

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

knew to be untrue. And, besides, we have precisely the same difficulty in certain passages in our Lord's sayings, which imply that Moses was the author of Deuteronomy,<sup>1</sup> which certainly cannot be explained as *argumenta ad hominem*.

The most natural alternative is to suppose that our Lord's knowledge on these points was really limited by the conditions of the time in which He lived. The *mere supposition* of ignorance cannot be regarded as inadmissible, either on the grounds of Christian doctrine or of reverence, when we bear in mind that He declared Himself ignorant on a subject of great theological importance, namely, the time of His second advent. We must admit then, on Christ's own authority, that the union of the Godhead with the Manhood did not as a fact in all cases preclude His ignorance as man. It should, of course, be distinctly borne in mind that our Lord's conclusion—the superiority of the Messiah to David—does not really depend for its truth on any argument drawn from Ps. cx.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Matt. xix. 8; Mark x. 3.

Many explanations have been suggested on theological grounds, to account for our Lord's ignorance. But, after all, is not this the most humble and reverent attitude to take?—to confess honestly that the union of an omniscient Godhead and a limited humanity in one Person absolutely transcends our human faculties; and that we therefore cannot say *à priori* what limitations to the one nature or the other, from our point of view, that union necessarily involved. It is enough for us that there were limitations, at any rate humanly speaking, to the *ἐνέργεια* of the divine nature. This is abundantly evident from the Gospel record of Him who needed to grow in wisdom as well as in stature, and who, in the startling language of St. Paul, being from the beginning in the form of God, emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, and was found in the fashion of a man.<sup>2</sup> What more striking example could we find of the difficulty of conceiving and representing divine truth under the limitation of human thought and human language!

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 8.

## The Laws of the Family.

BY W. ST. CHAD BOSCAWEN, F.R.H.S.

IN Oriental social life as known to us from modern examples, the estimate formed of women's position is not by any means a high one. This is, of course, largely due to the peculiar, and indeed in some measure inexplicable, tenets of Moham-medanism. These are inexplicable when we consider the powerful influence which women such as Ayesha and others exercised in its early days, and of the still more prominent part which women had taken in tribal government in the more remote periods of Arab history. The queen of Sheba was but a successor of the queens of Punt, the 'Holy land' of the Egyptians, whose portrait we find on the walls of the temple built by Queen Hatsepsu at Deir-el-Bahri. So also from Assyrian records we have the mention of the queens of the Arabs. So that the position of women according to the creed of Islam, is certainly not in accordance with the usual teachings of Semitic thought.

In the oldest civilisation of Chaldea we find quite another aspect. As also we do in the soci-

ology of the Pyramid times in Egypt. The mother and wife were held in the highest esteem. This is in some measure, as I have already said, in Chaldea due to the existence of the law of maternal descent, which certainly held good among the Akkadians, but its ready continuance and adoption among the Semitic people shows that it cannot have been entirely strange to them. In the syllabaries or dictionaries we find the name of the mother explained by the title *Ilat biti*, 'goddess of the house,' and this being indeed the position which she held. The tablet of social laws so often quoted has been questioned by some; that it was only a theoretical code, and not that in actual use; but this idea is entirely removed by the tablets found in Chaldea which belong to the days of Abram. These show clearly that most of the laws recorded in this tablet were in force among the people at that time. The position of the mother as set forth in these deeds is a very high one. Although the husband had absolute power to divorce his

wife, he was bound to restore her dowry; but if a woman sinned against her husband, she was thrown into the river. This punishment becomes interesting when we find that in a land of rivers the punishment is drowning, as in the desert, the birthplace of the Mosaic law, it was stoning. It was the great desire of every family to have a male child to whom the estate might descend,—and there must have been many a prayer like that of Hannah (1 Sam. i. 11) offered in the temples of Chaldea,—and above all, the childless woman was disgraced in the community. These views led to the development of two legal acts which do not appear to have ever been prominent among the Hebrews in early times. The first was the custom of adopting children, the other that of the ‘putting away’ of the childless wife. There is a curious example of the putting away of the wife in an inscription dated in the reign of Khammurrabi (B.C. 2230), which is now in the museum at Harvard University. In this strange deed the statement is made that a man marries a woman who is apparently a priestess, and it is agreed that if she has no children within three years she shall return to the temple. The peculiar part of this deed is that the whole arrangement is carried out with the sanction of the other wife—a curious illustration of the story of Sarah and Hagar. The law of adoption was, however, most important in Chaldea, as it was the only means of escaping the full enforcement of the ‘Levirate law’ of the property passing to the brother. Here there is a curious analogy to the child-marriages in England, which were no doubt brought about to avoid this secession, which was naturally very hateful. The deeds, therefore, which we find there are certainly of particular value as throwing great light upon this subject.

The children adopted were usually those of poor persons, and were adopted when young. Indeed, one tablet describes the child as being taken from the mouths of the dogs and the ravens and from the gutter of the street. The man was bound to

find a nurse to suckle the child, to feed, clothe, and educate,—that is, teach it to read and write,—and to give the child ‘deed of adoption.’ In return for this expenditure, the parents were protected by the law as well as the child. I will now quote one of these deeds. ‘Mar Istar, son of Iltani and Nadinat-Sin, have Iltani and Nadinat-Sin adopted to sonship; Akhi-Piam is his brother. When Mar Istar to Iltani his mother, and Nadinat-Sin his father, says, “Ye are not my father or my mother,” he shall be sold for money; but when Iltani and Nadinat-Sin say to Mar Istar “Thou art not our son,” he shall take and carry away his portion as the child of (the parents).’ All the details of the law of adoption are clearly set forth here, and are in accordance with the law. The child is adopted to avoid the property going to Akhi Piam, the brother. The law as to the repudiation of adopted parents was very remarkable. When a son to his father (adopted) says, ‘Thou art not my father,’ they brand him, put him in fetters, and sell him for silver. The repudiation of the mother was even more severe. If a son repudiated his mother, ‘they forbid him the town and drive him from the home,’ and brand him on the face. Perhaps in this branding and expulsion from the community we have the origin of the ‘mark set upon Cain’ (Gen. iv. 15), he having been the first to violate the family laws. Here we notice the greater punishment is given to the repudiation of the mother, and also we find that in the deeds of adoption the name of the mother comes first. The sale of the youth was no doubt to recoup for his keep. The parents could not, however, so easily repudiate an adopted child. He must take his portion the same as the other children of the household. This portion was the just right, and is no doubt the origin of the claim of the prodigal son, ‘the portion of goods that falleth to me’ (Luke xv. 12). This portion was regulated also by law; but as the subject is one which is fully dealt with in the inscriptions, I will deal with it in a subsequent article.