

of the city. He puts forward the view that the flight of this prophet and his death may not have taken place till the time of Zedekiah, and thus the letters do not need to be dated as far back as Jehoiakim's reign, but just a few years before the end of the monarchy. This theory seems rather fanciful, however, and does not accord with the archæology or the Biblical history of the time. From the layer in which the letters were found, they undoubtedly date from Nebuchadrezzar's invasion in 588 B.C.; and as they are all of the same type, and one of them (referring to fire-signals) is admitted to have been written during the invasion, it is evident that all of them belong to the same time of tension and alarm at the close of the monarchy. The idea that they may have formed the court-dossier of Hoshaiah at some military trial has nothing to support it.

The theory, too, that the prophet mentioned in them is Uriah will not be accepted by the majority of scholars, for this prophet was certainly put to death in Jehoiakim's time, and this would put the letters back as much as eleven years or more before the fall of Lachish. Torczyner, it is true, attempts to bring Uriah's death down into Zedekiah's time, and thinks the redactor has made a mistake in placing it under Jehoiakim, but the narrative (Jer 26<sup>22</sup> ff.) is admitted by the most advanced critics to be authentic as it stands. It is not un-

likely, indeed, that 'the prophet' (whose name is not given in the letters) was Jeremiah, for the statement in Letter VI. complaining of his words is practically identical with what is said of him in the Biblical record (Jer 38<sup>4</sup>).

Torczyner's idea, moreover, that the Nedabiah mentioned in Letter III. as the bearer of one of the messages is to be identified with the 'grandson' of Jehoiakim (cf. 1 Ch 3<sup>18</sup>) does not find favour with other scholars who have carefully studied the Phœnician script of the letters. The word which he transliterates נכר ('grandson') is clearly עבד ('servant'), and the royal grandson has nothing to do with the Nedabiah mentioned in the text. The former, indeed, on the most favourable estimate could not have been more than five years of age when Letter III. was written (according to Torczyner's date for it).

The volume will probably occasion considerable discussion and criticism. But if it should stimulate research into these invaluable documents, and reveal new points tending to clarify certain passages, great good will result. It is the reviewer's belief that scholarship will come to date all these letters to about February 587 B.C., only a few weeks or days before the fall of Lachish, and to see in 'the prophet' not Uriah, but Jeremiah, whose name seems to be clearly mentioned in Letter XVII.

*Glenfarg.*

J. W. JACK.

## Entre Nous.

### Some Thoughts on Bereavement.

To write to a bereaved person is the most difficult of tasks, it always has been so, and possibly not till months after the blow has fallen can the letter be of any use. Then it may be re-read; and some chance saying in it may reach and comfort the lonely. Thus it is surely worth while to read with attention what other and more distinguished people have said, and have found to be of solid use.

Possibly the letter written by Arthur Balfour to Lady Desborough, when her son, Billy Grenfell, was killed after his brother Julian in the War, may not be as well known as it might be. Mrs. Edgar Dugdale (who writes the life of her uncle) tells us that Balfour set forth 'more plainly and unequivocally than anything else ever put on paper, his feelings about death.' The gist of the letter lies in the fact that he entertains no doubt whatever

about a future life. ('I deem it at least as certain as any of the hundred-and-one truths of the framework of the world, as I conceive the world.') 'I am as sure that those I love and have lost are living to-day, as I am that yesterday they were fighting heroically in the trenches. The bitterness lies not in the thought that they are really dead, still less in the thought that I have parted with them for ever, for I think neither of these things.' He goes on to say that the bitterness lies in the certainty that, till he dies, he will never again see their smile or hear their voice, but then concludes victoriously—and here comes the steadfast helpful word: 'The pain is indeed hard to bear—too hard, it sometimes seems, for human strength; yet measured in the true scale of things *it is but brief*; death cannot long cheat us of love. . . .'

That is what we all long to give to the mourner

—something concrete to think about, and I have never met anything more felicitous than Baldwin's letter to Lady Cave on the death of her husband. 'In such unions,' Lord Baldwin wrote (the quotation is taken from *Lord Cave, a Memoir*, by Sir Charles Mallet), 'as we both know, there lies the certainty that before husband or wife there lies an ultimate path of deep sorrow. *In a way, you are bearing his burden*, the burden he would have had, if you had been called first. He has been spared what has fallen upon you.'

Another consolatory thought when suffering through the death of some one very dear, is that that friend who has departed would almost certainly deprecate a hopeless indulgence in sorrow, if he could return and speak. Henry Brewster, writing to Dame Ethel Smyth, thus expressed it, I quote from the memoir of Brewster prefacing *The Prison*, 'X reproached her grandfather, and very rightly, for giving way to clamorous grief; I feel so differently about death, that though their sorrow touches me, I should not like to be mourned for thus. "My peace I leave with you." These are beautiful words, gentle and proud. I would like to be able to say them in some measure.'

And have we not the great fact to rely on that, as the years pass, Love does not die. Looking through an old volume of poems by Madame Darmesteteter the other day we found some lines that expressed this fact perfectly . . .

Here, in the long light summer weather,  
She brings the books they chose together,  
And reads the verse he liked the most.  
And here, as softly as a ghost,  
Comes gliding through the winter gloom  
To say her prayer beside the tomb  
Of him she loved, and never lost.

CONSTANCE MILES.

#### Aldous Huxley.

In the April number of *Life and Work*, the Record of the Church of Scotland, there is a suggestive short article by the Rev. David Cairns, B.A., Bridge of Allan, on Aldous Huxley.

Mr. Cairns begins in this way: 'Aldous Huxley is one of our most significant writers to-day. He has written several novels, books of travel and of essays, and now he has produced *Ends and Means*—a diagnosis of the moral and political diseases of our age, together with a prescription which he hopes may lead to a cure. But all the way through his career, even in his novels, it has been as essayist and philosopher that he has excelled. Plot and

character are not the main thing with him; he is bent on seeing the world through the eyes of the people about whom he writes; and he sees farther than Wells or Shaw—and, unlike them, he grows in insight as he goes on.

'In his earlier books this portrayal is strangely detached, witty, and cynical; and there is a definitely disagreeable sexual element. The intention of this is not to corrupt, it is rather the depicting of a world with which the writer is growing more and more dissatisfied and disgusted. Before long Huxley begins to see that the haphazard freedom which he has described leads to the destruction of personality. In his later books a remarkable change has come over him. Now he believes that there is a certain kind of life which is worth living, and it is a proof of his new earnestness that he is now no longer content with mocking or sneering, but is trying to formulate certain rules for living which may save the world from impending disaster. And he sees that this ideal has no claim at all on men unless the universe itself has also a meaning.

'So it is natural that in the closing chapters of *Ends and Means* he should give an account of his beliefs about God and the Universe. For he sees that men's conception of their duty depends on the kind of God they believe in, and he revolts against all worship of the State as divine, and the consequent moral code that "whatever serves the State is right." In his books one sees this line of thought steadily developing. At first, in *Crome Yellow*, there is given a detached picture of the world. In *Point Counterpoint* you have a reaction of disgust against the meaninglessness and indiscipline of modern life; in *Brave New World* you have a picture of the things that planning may lead to in a State that has rejected all spiritual values. *Eyeless in Gaza* depicts the breakaway of a captive from the grinding mill of a meaningless life. In this book Antony Beavis rejects the planning of the Communist agitators, and advances towards a new ethic of non-violence and co-operation. And now in *Ends and Means* we have a systematic exposition of the same theme as is treated in the form of a novel in *Eyeless in Gaza*.'

There is no doubt that there were many people who read more into *Eyeless in Gaza* than was actually there. They wanted to believe that Huxley had already, in it, travelled far along the Christian path. *Ends and Means* makes it clear that though he has indeed travelled far from his earlier materialism, his present position cannot be identified with Christianity. Chapter xiv., entitled 'Beliefs,' shows that the God in which he believes

is an impersonal God, 'an impersonal spiritual reality underlying all being.' 'All the great religions have taught the necessity of transcending personality; but the Christians have made it particularly difficult for themselves to act upon this teaching. They have accompanied the injunction that men should lose their lives in order to save them by the assertion that God Himself is a person and that personal values are the highest that we can know.' Not only should personality not be attributed to God, but it would be wrong to attribute goodness to Him. 'God is not good.' Here it may be Huxley narrows 'goodness' down until it is equivalent with ethic morality—God is non-moral.

Men, on their side, must strive for an experience of mystical union with an impersonal union with an impersonal—super-personal—God. The way of spiritual experience is by meditation. 'Meditation is the technique of mysticism. Properly practised with due preparation, physical, mental and moral, meditation may result in a state of what has been called "transcendental consciousness"—the direct intuition of, and union with, an ultimate spiritual reality that is perceived as simultaneously beyond the self and in some way within it.'

It will be seen, from this quotation that the preparation for mysticism demands, on men's part, morality. 'Virtue is the essential preliminary to the mystic experience.' 'If we would transcend personality we must first take the trouble to become persons.'

#### Is Dogma Dull?

Miss Dorothy L. Sayers, the well-known author, whose Canterbury play, *In the Zeal of Thy House*—a play full of spiritual significance—is at present attracting much attention in London, has contributed a striking article to *The Sunday Times* of April 10. We quote a few paragraphs from the article.

'We are constantly assured that the churches are empty because preachers insist too much upon doctrine—"dull dogma," as people call it. The fact is the precise opposite. "It is the neglect of dogma that makes for dullness. The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama."

'The plot pivots upon a single character, and the whole action is the answer to a single central problem: *What think ye of Christ?* . . . The Church's answer is categorical and uncompromising, and it is this: That Jesus Bar-Joseph, the carpenter

of Nazareth, was, in fact and in truth, and in the most exact and literal sense of the words, the God "by whom all things were made."

'He was not a kind of dæmon or fairy pretending to be human; He was in every respect a genuine living man. He was not merely a man so good as to be "like God"—He *was* God. 'Now, this is not just a pious commonplace; it is not commonplace at all. For what it means is this, among other things: that, for whatever reason, God chose to make man as he is—limited and suffering and subject to sorrow and death.

'He can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself. He has Himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death. When He was a man, He played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace, and thought it well worth while.

'If this is dull, then what, in Heaven's name, is worthy to be called exciting? The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused Him of being a bore—on the contrary, they thought Him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround Him with an atmosphere of tedium.'

The Rev. Binney Simpson Black, a Presbyterian minister in Ontario, writing in *The Congregational Quarterly* for April on 'The Sermon Needed To-day,' strikes the same note as Miss Sayers. This is what he has to say on sensation: 'One type of sermon is generally condemned. It is called the Sensational Sermon. When the nature of the sensation is properly understood, I confess to a strong attachment to this sermon. . . . Too many sermons are dull and uninteresting. The devil of dullness must be cast out. . . . Make way, then, for a bit of sensation in the sermon. It is needed to-day. It always was needed. Can you imagine John the Baptist returning and preaching among us to-day and not producing a sensation? . . . The great sermons of history have been sensational sermons. If they had not been, they would not be on record to this hour. Chrysostom was so outspoken that he got himself exiled three times and finally died from hardships away from home. It needed his sensational preaching in a time-serving generation. . . . The Master's discourses produced a sensation. So did Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost . . . and Paul's sermon on Mars Hill was sensational.

'Someone asked Henry Ward Beecher what he thought of sensational preaching. He explained that if it meant the gaining of a low passing success by mere trickery, he was against it, but if it meant "preaching which produced a sensation," he was for it. But the minister who forgets that the Gospel is the real sensation, and depends upon his own peculiar methods and amazing fertility in conjuring up topics that will tickle and thrill, will have to go one better every week. He will merit the description by a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: "He is like a dog with a can tied to his tail—he has got to run a little faster every minute to keep ahead of the can." . . .

'There is sensational preaching which burlesques the Gospel and degrades the Church. From this we turn away. But we plead for that which is sensational in the noblest sense, reverent, scriptural, spiritual, wholesome, producing a sensation by the power of the truth.'

#### His Friends.

There have been several memoirs of Canon H. R. L. Sheppard and now this month one has been issued by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton—*Dick Sheppard*, by His Friends. 'By His Friends.' There is something singularly fitting and touching in this phrase for Dick Sheppard had a genius for friendship. Canon J. K. Mozley, speaking of this, says: 'My memory takes me back to Carlyle's famous definition of genius—an infinite capacity for taking pains. Certainly Dick took pains; he thought it worth while to let his friends know that he remembered their needs, or something that had emerged in the course of conversation, or some action of theirs which had given him pleasure.' A friend wrote: 'His was an amazing understanding of human nature: it was rooted in an almost uncanny sensitiveness to the needs and ideals of ordinary people.' 'Talking to Mr. Murry once, Dick Sheppard said: "Faith? I don't believe I know anything about Faith, Middleton. But Jesus is my *God*. I don't believe I have any faith except that: but I have a love for men; somewhere in me I have love. I *hang* on to that."'

A story which is not well-known, and which is perhaps the most touching of all the incidents given in the volume, refers to his early days in the Bethnal Green Settlement. 'The telephone bell rang one afternoon in the Oxford House Settlement in Bethnal Green. A resident answered the call, and heard a policeman ask if there was anyone at the House by the name of H. R. L. Sheppard. The resident replied that there certainly *had* been

a head of the House by that name, but that he left some twenty-five years ago! The officer then went on to say that a man had been found dead on the Embankment, a down-and-out, and the only thing on him was a letter, headed with the address of the Oxford House, and signed with the name H. R. L. Sheppard. In twenty-five years of a life of poverty and struggle, this unknown man had thought only one of his possessions worth keeping—a letter from Dick Sheppard!

Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton have played their part well. This is one of the most attractive volumes we have seen, with its pale grey linen binding, light weight, good printing, and its delightful portfolio of portraits. The price is only 5s., and it should be noted that all the royalties are to be paid to the funds of the St. Martin-in-the-Fields Relief Committee.

#### Thinking it Out.

'What is Christianity?'; 'Why should I call Jesus Divine?'; 'Why did Jesus go to the Cross?'; 'What does it mean to be saved?'; 'Why should I support foreign missions?'; 'Does God do anything?'; 'How shall I make God real?' These were the questions that were asked Mr. G. T. Bellhouse, the minister of Regent Square Presbyterian Church, not once but many times, and he found that although there were many books written in theological language for the expert it was difficult to find suitable books for young people. And while most of the larger books dealt with one problem only it was almost impossible to find anything which tried to cover the ground of all the everyday problems of faith. So he set himself to write *Thinking It Out*. In 'The Christian Year' for the Sunday after Ascension we have given extracts from his chapter on 'Does Prayer Make Any Difference?' and these will show how well and clearly Mr. Bellhouse has dealt with the difficulties which arise on this subject in the minds of many thoughtful people. It is a book to be commended for many purposes, but it will be found specially useful by ministers to give to the members of their Confirmation and Young Communicants' classes (S.C.M.; 2s. 6d. net).

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