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But the Apocrypha contains three works of real ethical and religious worth—2 Esdras, Ecclesiasticus (the Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach), and the Wisdom of Solomon. The meditations by the Reverend Arthur F. Taylor, which are given this month, are based upon texts taken from 2 Esdras. The meditations are unconnected, so that an introduction to the several books is not necessary; but it is interesting to remember that the chief problem of 2 Esdras is similar to that of the Book of Job and some of the later Psalms. The main part of the book consists of four visions. But in the visions no perfect solution of the problem is found. There is a contradiction running through them—hope in the world to come along with hopelessness because all men are irretrievably lost through sin. As Dr. Oesterley says: 'Nothing could better illustrate those alternating emotions which incessantly stir the human heart: the voice of Conscience, and trust in the Divine Mercy.' The meditations may be regarded as sidelights upon the homiletical exposition of Scripture.

History and Criticism.

By Professor Sir Flinders Petrie, D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., F.B.A.

We live in a time of far more rapid increase of knowledge than has ever occurred in other ages; an increase which is quite as remarkable in our ideas of the history of man, as it is in the control and the understanding of nature around us. We can no longer regard ourselves, and the world we live in, on the old basis of what was already proved; everything is changed or modified by the fresh range of our conceptions.

We must always remember that knowledge of all kinds has been so incomplete—seeing things, as Paul says, as an enigma in a mirror—that each age has merely framed a view of things which shall suffice to hold all that it knew. Most of the framing may be mere suppositions, but it has had to be supplied to satisfy the human craving for consistency and connexion. This is especially the case in physical things, where even some most fundamental facts remain entirely irreconcilable by our present theories. How much more likely are we to find contradictions when we deal with the complexities of man and his history.

Much, or most, of the framework of ideas, shaped to contain our experiences, being thus arbitrary, it follows that increase of knowledge always involves some rearrangement of what is accepted, in order to include the new facts. We were educated on the notion of the infinitely hard impenetrable atom, and many other absolute ideas on nature and on man. When the atom has now become a whirligig, which may lose and gain properties, and be knocked into something quite different, much else has also become transmutable in our notions. What has been going on in our relation to matter, has also been going on quite as rapidly and fundamentally in questions of mind.

Our vision of the past of man, of the various stages which have built up all that we now enjoy as a common heritage, has been rapidly extending. A century ago the Old Testament was the one window into that past which lay before the age of the classics. We now have opened many other windows, from which we look over that long scene from different angles. It is vastly more complex, more varied, richer and older, than our fathers had imagined. In the past of our own land we were still at Dr. Johnson's standpoint, that no one could ever know more of the ancient Britons than was recorded, and I remember the time when no one in England understood a flint implement. Now a whole science of history has grown up based on the understanding of the tangible remains of man; the 'ancient Briton' has dissolved into a complexity of invaders of all ages, who have poured in, and been fused together. Our vision has been lengthened a hundredfold—our sense of the past is entirely transformed.

What has been going on in our midst at home may make us realize more readily the expansion of our view in other lands, especially in those

regions which are bound up most nearly with the history of our religious ideas. We now look on Mesopotamia, Assyria, Egypt, the Hittites, and Palestine as having their own histories, with which at a later stage the Jewish history came into contact. This wider view must necessarily give us very different ideas from those which we had through the Jewish window. How is all this new range to be adjusted with our former ideas? The case is far more difficult when it touches our beliefs, than when we are dealing with mere matter. The doctor can change his treatment, the chemist can produce his new compounds, without a twinge; but when we deal with things which react on our beliefs the difficulties are far greater. There is not only the shock of change, but also the clearing of our minds, as to whether a fact is only incompatible with our interpretations, or whether it reacts on our fundamental ideas.

In those questions of belief, as in difficulties which are solely material, we must always recognize our limitations of knowledge and of perception, by having a suspense account, to contain matters which are 'not proven,' to quote a Scottish verdict. To keep a clearly accepted suspense account of all questions which we cannot feel are absolutely fixed, is a necessity for solid understanding. We need to have not only inquiry, so as to reach 'wisdom in the inward parts' with Job; but we need also honest judgment in our minds, and 'truth in the inward parts' with the Psalmist. We must fairly recognize what must be accepted; but we should not be confounded by a multitude of possibilities or probabilities, which may soon be reversed by a more just view or by wider knowledge.

Into all this delicate structure of the living mind there has in recent times been thrust a mass of crude theorizing, of mere guesswork, of wild contradiction; this has been in any case disastrous, as it has largely been reversed in each generation, and thus has needlessly confounded and blunted our perceptions. Much of this has arisen from the habit of mind produced by the German thesis system, which requires something new of a candidate, to be defended by dialectic in the mediæval style of the devil's advocate. Provided that some person or something was brilliantly attacked, the candidate's ability was established. This habit of contradiction is the greatest enemy to real advance; it lands its followers in a barren desert of denials, from which no real life can grow. They abandon all cultivation for fear of harbouring a poisonous plant. Now all our practical actions and decisions in life are based on a mass of probabilities, with very few real certainties. So we must be content to accept the most probable view in our working system of ideas, without rooting it out if it can by any supposition be rejected. We often meet with long pages and intricate hypotheses to prove that some conclusion might be wrong, while some other considerations all the time prove that it must be right. This barren dialectic is, in such a case, merely an advocate's habit of confusing the issue, which can be plainly handled from another point of view.

We will now turn to some of the instances of the different kinds of fallacies that are met with in criticism.

Two or three centuries ago even the most far-seeing men fearlessly constructed systems upon the most flimsy material. Sir Isaac Newton, who had a marvellous insight in physical matters, yet wrote a *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, which is wildly far from reality. In the great reaction of the last century, against accepting imaginations as certainties, there was a revulsion to the opposite extreme of taking doubt as a virtue, and insisting on a gospel of denial. Thus every possible and impossible doubt was thrown on the early records of each land; whatever was unknown did not exist, and the very imperfect view of facts that was then before men, was assumed to be the whole of what could be known—it was Dr. Johnson in another coat. The glory of archæology is the reconstruction of an independent view of the past, which, in most cases, gives a solid basis for the traditional and primitive histories that have been transmitted. At present we can see that early records and traditions are usually rather a hazy version of real history, and were not the produce of wilful invention. The many centuries of oral history preserved by primitive peoples in Africa and Polynesia show how much is actually preserved among those races which have not atrophied memory by writing.

But all these considerations of reality were outside of the vision of the purely literary man, who thought that the limits of knowledge lay in the extent of his own skill in spinning webs of conclusions over his imperfect material. This led to the habit of denials, which reached its full scope in so-called criticism. Denial became a passion of the mind, as when Cheyne said, 'It is difficult to

doubt that Shishak and Shushakim are corruptions of Cushi and Cushim' and 'they belong to well-ascertained types of textual corruption.' Long before this there was published the record by Shishak of his conquest of Palestine, yet even this was denied. The passion went even further: I remarked to Cheyne one day how the names of the divisions of Shishak's army, Libyans, Sukkim, and Cushim, agreed with the divisions of the Egyptian army, west, east (in Succoth), and south, Sukkim and Succoth being both written with *samech* and *caph*. He promptly denied this equality, stating that one was written with *sin* and *koph*. On referring to the Hebrew I verified that this was only a case of the passion for denial; the words are alike.

In a later writer, there is the denial of Joseph's marriage to a daughter of the high priest of Heliopolis; it must be 'a later colouring' because the Hyksos did not favour Egyptian worships. Yet a neighbouring temple was rebuilt by a Hyksos king with multitudes of columns and gates of copper. It is only the passion for denial which hides the facts. An extreme of denial is reached in discrediting even the artless relation of troubles by Jeremiah. The prophet hid stones 'in mortar in the brickwork which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes' (the translation 'brick kiln' is not warranted by any of the occurrences of the word, it is simply 'the bricked place'). This seemed an unaccountable description until I dug at the 'Palace of the Jew's daughter' in Tahpanhes. There I found the entry recessed at an inner corner of the fort for protection, and before it was a wide pavement of brick, about 140 by 70 feet, suitable for placing Nebuchadrezzar's throne as stated. Here the local facts, which are unique, exactly agreed with the narrative, yet we are assured that there is no reason to suppose that the prophet had any particular building in his mind. That he was there is not questioned, and he must have been familiar with the great fort, which received the royal fugitives and retained their name to this day. Why, then, can it be supposed that he wrote a description exactly agreeing with the place, without thinking of it? Could the lack of historical sense go further?

In all subjects the most frequent form of fallacy is the founding of a perfect argument upon incomplete data. It is the bane of much social and political argument in the present time. The conclusions are perfect and unavoidable, until some other factors are taken into account, which entirely neutralize, or even reverse, the result. The most glaring instances of this assumption of incomplete or incorrect bases are produced by the habit of 'reading-in' entirely fictitious statements to a narrative, and then arguing as if they were in the original documents. A very reasonable critic stated that the Israelites believed that they adopted circumcision in Egypt. He defended this by taking as a hypothetical interpolation Josh 5^{4-7}, and then referred to classical writers as proving the Egyptian source. The latter, however, naturally came in from the first circumcision being on the son of Hagar the Egyptian. The denial of all the pre-Exodus statements is purely gratuitous, at the bidding of vague surmises, which the critic even states are 'very doubtful.' Why abandon long and detailed statements (Gn 17) on such fanciful grounds?

Another reading-in was the statement that the Egyptian winged disc of the sun was embroidered on the robes of the high priest. There is no trace of such an idea in the original.

By another freak of reading it was said that Moses upheld the brazen serpent at the rout of Amalek. Yet the only reason given is that the common word for a standard or ensign is used for the stand of the serpent. Moses is not said to have anything in his hands, and both hands were uplifted, one on each side. The only purpose of this wilful reading-in is that it contradicts the record of the wandering, by assuming the use of the serpent in the early stages, while it is not described as being made till the late stage of the wilderness period.

Again we read that the altar built of stones on the threshing-floor of Araunah was a sacred stone. This contradicts the statement of building an altar, solely because the critic cannot imagine why the altar was to be of unhewn stone if it were not sacred to begin with. The religious motive is obviously the same as that which precluded the Syrian masons from cutting stone at the Temple; if hewn stone was needful, at least the hewing must be kept out of sight, human artifice was to be ignored. There is no ground for reading-in the worship of sacred stones into this passage.

The result of this carelessness as to sources, and free substitution of guesses and inferences in place of using the documents, is that it becomes impossible to credit any statements that depend on the conclusions of others. All the facts must be given which are involved, and not only opinions—

all the cards must be on the table before we come to any conclusions. The habit of the literary man, of quoting other authors as his sources, has become worthless, owing to the intrusion of opinion in place of fact. We must always remember the verdict of one of our greatest authorities on papyri; where a conjectural emendation has rested on a parallel passage it is usually right, but where it rested on the critic's own inventive perception the later discovery of MSS always proves the emendation to have been wrong. The most able scholarship does not suffice for thinking as a Greek, still less is it likely to make any one able to think as a Jew of the Monarchy or the Exile. The flow of early classical fragments, which have been found in Egypt during the last thirty years, have suddenly provided a salutary check, not only on the corruption of mediæval manuscripts, but also on the past three centuries of experiment in remedying that corruption. If we had a similar supply of early Hebrew we should then be in a position to deal with the corruption of the Massoretic Text, the Samaritan and the Septuagint; as things now stand we have no check earlier than these versions which vary considerably. If we wish to understand the value of emendation, even in a vastly easier field, we only need to look at the interminable battling and differences of opinion about an English author only three centuries old—Shakespeare.

However probable and simple any criterion or method may seem, the necessary test of it is the application to some well-known case. Whatever proposition fails when applied to known times, is worthless when applied to discover the unknown. The only valid sanction for any *a priori* view is to be derived from its always working true when put through known conditions. There have been many instances of the need of this test in recent historical work. An elaborate theory propounded that all the five dynasties across the Hyksos age in Egypt were derived one from another by repetitions and divisions of the numbers of years. But if the same kind of treatment is applied to a later and well-known age, from the time of Shishak down to the Persians, an even better fit of coincidence can be obtained by the numerical game. It is therefore only a piece of fallacious ingenuity. In another direction an elaborate German theory was built up of family convulsions among the rulers of the XVIIIth dynasty; the whole of it rested on the assumption that no ruler ever placed any name but his own on a monument; yet this is flatly opposite to the practice of Sety I. (immediately after the XVIIIth dynasty), who carefully restored earlier monuments in full, only adding a line to state his action. In a known case the theory entirely breaks down.

The most far-reaching instance of such untested theorizing is in the fundamental question of the J and E sources of the Pentateuch. The fact that in duplicated documents there is a difference in the Divine names, has been assumed to prove the converse case that a difference in the names proves a difference in the sources; and this has been stretched to the extent of cutting up single verses into fragments of different origin. The two propositions by no means involve one another. Take an instance of our own times: a Unitarian publication would have few or no mentions of the Trinity, but it would be quite untrue to say that every publication which dwelt only on the attributes of God was a Unitarian work. Take the hymn-book most familiar in the Church of England, and it will be found that only half of the hymns mention a single name out of six Divine names, of course apart from the Doxologies which have been so freely added by editors. What if a future critic on the J and E, P and D, basis were to split up the hymn-book into sources of as many different ages and beliefs as there are Names, and place all those with two or more Names as being due to the fusion of antagonistic beliefs?

When a theory thus entirely fails on being applied to well-known material, it is quite useless and misleading to employ it as a canon of criticism in discriminating the unknown. That the Divine names had very different associations and implications to the Hebrew mind is obviously probable, because we see the same in our own times; and this different applicability has been judiciously traced by some writers as the cause of many of the variations which we see. But this does not involve any necessary difference in belief or in date, any more than such a variation would in the work of a modern writer. That many different documents were compounded in the Pentateuch is obvious, but the discrimination of them must be on some other grounds than that of the Names used.

It is evident that the main object of criticism in reducing the age of documents is to eliminate their claim to prediction or prophecy. But without now entering on the theological question of the

nature of prediction, there is no possibility of denying that such has occurred. So soon as we consider a written document, we are told that it must be dated after the events named. We can, however, turn to a printed and dated document. Savonarola, before his martyrdom in 1497, foretold in 1496 the German attack on Rome which came in 1527, and the stabling of the horses in the churches. When this was printed in 1497, no Catholic could have imagined that in thirty years' time German Lutherans would occupy the churches of the all-powerful see. Yet Savonarola foretold the occupation, and it happened. What occurred in the fifteenth century A.D., may equally have occurred B.C.; the fact remains, however it may be explained. It is a fallacy of criticism to post-date documents to fit their contents.

Another failure of criticism is often seen owing to ignoring the historical or physical conditions which are involved. The familiarity with writing in Egypt is found from very early times; under the pyramid kings every estate had its scribes who catalogued all the produce minutely, and account-keeping was common among foremen, as we see by pieces of registers. This was continued, and, in the XVIIIth and XIXth dynasties, writing was general, and compulsory among officials of every grade. The officers (*shatar*) of the Israelites were literally scribes, and doubtless were such in practice, as the word was transferred to a 'registrar.' They were Israelites themselves, as they are distinguished from the Egyptian taskmasters. There were therefore dozens of writers among the people before the Exodus, and it is impossible to suppose that none of them kept a register after that. The numerical lists of the tribes, however misunderstood by later copyists, are what we should expect to have been recorded. Though there was a falling off in abilities during the rough nomad life, and the troubles in Palestine, it can hardly be supposed that the flourishing kingdom of David and Solomon, in touch with surrounding powers, did not keep the annals, which we find were usual at that time among the petty chiefs of the country. The Amarna letters show how every chief kept up official correspondence.

This familiarity with writing was continued among the Jews; the tomb opposite Cynopolis, used by a family settled there in Middle Egypt, is covered with scribbles of passages of family history going back to the reign of Manasseh. On coming down to Greek times every Jew in business throughout the Diaspora was sure to be familiar with letter writing and accounts, and they were often employed by the Gentiles and officially, as the Apostle Matthew the tax receiver of Herod. We must look at the origin of documents, therefore, from the standpoint of a people accustomed to writing on common affairs, and therefore quite capable of writing a document on more important matters.

Another example of the failure of criticism apart from history is the treatment of the references to the Hittites. These were said to be unhistorical because no Hittite kings could have compared in power with the king of Judah, 'nor is there a single mark of acquaintance with the contemporaneous history.' This reference in the Book of Kings to the Hittites is the best proof of acquaintance with contemporary history. The capital of their kingdom in Asia Minor has yielded up their archives, and we now see that they were of long-enduring importance in Syria, a power which could resist both Egypt and the Mesopotamian kingdoms.

The physical possibilities of a theory should also be taken into account, as they may absolutely settle a question. For instance, though it was agreed that the city of Pithom was identical with the Roman fort of Ero-castra, yet it was argued at great length that this must be at Tell Retabeh, not at Tell Maskhuta. The least acquaintance with the ground refutes all the arguments, as there is not a trace of Roman occupation at Tell Retabeh, and in all the Wady Tumilat there is no Roman fortress but Tell Maskhuta. When the critic was reminded of these facts, already published, the defence was that the object was only the discussion of documents, and not the settlement of history.

Another fruitless theory was started, that the route of the Exodus was direct from Egypt to Kadesh, rejecting the whole of the account of the Sinai itinerary. Yet this way to Kadesh would be totally impossible for flocks and herds, and difficult for men, women, and children. The route given in Exodus is exactly in conformity with the historical circumstances stated, and there is no other possible way which would be as suitable.

It is difficult not to feel that all these wilful alterations, which are without warrant or probability, have their root in a desire to exhibit the skill of the critic rather than the truth of the matter. We may see the same in much of modern art, which

is to show the virtuosity of the artist rather than the reality of the subject.

If we find, then, that the study of criticism is so unsatisfactory, some will wish to take refuge in the opinion of the Fathers, who were in contact with tradition, and with the country, and some of whom showed so keen an interest in places and events. Here, again, we must have some consideration of the history of their opinions and times. There are many among us who confound piety with knowledge, and if a man's character was admirable it is assumed that his opinions were equally reliable. We hear of a desire now to accept authority down to the sixth century. One of the most excellent men of that age was St. Gregory of Tours, diligent, practical, humble, and blameless; yet his judgment was so invalidated by superstition that it would be impossible to accept him as an authority on belief. His contemporary the great Gregory, who may justly be admired for his abilities, yet had the prejudice to abuse the worthy emperor Mauricius and to praise fulsomely the brutal murderer Phocas. Coming a century earlier, can we confide in the judgment shown in the credulity and violence of Jerome, or in the balance of mind which led Augustine to his extreme of predestination? We may love and admire these noble men for their good qualities, but that does not warrant accepting their judgment and opinions, in preference to looking at all sides of a subject for ourselves. If we refer still earlier to the Papacy, the prospect is worse; soon after the settlement of the Church under Constantine there came the fierce fighting of Ursinus and Damasus for the rich prize of the bishopric, on one occasion a hundred and thirty-seven dead lying killed in the basilica—fighting so continual that the whole city was unendurable, and the prefect of Rome left it to the religious factions. We are not encouraged to look for guidance in faith or morals to the example of the fourth century. The first three centuries had their own troubles, in the discrimination of the many ideas which were sought to be grafted on the primitive teaching, ideas some of which did take root in the system. We cannot but recognize that the history of Christianity has been a long course of accommodation to earlier beliefs; and it is the tragedy of all religions that the most popular features in the later periods are the accretions and not the essentials.

Let us close with something constructive, and seek some reasonable course in the midst of the inevitable changes produced by fresh knowledge. No one can expect to study all debated questions to the bottom; there must be for all of us a large reserve in a suspense account. But so far as we can each consider the real facts, rather than confide in the opinion of others, let us take ancient records as in general to be accepted with reason, until other material or facts prove inconsistent. Where there appears a difference between records, or between record and physical fact, let us seek whether the divergence is (1) in our own understanding of either, or (2) in corruption of the text, or (3) in partial and divergent points of view of the same history, or (4) in misconceptions of compilers, or (5) in the original writer, or (6) in deliberate invention. I venture to think that there will be little left over to the last category, on which to accuse our authorities. Such a treatment is equally due to all writings, religious or secular, pagan or Christian.

I have ventured to say all this from the layman's point of view. But I am well aware that the position of professed teachers of belief must be different from that of myself, a professed explorer. They cannot be expected to move except on grounds which are unquestionable. The trust implied in their position, of absolute honesty to those who are taught, requires more caution and restraint than that of the layman. Yet it is needful to face all new facts that are proved, and to deal with them in unequivocating truth. May we all have 'Truth in the inward parts.' To all of us there is but visible a glimpse of the vast stretch of knowledge, human and Divine, and we can only add to our own domain some small fringe of that illimitable 'suspense account' which stretches out beyond all our imagination.