

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

WHO was the Pharaoh of the Exodus? Once more the question is asked. It is asked with new interest and new hope.

Only a year ago it was supposed to be as good as settled that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was Meneptah, and that the Pharaoh of the Oppression was Meneptah's 'masterful father,' Rameses II. But there were always some good Egyptologists who were unconvinced. And within the last six months they have had a powerful accession to their number in the person of Mr. H. R. HALL, of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum. In his book on *The Ancient History of the Near East* (Methuen), Mr. HALL puts the Exodus back to a date long before Meneptah and long before Rameses II.

'The view that the Exodus took place in Meneptah's reign has always,' says Mr. HALL, 'been open to the objection that not enough time was left by it for the period of the Judges. A late Hebrew tradition ascribed a length of four hundred and eighty years to this period. This tradition had to be ignored, and the period of the Judges reduced by one-half. Yet, in view of the total absence of any information from Egyptian or other contemporary sources concerning the Exodus, it was natural that the reign of

Meneptah should have been generally chosen as that of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Rameses II. did very well for the Pharaoh of the Oppression, since he built largely in the Wadi Tûmilât, the Land of Goshen (as, for example, at Pithom), and "Pithom and Raamses" were the store-cities which, according to the Hebrew account, had been built by their ancestors under the pitiless lash of the Egyptian taskmasters. Meneptah, too, was a very weak successor to his masterful father, and after his time Egypt fell into a period of decline. All this was regarded as the result of the blow inflicted upon Egypt by the Exodus.'

But the continued study of the Tell el-Amarna tablets and the discovery of the 'Israel-stele' have had the result of shaking the confidence even of conservative investigators in the Meneptah theory.

In the first place, the word 'Israil' in the stele cannot be anything else than Israel; it is certainly not Jezreel, as has been suggested, since a Hebrew *s* could never be reproduced by an Egyptian *s*, and it is not a place-name but a folk-name, being 'determined' by the sign of 'people,' not that of 'town.'

In the second place, it is difficult to account for the existence of Israelites in Palestine in the

time of Meneptah if the Exodus took place in his reign. Yet Meneptah distinctly says, in the stele which Professor PETRIE discovered at Thebes in 1896, that he found Israelites there and smote them. Indeed, the main movers in the revolt, which probably took place on the death of Rameses II., although Meneptah did not proceed to put it down till the third year of his reign, seem to have been Israelites. Professor PETRIE suggested that possibly some of the tribes of Israel remained in Palestine when the rest went down into Egypt, or else that a partial Exodus had taken place before the Exodus under Moses. But neither suggestion has any actual evidence in its favour.

And in the third place—and most important matter of all—the Tell el-Amarna tablets record an invasion of Palestine by certain tribes of whom the chief are called Ḥabiri, and scholars are now becoming convinced that the Ḥabiri were none other than the Hebrews. The great obstacle in the way of the identification has hitherto been a linguistic one. The first letter of the name Ḥabiri (ḥ) could not be represented by the first letter of the name of the Hebrews (א). But that obstacle vanishes when it is realized that the Babylonians had no such letter as that which begins the word for Hebrews, and represented it, when they found it in a foreign tongue, by the very letter which begins the word Ḥabiri. ‘Thus,’ says Mr. HALL, ‘the only apparently “sound” reason for doubting the identification is shown to be valueless. Any other reasons can only be based on the individual view taken of historical probabilities. And in my own view, the probabilities are all in favour of the identification.’

What is the result? The result is that in the Tell el-Amarna letters we have Joshua’s conquest of Canaan as seen from the Egyptian and Canaanite point of view! And we have the date of the conquest of Canaan settled. The crossing of the Jordan was made in the reign of Amen-

hetep III., and the conquest took place definitely between 1390 and 1360 B.C. How long before that the Exodus from Egypt occurred it is still impossible to say. Mr. HALL thinks it is likely to have been a long time before. We are told in the Old Testament that the Israelites wandered forty years in the wilderness. Forty is a round number. Mr. HALL thinks they may have wandered many years more than forty.

‘The influence of the desert,’ he says, ‘in the moulding of the Israelite character is very evident, and the God of Israel is in His original aspect a God of the desert and the bare mountain; two centuries seem hardly too long for this period of nomadism.’ And two centuries are required to bring us to the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty, which is the most appropriate time for the departure of a Semitic tribe from Egypt pursued by Pharaoh and his host. In other words, the Exodus will then be the Hebrew version of the expulsion of the Hyksos.

In the October number of *Comment and Criticism*, the new ‘Quarterly Cambridge Paper for the Discussion of Current Religious and Theological Questions,’ there is an article by Mr. W. Nalder WILLIAMS, Classical Lecturer of Selwyn College, entitled ‘A Plea for a New Apologetic.’

It takes some courage to print the word ‘Apologetic’ in a popular periodical. There are several offences in it. The very word is offensive to some. They reply at once that Christ and Christianity need no apology. And it is a pity, undoubtedly, that the word used for that act of Christian service which most of all expresses confidence in Christianity should suggest to any one the idea of cowardice and shame. Others deny that any apologetic is required. Christ is His own best evidence. The modern Christian, like the ancient, should know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. They forget, says Mr. WILLIAMS, that the same ancient Christian who

knew nothing among the Corinthians 'save Jesus Christ and Him crucified,' spoke at Athens about the dedication which he saw on one of the altars to an unknown God, justifying the apologetic use of comparative religion.

But the most substantial objection to the use of the word 'apologetic' in our day is the fear that Christianity is not really able to endure it. For the apologetic which our day demands is no longer along the well-worn tracks of 'Paleysism' and the 'Evidences.' Mr. WILLIAMS thinks that these 'still have their uses.' But not in the parks on a Sunday afternoon. Nor in the magazines and books that the common people read. The only apologetic that has any persuasion in it is that which closely follows the comparative study of religion. And there are only too many, says Mr. WILLIAMS, 'who shrink from dealing firmly with (for example) the gospel according to Nietzsche or the Mithraic sacramental system, for fear lest, if they do, they may disclose some weak and vulnerable point in their own harness.'

What is the consequence? The consequence is that we have been content to abandon to the enemy a great deal of material, which, with more wisdom and courage, we might have used ourselves. 'A German professor creates a stir with a work on "The Christ-Myth"; an English politician writes a book called "Pagan Christs." Why have not *we* employed myth and legend—yes, and nursery fairy-tale too—in the service of God and of His Church?'

The moment we do, we find the advantage is with us. If the 'Christ-myth' covers the world, then Christ comes as the Saviour of all men. If there were 'Pagan Christs' before Christ, then Christ came to satisfy the hunger of the human heart. 'If,' says Mr. WILLIAMS, 'pre-Christian man feels the need of a mediator himself divine and human, such as Orpheus or Mithras, if the idea of death and resurrection holds such a place in the pagan mind as the learned author of the

*Golden Bough* has taught us that it does, have we not here a vast treasure-house out of which the apologist of the Kingdom of Heaven may indeed bring forth things new and old? If we believe that it was God's purpose to reveal Himself in Christ, is it not reasonable that He should so have fashioned mankind that it should give at any rate some half-conscious expression to the yearnings which only the Son of Man could satisfy?'

We and we only are able to meet the human heart in the way it can be most easily approached and most lastingly impressed. What way is that? It is the way of the fairy-tale. How well Jesus knew that way. How effectively He used it in His parables. Mr. WILLIAMS begins with the Fall. What is the story of the Fall as we have it in Genesis but a fairy-tale or parable? Is it therefore of no value? It is of the greatest value just because it is not literal history but fairy-tale. For so it touches the universal human imagination, which has already attempted to express its doctrine of the Fall and original sin in its own way. In the stories of Bluebeard, Lohengrin, Cupid and Psyche, and many more, the point is that happiness depends upon *not* doing some specified thing, just as with Adam and Eve it depends upon not eating the forbidden fruit. In every one of these stories the condition is violated. Some Fall takes place. The fact of universal sin is present. The idea of original sin is at hand. But how incalculable as a vehicle of instruction over all these stories is the value of the story of the Fall in Genesis. 'It is almost true to say that whereas past generations were content to rely on the evidential value of miracles, we must insist on the evidential value of fairy-tales.'

In the last verse of the 23rd Psalm there is a difficulty of translation. The Hebrew word *weshavti* is translated in our versions. 'and I will dwell.' But that is not its meaning. That is the meaning of a word which is like it, namely, *weshivti*. Why is *weshavti* translated as if it were *weshivti*?

In the original Hebrew only the consonants are given, and the consonants of both words are the same. When the Seventy, some two hundred years before Christ, came to translate the Psalm into Greek they read the word *weshivti*, translating 'and I will dwell' (καὶ τὸ κατοικεῖν με). But when, some time between the sixth and ninth centuries after Christ, the Massoretes added vowel points to the Hebrew consonants, they read the word as meaning 'and I will return,' for that is the meaning of the word (*weshavti*) as it now appears in our Hebrew Bibles.

Professor Emery BARNES believes that the Massoretes were right. In an article contributed to *The Irish Church Quarterly* for July, he says that the 23rd Psalm is a traveller's Psalm. The Psalmist has a journey before him. And for that reason he chooses the figure of a shepherd and his sheep. For in such a land as Palestine a shepherd cannot feed his flock without continually leading them to 'pastures new.' The grass is short-lived under an Eastern sun, and to stand still is to lose the flock. The shepherd is necessarily a traveller and a guide.

Professor BARNES gives three examples. In Gn 37<sup>12-17</sup> the sons of Jacob leave their father in the Vale of Hebron, and take their flock some thirty miles northward to Shechem to find pasture. When Joseph follows them at his father's bidding, he finds that they have moved some ten miles farther north to Dothan. In Ex 3<sup>1</sup>, Moses, being Jethro's shepherd, leads the flock in search of herbage right across the wilderness of Sinai to Horeb. And in Ps 78<sup>52</sup>, when the Psalmist wishes to describe Israel as travellers under the guidance of God, it at once occurs to him to use the metaphor of the sheep conducted for journeys of many miles by a shepherd.

And he caused his people like sheep to journey,

And guided them like a flock in the wilderness.

The 23rd Psalm, then, is a journey-psalm. The Psalmist starts from the 'House of Jehovah' under the guidance of Jehovah (v.<sup>1</sup>), and thus he is confident that he will return home safely at the last (v.<sup>6</sup>). He has friends who dread the journey for him, but for himself he has no fears. Protection will be granted him (v.<sup>4</sup>), and food will be given him (v.<sup>5</sup>). He knows that there are dangers by the way, but he trusts his guide. He answers his friends' forebodings with the calm words, 'I shall not want' (v.<sup>1</sup>).

The situation appears to Professor BARNES to be extremely like that of David when he was leaving Jerusalem and taking to flight from Absalom. As he passed out of the city, surrounded by weeping friends (2 S 15<sup>30</sup>), he was cast between hope and fear. But when the first danger was over, and he had already received fresh signs of God's favour in the proved faithfulness of some of his adherents, and in the noble hospitality of Barzillai the Gileadite, he became conscious of Divine leading and Divine protection, and declared himself confident of restoration to the place from which he had been driven. 'I shall return,' he said, 'into the house of Jehovah for many days to come.'

Professor BARNES is not above using his new translation in the interest of homiletics. 'The journey portrayed in Psalm 23 necessarily lends itself to be used as a figure of Life's Pilgrimage. The traveller leaves the surroundings in which he feels himself near to God and travels abroad, conscious of Divine guidance, and so assured of returning at last to the fuller communion of which he had formerly a glimpse. So he feels that the time of his wanderings is brief when compared with the period of the rest to which he looks forward; he will return into the house of the Lord for length of days!'

That men of scientific eminence are at the present moment less dogmatic, and consequently

more sympathetic towards the claims of religion than hitherto, has been shown first, and perhaps chiefly, by the reception given to Professor SCHÄFER'S Presidential Address at last year's meeting of the British Association, but also by the Address of Sir Oliver LODGE at this year's meeting. This change of temper is probably the occasion of a volume on *The Present Relations of Science and Religion* (Robert Scott; 5s. net), which has been written by Professor T. G. BONNEY, who was President of the British Association in 1910.

It is in quite a popular way that Professor BONNEY has written. And the topics he handles are popular. The chapter on miracles is chiefly a warning against calling that a miracle which is merely unintelligible at the moment. He also rejects without hesitation any miracle which comes from an untruthful or, in any respect, immoral witness. But he does not reject miracles. He simply says that, if revelation is a fact, miracles may be facts also. His words are: 'If we admit the possibility of any revelation we also admit that miracles, as we call them, though they may be improbable, cannot be summarily rejected as impossible.'

He deals with revelation in an earlier chapter. He admits its possibility; he admits also its probability. It is a working hypothesis, he says, that the God of the theist does sometimes, and in special cases, reveal himself to man. But, again, he insists on reducing revelation to its last remainder. What tests of a genuine revelation does he find applicable?

First, the messenger must be above suspicion. He does not deny that the Devil may sometimes tell the truth, but, if he does, it is for his own advantage, and we shall be wise to reject all that comes from an obviously corrupt source. But here we are placed before a difficulty. In judging of the source we must apply not our own standard of

right and wrong, but the standard of the age the messenger lived in. David committed a great sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, and Peter in denying his Master, but the sincerity of their repentance restored them to their place in society. 'But,' says Professor BONNEY, 'we should attach small value to the oracles, did any such exist, of the two sons of Eli, of Joab, of Gehazi and of Simon Magus.'

In the second place, the message must be ethical in tendency. But, again, the moral level of the age has to be taken into account. Professor BONNEY would not reject the word of a Moses who orders the slaughter of thousands of offending Israelites, or of a Joshua who puts Achan's family to death along with their guilty head. But he would unhesitatingly reject the claim to speak from God of one who could issue such orders after Isaiah had taught and Christ had come.

Lastly, the message must be reasonable. By this Professor BONNEY means that it must commend itself to our mental as well as to our moral faculties. 'We do not regard as characteristics of a revelation either truisms or commonplaces, or, if the phrase be permitted, the kind of twaddle, harmless, no doubt, but not edifying, that is too common in the discourses of many good and well-meaning men, but we do expect an uplifting of the veil, though it be but for an instant, a disclosing of some great truth of which, hitherto, the wisest have barely caught a glimpse.'

The sixth volume of the *ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS* is almost ready. With its issue in December half of a great and difficult undertaking will be accomplished. The whole work will consist of twelve volumes. It is worth noting that with the issue of every volume the circulation increases. This is most unusual.