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255. 8. For ויִסֹב read ויִסֹב ; l 9, for ויִסֹבו read ויִסֹבו .

256. 8. For יסֹב, יסֹב read יסֹב, יסֹב .

259. 14. Punctuate פְּתַחְתִּי . L. 16, punctuate $\text{פְּתַחְתִּי, פְּתַחְתִּי, פְּתַחְתִּי, פְּתַחְתִּי}$.

W. BACHER.

A NEW COMMENTARY ON THE FIVE MEGILLOTH.

Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament. Die fünf Megillot (Hohelied, Ruth, Klagelieder, Prediger, und Esther). Erklärt von K. BUDDE, A. BERTHOLET, und G. WILDEBOER. Herausgegeben von K. MARTI (Freiburg i. B. : J. C. B. Mohr).

THE contemporaneous publication in Germany of two series of commentaries on the Old Testament of a higher character, and at a comparatively small price, tends to show, if proof were needed, that in that country the scientific study of the Bible is still pursued with unremitting vigour. In the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW for October last I reviewed a recent issue of the *Handkommentar*. We now have before us a section of the *Kurzer Hand-Commentar*, dealing with the five Megilloth. Of these, Budde takes Canticles and Lamentations; Bertholet, Ruth; and Wildeboer, Ecclesiastes and Esther.

The estimate which the student may form of the commentary on the Canticles is likely to be influenced to a very great extent by his regarding with favour or otherwise Wetzstein's view of the origin and structure of the Book; for Dr. Budde is an ardent advocate of Wetzstein's theory, and expresses confidence in its ultimate general acceptance. According to this theory the book is a collection of bridal songs analogous to such as are used during the festive week in which the nuptials of the Syrian peasantry are celebrated; and, indeed, the songs of the Canticles may be regarded as having derived their origin from such celebrations. But the student who compares the details of the Canticles with the array of facts set forth by Wetzstein, or his disciple Dr. Budde, is not unlikely to exclaim *immane quantum discrepat!* Special prominence is, however, given to the procession in Cant. iii. 6-11; and this is compared with a very curious proceeding on the part of the Syrian peasants, who, on the morning after a marriage, fetch, according to Wetzstein, from the barn or other receptacle the threshing-table or threshing-dray, which, placed on a kind of scaffold on the threshing-floor, forms

a throne for the newly wedded pair. The threshing-table, it should be explained, consists of two boards bound together, and bent up at one end. Beneath, the machine is set with rows of stones for the purpose of rubbing and cutting. The use on such an occasion of an apparatus so seemingly incongruous is explained on the ground of poverty. The threshing-table having been brought in by village youths with songs of victory or love, a carpet is spread over it, and a pair of gold-bedecked cushions placed thereon for the seats of the king and queen, as the newly married pair are now designated.

From the לִבְיָדָי and לְפָנָי of Cant. iii. 6 it would seem that the procession is that of the bride, who is brought to the bridegroom *before* her espousals, on the litter or palanquin which he had sent. The eleventh verse may be taken to mean that she is met and received by the bridegroom, who wears the bridal crown placed on his head by his mother. The palanquin, with its gold, and silver, and perfumes, is evidently seen coming up "from the desert" *before* the marriage. This seems of fundamental importance. As to the incongruity involved in the use of the threshing-dray, Budde thinks that in Palestine a sofa or some more suitable piece of furniture would be employed. But there is a still greater difficulty in the introduction of the name "Solomon." Our author suggests that this name may owe its introduction to an explanatory gloss, or it may have been an accentuation and development of the idea of "king." I may add that the heroes surrounding the palanquin with their swords ready "because of fear in the night" would be, no doubt, explained by the anthropologists as a vestige of the ancient practice of marriage by capture. The song, as supposed, accompanying "the sword dance of the bride" (vi. 10—vii. 6), would require greater space for its discussion than can be here given to a matter so doubtful. And how much there is in the Canticles which Wetzstein's theory fails to explain the reader may convince himself without very much difficulty. But if this theory cannot now be regarded as giving a solution of the difficult problem of the Canticles, it is at least possible that it may be found hereafter to lead on to some extent towards such a solution.

With regard to the Lamentations Budde rejects, and, as is probable, rightly rejects, the supposed Jeremian authorship, a supposition which, however, goes as far back as the LXX. Budde, indeed, finds it in 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. But הַקִּינִיּוֹת in this verse may well refer to a collection of dirges which has not come down to us. As to the language our author assents to the position that it is not in sufficient agreement with that of Jeremiah to warrant the assertion that he was the author. And the mind of the prophet would scarcely

have had the tranquillity and freedom necessary for lyrical effusions. With regard to the number of authors, a decision is not made without difficulty. In chapters i, ii, iii, iv, there is an acrostic or alphabetic arrangement. The last three of these chapters, however, depart from the usual order of the letters, placing **ב** before **א**. The first chapter conforms to the usual order. This remarkable variation has not yet been explained, as Budde tells us, and he suggests no new theory. The variation is, moreover, accentuated by the triplets of chapter iii. The foundation of the book Budde finds in the second and fourth chapters. But in his opinion these chapters show a discrepancy in what is said in ii. 20 and iv. 13-16, concerning the fate of priest and prophet. It remains to be remarked that to Dr. Budde is assigned the merit of having proved that Hebrew elegiac verse is divided by a *caesura* into two unequal parts, first a longer and then a shorter member, constituted in the ordinary proportion he tells us, of three to two. The result of his researches on this matter was first published in the *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* for 1882.

Bertholet, who, as said above, writes on Ruth, accepts the position that the book is of late date. He is quite conscious of the literary merit and the charm of the narrative, which gained for it the high praise of Goethe. The vivid impression of truth and reality is attributed to the great artistic skill of the author. But still the book was written with a special object, namely, to controvert the teaching of Ezra and Nehemiah with regard to extraneous marriages, and to show that all Moabite women were not bad, and moreover, to inculcate the duty and the blessing of observing the Levirate law even in relation to such women. Whatever may be thought of the genealogy at the end of the book (iv. 18-22),-in Bertholet's view the narrative attains its supreme point when Boaz becomes through Ruth the great-grandfather of David. To this consummation the wish of iv. 11 looks forward: "The Lord make the woman which is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel." The book, in our author's opinion, emanated from the party opposed to the marriage-prohibitions of Ezra and Nehemiah. But that a tract which owed its origin to party spirit should find its way into the Canon is not, he thinks, unintelligible if we consider that the collection of the Kethubim was made at a time when the danger from Moabite marriages had entirely passed away; and the collectors did not apply the rule of historical criticism but were satisfied with an edifying or parenetic tendency. Bertholet does not overlook the difficulty which presents itself when the Book of Ruth is compared with the law of Deut. xxiii. 4 (Heb.), forbidding the entrance of an Ammonite or Moabite into the congregation of

the Lord, even to the tenth generation. This difficulty is certainly not less serious to more conservative critics. Our author cannot accept the suggestion of the Rabbins that the law of Deuteronomy relates only to males. In his opinion the law itself is, like the Book of Ruth, a product of party spirit (cf. Neh. xiii. 1, 2).

We now come to Wildeboer's work on Ecclesiastes. At the present time, out of the five Megilloth, Ecclesiastes is the book which excites the greatest interest. As to the date Wildeboer assents to the now prevailing opinion that Ecclesiastes was written about the year 200 B. C. With this date it is of course not difficult to allow that the book shows at least some trace of Greek influence in both its language and its thought. The whole intellectual atmosphere was so pervaded by the spirit of scepticism—to which Greek influence contributed—as to impel the author to write his book with the freedom which he displays. Moreover, he has studied the world and his own heart, and a disquieting struggle has arisen in his soul. He cannot content himself with conventional explanations. All things move in an endless circuit, from which man is powerless to release himself, his life and conduct being absolutely determined by invincible power. He acts as he must act. The author of Ecclesiastes is far from coming to the conclusion that there is no God, nor does he accept the pantheistic alternative. Dr. Wildeboer, however, considers that chap. xii. 7 speaks merely of the dust returning to the earth, and of God drawing back to himself the vital principle. The verse says nothing of a personal immortality. Indeed, if the author had believed in such immortality he could not have written his book.

Though apparently not admitting the substantial integrity of the text, Dr. Wildeboer is not disposed to reject the so-called epilogue; indeed to reject xii. 13, 14 is to misconstrue the very aim of the book. At the same time he does not take the last verse of chap. xii as speaking of a judgment beyond the grave, but only of such judgment as is to take effect during this life. This, however, is not an interpretation likely to gain wide acceptance.

The book as a whole is to be taken as an honest and candid confession; a view which, while it cannot be said to be novel, does not afford an adequate explanation of the facts. There is unity pervading the book from i. 2 to xii. 8, which, throughout, must be taken as the discourse of *Koheleth*. It is in accordance with the grammatical form of the word *Koheleth* to regard it as denoting a personified assembly of sages or philosophers; a view which, while it accounts for the unity just spoken of, is entirely in accordance with a diversity of sentiment, or even with manifest contradictions. It is scarcely

possible to find any satisfactory explanation of the sharp opposition in so close propinquity as that of iii. 17 and iii. 18 other than that we have the utterances of two members of the assembly holding contradictory opinions. Each begins with the formula אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי; and the אֲנִי of viii. 2 may be understood of a new speaker rising up to speak on a fresh subject. Indications somewhat less marked and conspicuous need not be mentioned.

In his note on iii. 8 Dr. Wildeboer speaks of the writer of this review as believing that Eccl. iii. 1-8 expresses the Stoic thought of a repeated cyclical revolution. This is certainly not in accordance with fact. The position of the writer was, and is, that the verses were intended as a sort of summary of human life, teaching that, in agreement with the law of nature, there are times and seasons for man's actions and pursuits, observing which, he may fulfil the great Stoic ethical principle of acting conformably to nature.

It is remarkable that in his note on ii. 25 Dr. Wildeboer has placed after חַיִּל "ἀπ. λεγ.," seeing that the word is of by no means infrequent occurrence. He expresses a high opinion of a work on Ecclesiastes, published in 1861, by the Dutch scholar P. de Jong, which, however, he speaks of as entirely unknown in Germany. Such, I suppose, is the case also in this country. But some specimens of De Jong's exegesis, which Dr. Wildeboer gives, are scarcely consistent with his high estimate of the work. With regard to the difficult expression of v. 19 פִּי הָאֱלֹהִים מְעֵנָה בְּשִׂמְחַת לִבּוֹ we are recommended to understand, with De Jong, *da Gott [ihn] beschäftigt mit der Freude seines Herzens*. To say nothing of the supplied object, it is sufficient to refer to 1 Kings viii. 35; 2 Chron. vi. 26, to show how unsuitable in this place would be the Hiph. of עָנָה in any such sense as De Jong suggests. For the probably true interpretation the reader must be referred to the Introduction to the present writer's Commentary on Ecclesiastes, of which a new edition is in the hands of the printer. Then with regard to the words of xii. 4 וְקַמַּל וְיִקּוּם לְקוֹל הַצִּפּוֹר Wildeboer commends De Jong's alteration קוֹל הַצִּפּוֹר. But though קַמַּל (which occurs twice in Isaiah only, xix. 6; xxxiii. 9) is used of the withering of plants, the word could scarcely be employed with any congruity of a bird's voice. Taking into account Ps. cvii. 29 יִקַּם סְעָרָה לְרַמְמָה "he causes the storm to become a calm," the difficulty in Ecclesiastes disappears; and we may translate, "and it becomes the voice of a bird," alluding to the change in the voice of old age described in Shakespeare's well-known words:—

"his big manly voice,

Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound."

In relation to Wildeboer's work on Esther, considerations of space compel me to limit my observations to a remarkable theory communicated by Prof. Jensen, the Assyriologist, and not unlikely to excite a good deal of discussion. The assertion that some things in Genesis were derived from Babylonian sources has become familiar. But it is somewhat startling to be told that the history of Mordecai and Esther, and their opponents Haman and Vashti, really represents the hostility of certain Babylonian and Elamite deities, to whom is attributed the mutual animosities of the Babylonian and Elamite peoples. With regard to Esther and Mordecai, that the names are related to those of the deities Istar and Marduk or Merodach is sufficiently obvious. "Mordecai," Mr. Pinches tells me, is a name not very infrequent on Babylonian contract-tablets, the name of the god being converted by its termination into a human personal name. "Haman" seems to have previously defied the etymologists and interpreters. Jensen's suggestion that this name is connected with that of the Elamite national deity "Humman" is certainly striking. The Elamites were the ancient foes of the Babylonians; Humman is the foe of Marduk, as Haman is of Mordecai. The history lying at the basis of the Esther-legend must have treated of a conquest of the Elamites, or of an Elamite king. "Vashti" brings into view the name of a female deity whose name "Wašti" or "Mašti" is found in the Elamite inscriptions. She was probably the consort of Humman.

Jensen, it appears, like Zimmern, regards the original feast of Purim as identical with the Babylonian feast of Fate or Destiny (*Schicksalsfest*) celebrated at the beginning of the year. With respect to the name "Purim" Jensen makes an assertion which, possibly, may be verifiable, though the present writer has failed to verify it. It is asserted that, in Assyrian, *pūru* or *būru* has the meaning "stone." Then פּוּר with the sense of "lot," may be regarded as a word borrowed from Babylonian. It may thus be compared with פּוּר and ψήφος, both the latter words having the signification "small stone" or "pebble," and so "lot." If this etymology of פּוּר can be demonstrated, a result of some importance will have been attained.

It is scarcely possible to treat otherwise than incompletely in a notice such as this a volume containing five commentaries by three eminent scholars. But enough has probably been said to attract the serious attention of those students who wish to become acquainted with the latest suggestions and results in the domain of Biblical science.

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