

Let us now consider the data furnished by the Jahwistic narrator. We note at the very outset that he concerns himself exclusively with the fortunes of Abraham and his clan, without bringing these into any connexion with the history of the land. The aid given by Abraham against the Elamites is unknown to the Jahwist. All that we learn from him regarding the further experiences of Abraham is confined, apart from what is of a purely family character, to two notices, which certainly deserve our attention. Abraham is said to have been the founder of the Jahweh sanctuary at Beersheba (Gn 21³³), and the Aramæans are viewed as racially connected with the Amorites, their tribal father Kemuel being represented as the third son of Abraham's brother Nahor, who according to E remained behind in Haran (Gn 22²²).

If we once more bring together what the Jahwistic narrator has handed down to us about the history of Abraham, and compare his statements with those of the monumental sources as yet ascertained, we may answer the three questions with which we started in some such way as the following:—At the time of the Elamite supremacy (c. 2280 B.C.) over Mesopotamia and Syria the tribe of Terah, which long before had migrated from S. Arabia to the kingdom of Ur, left their pasture-grounds on the right bank of the Eu-

phrates belonging to this kingdom, and under the leadership of their chief Abraham, betook themselves in the first instance to the north, where in the district of Haran they encountered the racially connected Aramæan tribe of Nahor, but pressed on from thence to S. Palestine, where amongst the Amorites, who had affinities with them in descent and religion, they found sufficient pasturage for their flocks, and themselves met with a friendly reception. They helped to free the land from the Elamite yoke, the consequence of which was to bring to an end the political supremacy of S. Mesopotamia in Palestine, which had existed for centuries. Among the Amorites the monotheistic conception was still traceable, and Abraham, who had remained true to the original S. Arabian monotheism, set up at Beersheba a sanctuary for the God Jahweh, who is first met with in S. Arabia. Abraham and his descendants worshipped their God Jahweh according to the traditional simple form, but their neighbours gradually adopted the native polytheism with its animistic tinge, the consequence being that the Terahites began to exhibit a marked distinction from the racially allied Amorites.

Thus far the Jahwistic tradition as to the first representative of the people afterwards known as Israel.

(To be continued.)

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF GALATIANS.

GALATIANS V. 6, VI. 15.

'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love.'

'For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature' (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

'In Christ Jesus.'—This means more than in Christ's religion. We had the phrase in chap. 3²⁸, 'All ye are one man in Christ Jesus.' It occurs frequently in St. Paul's writings; remarkable instances are supplied in Ro 16¹⁷, 'who were in Christ before me'; 16¹¹, 'which are in the Lord'; 1 Co 1³⁰, 'of him (i.e. of God) are ye in Christ Jesus.' It is perhaps best illustrated by our Lord's own Parable of the Vine in Jn 15¹⁻⁴. The spiritual union with Christ therein portrayed is maintained and operative

through the action of the soul habitually cleaving to and depending upon him, and constantly receiving from him responsive gifts of spiritual vitality and power.—HUXTABLE.

'Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision.'—We should not fail to note the perfect fairness of this. Freedom from Judaic observances is in itself no better than the keeping of them. Those who simply boast of their independence of all Judaic conditions meet here with a deserved rebuke. This form of language may have been very customary with St. Paul; for we find it three times, though in each case the sentence has a different conclusion.—HOWSON.

It is interesting to note the different ways in which the sentence is completed—

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but	{	Faith which worketh by love (chap. 5 ⁶). A new creature (chap. 6 ¹⁵). Keeping the commandments of God (1 Co 7 ¹⁹).
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The first is an analytical statement of the process which takes place in the Christian; the second is the state resulting from that process; the last is the visible sign and expression of the presence of that state.—ELLCOTT.

'Faith working through love.'—The Greek verb (*ἐνεργουμαι*) here translated 'working' or 'operative,' has, in the New Testament, always the middle sense. The passive rendering 'wrought' or 'made energetic through love' must be abandoned.—SCHAFF.

THESE words bridge over the gulf which seems to separate the language of St. Paul and St. James. Both assert a principle of practical energy, as opposed to a barren, inactive theory.—LIGHTFOOT.

FAITH in Christ, the devoted attachment to Christ, is the great motive power, the source or mainspring of action; and the law by which that action is regulated is the law of love. Faith makes a man seek to do the will of Christ; love tells him what that will is. It is clear that the faith thus described by St. Paul does not stop short in a mere head notion, and so is in no conflict with the teaching of St. James.—ELLCOTT.

'A new creature.'—The Greek may mean the act of creation, or the thing created. Here the latter, as the result of a creating act of God. 2 Co 5¹⁷, 'If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things have passed away; behold, they are become new.' The phrase 'new creature' was common among Jewish writers to designate a moral change or conversion to Judaism; but in Paul it has a far deeper spiritual meaning.—SCHAFF.

METHODS OF TREATMENT.

I.

The New Creature.

By the Most Rev. the Archbishop of Canterbury.

This doctrine is really the same as that taught to Nicodemus. He wished to be a half-disciple. Our Lord tells him that half-obedience is not enough, he must undergo an entire change. While half-obedience is better than none, it may be said to avail him nothing without a change of nature, which our Lord calls being 'born again,' and St. Paul calls a 'new creature.'

A man may do much that is right from natural impulse or want of temptation. What is good in him is indeed a precious gift of God. But though natural goodness may keep him right on some points, nothing can make the life good as a whole but a principle of right. The possession of this principle St. Paul calls a 'new creature.' Only this will carry us through disagreeable duties—not the resolution to do this or that, but the principle of pleasing our Lord in all.

Apply this to the things indifferent, not prescribed by law, which are the test of our lives. There you see a man's true character, whether if

there had been no law he would have made a law for himself, and that would have been God's law. For true obedience, though not commanded, would still do the same for love of God.

Again, in our repentance. It is not enough to repent of and resolve to avoid a particular fault. That will be found impracticable. The whole heart and will must be given up to God. There is but one way to serve Him—to serve nothing else. It is a hard lesson to learn that we cannot serve two masters. We are unwilling to surrender ourselves wholly to God. But the earlier we begin to learn it, the easier it is, and the more we gain. For if we try to do right merely by avoiding this or that fault, we find we are not strong enough and our labour is all thrown away. We have begun the lesson at the wrong end in not first making God's will our aim, and trying to please Him by the whole character of our life.

Nor is this all. That man alone who once for all turns his face to God not only has God's aid but feels and knows it. Many are unconsciously being educated by God and drawn to Himself. How much better to know you are led, to obey like a child, to repent like a child, and always to be conscious of the Father's presence. Thus it is with those who give God not service so much as themselves, and strive not to reconcile life to duty, but to make duty the one inspiration of life.

II.

Formalism and Liberalism.

By the Rev. E. G. Murphy.

St. Paul's message was not for one generation only. He spoke to the needs which last through all conditions and times. Because men are burdened now with the same errors as then, what helped them brings help to us. Because he spoke to evil native in heart and will, his spirit is ever the contemporary of the soul.

These words on the distinctive ordinance of a peculiar people sound like the words of a day. But the ordinance stands not for one religious act but for a religious tendency of thought, a certain kind of religious life. It refers to a character rather than a deed,—a character to which conventional rectitude and ceremonial consistency are essentials. This is in the world to-day, and therefore the apostle writes for us.

But he speaks of another tendency, and points

the failure of another character. All were not on the side of conformity to ordinances. Many had 'given up all that.' Because circumcision was unavailing, they were making too much of uncircumcision. But St. Paul says, 'Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.' Uncircumcision in itself is also unavailing. There is a profitless freedom as well as a profitless ritual. The 'new creature' is neither the child of law nor of liberty. The old character might be defined in relation to such things, but the new man in Christ is apart from them. His watchword is neither 'circumcision' nor 'uncircumcision,' but 'Christ.' Power lies not in the newness, but in the *life* and character, a character formed neither by law nor lack of law, but in companionship with the risen Christ.

The principle applies beyond the precincts of religion. In secular government whole centuries have dwelt on the ideas of order and obedience rather than of liberty and privilege. They have sought the good of the people by restraint and censorship. But circumcision was unavailing. Now men everywhere preach liberty and freedom in every department of life. But we see that the new way with all its newness and truth has not fulfilled its promise. For the Christian ideal there must be a 'new creature.' Even uncircumcision is not an end in itself. Freedom is not character, only the opportunity of character. The ideal of liberty has dawned on the world. But, as when the sun rises, the day it brings is just man's opportunity for work. Yet men have given more talk to the daylight than to its use. They have preached liberty as a final good, like people going about with tom-toms, declaring that the sun is up. What shall we do with the opportunity?

Again in our intellectual life a new way has come. We are free from the traditionalism of the past; we talk only of progress and development. What are we making of freedom? A free mind which chooses the way of the fool or the brute is all the more to be pitied. If your mind is free it is the direct historical result of a certain conception of man, and that conception is the result of the life and influence of Christ. But He made no man free for freedom's sake; for man's sake He made freedom. Therefore, because you are free you are the more responsible. If, being freer than your fathers, you have given less interest and concern to the problems of duty and the soul, you have

lost your opportunity and betrayed yourself. If you have thought the more deeply and reverently and diligently of the things of life, present and to come—that is the new creature in the mind.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

As a whole the letter is an eloquent and powerful claim for freedom of life, freedom of thought, freedom of the individual from external restrictions and regulations, freedom for all to work out their own salvation and develop their own nature; 'Ye were called for freedom' (v.¹³). And towards the conclusion this turns to a glorification of love. Their freedom is freedom to do right, not freedom to do everything; 'the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (v.²⁴). Selfishness, *i.e.* 'the flesh,' is the absolute antithesis of love, *i.e.* 'the Spirit'; and the receiving of Christ is 'crucifying the flesh with the passions thereof' (v.²⁴). The essence of the true life lies neither in observing the Law, nor in being above the Law, but in building anew one's nature (v.¹⁰).—W. M. RAMSAY.

'CIRCUMCISION or uncircumcision?' was the question. 'Circumcision!' shouted the Jew, zealous to bring the Gentile world within the pale of the Mosaic legislation. 'Uncircumcision!' shouted the Gentile, seeing that the family of God was wider than the family of Jacob. 'Circumcision!' cried the Jew, looking back, as he did, upon the splendid ritual of the Mosaic Church, upon the splendid achievements of Hebrew history. 'Uncircumcision!' cried the Gentile, looking back, as he did, upon the long array of great names and famous deeds, upon the width and length of the new world which had to be won, upon Christ who had made them free. 'Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision!' cried St. Paul, 'but a new creature.'—E. HATCH.

A New Creature.—When Dilawar Khan, once a robber of the Khyber Pass, became a Christian, he joined the British army, and was present at the capture of Delhi. The guide corps, to which he belonged, freely grasped at the spoil, and enriched themselves as they could. But the new faith had quite supplanted the instincts of the robber. Whilst his companions stripped the trembling vanquished, and compelled the discovery of their treasures, he refused to touch an atom of the spoils of war.

MEN have fabled fancies of a fountain in which whoever bathed grew young again, his limbs restored to elasticity, and his skin to clearness. To the old world it was as good a thing as priests could promise to the good, that when they died, the crossing of that dark and fateful river should be the blotting out for ever from the soul of all memorials of the past. But God gives us a better mercy than the mercy of forgetfulness. The Lethe which obliterates from recollection a sinful past is a poor hope compared to the blood of cleansing, which permits us to remember sin without distress, and confess it without alarm. Or what would physical rejuvenescence be, compared to the 'washing of

regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,' the rejuvenescence of the inner soul-life, the life of life made young? With a new self, cut off from this dreadful moral continuity with the past, eased of one's inheritance of self-reproach, and made quick within with the seed of a new future, all things seem possible to a man. The whole world changes when we change. Old things pass away; all things become new.—J. OSWALD DYKES.

A MAN may work brass to great beauty and perfection, but no artificer can work it into gold. To change our natures must be the work of Omnipotence. The change required to make us fit to enjoy heaven is not like that of the snake which has cast its skin, and yet remains a reptile still, it is the change of the caterpillar when it dies, and its crawling life ceases; but from its body rises the butterfly, a new creature with a new nature. To hew a block of marble from the quarry and carve it into a noble statue; to break up a waste wilderness and turn it into a garden of flowers; to melt a lump of ironstone and forge it into watch-springs;—all these are mighty changes. Yet they all come short of the change which every child of Adam requires, for they are much the same thing in a new shape; but man needs a change as great as a resurrection from the dead. He must become a new creature.—J. C. RYLE.

Faith working through Love.—On the occasion of a great public calamity which happened during the third century, Dionysius writes as follows: 'After a breathing-time of short duration, which both they and we enjoyed, we were smitten with the plague, of all dreadful things the most dreadful to the heathen, but which to us was a special trial and exercise of faith. A vast number of our brethren, out of affection for their friends and neighbours, did not spare themselves in their attentions to the sick, but, un-

mindful of the danger visited them, perseveringly waited upon and ministered to them in Christ, and at last were happy to die along with them. Many lost their lives in the room of those who, by their care, had been restored to health. In this way the worthiest of the brethren made their exit from the world by a death which, as it proceeded from ardent piety and strong faith, seems in no degree inferior to martyrdom. Some also, who after closing the mouth and eyes of their dying brethren, had carried them away upon their shoulders, washed their bodies, and wrapped them in their shrouds, themselves experienced ere long the same fate. Totally different was the conduct of the heathen. They drove out the sick on the appearance of the first symptom of infection, abandoned their dearest friends, cast them when half-dead upon the street, from apprehension of the spread of the fatal distemper, and yet could not escape its attacks.'—A. THOLUCK.

Sermons for Reference.

- Brook (S. A.), *Spirit of the Christian Life*, 109.
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 Harcourt (W. V.), *Sermons*, 86.
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The Iranian Background of Tobit.

BY THE REV. J. H. MOULTON, M.A., LATE FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

DR. RENDEL HARRIS has been lately showing, in *The Story of Ahiqar*, how a Semitic folk-lore story leaves traces on *Tobit*. There is a great deal of folk-lore underlying this romance, as I hope to show. A certain amount of Iranian influence upon the book has long been admitted, since the recognition of Asmodæus as the Avestan demon *Aēšma*, and the action of the story is connected with Media and especially 'the Zoroastrian Ragha.' Before indicating other Iranian features I will describe my theory of the book, and then fit the various items into it one by one. We have taken one step back in the history of the book when we have recognized with Dr. Harris¹ that there was

¹ *Am. Journ. of Theol.* 1899, p. 541 ff.

an original Aramaic, of which the Sinaitic LXX has preserved primitive features that have been edited away in the Vatican to a considerable extent. Let us take another step, this time out of Jewish territory altogether.

Tobit is Median folk-lore. In Media the Semitic and Iranian elements meet:² the Ahiqar points may very well have belonged to the earlier stage of development. A Jew resident in Media found a romance, written perhaps in Old Persian, which he rewrote in Aramaic, accommodating it throughout for the edification of his co-religionists. He has

² For a discussion of the view that the Medes were essentially Iranian, see my notice of Tiele's book on Iranian Religion in the March issue of the *Critical Review*.