

ashamed to be called their God; although Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren; although by the power of God they are now enjoying salvation: still their salvation is not yet complete, there is the possibility that even yet they may be ashamed at His coming.

For in all the intercourse of God with man, He uses no compulsion except the compulsion of love.

If one who has tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious feels constraint, it is the love of Christ that constrains him. And he must will to abide within the constraint of that love. He must, in the Apostle's words, 'abide in him,' in close conscious contact, that he may not be ashamed at His coming, but may have an abundant entrance into His eternal kingdom and glory.

Two Old Testament Commentaries.¹

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I. EXACT scholarship, a scientific temper of mind, and the reverence of a believer in Divine revelation combine to render Principal Skinner an ideal commentator on the Book of Genesis. The work before us will unquestionably take its place in the very front rank of modern O.T. commentaries. We can award it no higher praise than to say that it need not shrink from comparison with what has hitherto been *facile princeps* in the series to which it belongs—Driver's *Deuteronomy*. Before proceeding to deal with other features of this great work, we may note two respects in which even our acquaintance with Dr. Skinner had hardly prepared us to expect him to reach such excellence—namely, the literary style, which is not only clear and lucid but frequently reaches true eloquence; and the consummate skill and unfailing courtesy with which he treats opponents. We confess we had looked for a little more of that 'impatience with stupid people' which used to be attributed to the late Professor Robertson Smith. But Dr. Skinner's is no doubt the more excellent way. Not, indeed, that he cannot, when necessary, give play to a mild sarcasm. What, for instance, could be more charming than this touch?: 'What with Winckler and Jeremias, and Cheyne, and now Eerdmans, O.T. scholars have a good many "new eras" dawning on them just now. Whether any of them will shine unto the perfect day, time will show' (p. xlili).

Hitherto the best commentaries on *Genesis* at the disposal of the English-speaking student have been the translation of Dillmann's great work (T. & T. Clark, 1897), and the admirable *Westminster Commentary* of Driver. Our debt to Dillmann we should find it hard to estimate, but a considerable change has passed on the situation since his day; while Dr. Driver would be the first to admit that the 'Westminster' series denied him that scope of which Dr. Skinner has been able to avail himself in the 'International Critical' series. As for recent German commentaries, with all their excellence, we confess to have missed precisely what we find in the pages of Dr. Skinner's work. Take even the great work of Gunkel. In spite of its brilliance and suggestiveness, is there not a good deal of the wildly erratic in its theories and combinations, and is not an uneasy suspicion at times awakened in the mind of the cautious student that the ingenious author of *Schöpfung und Chaos* has discovered a mare's nest?

Most readers will be heartily glad that Dr. Skinner passes over so lightly the controversies as to the compatibility of the earlier chapters of *Genesis* with the conclusions of modern science. All such questions will soon cease, if they have not already ceased, to possess any living interest. Far more importance attaches to the question of the historical or legendary character of the book, or the relation of one of these elements to the other. Here Dr. Skinner is seen at his best, and we shall be sorely disappointed if his carefully weighed words fail to reassure some timid souls. For instance, in contrasting history with legend,

¹ THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY.—I. *Genesis*, by Principal Skinner, D.D., Westminster College, Cambridge, 1910. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; price 12s. 6d. 2. *Chronicles*, by Professor E. L. Curtis, D.D., Yale, with the assistance of Rev. A. A. Madsen, Ph.D., Newburgh, N.Y.; price 12s.

and defining the true character of the latter, he says:

'While legend is not history, it has in some respects a value greater than history. For it reveals the soul of a people, its instinctive selection of the types of character which represent its moral aspirations, its conception of its own place and mission in the world; and also, to some indeterminate extent, the impact on its inner life of the momentous historic experiences in which it first woke up to the consciousness of a national existence and destiny' (p. iv).

Dr. Skinner finds no difficulty in proving that in this sense much of the material contained in the early chapters of Genesis represents legend and not history, while at the same time it is possible, he argues, by the exercise of due care to extract solid historical results from a tradition that is mainly legendary. As to the presence of myths in Genesis, our author accepts as correct 'for all practical purposes' the view that the Hebrew mind did not produce myths of its own, but borrowed and adapted those of other peoples. This point is illustrated in detail (p. viii ff.).

A question of fundamental interest and importance to many readers will be that of the historical background of the *patriarchal traditions*. Nothing could surpass in fairness Dr. Skinner's treatment of the claims that have been put forward by recent apologists on archæological grounds. He shows exactly what archæology has proved and what it has left as much open to question as before. As to the *personalities* of the patriarchs, he examines carefully the theories that they were originally personified tribes, or that they were originally Canaanite deities. The cases of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are doubtful, although even here the *possibility* of an individual as opposed to a tribal origin of the names is not excluded; but Abraham has a claim to individuality that is all his own. On this point Dr. Skinner expresses so well the present writer's own conviction on the subject that it will be best to quote his words:

'An important element in the case is the clearly conceived type of *character* which he (Abraham) represents. No doubt the character has been idealized in accordance with the conceptions of a later age; but the impression remains that there must have been something in the actual Abraham which gave a direction to the idealization. It is this perception more than anything else which invests the figure of Abraham with the significance which it has possessed for devout minds in all ages, and which still resists the attempt to dissolve him into a creation of religious phantasy. If there be any truth in the description of legend as a form

of narrative conserving the impression of a great personality on his age, we may venture, in spite of the lack of decisive evidence, to regard him as a historic personage, however dim the surroundings of his life may be' (p. xxv).

And again (p. xxvii): 'The appearance of a prophetic personality such as Abraham is represented to have been, is a phenomenon with many analogies in the history of religion. The ethical and spiritual idea of God which is at the foundation of the religion of Israel could only enter the world through a personal organ of Divine revelation; and nothing forbids us to see in Abraham the first of that long series of prophets through whom God has communicated to mankind a saving knowledge of Himself. The keynote of Abraham's piety is *faith* in the unseen,—faith in the Divine impulse which drove him forth to a land which he was never to possess; and faith in the future of the religion which he thus founded. He moves before us on the page of Scripture as the man through whom faith, the living principle of true religion, first became a force in human affairs. It is difficult to think that so powerful a conception has grown out of nothing. As we read the story, we may well trust the instinct which tells us that here we are face to face with a decisive act of the living God in history, and an act whose essential significance was never lost in Israelite tradition.'

On the preservation and collection of the traditions and the structure and composition of the Book of Genesis, Dr. Skinner succeeds in formulating what is one of the most convincing arguments we have ever read in favour of the prevailing critical view. He appears to us to be especially successful in combating the objections of Dr. Orr (who, by the way, ought to have conceded nothing to his opponents if he was to escape finally conceding a great deal more), and the recent insidious attempts to invalidate the argument drawn from the varying use of the Divine names.

It may be of interest to note, finally, Dr. Skinner's view as to the date of the final redaction, when P^s was amalgamated with JE (p. lxi).

'If the lawbook read by Ezra before the congregation as the basis of the covenant (Neh. 8^{1st}) was the entire Pentateuch (excepting late additions),¹ the redaction must have been effected before 444 B.C., and in all probability the redactor was Ezra himself. On the other hand, if (as seems to the present writer more probable) Ezra's lawbook was only the Priestly Code, or part of it (P^s + P^h),² then the final redaction is brought down to a later period, the *terminus ad quem* being the borrowing of the Jewish Pentateuch by the Samaritan community. That event is usually assigned, though on somewhat precarious grounds, to Nehemiah's second term of office in Judæa (c. 432 B.C.).

¹ So Wellhausen, Dillmann, Kittel, *et alii*.

² So Cornill, Holzinger, *et alii*.

On the sphere of the commentary proper (which extends to 540 pages) we cannot enter. It may suffice to say that nothing is wanting for which the Old Testament student is entitled to look. He will find not only textual and literary criticism at the very highest level, archæology and comparative religion made to yield their latest and best results, exegesis of the safest and soundest type, but also a depth of spiritual insight which gives to this commentary quite a unique value. We should like to call attention, further, to the extremely important 'Extended Notes,' pre-eminent amongst which we have noted those on 'The Heb. and Bab. Sabbath,' 'The Chronology of Gn 5,' 'The Babel Legend,' 'Historical Value of Gn 14,' 'The Sacrifice of Isaac,' 'The "Shiloh" prophecy of Gn 49¹⁰,' 'The Zodiacal Theory of the Twelve Tribes.'

2. The pages of Professor Curtis's commentary introduce us to a very different class of religious literature. The Books of Chronicles are not specially popular with the ordinary reader of the Bible, and their real significance has not always been correctly appraised even by scholars. Dr. Curtis's difficulties in executing his task have been seriously increased by illness and partial loss of eyesight—a circumstance which necessitated the calling in of a coadjutor in the person of Dr. A. A. Madsen, whose work is fully recognized in the Preface. The Introduction contains a careful examination of the relation of Chronicles to Ezra-Nehemiah, and a discussion of the date of the work, which 'may be confidently given' as about 300 B.C. (p. 6). Proceeding to deal with the plan, purpose, and historical value, Dr. Curtis shows that the author of Chronicles belongs to the same school as the Priests' Code, delighting, equally with the latter, in all that pertains to the ministry of the sanctuary, showing the same fondness for registers and statistics, and indulging at times in similar exaggerations. The author's dominating motive is well defined as follows:

'He interpreted Israel's life, after the pattern of the Priests' Code of its national beginning under Moses, as that of a church, with constant rewards and punishments through signal Divine intervention. . . . He made more universal the connection between piety and prosperity, and wickedness and adversity; heightening good and bad characters and their rewards and punishments, or creating them according to the exigencies of the occasion' (p. 9).

The method of procedure is illustrated in detail by the Chronicler's treatment of the history of the

various kings, as contrasted with the account given in the Books of Kings.

Owing to this deliberate reconstruction of the history, the Books of Chronicles are shown to be a 'tendency' composition possessing but little historical value.

'The picture which they give of the past is far less accurate or trustworthy than that of the earlier Biblical writings; indeed, it is a distorted picture in the interest of the later institutions of post-exilic Judaism; and the main historical value of these books consists in their reflection of the notions of that period. Yet at the same time some ancient facts, having trickled down through oral or written tradition, are doubtless preserved in the amplifications and embellishments of the Chronicler. . . . These are few, indeed, compared with the products of the imagination, and must be sifted like kernels of wheat from a mass of chaff' (p. 14 f.).

We are thoroughly at one with Dr. Curtis's appreciation of the Chronicler as a historian. It is important to bear in mind that none of the Old Testament writers—and least of all those of the Priestly school—wrote history *for its own sake*. Their aim was spiritual edification; they viewed themselves as interpreters of Divine providence; they gave rather a philosophy of history than history itself. Keeping this in view, and the pædagogic purpose served by the Law and its literary allies, we can conceive how the religious value of the Books of Chronicles may far surpass their religious value.

'The religious value of Chronicles lies in the emphasis given to the institutional forms of religion. Forms, ceremonies, institutions of one sort or another are necessary for the maintenance of religious life. The Chronicler, it is true, over-emphasized their importance, and his teachings are vitiated by a false doctrine of Divine interference without human endeavour, and a false notion of righteousness consisting largely in the observance of legal forms and ceremonies. Yet in his own time, unless he had been a direct forerunner of Christ, he could not have been expected to give a different message, and in his day his message rendered a most important service. He belonged not only to the same school of writers as the author or authors of the Priestly element of the Pentateuch, but was kindred with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and especially Malachi. . . . Through these writings the past also was idealized and glorified as a norm for present activity and future development. Nothing better than the authority of the past could have served in those days to intensify the loyalty and devotion of the ancient Jew. The Divine law of retribution and special providence, which the Chronicler taught, was a most powerful factor also for preserving the Jewish Church. It must also never be forgotten that it was under the tutelage of men like the Chronicler that the Maccabees were nourished, and that the heroic age of Judaism was inaugurated' (p. 16 f.).

Further sections in the Introduction deal very satisfactorily with such subjects as the sources (canonical and un-canonical) at the disposal of the Chronicler, the peculiarities of his diction, and the Hebrew text and the versions. An interesting account is given of what criticism has had to say on the Books of Chronicles, and a very valuable list of the Literature dealing with them is appended.

The commentary proper (473 pp.) deserves unstinted praise, and will be found of extreme value by all who are interested in this late constituent of the Canon, which possesses so much interest alike from the literary and the religious standpoint. Dr. Curtis has supplied the English-speaking student of the Old Testament with precisely the work he required.

Another View of Professor Hilprecht's Fragment of a Deluge Tablet.

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THE treatment accorded this fragment of a Deluge tablet by two such distinguished scholars as Dr. Pinches and Professor Hommel in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for May is very suggestive. As my own attention has, in consequence of previous studies, been attracted to points which seem, in part at least, to have escaped the notice of the scholars mentioned, a few words from a different point of view may not be out of place.

It should be noticed, in the first place, that the tablet is a mere fragment. No line of it is complete. Every one who interprets any line must resort in some degree to conjecture. A full discussion of Professor Hilprecht's conjectures will appear in an article soon to be published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. I will here content myself with a few observations on line 12. There are visible but four signs in this line, namely, ku um mi ni. Hilprecht divides them ku-um mi-ni, translates them 'instead of a number,' supplies before this, 'and the creeping things two of everything,' making the whole read: 'and the creeping things two of everything instead of a number.' It is my belief that this whole procedure is untenable.

If we turn to Haupt's *Nimrodepos*, p. 138, lines 85, 86, we find that three classes of living beings went into the Babylonian ark. 'Cattle of the field, beasts of the field,' formed one class. Hilprecht's tablet gives this as 'beasts of the field and birds of heaven,' which forms a more beautiful line, and avoids tautology. Another class was the

family (*himta*) of the Babylonian hero. This appears in the last line of Hilprecht's tablet as *kin-ta*. The third class was 'artisans' (*ummânu*). This third class we also find in l. 12 of Hilprecht's tablet if we join the last three syllables which appear there, *um-mi-ni*, and regard *ummini* as a variant form of *ummâni*, just as we have *kurummîti* for *kurummâti* and *shurminu* for *shurmânu*. The remaining syllable *ku* would then belong to the end of some lost word. That word may have been *li-il-li-ku*, since this word occurs in a similar connexion on the deluge fragment discovered by Père Scheil (cf. *Recueil de Travaux*, xx, p. 58, l. 20). The line would then mean 'let the artisans come.' It is surely a more scientific method of investigation to go to other accounts of the Deluge for suggestions as to how to read the signs and to fill out the lacuna than to assume that the signs which have survived introduce something new, and then to fill them out from the Old Testament.

If we adopt the reading suggested above, all claims that this fragment bears a unique witness to the text of the P document fall to the ground. The cuneiform does not even contain the word 'number' (*minu*), so that there is no occasion to discuss its relation to the word מִן. Delitzsch perceived in 1886 that מִן could not be 'number' in the Biblical passages, and withdrew this rash suggestion of his youth (cf. *Prolegomena*, p. 143), which Hilprecht has more rashly revived.

It is clear from the above remarks that the tablet has no significance for the Biblical student