

Point and Illustration.

An Eye for an Eye.

NOT only is the principle of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' stated in these very words in the Laws of Hammurabi, but it runs throughout them, and usually with drastic literality. For example: 'If in a man's house a fire has been kindled, and a man who has come to extinguish the fire has lifted up his eyes to the property of the owner of the house, and has taken the property of the owner of the house, *that man shall be thrown into that fire.*'—*The Oldest Code of Laws*, § 25 (Johns' edition).

Salvation—By Anything.

There is a clever and amusing notice of Mr. Walker's book, *The Cross and the Kingdom*, in a recent number of the *Inquirer*. It was not to be supposed that a Unitarian journal would feel pleasantly at home with 'an ex-Unitarian minister,' yet the criticism is always good-natured and sometimes almost kind.

The head and front of Mr. Walker's offending is that when he felt cold in Unitarianism he did not *take exercise*, but put on ecclesiastical mufflers in the shape of an evangelical creed. Unitarianism is charged with its 'cold intellectualism': this writer retorts with the 'emotional excitability' of evangelicalism. And now, he says, Mr. Walker 'comes before us with this book, a veritable storehouse of warm clothing, whereto shivering Evangelicals may resort to readjust the temperature of emotions grown chill in the bleak borderlands which at once unite and divide the Congregational from the Unitarian Confessions.'

'Those of us,' he continues, 'who have either grown used to the climate, or are not afflicted with a low spiritual circulation, or prefer rather to be chilly and active than warm and encumbered by our wrappings, are not likely to spend much time at this new Emporium.' So all he promises his readers is the interest of looking in at the windows as they go by.

He does not like the things he sees. He selects four as specially offensive. The first is the statement that 'there is, doubtless, an undogmatic Christianity which is not without influence in the

world to-day . . . but it must not be forgotten that these aspirations have really been kindled (however remotely it may seem) by influences that have radiated forth from a circle, the centre of which has been the Cross of Christ in its evangelical interpretation.'

The second is that 'the illumination we rejoice in could never have come save through that evangelical interpretation of the Cross which we know, as a matter of historical fact, *did* bring it.'

The third, 'There is nothing more wonderful on earth than this unanimous and identical Christian experience; and it is entered on always in the same way, through faith in the revelation of God's forgiving love in the Cross of Christ.'

And the fourth is, 'Throughout all Christian time, wherever this gospel has been preached, in every clime and in every nation, men and women have found salvation through believing. There is no more patent or more remarkable fact in the history of the world and in the experience of men than this.'

The reviewer in the *Inquirer* puts a query to all these statements. He does not deny that men have found salvation (which he defines in a parenthesis as 'the sense of attaining to the higher possibilities of human life'); but he says that it has been in spite of, rather than because of, 'any such theory of the Cross.' The theory, he says, comes later as an explanation of the spiritual experience. 'Moreover, there is a very real sense in which any man anywhere at any time can "find salvation through believing." It is simply *through believing*. It is a subjective experience, and not to be held to establish an objective validity. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." He is kept in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on *anything*.'

The Babylonian Boy at School.

In the *Sunday School Times* of Philadelphia—the best edited religious paper in America—the editor has published a chapter from Professor Hilprecht's book, *Explorations in Bible Lands*. He has the right to do this (and of course he has received the liberty also) because of the great

service he has rendered in publishing Professor Hilprecht's discoveries as they have been made, and giving Sunday-school teachers and Bible students an interest in the archæology of the Bible all over the States.

This chapter is very suitably published in the *Sunday School Times*. Its subject is 'The Ancient Priest School of Nippur, and How School Children in the Time of Abraham learned their Lessons.' It is very diverting reading. The school curriculum of a Babylonian boy (or girl?) can be traced, so far at least as writing was employed in it, from the 'strokes' with which all the world has begun, up to the finest freehand drawing and clay-modelling. Here is a slate (may we call it? though it is made of baked clay) filled with simple signs, each of them beginning with the same sign, *ba—ba-a, ba-mu, ba-ba-mu, ba-ni, ba-ni-ni, ba-ni-a*, and so on. The slate is divided into two columns, and the second column is identical with the first. 'Repeat, repeat, repeat' seems to have been the first principle of education even in early Babylonia. Here is a slate with four mistakes in quite a small space. 'Let me correct the exercises of this young Babylonian, who lived prior to Abraham, and transliterate what he has to say.' And Professor Hilprecht proceeds to correct them. 'It would be interesting to know,' he adds, 'how such apparent carelessness or stupidity was dealt with by the professors in the great Bêl College and University of Calneh.'

What a laborious business it must have been to learn to write in the days when arrows, set at different angles and in different combinations, had to express all the thoughts of men's hearts. If we could only have been there and told these boys to write in English! And what a discipline it must have been for the teacher. Surely priests were then the schoolmasters because none but priests had patience enough. One thing is evident. There was no burning question called 'Religious Instruction.' All instruction was religious. From the earliest stroke to the clay bust all was done to the glory of God. It made things easier in this way that the god himself could be most easily and most acceptably modelled in clay.

Here is a tablet with two harnessed horses incised upon it. As the horse first appeared in Babylonia shortly before the middle of the second millennium, this tablet is a thousand years later

than the others that lie beside it. It must have been found in the upper strata of the mound. Here is a terra-cotta relief depicting a pastoral scene. A shepherd playing the lute has attracted the attention of his dog, who is evidently accompanying his master's music by melodious howlings, and another unknown animal (sheep?) is likewise listening attentively. With change of drapery the scene might be taken from Theocritus or Virgil.

These tablets all belonged to the temple library of Nippur. It was evidently well stocked with books, including many works of reference. So Dr. Robertson Nicoll must not think that his desire for books of reference beyond all other books is a wholly *fin de siècle* desire. And the books were arranged in order—mathematical, astronomical, astrological, linguistic, and grammatical treatises having in each case their own corner and their own shelves. 'The library,' says Professor Hilprecht, 'was arranged according to subjects, and classified according to scientific principles.'

Religion—Revealed and Unrevealed.

It is a pleasure to find a competent writer in *Church Bells* (30th January), who 'has not been an enthusiastic admirer of Professor Sayce's incursions into the realms of theology,' concurring with our judgment of the new book on the Religions of Egypt and Babylonia, and saying 'these lectures are, in my humble opinion, the best thing he has done yet.' We said the best thing since the Hibberts; but perhaps this reviewer is right. He says that 'Professor Sayce's felicity (he has just called him *felix opportunitate*) is mainly in the fact that some ground had now been definitely cleared for Oriental history. It is more than guess-work. It is a garden of fact, surrounded by a field of unexplored undergrowth. Of Professor Sayce's lectures it is not too great praise that he has almost succeeded in bringing order into a realm where chaos ruled before. He has pricked the bubble of belief in an unchanging East, where men are plunged in thought heedless of the march of events without. Even the practice of making mummies of corpses was neither primitive nor universal in Egypt, he tells us; and in Babylonia there was too much change at all times to be pleasant.'

This acute writer disputes Professor Sayce's

statement that the difference between the Hebrew and the Babylonian religion is the difference between revealed and unrevealed religion. He calls it 'psychological and historical nonsense.'

And he says that all religion, so far as it is religion, is revealed, and the difference between one religion and another is only the difference between what is true and what is more true.

Evangelicalism.

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II. THE LATTER-DAY CRISIS.

THUS far we have dealt with the causes of the great part played by evangelical religion in the history of Scotland during the last century and a half. But has it maintained its position and its influence during the most recent period? This there is good reason to doubt. There is of course much preaching which might be called evangelical rather than anything else, with a great organization of evangelistic effort, but there seems to be general agreement that they do not produce the same palpable results as in the earlier period. It may also be questioned if it has the same hold as before over the general mind. Formerly, to say that a preacher was evangelical was as much as to say that he was popular, while to-day the practical preacher who can also be interesting would rather appear—at least in wide circles—to be the favourite type. At all events, whether or not the evangelical pulpit generally has declined in power and popularity, there are various circumstances which have been making in this direction. One is that the hopes so fervently expressed in the early part of the Nineteenth Century as to the influence that a gospel ministry might be expected to exert upon the country at large, have not been realized. In particular, the great cities have not been purified, but in their depths are hideously festering with vice and crime. A second cause of disappointment may have been that the average person who professed, under the influence of evangelical religion, to have experienced conversion did not exhibit a type of character which, for all its spiritual excellence, was conspicuously superior in respect of unselfishness and integrity to that of the representative of a cross-section of ordinary respectable society. And lastly and chiefly, there has been some loss of

power owing to a feeling of uncertainty as to how far the doctrinal setting in which the evangelical message was traditionally enclosed can be upheld, and also as to how, assuming that it must be amended, the evangelical message is to be recast.

In the first place, it is unquestionable that there are some doctrinal elements of the traditional evangelical system which can no longer claim to make any impression upon the cultivated modern mind, some which have even become to it a stumbling-block. The theory of scriptural inspiration with which the older school operated has ceased to be the working theory of the men of the younger generation. The latter may believe as much as the former that the Scriptures are the record of a revelation which is of sovereign authority in matters of faith and practice; but they are, speaking generally, unable to see in each section and verse a pronouncement which has the imprimatur of the infallible God, and which decisively settles any question to which it can certainly be shown to speak. To proceed, in the evangelical demonstration which was wont to be given of the miserable present condition and of the desperate outlook of sinful man, the argument was largely founded upon doctrinal assumptions, some of which at least have ceased to be a living factor in serious thinking. This holds more particularly of the use which was made of Adam's Fall, of the imputation to us of the guilt of his sin, and of the transmission of a nature which was wholly corrupted through his act of disobedience; and we may take leave to doubt whether the conscience of any educated or uneducated person is now touched by a reference to Adam, and to suggest that there is a deep-seated feeling that to discourse upon these primeval transactions is to prejudice the message by inviting the