

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

astic church-workers profess their attachment to the specifically evangelical creed. The money-test gives practically the same result: while Christian liberality is capable of being evoked by many motives of greater or less religious value, its amount is on the whole proportionate to the evangelical zeal of the Church or congregation. Finally, not to multiply evidence, evangelicalism was seen to be, or to operate with a force, which was able to mould a definite, strong, and elevated type of character. It is a type of character, indeed, upon which criticisms have been passed, and no doubt with some justification; but in any case it is a

creation which stands high above the level of what is produced by the natural influences of education and custom, and which in its best examples easily stands comparison—in respect especially of earnestness and energy—with the best of other types of Christian character. And in view of this manifold evidence of the presence in evangelicalism of inspiring, energizing, and moulding power, we discover additional reason why it should have widely won the allegiance of a practical people that knows a force when it sees it, and that appreciates a real force in a world so full of mere noises and shams.

Saint Augustine and his Age.

Saint Augustine and his Age. By Joseph M'Cabe.
Duckworth. 6s. net.

THERE is sometimes significance in a book beyond itself. In this book there is such significance, significance beyond its size, its interest, or its worth. It belongs to a movement, and that movement deserves recognition; it also demands attention.

The title promises well. After a few pages, however, one begins to wonder if the 'Saint' printed in full splendour is serious. Mr. M'Cabe has no habit of calling people 'saints.' He cynically refers to Jerome as a 'saintly cynic'; and he publicly separates himself from the company of theologians and 'ecclesiastical' persons of all kinds, including those who give or receive the name of 'Saint.' 'Gibbon,' he says, in a footnote to page 384, 'Gibbon has said that the real difference between Augustine and Calvin was invisible even to a theological microscope. He should have said *except* to a theological microscope. I was once the happy possessor of such an instrument, and I perceived the difference.' In an earlier note he speaks of 'reputable theologians and journalists' as *these people*; and he takes great delight in handling humorously that blessed word 'ecclesiastical.' So the title promises one thing, and we receive another. The title promises a book by one of these ecclesiastical people; the book is written by one who has left

Christianity behind him and wonders that 'reputable theologians and journalists' should count it 'a grave offence against propriety and honour for a man to turn and rend the institution or sect he has just quitted.'

If Mr. M'Cabe has quitted Christianity, why does he write a book on 'Saint Augustine and his Age'? Because he believes that St. Augustine can be detached from Christianity. The Christian Church has claimed St. Augustine as a great glory and ornament. Mr. M'Cabe says that he was a good pagan spoiled. The one blunder of his life was his conversion—Mr. M'Cabe would call it a crime rather than a blunder. Before his conversion Augustine was a thinker from whom civilization had much to expect. After his conversion he became fettered in thought and shifty in principle. Mr. M'Cabe has a genuine admiration for Augustine; it grows upon him as he goes; and he does not grudge the homage that belongs to intellectual and moral greatness. But he hates Christianity; and ever the 'saint's' gain is his Church's loss.

It is not surprising that in pursuing such a task Mr. M'Cabe should sometimes be a little inconsistent. On one page he calls it 'a popular impression' that in the fourth century Christianity's serious rival was the ancient Roman religion.

'Certainly,' he says, 'what was already being called "Paganism" was dying. For many centuries it had sheltered Rome, but corruption was eating into its heart, and the yellow leaves were falling on every side. Either Platonism or Mithraism formed the core of whatever religion the cultured pagan still retained.' But on a later page he contradicts himself and calls the old pagan religion 'the chief rival of Christianity.' Still more forgetful is he in his references to Romanianus. On page 176 he tells us that Augustine wrote his fine treatise *On the True Religion* 'for the purpose of converting to Christianity his friend Romanianus, who tarried in an eclectic theism.' On page 179 he says 'Romanianus declined to follow him into Christianity.' On page 185 he repeats that the treatise *On the True Religion* 'was written for the purpose of converting his wealthy friend Romanianus, who had, we gather, remained in an eclectic frame of mind, favouring Christianity, Platonism, and Manicheism.' And on page 186 he says 'Romanianus responded to the appeal, and became a Christian.'

Such inconsistencies, however, are not so serious or so numerous as might have been expected. It must not for a moment be supposed that Mr. M'Cabe is a loose thinker or a careless writer. He belongs to the new school of 'rationalism.' It has only begun to make its existence known. But such volumes as Mr. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology* (which Mr. M'Cabe calls an 'able and conscientious study') reveal its presence and its character. No member of the old school would have thought of writing a life of St. Augustine; no one could have written a life like this. The inconsistencies that occur are almost all in the description of the character of Augustine himself, and they are due to the effort (which turns out to be an impossible one) to separate St. Augustine from his faith.

It is a curious study. Here is a passage which ungrudgingly gives Augustine his greatness, let us take it first: 'When Augustine had protested, with tears, against his ordination, many thought, says Possidius, that he felt the bitterness and poverty of the position they offered him. We may be sure there was no such thought in Augustine's mind. . . . His resistance would undoubtedly have been greater if the See of Carthage had been offered to him. And when he did eventually submit to ordination, it was with

the one thought that he was entering upon a sacred duty.' That on the one side. That is Augustine himself.

On the other side are the very outspoken sentences—and they are not few—regarding Augustine's mistress. And the point in regard to them is that Mr. M'Cabe never condemns Augustine for this illicit connexion of his early life. Does he *not* disapprove of it? On one page of his book he speaks of 'the peculiar and awful penalty of logically applying the ascetic Christian view of marriage.' In any case, it is not the illicit intercourse, it is the termination of it, that Mr. M'Cabe condemns, and that was due to Augustine's Christianity. For once he is distinctly and even grossly unjust to Augustine, when he says, 'It does not seem likely that Augustine's mistress was a slave; though he tells us nothing of her beyond the facts of her introduction to his home and dismissal from it, after a faithful attachment of fourteen years, that he might marry one who seems to have been richer.'

In short, Augustine deteriorated from the ill-fated moment of his conversion. Of the conversion itself Mr. M'Cabe says, 'They who picture the last struggle in the conversion of St. Augustine, the best known page in his life, as a struggle with sin, miss its real significance.' What was it then? It was simply a struggle as to whether he should marry a wife or not. If he remained a pagan he could marry—the moral choice of marriage *or* concubinage was not in it: if he became a Christian he could not. For Christ had made self-denial the test of discipleship.

He became a Christian. And then: 'The moral reaction of his mind after conversion, and the incessant brooding on the least humane dogmas of early Christianity, perverted his moral judgment and feeling. . . . For the first ten years of his mature life he was impelled by an extraordinary craving for knowledge. . . . Then came the reaction on his humane ardour, and a growing contempt for secular knowledge.' And: 'later, as his mind narrows, we shall find him make truth synonymous with a knowledge of what the Scriptures tell concerning God and the soul.' 'In his twentieth year . . . the stern voice of Paul of Tarsus, denouncing philosophy as folly and the simple demand for evidence in a world of lies as arrogance, repelled him. There came a day when Augustine found deep and accurate science in

Genesis, a "mystic" beauty in the lives of the patriarchs, a surpassing eloquence in the Gospels, and a supreme reasonableness in Paul's demand that we shall close our eyes and obey him.'

Thus Augustine degenerated until, at last, also under the influence of Christianity, he formed a system of theological thought. Mr. M'Cabe does not trust himself to describe Augustinianism. He quotes the description which M. Nourisson gives in his *Philosophie de Saint Augustin*. But when he has quoted it, he adds, 'Each point in that indictment can be rigorously substantiated.' This is M. Nourisson's description: 'Taken literally and in certain pronouncements, though these are usually episodic and have been abused, his teaching destroys liberty of conscience, justifies slavery, shakes the foundations of private property, reduces history to special pleading, enthrones theocracy, and at the same time, in various respects, discourages toil and the love of glory, hampers the march of civilization, and paralyses the energy of all science, especially of the physical and natural sciences.'

Thus wrought Christianity with Augustine. Yet Mr. M'Cabe rarely denounces Christianity. Rarely does he appear as its open antagonist. He strives to make us think that it is Christianity that is bad, not Mr. M'Cabe that dislikes it. In the graphic description of the Eternal City in the fourth century, Christianity and Paganism are placed side by side and there is little to choose between them. 'At one moment the sun glitters on the jewelled fingers and buckled and perfumed locks of a Christian priest, and the next it flashes on the painted face and the gay tunic of a sexless priest of Cybele or the shaven head and face of a votary of Isis.' 'Perhaps it was a day of religious feasting, and they flocked to the temples—Christian as well as pagan—and gorged themselves with food, and reeled with intoxication, in honour of any god or goddess that chanced to have wealthy admirers.' But sometimes Christianity is charged with special and deliberate ills. The decay of patriotism is partly due to the effect of Christian teaching on some of the best spirits of the time. In the moral life the Christian religion was no improvement on the pagan. 'It is probable,' says Mr. M'Cabe in one place, 'that Manicheism did no more than Christianity towards the purification of the empire.' And in another place he boldly states that although by

the time that the Vandals arrived in 429 Christianity had virtually conquered Africa, 'it had not conquered, but had been conquered by, its vices.' The chaste Vandals remedied in a day the corruption that Christianity had failed to overcome. And when he remembers that the Vandals were by this time Christians themselves, he explains in a footnote that 'no one questions that their zeal for chastity was a survival from their paganism.' This was Christianity, and this was Christianity always. Contrary to current opinion the fires of persecution had no purifying influence. 'One naturally assumes that the Christian clergy who survived the last of the great trials of the Church must have been exceptionally chastened. No assumption could be farther from the truth.' And it is not any fourth-century perversion of Christianity that was so evil and so incapable of improvement, it is the Christianity of Christ. Mr. M'Cabe rarely allows himself to mention the name of Christ. But when it occurs it occurs in this way. 'The pivot of Augustine's optimism must be transferred to heaven, and then the earth and all the children of men could be freely handed over to the damnation of original sin. *The ascetic teaching of Christ fully harmonized with this theory.*'

Gibbon was puzzled with the progress of Christianity. Had he read Mr. M'Cabe's *Saint Augustine and his Age* he would have been more puzzled. Gibbon gave reasons to account for it. Have they ever been considered sufficient? Mr. M'Cabe gives reasons to account for it also. They are fewer in number than Gibbon's reasons, but he himself is satisfied. The first is that it was a lucky chance. 'If Constantine had chanced to stake his fortune on Mithra instead of Jesus in his decisive battle, it is difficult to say what might have happened.' That is one reason. The other is more serious—or more absurd. Humanity makes progress. Its religions make progress with it. 'Be it God, or nature, or the world-soul that grows through the ages, that inspires those views of man's life and destiny which we call religions, this much is certain—they improve from age to age.' Christianity beat paganism because it came after it.

One deplorable result of Mr. M'Cabe's dislike of Christianity is that he never speaks without contempt or bitterness of one whom the Christian world has learned to love and reverence even

more than Augustine himself. His mother Monica is 'a simple, ignorant woman,' 'an uneducated woman'; the wisdom that Augustine found in her 'is not impressive'; the Church has 'put many more disputable models of maternity on the roll of the canonized'; when Augustine became a Manichæan, 'Monica was profoundly troubled about the lapse, she seems to have accepted his "companion" without a murmur, but the descent into heresy was an unpardonable depth.' Monica

was the expression of the Church's simplest and sincerest form of piety. That seems to be the only reason for Mr. M'Cabe's dislike of her.

But we must not end with that. In spite of his opposition to Christianity, Mr. M'Cabe has written a life of Augustine for which we thank him. His purpose seems to have been to discredit 'ecclesiastical' Christianity. He has not succeeded in that. For he has shown that Augustine was great, not in spite of, but by reason of, his faith in Christ.

The Code of Hammurabi.

(B.C. 2285-2242.)

BY C. H. W. JOHNS, M.A., LECTURER IN ASSYRIOLOGY, QUEENS' COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

IT is evident that some of the laws in the Books of Moses are very similar in style to those which were enacted by legislators who could scarcely have known the Hebrew Scriptures. Hence, while men have been accustomed to illustrate particular enactments by reference to the legislation of other nations, we have been careful to note that similar laws naturally arise at similar stages of civilization. But, where direct intercourse can be shown, there we are led to suspect borrowing. Now, if we recall that Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees, that the Israelites, on entering Canaan, found Babylonian literary influence in full power, and that the Jews who returned from Babylon must have brought with them some knowledge of the laws under which they had lived in exile, we are compelled to regard a Babylonian code of laws as of the highest importance for illustration of the Mosaic Code.

It would lead too far and anticipate too much now to enter into any discussion of parallels. But we now have a dated code of laws, extremely full and clear, with the certainty that it was known in Ur in the days of Abraham, and still in full force in Babylon to the days of Cyrus. To give some account of this Code may be helpful to many.

First, briefly, as to the monument itself. It was found at Susa by the French exploration in December 1901 and January 1902. The fragments were readily pieced together, and give some 3600 lines of text. This was superbly

published by the French Ministry of Instruction in the fourth volume of the *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse*, with an admirable transcription and translation by Professor V. Scheil. It at once excited great interest in America and Germany, and Dr. H. Winckler promptly produced a version in *Der Alte Orient*. The general impression seems to be that, quite apart from its biblical interest, it is one of the most important monuments of the ancient history of the human race.

Considered as a code of laws, it presupposes a very highly advanced state of civilization. On all hands appear a crowd of officials with highly specialized functions, a settled landed gentry, a populace widely possessed of fair wealth, a vast army of slaves. We see numerous trades, and occupations, a well-established commerce, making distant journeys by land and river, to trade and exchange produce, a regular judiciary, a firmly established central government, with considerable local and district devolution of responsibility. But, above all, we have the duties and liabilities of each class set out, regulated, and co-ordinated. Fees, fines, wages, rents, prices are fixed by statute.

This is not all new. A great deal was known, and more conjectured, from the thousands of legal documents already published, chiefly, of course, on the civil side. Even fragments of the Code were known from Assyrian copies of the seventh century B.C. But the criminal law was little