

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

Two books, both dealing with the interpretation of the Old Testament, have been published at the same time. One is the work of an archæologist, Professor FLINDERS PETRIE. The other is the work of a textual critic, Professor CHEYNE. And they differ widely in their methods and their results. But in one respect they agree. They overturn the traditional interpretation of many of the most familiar passages of the Old Testament.

Professor FLINDERS PETRIE gives his book the simple title of *Egypt and Israel*. It is published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (2s. 6d.). Its purpose is as simple as its title. Professor FLINDERS PETRIE believes that Egypt has had far more influence in the making of the Bible than has ever been recognized. Accordingly he begins at the beginning of Genesis and goes right through to the end of the Apocalypse, tracing the hand of the Egyptians all the way. Nor does he end with the Apocalypse. There are traces of Egyptian influence on the Church as far as the middle of the sixth century. In short, he makes his way through four thousand years of history, from 3500 B.C. to 540 A.D., all with the object of showing how great has been the influence of the ancient Egyptians on the Bible and on Christianity.

Now Professor FLINDERS PETRIE has not gone far when he comes to the question of the great

age of the people who lived before the Flood. Professor CHEYNE would make short work of Methuselah and his multitude of years, for he would call in the aid both of folk-lore and the corruption of the text. Professor FLINDERS PETRIE will also find the text occasionally in need of correction, but not in the wholesale manner of Dr. CHEYNE, and folk-lore he is reluctant to open the door to. But he is quite convinced that Methuselah did not live nine hundred sixty and nine years. It is 'alike contrary to all human physiology and experience.' And he says that these long ages are probably due to the omission of unimportant generations.

After a little he reaches another difficulty with figures. It is the difficulty of the number of the Israelites who left Egypt at the Exodus. The number of men is stated in Ex 12³⁷ to be 600,000, besides children and a mixed multitude; and in Nu 2³² it is given at 603,550, besides the tribe of Levi. To those who hold that these numbers are correct, Professor FLINDERS PETRIE has some very plain things to say.

In the first place, he says that the land of Goshen could not have held them. A century ago the population of this district is stated to have been 4000. It is now improved by agriculture and supports a farming population of 12,000 persons.

But to get 600,000 men with their families out of that land would be 'utterly impossible.'

In the next place, soon after leaving Egypt the Israelites had an encounter with the Amalekites. It was almost a drawn battle. Now the peninsula of Sinai, where the Amalekites dwelt, will not at present support more than a few thousand people, and its climate has not appreciably changed. How, then, could the Israelites have experienced any serious resistance from a poor desert tribe whom they outnumbered as a hundred to one?

Again, it is stated that among the Israelites who departed from Egypt there were only 22,273 first-born boys. Let us say that there was the same number of first-born girls. That is to say, there were altogether 44,546 families. If that is so, and there were 600,000 men in all, only one man in thirteen had a family.

Professor FLINDERS PETRIE has a simple explanation of the figures. The word translated thousand (*alāf*), he says, has two meanings. It means a thousand, but it also means a group or family. Hence the statement that there were 'thirty-two *alāf* two hundred people' might mean 'thirty-two thousand two hundred,' or it might mean 'thirty-two families, that is, two hundred people.' Professor FLINDERS PETRIE has no difficulty in making his choice. The column of 'thousands' is simply the number of tents, the column of 'hundreds' is the number of persons. And how many, then, came out of Egypt? Five thousand five hundred and fifty—a number that might have been maintained in Goshen, and that might have been just a match for the scanty population of Sinai.

The determination of the number of Israelites who left Egypt is of importance chiefly to the historian. But the preacher, and even the man of letters, is affected by what Professor FLINDERS PETRIE has to say about the making of bricks.

He says that it was not customary in ancient any more than in modern times to mix straw with the clay in the making of bricks. It is true that straw finely chopped, as from a threshing-floor, is useful to dip the hand in so as to prevent the mud from sticking. It is also useful for covering the lump of clay that it may not stick in the mould. And in these ways it facilitates the doing of the work. But there was no demand made on the Israelites to go to the fields and gather straw for mixing with the clay. All that was meant by the order, 'There shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks,' was that the work would be slower and more difficult owing to the lack of straw-dust coating.

But these are trifles in comparison with what Professor FLINDERS PETRIE has to say about the position of women in patriarchal times. What he says is, that in patriarchal times in Palestine, just as at the present time among the Bedawyn, the head of the family was not the father but the mother.

Now this is not a matter of custom merely. It is a difference of morals. Dr. FLINDERS PETRIE admits that it is 'awkward' for most readers to realize an entirely different standard of morality from their own. But it has to be done here. Polygamy was the recognized order of life, and marriage with a half-sister was correct, as in the case of Abraham and Sarah. More than that, the tie of marriage was a light one. Twice Sarah was taken into the palaces of rulers with her full consent. 'For these Semitic chieftainesses had but little tie to their husbands and were quite ready to renounce them if a more civilized position was open to them.'

Professor FLINDERS PETRIE calls Sarah a chieftainess. It is her proper title, he says, not 'princess,' as the word is rendered in our versions. She was the head of the clan. All the property belonged to her. She had an independent establishment at Mamre. And when she died, Abra-

ham, who lived at Beersheba, 'came to mourn for Sarah,' and to bury her.

The title of Professor CHEYNE'S book is *The Two Religions of Israel* (A. & C. Black ; 12s. 6d. net). Professor CHEYNE believes that throughout the whole of the history of Israel a struggle went on between Yahweh and Yerahmeel. Out of that struggle the Old Testament came. And because each of these Gods retained His worshippers, the two forms of religion persisted side by side. Thus Israel had 'two religions.'

Another name for Yerahmeel, and a more familiar one, is Baal. Now that a struggle went on for many a year between the worshippers of Yahweh and the worshippers of Baal is the usual belief and teaching. But Dr. CHEYNE holds that the struggle was far longer in duration and far more evenly balanced than has been generally understood. The finally victorious Yahweh party obliterated innumerable evidences both of its extent and of its fierceness. And it is only by an unrestricted resort to textual emendation on the part of Professor CHEYNE that the actual state of the case can be laid before us.

Take an example. The great difficulty which the Yahweh prophets had to face was the indifference of the people. There were many Israelites who halted between two opinions. They might even swear by Yahweh, and yet mean much the same as if they had sworn by Yerahmeel. There were multitudes even of the prophets of Yahweh who were no better—no purer in worship, no cleaner in conduct—than if they had been prophets of Baal.

Now, in the story of the Rapture of Elijah there is a name given to Yahweh which is unusual. He is called Ruah Yahweh ('the Spirit of the Lord'). Dr. CHEYNE believes that this word Ruah is a corruption, most likely a deliberate corruption, of Yarham, that is, Yerahmeel. In the earliest times,

he thinks, there was but one God, whose name was the compound Yahweh-Yerahmeel or Yerahmeel-Yahweh. 'One may suppose that when the point to be emphasized was the supreme dictatorship of Yahweh the former combination (Yahweh-Yerahmeel) was preferred, and that when the main point was the energetic impact of divinity upon humanity the form adopted was the latter.' Well, Elijah had probably no objection to a divine duad. What he objected to was the cult of Baal in preference to that of Yahweh. He would therefore be quite pleased to use such a double name for God as Yerahmeel-Yahweh.

Much in the same manner (to take one more example) Professor CHEYNE explains the name Yahweh-Sebaoth ('the Lord of Hosts'). Sebaoth 'must have been' Sibith, which is a shortened form of Sibonith, an Arabian goddess. 'The great N. Arabian goddess was originally worshipped beside Yahweh.'

There is nothing that Professor CHEYNE is prevented from accomplishing by the use of textual criticism. When Moses inquired by what name God desired to be known to the Israelites in Egypt, 'God said to Moses, *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* (I am that I am); and he said, Thus shalt thou say to the benê Israel, *Ehyeh* (I am) has sent me to you.'

Dr. CHEYNE does not discuss the translation. The word *ehyeh* may be 'I am,' or 'I will be,' or anything else you please. He is not concerned about that. He has no doubt that *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* is the corruption of the name of some God, and so—'The current explanations are so unsatisfactory, that I have had to try my chances once more with a keen textual criticism. My result has somewhat surprised me; *Ehyeh*, it appears, should be *ashhur*, and *asher* should be *asshur*. *Ashhur* and *Asshur* are equivalent; the latter is a gloss on the former, and the second *ehyeh*, i.e. *Ashhur*, is a dittograph. Probably the whole verse is rather overgrown; I mean that the

reported divine saying was perhaps this, "Tell the benê Israel; Ashhur has sent me to you."

Now Ashhur is another name for Yerahmeel. And Yerahmeel is another name for Baal. And — Hear, O Israel: I am Baal thy God which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

In his new book on *The Ascended Christ* (Macmillan; 2s. 6d. net) Professor SWETE asserts that the Ascension of our Lord is neglected. His way of expressing it is that there are 'parishes where the church bell is silent or awakens a feeble response on the day when our Lord entered His glory.' And the chief hope he seems to have in publishing his book is to revive 'the great Ascension festival.'

Why is the Ascension neglected? Perhaps it is because the early Church neglected it. The early Church did neglect the Ascension. Or if 'neglect' is an improper word to use of St. Peter and St. Paul, it is at any rate safe to say that they made very little of it in comparison with the Resurrection. And that was almost inevitable.

For it was the Resurrection that surprised them. And it surprised them so thoroughly that they could never again receive so great a shock of surprise. So when the Ascension came, marvellous as it was, they stood gazing up into heaven in mild wonder, until they were told to return to Jerusalem and their duty.

And, besides that, they afterwards looked upon the Resurrection as involving the Ascension. If Christ rose from the dead, He did not rise to remain a little time upon the earth and return again. He rose to die no more. Either, therefore, He must live for ever here on earth, which would have been both inconvenient and unprofitable; or else He must ascend into glory. And so, whatever was the immediate impression, the

Church ever after regarded the Ascension as the natural result of the rising again from the dead. They said little about the Ascension itself. Our authority for it as an event is St. Luke (in the end of the Gospel and the beginning of the Acts) and the unauthenticated appendix to St. Mark. Get men to believe in the Resurrection, the early Church seemed to say, and belief in the Ascension will follow.

But if the apostles did not say much about the Ascension as an event, the fact of it was never absent from their minds. Their Christ was a risen and ascended Christ. Here lies the difference between them and us. 'In the judgement of the leaders of the Apostolic Age,' says Professor SWETE, 'the life of Christ in heaven must have had a supreme value, seeing that it forms almost the chief subject of their teaching.' How little value in comparison must it have for us who so rarely refer to the life of Christ in heaven. When we speak of Christ, in the pulpit or out of it, we speak of His life and work upon earth.

There are therefore peculiar and immediate advantages in the study of the Ascension. In the first place, a study of the Ascension and the ascended Christ is the best medicine for a mind diseased with materialism. In St. Paul's day faith in the ascended Christ was the best remedy he could think of for the sensuality which he encountered in the Greek cities of Asia Minor. 'Seek the things which are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth; for your life is hid with Christ in God; mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.' These grosser vices have less attraction, says Professor SWETE, for our age. But the downward pressure of external things remains. 'At a time when life is being reduced to a complex machinery for the production of wealth, there is ample room for a doctrine which points men persistently to an order of realities which are at once present and eternal;

a world which already surrounds us and waits only for the coming of the Lord to be manifested in overwhelming power.'

Then there is the tendency in our day to minimize the Person and Work of Christ. Our attention is directed to the records of His life on earth. He is the Jesus of history. His Person is levelled down to that of ordinary humanity. It is even claimed that in being merely a man He becomes the better Saviour. His sinlessness is first discussed and then declared to be beneath discussion. How could a man be sinless? But the Christ of glory, the 'glorified Christ of the Epistles and Apocalypse,' is not a mere man. When we consider the heavenly vision which St. Paul offers for our thought, we see that it is as suicidal as it is arbitrary to leave the Christ of the New Testament lying in Joseph's tomb. The Christ of St. Paul and of St. John is a personality, pre-existent and post-existent, a personality persisting through all experiences, and in the fulness of His personality at once our example and our redeemer.

And as with His person, so with His work. The Ascension has lifted the work of Christ to a plane immeasurably higher than that of the earthly life, high as that stands above the lives of other men, and has extended it to far wider fields of energy. Yet the work is homogeneous as the Person. There is no longer any such alternative as 'Jesus or Christ.' The Christ of the Epistles, in Person and in work, is the Jesus of the Gospels. The study of the Ascension is the discovery of the man Christ Jesus.

A little book has been published anonymously by Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall, & Company, under the title of *The Knowledge of Christ*. By some miracle it may catch the attention of the Church and do the work it is fitted to do. Almost certainly it will be swept off the bookseller's counter within the next three months, and never again be heard of.

'The Knowledge of Christ: Being Meditations and Devotional Thoughts on Philippians 3¹⁰: That I may know him.' That is the whole title, and there is no great promise in that. But the other title—the bastard title, as the printers call it—'That I may know him: The Gospel for the Christian according to St. Paul'—there is a certain arresting confidence in that. Is that the gospel according to St. Paul? Is there a gospel for the Christian at all?

But if there is confidence here, turn the page. '*That I may know him.*' In words few and simple there is here summed up the gospel for the Christian according to St. Paul. Its first step and its last—its lowland, upland, highland, and mountain-top—its raindrops, rivulets, and vast expansive oceans are knowledge of the Son of God. Its simplest lesson, its profoundest truth, its last thought, its gentlest beam of light, as its fullest glory, are knowledge of the Son of God. Its Alpha and Omega, its centre and substance, its secret, soul, and consummation are knowledge of the Son of God. Its earliest touch and trace of grace, its progress and maturity, the least, largest, best, and fullest God can bestow, are all alike personal, heart-felt and soul-felt knowledge of the Son of God.'

So this anonymous author believes that he has a topic. If only—and this is the first and last criticism—if only he had made a book of it. This is little more than a pamphlet, with a pamphlet's price no doubt. If only he had made a book of it, every sentence a paragraph, every paragraph a page, and every page a chapter. Here the thought is packed as for the discovery of the South Pole. And we can do nothing with it except helplessly transcribe a section.

'That I may know Him. It was no mere empty, fervent longing, no spiritual dream for ever being dreamed. St. Paul knew Him: possibly in light and energy of clear full understanding as no

other, certainly as very few. He knew Christ with the knowledge that diffused itself in life and character, that coloured and controlled not only his spirit and being, but his speech and the very incidents of his life. No artist, attempting miniature with Christ as the model, had made it so true and perfect, and yet disguised it so artfully with separate person. No artist, portraying close resemblance in the Apostle, had maintained such spiritual identity under such varied distinctions. "They followed vanity and became vain" (2 K 17¹⁵). St. Paul copied his Master, and became a copy of that Master, strict and detailed, yet free and natural. According to the verity of His own pattern, the Son of God lived once more in the Apostle with duplicate of spirit, and again with duplicate of very letter, so that the Apostle's life resolves naturally into the dual life of Paul and his Master, or rather, perhaps, declares itself in all simplicity the single life of the Son of God—according to his own great confession—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

'Hear the great soul-utterings of the twain, and note the echoings of the One in the words of the other.

"I am come in my Father's Name."

"For me to live is Christ."

"I live by the Father."

"I live by the faith of the Son of God."

"The Son of man came to minister."

"I have made myself servant to all."

"I lay down My life for the sheep."

"I could wish that myself were accursed . . . for my brethren."

"The zeal of Thine house, hath consumed Me."

"I laboured more abundantly than they all."

'Again, what like-mindedness, what like-heartedness, and what kinship of terms in which they are declared!

"And Jesus went before them; and they were amazed."

"What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die."

"Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves."

"Christ is preached, and I therein rejoice."

"Who being in the form of God . . . made Himself of no reputation."

"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

"The Son of God must suffer many things."

"Bonds and afflictions abide me."

'Such oneness of life could but mean inevitably a corresponding oneness of fortune, and with due fidelity "the fellowship of sufferings" is both in parallel lines and parallel language.

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master," said the Lord.

"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," said St. Paul.

"Then took they up stones to cast at Him."

"Having stoned Paul."

"The band took Jesus and bound Him."

"They bound him with thongs."

"Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him."

"Five times received I forty stripes save one."

"One of the officers struck Jesus."

"The High Priest commanded to strike him."

"He is beside Himself." "Thou . . . art mad."

"Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

"We found this fellow perverting the nation. He stirreth up the people."

"We found this man a pestilent fellow . . . a mover of sedition."

"He was despised and rejected of men."

"We are made as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things."

"All the disciples forsook Him."

"All men forsook me."

"Away with Him. Crucify Him."

"Away with him. It is not fit that he should live."

'A more beautiful or marvellous illustration could scarcely be of the absolute oneness and consistent action of laws in the spiritual world, nor could we imagine lines so wondrously coincident closing in more perfect unison.

"I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course I have kept the faith."

The Elder Brother.

BY PRINCIPAL THE VERY REV. ALEXANDER STEWART, D.D., ST. ANDREWS.

'Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing,' etc.—LUKE XV. 25-32.

IF we consider carefully the parables contained in this chapter—the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Lost Son—we shall find that they form a climax, the highest point of which is reached in the portion which tells of the Elder Brother. It may be that in general interest and attractiveness the simple and beautiful narrative of the son that wandered surpasses both what precedes and what follows after. The little drama of human life with its four stages—the departure, the repentance, the return, and the joyful reception—seems complete in itself, and the ordinary reader probably feels that the last word has been said, and that the verses referring to the elder brother touch with a gloom at once unexpected and unwelcome the bright picture of the festivities which celebrated the wanderer's return. Yet a closer study of the relation in which the several parts of this chapter stand to one another will make it clear, I think, that here we have not *three* parables only, but practically *four*; that when Christ said, 'A certain man had two sons,' He was deliberately leading up to the Parable of the Elder Brother not as a mere appendix to the touching story of the Younger Son; that for His purpose, for the enforcement of that lesson He designed to teach, this last part was the essential one, that here lies the nerve and pith of the whole argument.

For note how the Parable of the Prodigal Son is itself an advance upon those which precede it. The Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Money are mere material possessions, and the only point which they illustrate is, that the joy occasioned by their recovery is naturally so much greater than

the pleasure of merely possessing them, in consequence of the doubt which had for a time rested upon their fate. In both cases, however, the wandering, the disappearance, is purely physical, though it is obviously easy to recognize in them symbols of that moral alienation which is seen in the third parable accompanying and occasioning the physical departure. With this, therefore, the question is raised to a higher level. The interests of kinship supersede those of mere ownership, and as the moral had preceded the bodily separation, so a moral return precedes and brings about the actual return; the Prodigal came to himself before he came to his father. Nor was the cause of his father's grief merely that he had lost sight of his son, but that he had lost his affection and confidence; as, on the other hand, it was not his bodily return so much as his return to the duty and the feelings of a son which gave birth to such transports of joy. Here, therefore, on the analogy of the former parables, this might have taken end,—'They began to be merry,' corresponding to the 'Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' But there is a further refinement possible. The problems which Jesus has laid before His hearers have an increasing degree of difficulty. The spiritual faculty trained and disciplined by the solution of the lower is led on towards the higher: it first attempts the separation which is wholly outward; then the outward in combination with, and as an index to, the inward; and, lastly, that which is *altogether inward*. There could be no doubt about the wandering of the Sheep, the losing of the Coin; there could be no doubt about the alienation of the Prodigal, for had he not gathered all together, and taken his