

that my fellow-servants of Christ would do well to unbend and cultivate, not repress, any faculty of humour they may possess? It needeth not that we talk the world's talk any more than that we go the world's ways to possess and utilize this divinely-bestowed gift. I am far from assuming that the one alternative to the Christian who can use humour is your grim, hard-featured, unrelaxing present-day Pharisee. I willingly concede that there are characters—characters of a blessed and hallowed likeness to their Lord—which overflow with a tender and winning love and loveliness, yet are seldom prompted to laughter. So be it. "There are diversities of operation, but the same Spirit." But none the less I must affirm that I am increasingly satisfied that your Christian who never laughs, and who shrinks from anything approaching wit or humour, weakens his influence, especially in intercourse with the young. On the other hand, I am equally satisfied that a whole-hearted, pleasant, gladsome Christian who can sanctify the faculty of humour as a God-given thing, to be used like any other "talent" for the Master, and not wrapped up in a napkin, adds to his influence in all that makes for righteousness. It would be an insult to distinguish the play of humour I advocate from "foolish jesting," and the "loud laugh that shows the vacant mind." Ethically, too, laughter is what God Almighty uses. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh*: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. ii. 2-4). This "laughter" and "derision" of

Jehovah prepare us for the same in our Lord as He was "God manifest in the flesh." More than that, He who condemns laughter, derision, contempt (though not scorn), tacitly reflects upon God's own acting, and pronounces against God's own endowment of man with the faculties of laughter and humour. I am aware that a mediæval legend tells us that whilst Jesus wept He is nowhere represented as laughing. I traverse the statement. In a hundred places in the Gospels, actions are declarative of the face of the Lord having been radiant with smiles, and the voice attuned to pleasant laughter. Grace, therefore, will seek to sanctify and serve with humour and laughter, not to "charge God foolishly," by seeking to extirpate either. I close my Paper with all gravity. It is in my conception, I must reiterate, profoundly irreligious to frown upon the exercise of any faculty that has been bestowed upon us. If we possess it not, we must acquiesce; but do not let us challenge God, or challenge our fellow-creatures, to whom it is a joy to realize the humour of our Lord.

\*\*\* It ought, perhaps, to have been noted that whilst in the incident at Nazareth by ἀγορά is not necessarily to be understood the market-place, yet as simple matter of fact there the "market-place" is the open space where the children engage in their mimetic pastimes. I have watched them in various bazaars or Eastern marts—once off the street called "Straight," in Damascus, and often in Cairo, Constantinople, etc. Not far from the open space and market of Nazareth stands its ancient synagogue, with bevelled foundation stones, so that one felt that one's eyes were looking on the almost unchanged scene of our Lord's observation.

### After the Exile.

*After the Exile: A Hundred Years of Jewish History and Literature.* Part II. The Coming of Ezra to the Samaritan Schism. By P. HAY HUNTER, Minister of Yester. Oliphant, Anderson, & Ferrier, Edinburgh, 1890, 5s.

THE period of Jewish history covered by this work is one with which many readers of Scripture have a small acquaintance and in which they take but a feeble interest. To all such we commend the study of the above volume. They will not meet with a dry page from beginning to end. The book sustains the reputation gained by Mr. Hunter in previous works of kindred aim. To the execution of his task the author brings a thorough grasp of the details of the situation, and his power of graphic description leaves nothing to be desired. The leaders of Israel move before us as real characters, men of like passions with ourselves, some of them

indeed men of passion in more senses than one. Mr. Hunter does not discuss in much detail the thorny questions of the date and the relations to one another of the Deuteronomic legislation and the "Priestly Code," etc., although it is plain that he is at home in the literature of these questions. Many readers will probably welcome this giving them of results instead of processes, which secures a continuous narrative instead of one frequently interrupted by critical discussions. It may suffice to say that Mr. Hunter, while far from accepting traditional opinions, declines to receive the conclusions of extreme critics as to the liberties Ezra permitted himself in his redaction of the *Torah*. The Jewish legends about Ezra and the great synagogue are submitted to examination, and the volume closes with an estimate of the work of Ezra and his school in setting "a hedge" about Judaism, as well as unconsciously serving a *pedagogic* purpose with a view to the gospel of Christ.

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