

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE American Expedition has returned from Babylonia, bringing its 'finds' with it, and Professor Hilprecht, its director, has written a short account of the season's work to the *Sunday School Times* of 2nd December.

This is the fourth season. The first expedition went out in 1889 to a brief preliminary survey. Next year the second went out and demonstrated the existence of many monuments in the lower strata of the temple mound at the ancient city of Nippur. In the third campaign these monuments were reached and found to be in a fragmentary state. But that was the occasion of the great discovery: that through the temple mound ran a series of 'platforms,' constructed of baked bricks, which often bore inscriptions. By these inscriptions the explorers were enabled to fix with nicety the date of the different strata of the mound. The lowest of the 'platforms' reached that year were seen to be the work of kings and priest-kings (*patesis*) of the years 4000 to 3800 B.C. The explorers stood on ruins of the city of Sargon and Naram-Sin, hitherto hardly more than mythical names, now shown to be actual historical rulers. And that was not all. Below these 'platforms' were earlier 'platforms' still. Thirty feet of ruins lay below, the remains of a yet earlier civilization—work for a later expedition.

The site of these discoveries is the ancient city of Nippur, now called by the Arabs Nuffar (or Niffer as most spell it). Nippur, which is two days' journey south-east from Babylon, was once the leading city in Babylonia. Its supremacy, both political and religious, may be traced, Dr. Hilprecht thinks, from the dawn of civilization down to the invasion of the Elamites in 2200 B.C. These Elamites, 'to whom Chedor-laomer belonged,' destroyed the power of Nippur, and the city of Babylon secured the supreme place. Babylon retained its supremacy (with more or less oscillation in its sphere of influence under the last kings of Assyria) down to the year 539 B.C., when it was entered by Gobryas, the general of Cyrus.

There is a Jewish tradition that Nippur is the biblical Calneh, one of the four great cities of the kingdom of Nimrod (Gn 10¹⁰). Professor Hilprecht believes that the tradition is correct, for every discovery that he has made has gone to confirm it. Again Professor Hilprecht has found the name of the river Chebar on two different texts that were rescued from its temple library. Thus, as he worked, the city was associated in his mind with 'the first and the final acts in the great drama of divine selection and human rejection in which Israel played the leading rôle.' About the

time when the Elamites destroyed the temple of Bel at Nippur, Abraham was leaving his ancestral home at Ur, or Mugheir, a little to the south; and again it was under the shadow of its crumbling walls that Ezekiel stood to comfort his fellow-exiles.

Nippur is now a mere mass of ruined mounds. They lie half-way between the Euphrates and Tigris, 'at the north-eastern boundary of the great Affej swamps, which are formed by the regular annual inundation of the Euphrates,' and they are cut into two almost equal parts by a waterless canal. On an average about fifty or sixty feet high, these mounds are torn up by gulleys and furrows into a number of spurs and ridges, as if a rugged mountain range had risen on the bank of the upper Tigris. Now, the glory of ancient Nippur was the great temple of Bel. And the glory of the temple of Bel (at least in the eyes of the modern explorer) was the temple library. Under which of these mounds does the temple library lie?

When Professor Hilprecht first saw the ruins of Nippur, he selected a certain mound, and said, 'The temple library lies there.' Ten years passed. Then that mound was examined. Dr. Hilprecht was right. But even Dr. Hilprecht was amazed at the wealth of literature which the explorer's spade laid bare.

When the fourth expedition, which has just returned, set out, its journey was directed straight to this mound. Its work was clearly mapped out. It had to determine, if possible, the extent of Sargon's city, to ascertain the exact form and character of the temple of Bel, to search for the great city gates so often mentioned in the inscriptions, to study the manner in which the ancient inhabitants of Nippur buried their dead, but above all to uncover and carry home to America the temple library. Professor Hilprecht is sententious. He says, 'The task was great, but we have accomplished it.'

Four hundred Arabs were at one time occupied on the excavations. They unearthed nearly twenty-five thousand cuneiform texts. These texts have to be read and translated. But one grand result Dr. Hilprecht can already announce, it is the thrusting back of the civilization of the world 'some thousands of years.'

This result has struck the imagination of the American. Sensational headlines, like 'A Library 9000 Years Old,' have appeared in some of the New York newspapers. But while answering these and deprecating exaggeration, Professor Hilprecht yet claims that the library he has recovered contains tablets from the fifth pre-Christian millennium, and that 'with reasonable certainty we can say that the lowest strata of Nippur, twenty to thirty feet below the surrounding desert, go as far back as the sixth and seventh millennium B.C., and possibly they are even older.'

There are two difficulties in the Parable of the Unjust Judge (Lk 18¹⁻⁸). The one is superficial, the other fundamental. The superficial difficulty is the comparison of God to a judge who is unjust. And it will not do to say that the judge's injustice has nothing to do with the comparison. It has much to do with it. But it has to do with it by way of contrast.

There are two points in the parable, and they are both points of contrast. The one is that if a judge who is unjust yields to importunate prayer, how much more will God who is just. The other is that if the judge yields to a woman in whom he has no interest, how much more will God yield to His elect whom He has redeemed with the precious blood of His dear Son.

But does God need to be wearied with prayer as the unjust judge was wearied? That is the very lesson of the parable, and that is its fundamental difficulty.

Well, in answer, we must say that there are some things which God grants His elect at once. 'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.' It is a matter of simple experience. Who has not experienced it, and with it the inexpressible joy of surprise?

But there are things that are not granted at once. They are the greater matters of sin and of society. We pray that wars may cease, that diseases may be healed, that the poor may no longer be with us, that the oppressor may perish out of the land, that disappointment may never again eat our own or our dear friends' hearts out. These things are not granted. War may be less brutal, but it has not ceased; diseases have been stamped out, but diseases yet remain; the poor we have with us still, though their poverty is less abject; the oppressor seems only to have changed his violence into craft; and disappointment, like the worm in the bud, eats our own and our friends' hearts out still. These things are not granted. Yet we pray for them. We pray persistently. We weary God with prayer.

It was to this end, that we should always pray for these things and not faint, that Jesus spoke the parable. It was much needed. It was so much needed that He wondered whether after all any persons would be found praying these prayers and persisting in believing in their answer when the Son of Man came again. For it was not faith He doubted the presence of in the earth when He came again, it was *this* faith—faith in a God who hears prayer though He seems not to hear it, and tarries long over these things before He grants them.

John the Baptist is our typical example of the man who lost this faith. He did not lose his faith certainly. He only lost his faith in Christ's method of working. He had promised that the Messiah would come with His fan in His hand, and that He would burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. But Jesus came healing the sick, preaching the gospel to the poor.

And yet John's prophecy was not wrong, and Jesus agreed with him. He said that God would tarry long over the things which the elect prayed for, and yet He said that God would grant them speedily. It is merely a question of time. John was right. His fan is in His hand, a thousand years are as one day. And John was wrong. He tarries long before He vindicates His elect and answers their prayer,—a long, long time to them.

He will avenge them speedily. What a sublimity there is in that word *speedily*! It is the eye of a prophet foreshortening the distance. A thousand years are as one day. When the disciples returned and reported that even the devils were subject unto them through His name, 'I saw,' He said, 'I saw Satan fall as a lightning-flash from heaven.' He had observed them as they went forth two by two; He saw them enter the villages of Galilee; He felt virtue go out of Him to expel this demon and that: and then He gathered all these efforts and successes together into one grand occasion: He saw all these demons centred in the prince of the demons, and, standing at the end of the Age with the eye of a prophet, He looked back and said, 'I saw Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.' He sees our little efforts in the cause of peace, of health, of comfort, of kindness, of happiness, He gathers them all into one supreme effort, the end has come of all the ills that flesh is heir to, and He answers 'speedily.'

The Urim and Thummim are with us again. In *The Ancient Scriptures and the Modern Jew*, recently published by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, Mr. David Baron tells us all about them, what they were, and exactly how they were worked.

The breastplate of judgment, says Mr. Baron, was made 'like a four-square box,' a span in length and a span in breadth. Into the front of it were inserted twelve precious stones, varying in nature and in colour. Set in golden frames, they

were fastened to the breastplate and formed its brilliant front. On each of the twelve stones was engraved the name of one of the tribes of Israel.

But now, inside the 'four-square box' which formed the breastplate and behind the stones was placed a lamp with twelve separate lights. Each light shone upon one of the stones, and heightened its brilliancy and lustre. The twelve lights of this lamp were the Urim; for Urim means 'lights' or 'illuminators.' When an oracle was requested, the breastplate was put on and the lamp was lit. The high priest examined the stones. If any letter in the name on any of the stones was dark, that letter was taken. He looked again. If another letter was dark, it was taken. And thus he spelt word after word, and gave the answer.

But there were four letters of the Hebrew alphabet which did not occur in any of the names of the twelve tribes (פ, צ, ט, נ). To supply these a separate lamp with four lights [and, we suppose, a separate precious stone with the four letters engraved on it] was inserted in the box. Its light shone out at the right side. These lights were called the Thummim. For Thummim means 'the completers' or 'the perfecters.'

To make the method perfectly intelligible, Mr. Baron gives an example. There is sin in the camp. The princes of the twelve tribes of Israel are called together. The high priest puts on his breastplate of judgment. At once he sees that the stone on which is engraved the name of Judah is dark. The other eleven princes are dismissed. Then the fathers of the families of the tribe of Judah are called. There is a single letter dark. It is the first letter of Zebulun. Now there is another. It is the first letter of Reuben. But there are no more dark, and out of Z R the high priest can make nothing. He looks to the side of the breastplate. One of the four Thummim letters is dark. It is H. He returns to the front. The letter J (י) in Joseph is dark. Now he spells the name. It is *Zarhi*. The rest of the families of

Judah may go. The households of the family of Zarhi are taken. The same process is repeated. The Urim and Thummim spell *Zabdi*. At last Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, is taken, and Achan makes confession.

It is most simple. If only we had chapter and verse for it.

Less clear and less confident is a note by Professor Haupt in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* for 1900. Professor Haupt thinks the breastplate of judgment, worn on the breast of the high priest, may have been 'a sort of sacred dice-box from which the sacred dice were thrown.' It is not necessary, however, he adds, to suppose that the Urim and Thummim were regular dice marked with spots from one to six. The sacred lot may have consisted of stones of different colours, small cubes or balls, perhaps one black and one white, so that Urim would practically correspond to our 'black ball.'

Then Professor Haupt thinks that the method of procedure may have been like this. Jonathan had disobeyed, but it is not yet known who is guilty. The lot is cast. The Urim, the black ball, comes out. That shows that the guilt is with the royal family. Had Thummim come, each tribe would have had to be taken separately. But now it lies between Saul and Jonathan. The lot is cast again. If Urim had come out, Saul was guilty, for it was he that cast the lot. Thummim came; Saul is free; Jonathan is condemned. 'It is hardly necessary,' adds Professor Haupt, 'to say that this explanation is to a great extent entirely conjectural.' Mr. David Baron forgot to say that.

If we may judge from the Conferences that have been held in Oxford and London, the troubles that afflict the Church of England in our day all turn upon a single small difference of opinion. The Conference held at Christ Church,

Oxford, though far more important, and conducted with far more ability than the London one, never focussed itself sufficiently. At the very end the members looked at one another and asked what held them apart. The difference was there, but they did not recognize it. The Conference held at Fulham Palace, London, came upon it almost at once. There were five sessions. The second session had not proceeded far when it rose and stood between the members, unmistakable, immovable. It is the difference of opinion whether, after consecration, the Bread and Wine of the Supper are still only Bread and Wine or are now Body and Blood.

It is not the question of sacrifice. At the Oxford Conference Canon Moberly and Canon Gore argued earnestly for the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, as earnestly as did Father Puller. But they did not believe, as he did, that the Bread and Wine were by consecration made anything more or other than Bread and Wine. At the London Conference also there were men, like Mr. Birkbeck, Principal Robertson, and Canon Armitage Robinson, who held that the Eucharist was a true sacrifice, but only Canon Newbolt and Viscount Halifax believed that (in the words of the latter) 'by virtue of the Consecration and by the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, the Bread and Wine become, are made, are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.'

It is not sacrifice that is the matter at issue. Because at the Oxford Conference, when Canon Moberly and Canon Gore explained what they meant by sacrifice, Canon Bernard, Bishop Ryle of Exeter, and even Principals Fairbairn and Salmond cordially agreed with them. But they could not agree with Father Puller when he said that the matter of the Church's sacrifice was 'primarily Christ's Body and Blood.' It is not sacrifice, because at the London Conference there was no impassable gulf seen or felt until Canon Newbolt said that in his belief, 'while the elements of bread and wine retain their natural

substances, an addition is made to them, by virtue of which the Body and Blood of Christ are present really and truly, but spiritually and ineffably, under the outward visible sign or form of bread and wine.' It is not sacrifice; it is simply the opinion that the bread and wine of the Supper of the Lord is more or other than bread and wine.

But if the bread and wine at the Supper is changed into something that is more or other than bread and wine, that makes a difference in the conception of sacrifice. From those momentous Conferences it has accordingly emerged that in the High Church of England there are two different ways in which the Eucharist may be regarded as a sacrifice.

First of all, it is a sacrifice of the participant. It is the great occasion upon which we are enabled to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable. Or, to be more explicit, it is a sacrifice of the will. There is an altar, and the sacrifice that is laid upon it is the spiritual sacrifice of our impure affections and inordinate passions. That is the belief of Canon Moberly, of Canon Gore, of Mr. Headlam, we think even of Canon Scott Holland, and of all the rest at the Oxford Conference, except Father Puller. It is also the belief of all the members of the London Conference, except Lord Halifax and Canon Newbolt.

The other way is to regard the Supper as the occasion upon which the Church of Christ is enabled to offer in sacrifice the Body and Blood of her Lord. There is a slight difference of opinion regarding the relation between the visible and the actual offering. Canon Newbolt holds that after consecration the bread and wine still remain bread and wine, but now become in addition to that Body and Blood, the Body and Blood of the Redeemer. Viscount Halifax holds that the Bread and Wine are *changed into* His Body and Blood. On being appealed to, Lord

Halifax said he 'wished to be understood as stating simply that the bread and wine became the Body and Blood of our Lord.' The difference is inconsiderable. Both hold that the altar is an altar upon which is laid in sacrifice a Victim external to the worshipper. Both hold that that Victim is the Lord Jesus Christ. Both hold that the Sacrifice of the Eucharist is a propitiation for our sins.

Why do Canon Newbolt and Viscount Halifax hold this? Partly because they think the language of our Lord at the institution of the Supper demands it. He said 'This is My body.' They understand He meant that the bread was His body actually. He said 'This do.' They understand that the word He used means 'This offer.' He said 'In remembrance of Me.' They understand that the word He used means 'for a sacrificial offering of Me.'

But further, they hold that the work of our Lord in heaven is the work of a priest. He did not begin to be a Priest, indeed, until He had ascended to the Father, since the priest's work always began *after* the victim was killed. Now the victim that as a Priest He offers in heaven, is the Victim that died on Calvary, His own Body and His own Blood. He offers His Body and Blood as a perpetual propitiatory sacrifice. But what He does in heaven the Church, which is His Body (in another sense), does on earth. The Eucharist is therefore an actual offering on earth of the same Body and Blood which He Himself is offering in heaven.

But how can Lord Halifax and Canon Newbolt believe this? By faith, they say. And that is perhaps the root of the whole matter. Faith is

misunderstood. 'I believe,' says Viscount Halifax, 'that this change is sacramental, in a sphere outside the cognizance of sense, to be accepted, and therefore to be apprehended only by faith.' But that function is never given to faith in the Bible, or by any clear thinker out of it. Not once is faith called in because the senses fail. Not once is faith appealed to in order to supply the lack of evidence. Christ worked miracles as evidences of His power and mission. Accepting the evidence of the miracle, men might rise into faith in Him. But He never asked for faith in the miracle itself. There is first the miracle as demonstrable fact. Then faith stands on that, and rises into the region of the spirit. Faith is not faith that is not in touch with spirit.

Christ turned water into wine at Cana of Galilee. He did not bid the guests drink water and believe that it was wine. It was wine. The evidence of their senses told them that. For in the economy of God's providence the senses have their own place always, and do their own work. They are not asked to intrude into the realm of the spirit, they are not asked to stand aside and let even the spirit do their duty. The wine was wine, not water. In the region of things material the senses hold their own.

Nor even if Christ had offered them water, and had persuaded them—though it looked like water and tasted as water—that it was wine, and they had believed it—not even then would they have had any faith. What faith is we are very clearly told in connexion with that very miracle. 'This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.'