

## President Harper's 'Amos and Hosea.'<sup>1</sup>

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THE 'International Critical Commentary' continues to make steady progress. Professor Harper's Commentary, which forms the latest addition to the series, will be welcomed for a variety of reasons. The place of the prophets in the religious history of Israel has always been recognized as one of great importance, but their real significance was missed before historical criticism had set in a new light their relation to the Law. Even those who are still unconvinced of the necessity of a radical change of view in this matter, and who persist in denying so large a creative activity as many modern scholars claim for the prophets, will be glad to learn from the book of Professor Harper what is the prevailing critical opinion regarding the rôle these leaders of religious opinion played. Especially interesting will they find it to study this question in the case of Amos and Hosea, for these are the two earliest of the writing prophets of Israel; and the advent of written prophecy confessedly marks a turning point in the history. Again, there has been of late a great deal of discussion as to the extent to which the works of the prophets, as we have them, represent their original form, and how far they have been edited and re-edited, receiving additions or suffering curtailment, or being modified to fit them better to minister to the needs of successive generations of Israelites. Then, further, the whole situation has been altered by the recent contentions of Pan-Babylonists, for even prophecy, which used to be claimed (and we firmly believe, rightly claimed) as a unique feature of Israel's religion, has been annexed by Friedrich Delitzsch, to his own satisfaction, to the Babylon of his own imagination. And, finally, the study of the text of the O.T. prophets has recently been approached with a new critical aid, on which some place immense reliance, while others view it with more or less scepticism—Hebrew metre according to one or other of the systems in vogue. On all these questions the

reader of the volume before us will obtain information, and in many instances, at least, will feel that he is following a safe lead.

The Introduction is very full, running to no fewer than 186 pages. It is divided into five sections, of which we will now give a short account.

(A) 'Factors in the pre-prophetic movement.' In this section the writer's aim is practically to trace the religious history of Israel up to the point where written prophecy found its first exponent in Amos; to exhibit the chief characteristics of 'pre-prophetism,' and its fundamental thought (concerning God, man, worship, life, and the future). This leads, of course, to an examination of the traditions that have come down to us regarding this earlier period, and the extent to which its history and its thought are embedded in any of the writings now extant. The story of the revolt under Jeroboam I. and the records of the activity of Elijah and Elisha are examined with a view to showing the working of the pre-prophetic factor either in isolation or in societies. Then come four important discussions on the 'older' and 'younger' decalogues, the Book of the Covenant, and the Judæan (J) and Ephraimite (E) narratives. By the 'older' decalogue is meant, of course, Ex 34<sup>12-26</sup> (J), whose message Professor Harper sums up thus: 'Worship Jahweh, and Jahweh alone, without images (such as Northern Israel uses); let the worship be simple and in accord with the old usage; forbear to introduce the practices of your Canaanitish neighbours.' The 'younger' Decalogue, found in two forms, Ex 20 (E<sup>2</sup>) and Dt 5 (D), cannot have 'come from the times of Moses, for tradition regards Ex 34 as "the ten words"; it is unknown to the Covenant Code; it is in a measure inconsistent with the ritualistic religion of the pre-prophetic time.' There will be some difficulty in assenting to the whole of these statements, but there can be little doubt that the Decalogue in its present form shows evidences of expansion from a simpler original, and in any case it is not easy to believe that the Second Commandment (forbidding the making of graven images) can have been Mosaic. Professor Harper's conclusion is that

<sup>1</sup> *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea.* By William Rainey Harper, Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature in the University of Chicago. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1905. Price 12s.

'upon the whole we shall be justified in assigning the formulation of the younger decalogue in its original form, even with the Second Commandment, to a period not much later than 750 B.C., the arguments for a still later date not being convincing.' In this connexion we are glad to find him making use of the remark of Professor Kautzsch (whose magnificent article on the 'Religion of Israel' in the Extra volume of the *D.B.* is constantly cited) that the commands and the prohibitions of the Decalogue 'have not an absolute but a relative scope,' and that the earlier thought was one not of *morals* but of *rights*. Our author turns next to the Book of the Covenant 'promulgated, substantially in its present form, with prophetic sanction, as early as 800 B.C., or half a century before Amos and Hosea.' The narratives of J and E and their message to 'pre-prophetic Israel are then examined.

(B) Our author has next to ask, What was the basis and character of the pre-prophetic movement? And, first, as to its relation to Mosaism. Professor Harper believes that we are entirely justified in believing that Moses was the founder of a religion, and 'brought to his people a new creative idea, viz. the worship of Jahweh as a national God, which moulded their national life' (Stade, *G. V. J.*, i. 130). On the other hand, 'We may safely deny the ascription to Moses of literary work of any kind, even the songs with which his name is connected (e.g. Ex 15<sup>1-18</sup>, Dt 32<sup>1-45</sup> 33<sup>2-29</sup>), or the "judgments and precepts" of the Covenant Code, and the decalogues of E (Ex 20) and of J (Ex 34); but without much question we may hold him responsible for the institution of the tent of meeting as the dwelling-place of the Deity, together with the ark, and the beginning of a priesthood, and this is the germ of much of the institutional element that follows in later years.' We will leave traditionalists to adjust *their* view of Moses as best they can to the statement that he was 'pre-eminently a man of affairs; the strenuous nature of his activities as leader and organizer of the tribes of Israel left no opportunity for literary pursuits.' This is probably quite true, but we could have wished for a little more help in discovering the basis which Mosaism supplied for an ethical development. That that great movement originated with a great personality, and that that personality was Moses, we have no doubt; and Professor Harper himself appears to share

this conviction. But we question whether even Budde (*Religion of Israel to the Exile*, p. 38) has explained everything when he says: 'Israel's religion became ethical because it was a religion of choice, and not of nature, because it rested on a voluntary decision, which established an ethical relation between the people and its God for all time.'

In what follows, Professor Harper seeks to define the essential religious thought of pre-prophetism, and traces in a suggestive and luminous way the progress of Jahwism until it reached not indeed monotheism but henotheism. And here begins—

(C) The work of Amos. The personal life of the prophet and the social conditions of the time are described as far as can be done from allusions in the book that bears his name. Then our author passes to the message of Amos.

'Amos's message is in some respects the most important of any conveyed by an O.T. writer. Great interest centres in and about this message, because (a) it is the first of a series of writings which stand alone in the world-literatures; (b) it places a stress upon the ethical side of religion greater than had before existed; (c) it marks a new epoch in the history of Israel's relations with the nations of the world—the Assyrian period.'

Professor Harper lays great stress upon the necessity of distinguishing between words actually uttered by Amos himself and words that afterwards found their way into the book that bears his name. Nearly one-fifth of the present book has thus to be laid aside. While there is room for questioning whether he is justified in pressing so absolutely his contention that the message of this prophet was one of threatening, unrelieved by promise, few will question the justice of his conclusions regarding the uniqueness of the monotheism of Amos as compared with that which some have attributed to other peoples. In view of the fact that the echoes of the *Babel-Bibel* controversy are still sounding, we make no apology for quoting in full the following passage which Professor Harper cites with approval from Marti's *Dodekapropheton*:—

'No one can fail to observe how, in this belief of Amos, monotheism is present in essence, even if not in name, and what an altogether different kind of monotheism it is from that to which the priests in Babylon and Egypt are said to have attained! There in Babylon and Egypt a monotheistic speculation, which possesses no force and is wholly indifferent towards the polytheism of the mass, whose gods this theory allegorizes and dissolves in a general conception; here

among the prophets in Israel a vigorous and vital faith in Jahweh, who suffers no gods alongside of Himself, who watches jealously over His own exclusive worship, and directs the destinies of man as the only God. *A relationship and dependence between the monotheism in Babylon and that in the Bible does not exist*; their radically different origin is the basis of the difference. In Egypt and Babylon monotheism is theory; in Israel, strength and life; there it is the product of a speculating abstraction, won through a fusion of the gods; here the experience of a higher Being, the inner realization of His moral and spiritual might, grown from a moral and religious deepening, from an intimate union with a special God who, moreover, does not disappear and dissolve, but remains the living one, and proves Himself the only living one. There the empty concept of monotheism; here, indeed, though the word (*viz.* monotheism) is not yet coined, the fulness of power and life which must indwell this faith where it is a true faith. How vividly, however, Jahweh was experienced as power by Amos is shown by 3<sup>4-8</sup>; perhaps, notwithstanding its simplicity, the most magnificent portion of his prophecy; not merely is God an hypothesis of the intellect, but the perception of Him is a result of the announcement of God Himself.

We would commend to careful study the eminently judicious examination (p. cxxi ff.) of the question whether Amos and his successors were the *creators* of 'ethical monotheism,' as well as the whole section on 'The Ministry of Amos.' The latter is followed by a useful account of the literary form of Amos' writings.

(D) Turning now to Hosea, we come upon a prophet about whose personal life we know much or little, according as we attribute a symbolical or a literal sense to what we read of his marriage. This whole question, and the difficulties that beset either interpretation, are very fully dealt with by Professor Harper. Fortunately the message of the prophet to Israel retains its significance whatever view we take of his domestic experiences, the message, namely, of Jahweh's love to Israel in spite of her unfaithfulness. The contrast in temperament between Amos and Hosea is accurately seized by Professor Harper, who shows, moreover, that with all his emotionalism Hosea was anything but weak. As in the case of Amos, a good

deal of the Book of Hosea is set aside as later addition.

In particular, passages like 14<sup>1-8</sup>, not to speak of 1<sup>10-21</sup>, 14, 16, 18-23, 3<sup>5</sup>, 11<sup>10f.</sup>, are suspected because of the brightness of their message. On this point we prefer to reserve our judgment. 'The Ministry of Hosea' and 'The Literary Form of Hosea' are next described in a way similar to what was done for his fellow-prophet.

(E) Professor Harper passes next to the consideration of 'The Poetical Form of Amos and Hosea,' in which strophical and metrical systems are discussed in a way that will prove informing even to those who have little faith in this latest ally of textual criticism. Then come chapters on the Language and Style, and the Text and Versions, and finally a very copious Bibliography, which is separated from the Commentary proper by a 'Chronological Table of Israelitish Life and Thought' (*a*) during the Divided Kingdom, (*b*) from the Disruption of the Kingdom to the Fall of Samaria.

The Commentary, which runs to 417 pages, is marked by the excellences which we have learned to associate with the Series to which it belongs, and we can confidently assure those of our readers who have less faith than ourselves in the principles which underlie the Introduction, that they will find the Commentary luminous, suggestive, and most informing. Some of the allusions in the Books of Amos and Hosea are set in a clearer light by the two maps at the end. Finally, we have Indexes, which will be found sufficient for all practical purposes, under the three headings: 'Subjects,' 'Geographical,' 'Hebrew.' The volume bears upon every page the marks both of wide reading and of independent judgment; it places the materials before the student in such a way that he is able to form his own conclusions; and it cannot fail to take its place as the English commentary that is indispensable to those who would understand the rise of written prophecy in Israel.