionary Movement has been very prominently before us for some time, but there is another movement, the Brotherhood Movement, which is of equal importance. In recent years, more particularly in the American Republic, the men of the churches have been banding themselves together to make more potent and more definite the influence of the Christian religion upon the whole life of all the men of the nation. Hence the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the Brotherhood of Andrew and Phillip, the Brotherhood in the Baptist church, in the Congregational church, in the Disciple church, and the Presbyterian Brotherhood of America, which was organized three years ago at the convention of Indianapolis.

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This rise of the men is one manifestation of a very widespread change that has been coming over the mind of the church, and who will say that this change has not been brought about by the leading of that Spirit which Christ promised to send to the world to guide men into all truth. One phase of this change has been the widening conception of the term religion and the corresponding widening conception of the religious duties of the men of the church. The church is no longer considered to be simply an agency to give people a passport into a Kingdom, the entrance to which lies beyond the grave. We have learned more truly the meaning of the prayer that Christ taught the church and more particularly that first petition which includes all else: "Thy Kingdom come." The true function of the church is to be the agent of God in the answering of that prayer. This is in accordance with the general principle that God