

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

NOTHING that has occurred in our day has dealt so hardly with the old idea of Inspiration as the discovery of the Laws of Hammurabi. Their far-reaching significance has scarcely yet been recognized. But in the middle of a mass of correspondence in the *Record* for 27th February there is embedded an article, which not only recognizes the force of the attack, but earnestly endeavours to meet it.

The article is written by Dr. Dietrich, 'Rektor' of Stuttgart. It was first published in the February number of *Philadelphia*, an evangelical magazine, of which he is editor.

Dr. Dietrich at once acknowledges that the Laws of Hammurabi contain much that is found in the Laws of Moses. And whether Hammurabi is the Amraphel of the fourteenth chapter of Genesis or not, he certainly belongs to an age some five hundred years earlier than that of Moses. Dr. Dietrich places his date tentatively at 2300 B.C. So that it does not seem possible, as popularly supposed, that the Laws of Moses were given in their entirety on the top of Mount Sinai, or even that the Decalogue alone was so given. The very claim that 'God spake all these words' to Moses, looks like an imitation or transformation of the relevant part of the Hammurabi Code. Hammurabi also, and with

much solemnity, claims to have received his laws directly from his god.

Dr. Dietrich recognizes the situation. The Mosaic Law, he says, does not claim to be absolutely new. It may have been given afresh by God to Moses, though it had long been in existence already. Its new promulgation only shows that it 'had become very much obscured in the consciousness of the Israelites.' It had to be repeated in the most solemn manner, in the Wilderness, in order to make it once more the living reality it had formerly been.

The second part of the *Journal of Biblical Literature* for the year 1902 has now been published. Among other things it contains an exposition of the words in Ex 20<sup>6, 6</sup>, which occur also in Dt 5<sup>9, 10</sup>, 'For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.'

The Rev. Dean A. Walker, Ph.D., who contributes the exposition, says that even when he was a child and learned the Ten Commandments, he could not suppress the feeling that God was

an unjust God for visiting upon innocent children the sins of their fathers. He wished to believe that whatever God did was right, and it was some relief to know that His mercy extended to thousands of them that loved Him. But still the lurking sense of unfairness remained. He longed for some explanation that would justify these ways of God to men.

As he grew older he found satisfaction for a time in the doctrine of heredity. He did not separate heredity from God. He thought that, though some children suffered from the law of heredity, God saw that it worked for the greatest good of the greatest number. But when he remembered that heredity is quite a modern doctrine and 'could not have been in the mind of Moses when he wrote the Commandments,' even that poor consolation was taken from him.

Relief came at last from that historical study of the Bible which we call the Higher Criticism. Dr. Dean Walker noticed that the penalties proposed for transgression extend to four generations and then stop, whereas there is no limit to the law of mercy. That is exactly in accordance with the social customs of the time. When a ruler punished, he often included the family of the transgressor in the punishment, and even carried his punishment down to the third and fourth generation. In the Old Testament itself we have examples, like Achan (Jos 7<sup>24, 25</sup>), Saul's slaughter of the priests at Nob (1 S 22<sup>10</sup>), the punishment of the conspirators by Darius (Dn 6<sup>24</sup>), the proposed massacre of the Jews by Haman, and the counter-massacre of the Persians by Mordecai (Est 3<sup>18</sup> 8<sup>11</sup>); and especially the destruction of the House of Omri, in fulfilment of Elijah's curse on Ahab, in which four generations perished to a man, the infant Joash alone escaping to perpetuate the royal line of David.

Why was punishment visited upon a man's family, and even to the third and the fourth generation? Dr. Walker gives three reasons.

The first reason is that the example to other possible transgressors was thereby made more awful.

The second reason is that in those days a man and his family were looked upon as a unit. For social legislation they were a unit. And a man's family included his slaves and even his live-stock generally. It is sometimes said that Achan's family must have been privy to his sin. That is to introduce modern ideas of responsibility into this ancient narrative. If Achan was guilty, his family was guilty. What he did they were considered to do. What he suffered they must suffer with him.

The third reason is connected with the law of blood revenge. If a man is put to death, it often becomes necessary to put to death at the same time all those on whom would fall the duty of avenging his death. The spirit of revenge was handed down from generation to generation. Any member of the family, as he grew up, received his lesson in the wrongs of the family and conceived his thirst to avenge them. Therefore the son must perish with the father, and the son's son, to the third and the fourth generation. For even if an infant in arms is spared, he may grow up to take upon him this obligation of blood revenge.

These are the reasons for which God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children until the third and fourth generation. The passage is highly anthropomorphic. God is conceived as a great Eastern potentate. His ways are the ways of the rulers of men in the days when the laws were given. And it is to be considered whether other language and other ideas would have been as intelligible or as impressive.

The mercy is not carried down to the fourth generation, or rather it is carried beyond it. There is indeed no limit to the operation of mercy. The sin is visited upon the family till in the direct line the family is blotted out. But the

blessing is carried down in the direct line without limit, and it also spreads into all the branches of the family, till every one who claims connexion with them that love the Lord shares in the blessing which love brings.

But still the Eastern ideas prevail. Even the blessing is confined to the family. It reaches all its members, but it is not conceived as passing beyond. For the true translation, says Dr. Dean Walker, is not 'showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me,' but 'showing mercy unto thousands *that belong to* (Heb.  $\text{ל}$ ) them that love me and keep my commandments.'

One of the most urgent needs of our time—many feel it, some feel it keenly—is the need of a new apologetic. While we are writing these Notes there comes a letter from a man who describes himself as the Headmaster of a large Public School and a Wesleyan Local Preacher of more than fifteen years' standing. 'I feel,' he says, 'and I feel very keenly, how necessary it is that I who presume to instruct others, should myself be fully assured of the truths which I proclaim; but to-day criticism, historical, scientific, and comparative, has assailed and seems to have subverted so much of what our fathers held to be true, that I confess I scarcely know what to believe and what to disbelieve.'

He says that the difficulty is increased by the fact that those from whom we expect to receive guidance are at variance among themselves. And he refers to what he calls 'a very apposite illustration.'

Let us repeat his illustration, even though it should give our enemies, if we have any, occasion against us. He says that in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for March, Bishop Ellicott, writing on the Incarnation, uses the words, 'We thus owe the narrative to an evangelist and apostle,' whom he has stated in the previous sentence to be St.

Matthew. But on another page Professor Chase 'lets the First Gospel go.' He says, 'it is critically anonymous. We have no clue to the source of its author's information.'

It is not our business at present to defend either the Bishop of Gloucester or the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University. It is not our business to harmonize them. It is enough to notice that on so important a matter as the authority of St. Matthew's Gospel they hold opposite opinions. And our Headmaster asks, 'Who am I, a mere layman, to believe?'

'What I want,' he goes on, 'is to be fully assured of the fundamental truths of Christianity, and I do not know how to arrive at this assurance. If I attempt to study the New Testament itself, I am confronted with questions of reliable text, of date or authenticity, of what Christ really said and what is put into His mouth by the evangelists, of the formation of the Canon and the possibly varying authority of different books, until I feel bewildered, and cannot find even a reliable starting-point.' It is clear that one of our greatest needs is the need of a new apologetic.

The need of a new apologetic—that is the very title of an article in the *Biblical World* for February. The author is Professor Milton S. Terry, D.D., of the Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Illinois. It comes, not to tell this Headmaster exactly what to believe and what to disbelieve—is it possible for any man to tell another that?—but to emphasize his demand for a new statement of the Faith and to indicate the lines upon which the new statement must be made.

Now, when the new apologetic comes, the first thing Professor Terry notices about it is that it will not pour contempt upon the past. 'In affirming such need of a new apologetic, or of any new statement of Christian doctrines, I desire also,' he says, 'to express becoming admiration for

things that are old and honourable. The great historic creeds and confessions of Christendom are monumental witnesses of honest effort to set forth the very truth of God. Doubtless in many things they all offend, and not one of them, as a whole, is competent to bind the judgment and the consciences of all subsequent time. In like manner, the great apologies of the past constitute a body of Christian literature of inestimable value. The science of apologetics would not be possible as a theological discipline to-day but for the many treatises which first and last have appeared in defence of the Christian religion and its sacred books.'

But why should this generation need a new statement of the Faith more than any generation that has preceded it? It does not need it more. Every generation that has gone before has required an apologetic for itself, and every generation that comes after will require it. There is no finality, says Professor Terry, to the progressive trend of scientific investigation. The best apologetic we can put forth to-day will need as much revision and restatement a century hence as the apologies of the eighteenth centuries call for now. Dr. Terry is very bold, and doubts if even in the millennial time we hope for, or even in the heavenly life, 'when that which is perfect is come and that which is in part shall be done away,' we shall ever reach the point where there will be no occasion to give a reason to every man of our Christian faith and hope and love. For 'it is of the very nature of the spirit of man to search continuously and perpetually after everything in earth or heaven that may be known.'

So it is no use blaming Wellhausen or Robertson Smith: it is no use blaming Canon Driver or Professor George Adam Smith for this necessity that has been laid upon us. They are in the hands of the Time-Spirit. The criticism of the Old Testament is part of the science of history. And the science of history, as developed since the

days of Niebuhr, has virtually created a new method of treating all the records of the past.

When Thucydides set out to write the history of the Peloponnesian War, he knew that it was expected of him that he should incorporate in his history the great speeches that had been made before the war began or during its progress. But how could he or his reporters recollect the exact words of those speeches? 'I have therefore,' he naively declares, 'put into the mouth of each speaker the sentiments proper to the occasion, expressed as I thought he would be likely to express them, while at the same time I endeavoured, as nearly as I could, to give the general purport of what was actually said.' The historian of the war in South Africa does not write history in that way. But it seems unlikely, when so responsible a historian as Thucydides makes such a confession, that the speeches and songs found in the Old Testament are the very words of those heroes and heroines to whom they are attributed. It is unreasonable to expect that the new apologetic should wholly and unreservedly defend their genuineness.

No doubt the plea has been urged that we may use the utmost freedom in investigating matters of secular history, of philosophy, politics, art, and literature, and of the claims of other religions and the character of their sacred books; but that the history and documents of Christianity are not to be handled freely. Dr. Terry admits that the plea is urged in the interests of the truth of God. But he says quite firmly that such a plea can expect no favour with the great body of sober thinking men of our time. It savours of cowardice. It begets distrust of the man who makes it, as of one who is afraid, or at least unwilling, to come to the light lest his claims should be shown to be untenable.

But now, let the need of a new apologetic be granted, in what will it differ from the old? What will it discard, and what will it retain? And especially has the new method of studying the

Bible reached results that are sufficiently agreed upon among its followers, and therefore sufficiently authoritative for the unlearned? Professor Terry proceeds to answer these questions.

It is now quite possible, he believes, to outline the criticism of the Bible which demands recognition in the apologetic of our day. 'One may, with no little confidence, mention three commanding works which embody the latest results of biblical scholarship as represented in the highest seats of learning. I refer to the *Dictionary of the Bible*, just completed in four volumes, edited by James Hastings, with the co-operation of nearly two hundred writers of acknowledged learning; the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, edited by Cheyne and Black; and the third edition of Herzog's *Real-encyclopædie*, edited by Albert Hauck, and now in the tenth volume. These monumental encyclopædias,' continues Dr. Terry, 'are a momentous sign of the times. It cannot be denied,' he says, 'that they represent the critical opinions of the most famous biblical scholars of Germany, Great Britain, and America.' And the point is (Dr. Terry calls it 'a notorious fact'), that on all the leading questions which have agitated the learned world for the last fifty years, such as the composition of the Hexateuch, the authorship and date of the Books of Isaiah, Jonah, and Daniel, the origin of the Gospels, and the like, all these dictionaries are in substantial agreement, and none of them maintains the older traditional views.

It is true that in some instances these encyclopædias contain views on particular names, events, or books of the Bible, which are theoretical in the extreme and peculiar to their writers. These peculiarities, however, affect the value of the dictionary in which they appear rather than the consensus of critical opinion. There is no question that these great works are on the whole representative of modern scholarship, and that they have moved away from the opinions which the apologists of an earlier time strenuously contended for.

The apologist of to-day must not contend for the things that have thus been left behind. He is not called upon to accept all the opinions of the great encyclopædias, but 'he will see how unwise and hazardous it must be to place himself in antagonism to conclusions in which they generally agree.'

Professor Terry then passes to some pointed illustrations.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a certain use made of Old Testament texts which appeals to us otherwise than it appealed to an older generation, or indeed than it appealed to those to whom the Epistle was addressed. The historical occasion, the immediate meaning and application of these texts, was ignored by the writer. It is not necessary to say that they are torn from their context, and used as it suits the writer's purpose to use them. That is not true, and to say so is probably to blind one's eyes to the value of that doctrine of the transcendence of Christ as our great prophet and priest, mediator of a new covenant, minister of the heavenly sanctuary, and author and finisher of our faith, which is of inestimable and permanent value as a contribution to the scriptural revelation of God in Christ. But the fact has to be reckoned with, that the impression which this truth makes upon us is not due to the pertinence of the texts cited in its support. The truth remains; it is no longer disputed indeed. And it is now, when the truth can stand alone, that we have passed away from that method of apologetic by which it was once commended.

Again. The older apologies made much of the argument from predictive prophecy. A school of expositors arose who spoke of prophecy as 'history written beforehand.' They pointed to specific predictions which were literally fulfilled centuries after they were uttered. Much of this manner of interpreting prophecy has passed away. Greater attention is given to the historical situation, the

exact language, and the circumstances and needs of the first hearers.

The 'virgin prophecy' in Is 7<sup>14</sup> is an example. In Mt 1<sup>22</sup> it is stated that that prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Christ. We learn to understand what 'fulfilled' means when we observe that in Mt 2<sup>15</sup> it is said that Hos 11<sup>1</sup> was fulfilled in the return of the child Jesus from Egypt after the death of Herod. The words in Hosea are, 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.' The reference is to the Exodus, not a future but a past event.

In like manner, in Is 7<sup>14-16</sup> the prophet speaks of what is future indeed, but only in the near future, and while the element of prediction enters into it, it cannot without violence be explained as foretelling an event of the far future. The prophet declares that the virgin whom he has in mind has already conceived; she is about to bear a son; and before the child is old enough to know good from evil, the countries of Syria and Ephraim, which were then threatening Judah, should be desolate. The prophecy in respect of the desolation of these countries was fulfilled in the lifetime of the prophet and his hearers; it is most unnatural to say that the other part, the birth of the child, was delayed for six hundred years. St. Matthew uses these prophecies in a way that is quite relevant to his purpose and impressive to his readers. But this use may not be the one that most impresses us.

These examples are enough to show the lines along which, in Professor Terry's judgment, the new apologetic must move. His demand, presented in our bald résumé, may appear too revolutionary. In reality he moves with caution and with reverence. But he claims that reverence is due to the truth as we now apprehend it, not less than to the form in which it has come down to us.

And for the rest he pleads for the apologist. 'Oh for another Joseph Butler, to write a

new *Analogy*, not of *Natural and Revealed Religion*, but of universal religion and of comparative theology, as brought to the attention of mankind by the critical studies of the last one hundred and fifty years! In the light of those studies both religion and "the constitution and course of nature" have taken on a grandeur unseen, unknown before. The new analogy must accordingly be broader, deeper, richer than was ever possible before.'

How circumspect the new apologetic must be—without pursuing the subject, we may touch on one of Professor Terry's illustrations—is brought home to us by the circumstance that the first book looked at after reading Professor Terry's article, touches on the Virgin-birth and St. Matthew's use of the prophecy in Isaiah.

The book is a volume of sermons by Professor C. A. Briggs, D.D., D.Litt., of the Union Theological Seminary, New York. It is a volume of sermons of unusual character. The difficult doctrine of the Incarnation forms the subject of every sermon, and every sermon is so arranged that that doctrine is explained according to the traces of its development in the New Testament. The title of the volume is *The Incarnation of the Lord* (New York: Scribners, \$1.50 net).

It is in the last sermon of the book that Professor Briggs deals with the Virgin-birth. He leaves it to the last, because the idea of the birth by a virgin stands by itself in the writings of the New Testament. It is not Pauline. It is not Johannine. It has no contact with any other doctrine or system of doctrine. It must therefore be treated by itself. And although it is early in time, and comes with as much authority as it could very well come, it is nevertheless later than the Pauline and Johannine ideas of the pre-incarnate Christ and the Divine Logos. For it is evident to Professor Briggs that both Paul and John must have left Jerusalem forever before the

doctrine of the Incarnation by a Virgin-birth became generally known there.

The doctrine of the Logos first appears in a Christian hymn, sung in the Greek congregations of Asia Minor. That is to say, Professor Briggs reckons the fourteenth verse in the first chapter of St. John part of a hymn which was sung in the churches in and around Ephesus while St. John dwelt there. He prints it—

And the word became flesh,  
And tabernacled among us,  
And we beheld his glory,  
Glory as of an only begotten from a father,  
Full of grace and faithfulness.

The doctrine of the Virgin-birth also appears first in a Christian hymn. Its form is—

The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee,  
And the power of the most High shall overshadow thee;  
Wherefore also that holy thing that is to be born,  
Shall be called the Son of God.

It was sung in the Jewish-Christian congregations of Palestine. It was sung there at least twenty years earlier than the Song of the Word made flesh was sung in Asia Minor.

We call this song the Ave Maria, or Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin. It was written by some early Christian poet. It was certainly composed in the Jewish-Christian community in Palestine which was nearest to the Virgin Mary. 'The author must, therefore,' says Professor Briggs, 'have known the mind of the Jerusalem or Galilean community as to the Mother of Christ Jesus. This hymn belongs so near the life of our Lord, and so near the immediate family of Jesus,

that its reliability ought not to be questioned. The Jerusalem Church, under the headship of St. James, the brother of the Lord, would not have tolerated the Ave Maria if it had not expressed their devotional feelings towards our Lord and His Mother.'

But there is another version of the Virgin-birth. There is a prose version. It is found in St. Matthew's Gospel. And although it does not cite the Ave Maria, it presupposes it, giving in prose what the Ave Maria gives in poetry.

Now in this prose version the most strikingly original matter is the quotation of the prophecy in Isaiah, and the claim that that prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Christ. 'The Isaian passage,' says Professor Briggs, 'does not predict the Virgin-birth of the Messiah; the original Hebrew word means only a young woman, whether married or single. But St. Matthew quotes the Greek version of the Old Testament, which uses a more specific term, a term which is translated virgin.'

But Professor Briggs is by no means sure that it is for the sake of the Virgin-birth that St. Matthew makes the quotation. He holds it more probable that the point of the prediction for St. Matthew was in the second line. The words of the prophecy are—

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,  
And they shall call his name Immanuel.

The prophecy is cited, he believes, as a prediction of the birth of the child Immanuel. For Immanuel is translated, 'God with us,' and that translation justifies the name Jesus, which means, 'Jahweh is salvation.'