

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for April will contain the first of a series of critical and expository articles on the early chapters of Genesis, by Professor Herbert E. Ryle, Cambridge.

Two interesting communications respecting "the Spirits in Prison" have reached us since last issue. The importance of the passage is not less than its difficulty; and for that reason it is well that every one should make an effort to reach an explanation which shall be in accordance with an accurate knowledge of the language and teaching of the Word. We shall retain these notes meantime, with the hope of returning to the subject soon.

The *Newbery House Magazine* for February opens with a well-informed and temperate article by the Rev. F. F. Irving, B.A., on "The Attitude of Catholics towards Biblical Criticism." Touching first on the necessity of *some* criticism, Mr. Irving quotes the Vulgate reading *ipsa* of Gen. iii. 15 (*Ipsa conteret caput tuum*, "She shall bruise thy head"). "It can hardly be denied that this reading has commonly been regarded by our Roman brethren as giving scriptural support to much of the more exaggerated teaching as to the office of the Blessed Virgin. It is certainly the ground of the peculiar prerogative attributed to her in the title 'Destroyer of all Heresies,' which is, in fact, merely an extension to times subsequent to the Incarnation of the words *ipsa conteret caput tuum*; and, further, it is the only *biblical* authority for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, in support of which it has been, and still is, extensively

used. Compare, for example, such an admirable work as Schoupe's *Elementa Theologie*, where it is advanced without note or comment as the first and practically sole scriptural proof of the doctrine. And yet not Cardinal Franzelin alone, as Messrs. Addis and Arnold allow in their *Catholic Dictionary*, but all competent Roman Catholic critics, as shown by Dr. Pusey in his *Eirenicon*, on the authority of the learned De Rossi, acknowledge that it must be surrendered as a false reading in favour of *ipse*."

Mr. Gladstone returns to Professor Huxley and the Miracle at Gerasa in the *Nineteenth Century* for February. Even the *Spectator* is amazed at the "elasticity" of which the article is an evidence. It is marvellous. Most of the authorities are examined at first hand, and with a discrimination which means close and watchful study; the points are skilfully chosen; and the whole argument is massive and masterly. On his own ground Professor Huxley has been answered. But we need not say that we believe the ground to be mistaken. Mr. Gladstone seems himself to be conscious of this. "The first question that arises," he says, "in approaching this inquiry is, where did the miracle take place? And I do not well understand how Mr. Huxley, or his authorities, have so readily arrived at the conclusion that the very existence of any place named Gergesa is very questionable." Then, after giving Origen's testimony, he adds: "This statement from such a source, at such a date, appears to require a treatment much more careful than the dictum that

the existence of Gergesa is 'very questionable.' I admit, however, my obligation under the circumstances to inquire also, and fully, into the case of Gadara."

It is not difficult to see why Professor Huxley says the existence of Gergesa is very questionable. No such name was heard of till Origen suggested it, in place of the Gerasa which he found in [almost] all the MSS. of his day; and that it appears in certain MSS. since his day is probably due to his influence. The hamlet named Gerasa by the Lake of Galilee may have temporarily dropped out of sight in his day (an easily explicable event), or changed its name, and when he found that name in his MSS. he could think only of Gerasa in Gilead, thirty miles away—an impossible place. Others had already proposed Gadara (really also impossible, though not so manifestly); Origen suggested Gergesa, which may have been the name by which the real hamlet was then known, or the name of some neighbouring hamlet, or a pure supposition suggested by the Girgashites of the Old Testament. Professor Huxley may therefore reasonably doubt the existence of Gergesa, but not of Gerasa.

In a letter to the *Academy* of February 7, Professor Sayce makes known for the first time the origin of the name Jerusalem. A cuneiform tablet made us acquainted long ago with the fact that *uru* signifies "city," the Assyrian *alu*. Now the latter part of the name has been found in the Tel el-Amarna tablets, in which are preserved the letters which Ebed-tob, Governor of Jerusalem sent to his suzerain the King of Egypt, a century before the Exodus. Salim, says Ebed-tob, was the name of the local deity worshipped on "the mountain of Jerusalem." Thus Uru-Salim, or Jerusalem, must be "the city of Salim," the god of peace. We can thus understand, adds Professor Sayce, why Melchizedek, the royal priest, is called "King of Salem" rather than of Jerusalem; and we may see in the title "Prince of Peace," conferred by Isaiah on the expected Saviour, a reference to the early history of the city in which he lived.

"The Higher Criticism,"—but is it not time to drop that unmeaning adjective? It is true that

Eichhorn deliberately rejected the word "historical," because it did not cover the whole ground. But the ground is not so wide now. The Higher Criticism, as he named it to distinguish from the Lower or Textual Criticism, included in his day both literary and historical criticism; that is to say, an examination of the *language* of the books of the Bible, and an inquiry into their *historical contents*. And for many a day that double-edged weapon was skilfully and fearlessly employed to discriminate authorship, date, and reliability. But that which once seemed to yield the surest results—the language of the different books—has been found deceptive and unreliable. To-day it may almost be said there is no such thing as a literary criticism.

"The Higher Criticism," said the late Principal Rooke, "is not to be evaded or ignored; it has come among us to stay." Already his words are finding their fulfilment. Very little that is first-rate in temper and ability has yet been written on either side in this country, but a great deal of some sort is written every month; the editors of even the popular magazines have discovered that it is a subject in which the public take an interest; and men of recognised ability and fairness are coming forward to guide what can no longer be stayed or stifled.

The most recent and a very notable contribution to the literature of the subject is a little book by Professor Sanday of Oxford—*The Oracles of God* (Longmans, 1891, 4s.). In one of its earliest pages, we find this reference to Delitzsch: "A very significant fact was the conversion of the veteran Delitzsch, who died on March 4 of this year at the age of nearly seventy-seven, substantially to the new views. A man of extraordinary learning and of deep piety, he had all his life long contended for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, until first, in two preliminary essays published in 1880 and 1882, and then in the fifth edition of his Commentary on Genesis, published in 1887, he threw over this, and without admitting any change in his religious convictions he practically went over to the other side." Dr. Sanday is not himself such an instance of conversion to the new views. Never an opponent of the Higher Criticism, for his studies have lain in another direction, he is not now its

advocate. But he recognises "a change of front as to the nature of God's revelation of Himself in the Bible, and especially in the Old Testament, or more accurately, as to the nature of the methods by which that revelation has been conveyed . . . a change in regard to the conception of the Old Testament as the vehicle of revelation," and he seeks to estimate the loss as well as the gain in this change; for "there may be loss as well as gain; and yet I cannot but think that the gain will be found to overbalance the loss, and that all things—even the progress of criticism—still work together for good to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

It is not the Historical Criticism alone that has wrought this change. The discoveries of the archæologists in Egypt, Palestine, Assyria, and Babylonia have done something towards it. "In many respects the result of these discoveries has been to confirm the truth of the Old Testament history—in many, but not quite in all." So Dr. Sanday believes. It is a question by itself of very great moment, and though still somewhat hot, might advantageously be opened up to sight by the men who are competent for it, but it is merely touched upon here. For, in Dr. Sanday's judgment, "of more far-reaching significance are the results obtained—or at least thought to be obtained—from the critical investigation of the Bible itself."

Principal Cave has said in his recently issued *Battle of the Standpoints* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1890, 6d.) that the burden of proof lies with the higher critics; and undoubtedly one of the most urgently pressed demands is a plain statement, if it can be made, not merely of the results arrived at, but of the facts and inferences which are relied upon in reaching these results. But there are those who cannot bring themselves even to look at the proofs. They cannot enter this field, because it seems to them that since our Lord quoted the Pentateuch under the name of Moses, and the Psalms under the name of David, in passing through the gate they should have to trample upon the authority of Jesus Christ. Dr. Sanday believes that this is a mistake, and regrets that the controversy respecting the criticism of the Old Testament should have taken that unfortunate turn. "The true method in this and in all cognate

questions is first, at all costs of time and labour, to ascertain what are the exact facts. When that has been done, the explanation of the facts will come almost of itself. We shall see them in their true proportions, and they will fall into their proper place and relation to each other. It is the reverse of this to take a single text, to draw from it at once far-reaching dogmatic consequences, and so to foreclose by an appeal to authority the whole line of detailed investigations. It is needless to say that even the effect which is sought will not be attained. The investigations will go on all the same. And meanwhile they will be conducted under prejudice on both sides, and when they have reached their conclusion the shock of collision between the opposed opinions will be all the greater."

Still the feeling is there; present to some degree in most men's minds; overpowering and altogether prohibitory in some. Dr. Sanday recognises this; and though he regrets the order in which it has come up, thinks the question must now be faced. Two different solutions have been suggested; and it may confidently be affirmed that no other will be suggested. For it cannot be that after the enormous correspondence of recent months on this subject, a new idea should still be latent somewhere. The suggestions are (1) that Christ accommodated His language to the current opinions of the Jews of His day regarding the Old Testament Scriptures; or (2) that His human knowledge was really restricted on such subjects. It is possible, indeed it is very easy, to bring forward even serious objections to both views. Dr. Sanday, after planting his feet firmly on a clear declaration of the Godhead of Christ, chooses the latter.

There is no English periodical that gives so much attention to questions of Old Testament Criticism as the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (London: D. Nutt, 3s.). Its articles are always well forward on the critical side; they are always perfectly candid, and they are conspicuous for ability and ripe learning. To the current number (published in January) Mr. C. G. Montefiore, one of the editors, contributes a paper of forty pages on the three great continental critics, Kuenen, Wellhausen, and Stade,—all of whom he discovers to be both inconsistent and inconclusive in what they say on

a subject confessedly one of the most difficult in the whole range of the Higher Criticism, the relation between the religion of the prophets and that of the historical books which precede them.

Mr. Montefiore points out that the Higher Criticism finds three salient features in the religious doctrine of the prophets. 1. Their religion is practically monotheistic. To Amos, Yahveh is not only the God of Israel, but of the world. Moab He punishes as well as Israel. To Isaiah the Assyrian monarch is but the rod of Yahveh's anger; the idols are things of nought. 2. The prophetic religion is an *ethical* monotheism. Yahveh's action is governed by righteousness and mercy, combined into a unity that is self-consistent and unalterable. Israel is His chosen people, and or that very reason must suffer defeat and even exile because of its sins. 3. This unique God is to be served, according to the unwavering doctrine of the prophets, on the negative side by a complete renunciation of all idolatrous and superstitious practices; upon the positive side by the practice of social morality. No magical rites, no material representations of Yahveh are to be tolerated.

No other gods but One; who is a righteous God; and who will be worshipped with clean hands and a pure heart,—these are the three leading features in the religious teaching of the prophets of the eighth century B.C. But in significant contrast to these, criticism discovers certain passages in the Historical Books. One of the most striking is David's complaint (1 Sam. xxvi. 19), that if he is driven from abiding in the inheritance of Israel he must serve "other gods," as if he conceived the range of Yahveh's influence not to extend beyond Palestine. Again, such passages as 1 Sam. vi. 19; 2 Sam. vi. 7, xxiv. 1; Judges v. 11, vii. 20, are held to represent Yahveh as taking part in the struggles of Israel, not in an ethical but in a purely natural sense. And then, in contrast to the third feature of prophetic doctrine, the very leaders of the people are said to be represented in Judges, Samuel, and Kings as engaging in superstitious and magical practices, like the casting of the lot and the care of Teraphim.

Now if these things are so, the question arises, How do the prophets know a religion so immensely superior to that of even the rulers of the

people in the previous century? Two answers have been made. One that the historical period of the Judges and Kings was a distinct decline from the purer Mosaic period; the other, that the Mosaic religion was still lower and ruder; that there was a gradual development from the Mosaic to the prophetic era, and that Moses stood upon the lowest rung of the ladder of which Amos stood on the highest. The latter is the answer given by the Higher Criticism of to-day as represented by Kuenen, Wellhausen, and Stade. For Kuenen, who orce (as in his *History of Israel*) held the Decalogue to be Mosaic, placed the religion of Moses on a higher ethical level, and regarded the idolatry of the historical era as due to the fact that the people in general had never learned the higher conception of Yahveh's nature, has in recent years departed from that position, and is now in practical agreement with Wellhausen.

But the difficulties which stand in the way of this theory are very obvious and very serious. As Mr. Montefiore points out, "the prophets never put forward what they have to say as a hitherto unheard of novelty. They appear to assume that what they preach is the legitimate religion of Israel, while the popular religion is an aberration and a falling away. The beginnings of nation and religion are alike assigned to the exodus from Egypt" (see Amos ii. 10-12; Hos. xiii. 4, xii. 14; Isa. i. 21, 26; Jer. ii. 2, 3). "But it is not merely the sudden appearance and splendour of the prophets which upon this hypothesis becomes difficult of adequate solution. We find it hard to realise how the religion of the national God was preserved at all. If, when the Israelities entered Canaan, the Yahveh whom they worshipped was not superior to the gods of the Canaanites, one would have imagined that Yahveh would either have disappeared altogether, or that the monotheistic impulse would have entirely broken down. For the Canaanites were superior to the Israelites in external civilisation. The former were agriculturists and dwellers in cities; the new comers were nomads and shepherds. We know that the Israelites adopted a good many of the Canaanite rites; we know also that there went on a considerable process of assimilation between the two kindred races. Why did not the greater absorb the less? Why did not Yahveh succumb to Baal?"