

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

PROFESSOR MARGOLIOUTH has published a pamphlet on the Origin of the Original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus. Along with the review copy, he sends the following note:—‘I beg that you will submit the enclosed pamphlet for review to some Semitic scholar, if possible an unbeliever, and request him to defend the genuineness of the document called the Original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus against my arguments. If he is either unwilling or unable to do that, kindly inform the world that the Hebrew scholars of Europe have been caught misdating a document by 1300 years, and that it is therefore probable that their conclusions concerning the dates of the documents of the Old Testament are disfigured by serious errors.’

The point of that note will be best appreciated by those who remember an earlier pamphlet of Professor Margoliouth’s and what it led to. Nine years ago Professor Margoliouth published a pamphlet in which he contended that the higher critics were utterly wrong in the date they had assigned to such books as Ecclesiastes and Daniel. They had assigned dates to these books pretty closely corresponding to the time when it is known that the book of Ecclesiasticus was originally written. The Book of Ecclesiasticus was originally written in Hebrew, but the Hebrew original was lost, the book had come down to us in Greek. Professor Margoliouth worked on the

Greek, found that it demanded a Hebrew original in metre, turned it back into that supposed Hebrew original, and showed that it was rabbinic Hebrew, wholly different from the Hebrew of Daniel or Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus, said Professor Margoliouth, is centuries later than the Hebrew of Daniel or Ecclesiastes. But we know when Ecclesiasticus was written. Daniel and Ecclesiastes must have been written centuries earlier—centuries earlier than the higher critics asserted.

The higher critics criticized that pamphlet. They denied that the original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus was in metre. They denied that it was rabbinic Hebrew. They denied that the Hebrew to which Professor Margoliouth ‘restored’ the Greek was anything like the original Hebrew.

Six years passed. Mrs. Lewis of Cambridge was passing through Palestine. Among some Hebrew MSS which she bought there a leaf was found which, on examination, was pronounced to be a leaf of the lost original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus. Mr. Schechter edited and translated it. And he had just done so when other nine leaves, following on at the point where Mrs. Lewis’s leaf broke off, were discovered in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. This also was edited, translated, and published. It was seen at once that

the Hebrew was not rabbinic Hebrew. It was not 'new' Hebrew of any kind. It was good biblical Hebrew, and actually contained fewer 'new' words than were to be found in the Book of Ecclesiastes.

The discovery was a triumphant vindication of the higher criticism. All European Hebrew scholars were interested. Many wrote dissertations on the discovery, or published editions of the precious fragments. Professor Margoliouth held his peace.

Three years have passed since the discovery. Professor Margoliouth has published another pamphlet. He contends that this is not the original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus at all. It is a retranslation into Hebrew out of a Syriac and a Persian translation. The translator was an Arab, at least Arabic was his native language, but he had learned Persian. And he lived after 1000 A.D.

'This, then,' says Professor Margoliouth, 'is the miserable trap in which all the Hebrews of Europe have been ensnared. It was I that decoyed them into it, it is I that let them out of it. Driver and Nöldeke are not quite the men to be caught napping; but owing to a controversy in which we had been engaged, they had an *interest* in thinking this rubbish genuine; and it was this interest which put them off their guard. Mrs. Lewis, by her precious discovery, has hit biblical criticism harder than it ever was hit before, or is ever likely to be hit again. For the next time we proceed to parcel out Isaiah, will not our very street boys call out to us, "You who misdate by 1300 years a document before you, what do *you* know of the dates of the Prophecies and Psalms?"'

We have sent the pamphlet to a most learned Hebrew scholar. We shall see.

Was Jesus justly condemned to death? There were two trials, if not three, if not four. We speak

at present of the trial by the Jewish Sanhedrin—its president, Caiaphas, in the chair. Was Jesus condemned in accordance with a just interpretation of the law? Professor Dalman of Leipzig and Mr. Taylor Innes of Edinburgh both hold that He was.

Professor Dalman has written an article to the *Sunday School Times* of 6th May on the condemnation of Jesus Christ. Mr. Taylor Innes has just published a small book on *The Trial of Jesus Christ* (T. & T. Clark, crown 8vo, pp. 224, 2s. 6d.). Between them, but chiefly from Mr. Taylor Innes, we learn how greatly the question has been disputed. The disputants have been chiefly Jews. Salvador in 1822 included a chapter on 'the Judgment of Jesus' in his *History of the Institutions of Moses*, and argued that the judgment was inevitable if the tribunal adhered to its own Mishnic law. He was brilliantly answered by Dupin. But Dupin answered on the moral not the legal question. Salvador replied that he was considering not whether Jesus deserved to die, but whether His judges judged in accordance with their own law when they condemned Him to die; and in the third edition of his *Institutions* in 1862 he restated all his original arguments. Then came the brothers Lémann, Jews by descent but Roman Catholics by profession. They argued that in twenty-seven respects the Jewish court of justice acted illegally. They based their argument, however, on the law of the Talmud, and the law of the Talmud was not in force in the time of Jesus. Both Dalman and Taylor Innes hold that, according to the law which they were there to administer, the Jewish Sanhedrin could not do other than condemn Jesus to death.

When the Sanhedrin met, the prospect of getting Jesus condemned was not bright. They had already resolved upon His death unofficially. To get an official condemnation was another thing. For the law was very explicit, and it was altogether on the side of the accused. They stretched it as far as they could. The trial was held at night,

though, in spirit at least, the law demanded that a criminal trial should be begun and ended in daylight. They sought for witnesses, and encouraged them to produce their evidence, be it true or false. Immoral the trial certainly was. How outrageously immoral we do not realize until we recognize the fact which Taylor Innes brings before us, that the law commanded the high priest to warn each witness before he gave his evidence. The words of the warning are most impressive: 'Forget not, O witness, that it is one thing to give evidence in a trial as to money, and another in a trial for life. In a money suit, if thy witness-bearing shall do wrong, money may repair that wrong. But in this trial for life, if thou sinnest, the blood of the accused, and the blood of his seed, to the end of time shall be imputed unto thee.'

They found that, after all, there was little that Jesus had said or done to rest a charge upon. The most plausible thing seemed to be His words about the temple. But the witnesses to that contradicted one another. Wherein the contradiction lay we are not told. But, as Taylor Innes says, so slight a discrepancy as one asserting that He said, 'I am able to destroy this temple,' the other that He said, 'I will destroy this temple,' was enough to nullify their testimony. For in a Hebrew criminal trial 'the least discordance,' says Salvador, 'between the evidence of the witnesses was held to destroy its value.'

The prospect of condemnation was not very bright at the first. It grew darker as the trial went on. Why did they not accuse Him of claiming to be the Messiah? Apparently because there was no evidence that He ever had made that claim. There were those who hailed Him as the Messiah, but there were none who would come forward and say that He had accepted the honour. Caiaphas, however, conceives that it may be possible to get Him to accept it now. It will not be certain death even if He does. The Messiah was either to be a prophet or a king. If he accepts the title of Messiah, it will be just possible to

accuse Him to Pilate of claiming to be a king. It may be possible even to condemn Him on the Jewish law, by dealing with Him as a false prophet. For the law says that 'the prophet which shall speak a word presumptuously in the name of God, which I have not commanded him to speak, that same prophet shall die' (Dt 18²⁰).

Caiaphas tries it. What was his surprise and joy to hear Jesus claim the glory which belongs to God! To accept the Messiahship is something, and He does that. But He does far more than that. He claims to be on an equality with God and to exercise His highest prerogatives. 'What need we any further witnesses, ye have heard the blasphemy; what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.'

They could not do otherwise. And Jesus meant it so. They are not excused by the legality of their condemnation. They are morally as guilty as unjust judges can ever be. But Jesus would not be condemned on any false charge of claiming to be a king or a prophet. He would be condemned for having come into the world to save sinners.

When a book is published in several volumes, it generally happens that the first volume receives all the attention from reviewers, the rest are dismissed in a paragraph. With the new *DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE* that has not been so. The second volume has been as fully reviewed as the first, and even more favourably. Its great theological articles seem to carry a more direct and impressive appeal than the critical articles which were the strength of the first volume,

One might even contend that reviewers have given the larger articles more than their just share of attention. It would be rash to say that more ability, it would be wrong to say that more pains, had been spent on them than on the smaller articles. If the reputation of the *Dictionary* were to be staked on one feature rather

than another, those who are most familiar with it would probably choose the exact scholarship of the minute articles. Still it was natural, perhaps inevitable, that when the new volume came to hand the first to be read and the most to be admired should be the great theological articles, and especially the article by Professor Sanday on JESUS CHRIST.

And it will not be out of place if here and now the editor makes this confession. When it became known that Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* was not likely to be revised beyond the first volume, those who had waited for that revision till patience was sorely tried, knew that the matter could not rest there. The greatest need of our time was the need of a Dictionary of the Bible. An effort must be made to meet it. The Dictionary must be full, in touch with the latest knowledge, and entirely original. Having been encouraged by the one scholar in Scotland who was most able to speak, the editor went to Oxford and saw Professor Sanday. When Professor Sanday approved of the scheme and said he would write the article on JESUS CHRIST, there was no more hesitation. That article exceeds the highest expectation that was formed of it. But even then it was clear that it would be the making of a new Dictionary.

What mean ye by this Feast? the son said as the Passover was laid on the table; and the father answered in set form of words. What mean ye by this Feast? our sons are asking about that Supper that has taken the place of the Passover. They are asking in greater perplexity, and we have no set form of words in which to answer them. The Passover was the great occasion for the temporary union of all Israel, however scattered and separated at other times. The Lord's Supper is the great occasion for the separation and disruption of Christendom, however otherwise at one.

And yet there is one feature of the Lord's Supper in which we may all agree. It is, more-

over, so fundamental a feature that, agreeing on it, we may be led to agreement on much else. It is the meaning that the Supper had to the Lord Himself.

For we must remember that our Lord partook of the Supper Himself. He was no mere spectator, dictating a rite in which He had no share. He was the first Communicant. And He has told us what the Supper meant to Him. He opened His heart frankly to the disciples as they reclined beside Him. He told them in few words much of the sacredness that the occasion had for Him, and the satisfaction that it brought to His soul. What mean ye by this Feast? Our sons can ask the Master of the Feast Himself, and the answer is both essential and unmistakable.

The *Methodist Times* recently published a Communion Address by Professor Findlay of Headingley College, Leeds, giving it this title: 'The Lord at the Lord's Supper.' Professor Findlay finds four things that the Supper was to our Lord Himself.

First, it was a special occasion to Him. 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I die.' It was not a matter of small account whether He held this Passover or not. It was not a matter of little moment whether or not He took His part in it. He had looked forward to this Hour. He had counted upon this Feast. The evangelist brings out the intensity of the expression by reproducing the Hebrew phrase, 'With desire I have desired.' Therefore we do not follow the Master if we turn our back upon the Lord's Supper, if we thrust it into a corner, if we belittle or neglect it.

Next, it was a Feast with a history. It had a history behind it as well as before. 'With desire I have desired to eat *this* Passover.' It was the ancient rite of Israel. It was the most sacred and symbolic act in the ancient Church of God. He came not to destroy it, but to fulfil. He appro-

priates the table of Moses for His own Communion. 'Himself the true Paschal Lamb, He takes from the provisions of the original Feast consecrated by the use of fourteen centuries, the bread and cup that should serve for His own memorials to the end of time. At that Supper, the last of the old order and the first of the new, He communes in spirit with all the saints of the ages, past and to come. Moses and Elijah sit down with Peter and John. Prophets and apostles meet at "this Passover"—and Jesus in the midst.'

What else was the Supper to Christ Himself? In the third place, says Professor Findlay, it was a sign of brotherhood. He did not commune with the ancient past in private and alone. Together with His disciples He rehearsed the original act. Hand joined to hand; eye met kindling eye. They tasted the same broken loaf; the same covenant cup passed from lip to lip. 'With desire have I desired to eat this Passover *with you*.' The heirs of that Divine past, the heralds of a yet Diviner future, to share the meal with them was to Jesus a true Communion feast. The Supper was a means of sealing His fellowship with His disciples.

Nor was it for their sakes alone that He held this Passover in fellowship with them. As the hour of His agony drew nearer, He took Peter and James and John with Him. Already he longs intensely for their fellowship. He would open His heart to them. Through them He would realize the worth of the souls He was dying to save. 'You are they,' He says, 'who have continued with Me in my trials.' And now He takes them into full confidence. 'All things that I have heard from my Father I have made known unto you.' Thus the Supper was a preparation and support for Calvary. 'It was to Him first, as often to His people afterwards, a true *viaticum*—a draught of pure joy to cheer His spirit before He suffered. "My joy," He said to His friends—the joy radiant in his face as He

looked upon them, the joy of perfect obedience to God and perfect fellowship with men—"shall remain in you, and your joy shall be full."

But last of all, and most of all, the Lord's Supper was to the Lord Himself an act of consecration. 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you *before I suffer*.' It is the instrument which binds Him to His atoning death. If the words 'this Passover' looked back, the words 'I suffer' look forward. They give to the rite its new prospective character. They turn the great page of history. They inaugurate the new redemption as the first Passover inaugurated the deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

The Lord's Supper is the instrument which binds Him to His atoning death. And it is not laid up out of sight in the archives of heaven. It is a document intrusted to the Church on earth. The bread and wine are the sign-manual of the Crucified. 'See, Lord,' our humble faith appeals, 'What means this broken bread, and the wine-cup of Thy table? What hast Thou said concerning them? Is it not Thy Body given for us? Thy Blood shed for many for the remission of sins? Hast Thou forgot? Wilt Thou deny Thine own tokens?' He does not. He cannot. He abideth faithful.

But the compact is mutual. If He is consecrated to His death, so are we to ours. If He sanctifies Himself thereby, it is that we also may be sanctified in truth. The Communion is more than a commemoration. It is a mutual pledge, a joint engagement. It is the betrothal of Christ and the Church before the Father. In the last Supper Christ's brethren bind themselves to Him as He to them. And with the Covenant vow there is given the Covenant grace. For it is no dead hero we commemorate; it is a Lord that liveth and abideth for ever, who Himself puts into our hands the tokens of His dying and undying love, and enriches the believer with the benefits of the Covenant of Grace.