

Outlook for Old Testament Interpretation at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century.

A thoughtful article by Professor W. G. Jordan, D. D. of Queen's under this title occupies a prominent place in the Biblical World for June. After discussing at some length the spirit and purpose of modern Biblical criticism he concluded as follows with an answer to the question:

What, then remains after all this shaking? What does biblical science hand over to the twentieth century?

1. A great literature which has grown rather than shrunk under the fires of criticism. Instead of books written by a few men, we have a great literature into which a numberless host of living souls have poured their noblest thoughts and purest aspirations. In the main, and for the great body of general readers, this book belongs to what is called the "literature of power;" that is, its chief service is in keeping alive great religious ideas, and inspiring men in their struggle, not only with evil, but also with prosaic fact and dead routine. Even from this point of view the book has become larger rather than smaller. The idea of revelation, somewhat mechanically conceived, had pressed into the background the thought of a literature which mirrors the life of man and reflects the guidance of God. Recently the idea of literature has been emphasized, and, instead of looking on every page for the same few dogmas, we seek in the varied literary forms for manifestations of the life of men who are eager in the search for truth and God. These two ideas must be reconciled by the recognition that it is through the life of man thus reflected or embodied that the divine revelation comes to us. Without lessening the spiritual power, science has shown how to the special student it may also be a book of instruction and contribute its share to the history of the past.

2. Hence there remains an important series of documents for those who wish to know how Christianity grew out of Judaism, and in what way the religion which we now love and seek to live has its roots in experiences so different and distant. How did there come forth from such an intensely national religion a faith that is purely spiritual and knows no distinction of clan or race? That must always be an interesting problem, and it has lost none of its importance. It is a startling change out of the heart of narrow Judaism there springs a religion spiritual in its nature and universal in its range. This, we shall see, was not so sudden as it seems; not without long, slow, gradual preparation involving much discipline of national life and individual experience. This leads us to take a scholarly interest in books not included in the Jewish Canon, and it shows us that there are no "silent centuries," but that we must take a larger view of this history, if we are to understand the glorious saying that God, who in sundry times and divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his son.

3. A great book for the preacher still remains, with its historical pictures, varied biographies, and sacred poems. Certain parts of the book were lost to the preacher, for a while; that is, to the preacher who possessed something of the scientific spirit and was troubled with an "exegetical conscience." The old view was lost, and the new one not fully ap-

propriated; a transitional period always has its difficulties. But many have now worked themselves through into a position where they can do justice to the demands of science without being unfaithful to the practical needs of religion. From the point of view of concrete, picturesque, powerful preaching, it is most important that the Old Testament should not be neglected in the pulpit. In recent years, as the effect of influences coming from various directions, the social side of the religious life has been emphasized. With this, of course, a true individualism and a deeper view of the personal life must be combined; but the individualism cannot be restored in precisely the old form; the preacher must now insist upon the relationship of man to man; religion must be a force inspiring social purity and civic righteousness. Here the prophets and teachers of Israel are near to us, though they seem so far away; their message was in the main to society, and it is a message that we can adapt to our own day. This needs wisdom as well as courage, intelligence as well as fervor; but it is a high task worthy of the true preacher who honors God and is sympathetic toward men. If we will base ourselves upon that which is best in the past, if we will use wisely the results of all this painful, conscientious toil, then in the new century the Old Testament need be neither a sealed book nor a neglected book, but may take, more and more, its rightful place as one of God's ministering servants, bringing light, joy, and peace to many struggling souls.

Literary Notes.

Winston Churchill's new historical novel, "The Crisis," is on the whole much superior to his "Richard Carvel," which was read so widely a couple of years ago. The story tells of the great war between the North and the South and gives most vivid pictures of Lincoln and Grant and Sherman. As in "Richard Carvel" the characters are many, illustrating the different sides of the question over which the great struggle took place. The two old friends, Colonel Carvel, who believes strongly in slavery, and Judge Whipple, as strong an Abolitionist, form perhaps the most interesting study in the book; and their separation when they can no longer remain friends is one of the most touching scenes. Virginia Carvel, the heroine, is a descendant of the beautiful Dorothy Manners, and very much resembles her great-grand-mother in appearance and in character, as she is both beautiful and haughty. Notwithstanding her haughtiness, the hero loves her devotedly through four hundred pages and in the end wins her for his wife. Eliphalet Hopper takes the part of villain with ease, being a sneak and a rogue to whom "the being caught was the unpardonable crime." "The Crisis" is certainly one of the best of the historical novels of which so many have recently been written. The book shows with great skill the feelings of both parties. The value of the book is enhanced to most people by the fine illustrations by Howard Chandler Christy. The Copp Clark Company, Toronto.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer has accepted the presidency of the English Sunday School Union for 1902 in succession to Mr. George Cadbury.

Sparks From Other Anvils.

Christian Guardian: If Christianity has succeeded where other religions have failed, if that high morality of sentiment which we call civilization has distinguished Europe from pagan nations, it has been accomplished from a belief in the supernatural mission of Jesus.

Christian Observer: One of the surest signs of a consciousness of weakness in argument is the beginning of a personal attack upon an opponent. When a writer calls another by hard names, of course the other, in a spirit of self-respect, will make no answer, and then the author of the vituperation will seem to have won his case.

North and West: If ministers would only get the Bible idea of sin they would have to accept the Bible idea of salvation or confess that their theology was insufficient for the task of saving souls. The world has progressed, but it has not gotten past Calvary, and a revival that is to sweep America must have its birth under the shadow of the cross.

Presbyterian Banner: We ought to consult God on all subjects in prayer and make known all our wants to him. He is not far off, but nigh us, even in our hearts, and his presence palpitates in every raindrop and sunbeam. We should make this great splendid truth vivid and vital in our hearts and lives, that it may bring us into constant fellowship with our Father and sustain us with his power and peace.

Michigan Presbyterian: The ancient Jews, with all their strictness in regard to the Sabbath, made one exception in their rules, and that was in reference to the Temple. They held that anything that was done in the Temple on an ordinary day might be done there on the Sabbath, because all work was holy within the Temple. So should all our work be done "as unto the Lord, and not unto men," as a divine ministry, wherever its field and whatever its nature.

Herald and Presbyterian: The ranks of the "Christian Scientists" are made up of two classes: the misleaders and the misled. It is more than likely that many of them belong to both classes. Certain it is that some in hope of bodily healing have been led into the acceptance of erroneous views that endanger and ruin their souls. The philosophic fallacy which underlies their conception of physical conditions is bad enough, and leads to enough of mischief, but the vital errors which characterize their religious teachings bring absolute disaster to those who accept them. There should be outspoken exposure of this false system by all who have opportunities and responsibilities as public teachers.

S. S. Times: "In season and out of season" is the time to preach Christ. "In season and out of season" is the time to be faithful to souls. Paul preached in that way. Many another follower of Christ has thus preached since Paul's day. Why should not every one of us thus preach Christ daily? When Dr. Edward Payson, of Portland, Maine, was dying, he requested that a label should be attached to his breast, and that on it should be the inscription, "Remember the words which I spake unto you while I was yet present with you." This was seen by all his people, and so he continued to preach to them. Again, those words were engraved on the plate on his coffin. And thus he continued to preach until the last. Is not that an illustration of faithfulness to Christ and to souls in life and death? Have we that spirit, even if we do not show it in that way?