

## CO-OPERATION IN BIBLICAL RESEARCH

SINCE the birth of THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY in 1929 considerable advance has been made towards the establishment of a Biblical literature, written from a conservative standpoint, but in no way inferior to that which has been produced by the liberal school. This movement has been helped forward through the formation by the I.V.F. in 1938 of a Biblical Research Committee which aims at "the production of scholarly conservative literature bearing upon Holy Scripture", and at "making use of literature in foreign languages which might be made available by translation or by adaptation". Since then this Committee has become the nucleus of a wider group, the Tyndale Fellowship, and Tyndale House has been founded at Cambridge as a research centre, of which a description will be found in the January number of the QUARTERLY.

With these facts in mind the writer of this article paid a visit to Lausanne University in June 1946, in order to learn what efforts were being made in Switzerland in the same direction and to explore the possibilities of co-operation. Amongst those whom he had the pleasure to meet were Professor de Saussure (who has for many years been a corresponding editor of the QUARTERLY, and had just come to join the teaching staff of the *Faculté Libre*) and some of his colleagues, all of whom welcomed the idea of friendly co-operation. Further help and encouragement was given by M. Paul Métraux, then editor of the *Semeur Vaudois*, the weekly journal of the Protestant church of Canton Vaud, by M. Champendal, chairman of the pastoral fellowship of Geneva, M. Lavanchy, pastor of the Cathedral Church at Lausanne, and by Dr. de Benoit, a good friend of the I.V.F. and the greatly respected Principal of the Institut Emmaus at Vennes. This is a flourishing Bible Training School, similar to that presided over by Dr. Davidson at Glasgow.

Valuable advice was also given by Dr. René Pache, the gifted representative in France of the recently formed International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, who from this month will be sharing with Dr. de Benoit in the training work at Vennes.

All these emphasised the need of more books and commentaries in French of a thoroughly evangelical and scholarly character. There are good books written by scholars of a former generation such as Godet and Doumergue, but few modern ones of equal quality. The Emmaus Institute has produced a useful series of popular introductions, *Guides pratiques pour l'étude de la Bible*, including an excellent group on the prophets by Dr. de Benoit, and a commentary on the Apocalypse by the same author. It has also issued a series of guides for Bible classes on Leviticus, Daniel, John, Acts and other books by Dr. Pache. From the neo-Barthian standpoint, a group of theologians and pastors have produced a series which is called *Actualité Protestante*. The latest of these, *L'Ordre de Dieu*, is a symposium edited by R. de Pury, which expounds the Ten Commandments in relation to the Christian life of to-day, a stimulating and valuable exposition, in which the doctrines of grace are firmly upheld.<sup>1</sup> Another series is issued under the title *Je sers*, and includes *Dieu nous parla*, by J. Javet, on the Hebrews, and *La prophétie de Daniel et notre temps*, by W. Lüthi. In addition to these Professor de Saussure has written a popular exposition of the creed, *Crois-tu cela?*, and other books. There are some useful works by Roman Catholic writers, such as *L'Authenticité Mosaïque de la Genèse*, by Père Lagrange. Some of the works of Barth and Brunner also have been translated into French.

In German Professor Wilhelm Vischer of Basel is engaged on a monumental work entitled *Das Christus-Zeugniss des Alten Testaments*, of which the parts on the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets have been already published. There is also a series called *Prophezei*, in which Professor Zimmerli has written an exposition of Gen. i-xi in two volumes, in which the documentary theory is accepted, but combined with a reverence for every word of the scripture as being the word of God which is nothing less in practice than a belief in Verbal Inspiration. There are several other commentaries in the same series which are expressly intended for the use of ordinary church people.

As is natural, the works of Barth and Brunner are widely read and have deeply influenced the thought of the Vaudois Church. Not that all are in agreement about them, for one heard of Barthians, anti-Barthians and semi-Barthians! Under such influences it was taken for granted by those I met that Wellhausen's

<sup>1</sup> See the review on p. 305.

theories were completely out of date, and surprise was expressed that books like those of Oesterley and Robinson should have any place in the curriculum of Colleges which claimed to be evangelical.

In Suisse Romande the word *évangélique* is taken to be the opposite of *libéral*. The former describes an outlook based upon belief in the Bible as the word of God, which requires that its inspiration be taken seriously, and that the acts and message of God in the Old Testament be given equal credit with those in the New. Whilst this leaves open the way to critical investigation, it shuts the door on all that savours of rationalism or humanism. Questions of authorship can be regarded as secondary, provided that they do not affect the inspired character of the writing. As one friend put it, "The first question about any book is 'Is it canonical?' If it is, then it bears the impress of the Spirit of God." Old Testament Scripture should be treated just as Christ and His apostles treated it. They did not ask questions about verbal inspiration, but they assumed its truth, knew it as the word of God, and they revered its teaching. This attitude, described to me as 'Neo-Calvinism', is illustrated in the works of De Pury and Zimmerli referred to above.

Standard theological books in English are reviewed and a few have been translated into French. But the publications of the I.V.F. are known to very few, and apart from Professor Saussure, no one whom I met had heard of THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY. Among the students the *Association Chrétienne d'Étudiants*, which corresponds to the Student Christian Movement here, but which retains more of the evangelical spirit of Mott and Wilder, is well known, and is favoured by the authorities. The *Groupes Bibliques Universitaires*, which are linked with the I.V.F. in the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, are as yet neither numerous nor well known. On the other hand they are vigorous, have held successful Summer Conferences, and their influence is growing. The branches at Lausanne, Geneva, and Zurich are united to form the nucleus of a national movement in affiliation with the international fellowship.

The suggestion for co-operation in the production of Biblical Literature met with a warm response in all quarters, and there is a general desire to know more of the best modern books in English. It seems therefore that the time is ripe to promote this co-operation between conservative scholars on both sides of the

Channel, in accordance with the aims for which THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY and the Biblical Research Committee and Tyndale Fellowship were founded.

Younger men can help by devoting time and energy to study, research and writing; experienced scholars by encouraging such work, suggesting sources of information and by indicating directions in which research is needed; and all by commending the best books and helping to give them a wider circulation. Such co-operative effort, if once established between Britain and Switzerland, might afterwards be extended to other countries.

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