

The Motive and Date of the Epistle of St. James.

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WE will assume, since it has so often been proved already, that this Epistle was authentic, and that its author was the James known as 'the Lord's brother,' the first President or Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem. (Gal 1¹⁹; cf. Ac 15^{13, 19}). Then the question of its date will have clearly defined limits. It cannot be earlier than 40 A.D. (about), and it cannot be later than James' own martyrdom, which occurred in 63 or 68 A.D., according as we take Josephus or Hegesippus as our authority. The question of date, therefore, does not seem at first sight of much significance or importance. It may indeed be the earliest, but it cannot by any possibility be among the latest of the Epistles of the New Testament.

But a secondary consideration makes the question of date of more concern. In the well-known passage upon the relation of faith and works, the inquiry is suggested, Have St. Paul's words (Ro 4¹⁻⁷) and St. James' any relation to each other? If so, which is attempting to modify the view of the other?

We grant the interest attaching to this question, but it is not the real interest attaching to the question of date. There is a far higher, an even thrilling historical and spiritual interest which attaches to one view of its contents. Is it a last message on the eve of a great coming of Christ? Is it God's final word to His own people before their overthrow as a nation and the ushering in of those times of the Gentiles which have succeeded the Jewish age of the world's history? Then every word of the Epistle becomes absorbingly interesting. There is the interest of historic situation. Here we shall find a picture, inimitably vivid and startling, of the state of things immediately before the coming of the Romans and the Fall of Jerusalem. There is the interest of historic parallelism. We ourselves seem to be nearing the close of another long epoch—the epoch of the Gentiles. Does the picture here presented correspond, possibly even with startling accuracy, to the features of our own age? There is the interest of historic sympathy. The words of guidance, of warning, of consolation which they needed then may be needed by ourselves still.

There is another important point in this view of the Epistle, if tenable. We can see at once that it might explain upon other grounds many peculiarities in the Epistle which are now wrongly attributed to an early date. And thus it will reconcile divergences which seem at present a mystery to scholars—such authoritative names as Schneckenburger, Neander, Huther, Beyschlag, Weiss, and Lechler standing in favour of an early date; whilst, on the other hand, we have such scholars as Weisinger, De Wette, Wordsworth, and Farrar claiming that it was written near the close of St. James' life.

The Epistle is a Last Message, written probably on the very eve of James' martyrdom. What authority have we for such an affirmation? Let us consider for a moment some general features of the Epistle in the light of such a statement. First of all, we note the fact that it is addressed to the nation in its ideal unity, the 'Twelve-tribed nation in the Dispersion.' We are quite aware that this very fact has been used as an argument for its early date upon a false supposition. But if James was commissioned to address a last message to Israel, he would address Israel as a whole. Then, passing into the Epistle, we mark in its very authorship, and still more in its contents, a message from first to last to Israel as such. The writer himself is an Israelite to the core. He holds in passionate devotion all that Israel holds dear. He seems to gather up into his own person all the influences which go to make the true Jew. The Law is to him no rule of bondage to be set aside, but 'the royal Law,' the perfect Law of Liberty (1²⁵ 2⁸). This is his answer to those who at the very time, probably, when he wrote, were leading multitudes forth into the wilderness promising to show them the *σημεία ἔ εὐθερίας*. The prophets are his examples of suffering and of patience (v. 10). 'THE NAME' is so sacred to him that, above all things, swearing is forbidden. The language and imagery he uses are the language and imagery of the Old Testament in their contents, their spirit, and their style. There is no other Book in the New Testa-

ment which so completely reminds us of Isaiah on his sterner side. There is no other New Testament writer who has drunk so deeply from the spirit of the later Books of Wisdom, the last source of enlightenment for Israel before Christ came. There is no such reflexion in the Bible of the Sermon on the Mount. All the influences brought to bear upon the Chosen People before and at Messiah's coming are focused in this Epistle. The character of the writer as we know it from history, even making allowance for the fabulous exaggerations due to reverence for his memory, mark him as the ideal Jew, and therefore make the message of his Epistle more significant. He who speaks of 'the Just One' is himself 'James the Just,' a Hebrew of the Hebrews, the 'bulwark of the people,' a Nazirite whiter than snow, a devoted attendant at feast and fast and office in the temple, wearing on his brow, so tradition pictured, the gold plate of the high priest with its inscription, 'Holiness to the Lord,' dwelling in the Holy City to the last, laying down his life as a witness to Messiah.

Of course these facts in themselves are no complete argument that the Epistle was a last message to Israel as such. But they wonderfully correspond with such a fact if on other grounds it is shown to be likely. In nothing could the tenderness of God for His own people have been more wondrously shown than in sending them as their final opportunity 'the Lord's brother' with a message so appealing to their past.

But there are other and stronger arguments. What should we expect a sacred writing to be which was a last message on the eve of doom? It would be intensely practical in character; it would glow with the fires of moral conviction, rather than orthodox zeal; it would regard the controversies aroused by a new order of things which lay *behind* the goal towards which it travelled as outside its scope; it would emphasize the truth already familiar, and would apply it relentlessly to life; it would expose with passionate earnestness the awful want of correspondence between creed or code and practice; it would scathingly denounce the fashionable sins which were hastening the already impending judgment; it would appeal to that which was common to the nation as a whole (whether Christian or non-Christian); it would speak in a language mindful of its sacred past.

These are the very peculiarities which we find in the Epistle. They are sometimes urged as an argument for an early date. But the difficulty is that no date, however early, is early enough to account for them. The Judaic tone is pronounced, decided, and clearly reflects a character, which, if history is to be trusted, continued the same to the very last. Does the tone of authority read like the language of a young man or a father in God? The question of the admission of the Gentiles had become a burning one long before the Council over which James presided (Ac 11¹). If the subject had lain within his province, it would have been necessary to speak of it in 41 A.D. as much as in 52. Take the other view of the Epistle, as a Last Message on the eve of judgment, and all becomes explainable. Its omissions, as well as its inclusions, bear witness to its aim. We should not expect to find a new Christian nomenclature which would offend the stricter Jew. The 'Synagogue' would be Synagogue still though Christians formed a large part of its congregation. Controversies arising from the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Christian Church would be studiously avoided. This would explain the absence of any allusion to the First Council at Jerusalem. It is the last thing we should expect. But, on the other hand, we should expect to find some differences drawn between Christian and non-Christian Jews, both of whom are addressed in turn. Sufficient time will have elapsed for those differences to have become acute. In no Epistle, accordingly, is there such contrast of address (*e.g.*, 1² 1¹⁰⁻¹⁰ 3^{17.18} 5⁷⁻¹¹, and cf. with these the following, 2^{19.20} 4¹⁻⁴ (*μοιχαλίδες*), 4^{8.9} 4^{16.17} 5¹⁻⁶).

And as an ever-present thought, darkening the horizon, throwing its lurid hue into warning and word-picture, would be the thought of impending doom ready to fall. It emerges everywhere. Let the rich man rejoice in his humiliation, for otherwise, as a flower of the field, he (and not merely his riches) will pass away (1¹⁰). Let them so speak and so do as those who are 'about to be judged' by a law of liberty which makes mercy to others the standard of mercy to ourselves (2¹²). Let them howl (5¹) at the miseries which are coming upon them. Already the stored up wealth is corrupted, the choice shining garments (*cf.* 5² and 2²) are moth-eaten, the gold and silver are rusted, clutched all in vain in the fingers which they burn. The treasure, so wickedly accumu-

lated, is but laid up 'in last days' (5³). It cannot be enjoyed. The cry of the unpaid labourers has already been heard. They have nourished themselves and pampered themselves . . . only to be fattened for slaughter (5⁶). Where in the New Testament have we a social condition like this? In the days of Felix and Festus, which immediately preceded James' death. The curious order

of the words, 'Ye kill and covet,' exactly describes the strife of the robber hordes of those lawless last days over their ill-gotten gain (4²). In the light of such facts we can see the substantial truth of the words of Eusebius, which are confirmed by Josephus and Origen, that in the martyrdom of James the Just the cup of iniquity was filled, 'and then the Romans, under Vespasian, besieged the city.'

Hilprecht's Discoveries at Nippur.

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THE first complete account of the excavations at Nippur is offered to biblical and historical students in a volume that has just been published, entitled *Explorations in Bible Lands during the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Professor Hilprecht, of the University of Pennsylvania (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark). In the preparation of his large volume, Dr. Hilprecht has had the co-operation of four well-known German scholars. Professor Hommel, of the University of Munich, has written the section on 'Arabia'; Dr. Benzinger, of Berlin, on 'Palestine'; Professor Steindorff, of Leipzig, on 'Egypt'; and Professor Jensen, of Marburg, on 'The Hittites.'

The volume contains four specially prepared maps, nearly 200 illustrations, and about 900 pages, nearly 300 of which are devoted to the history and epoch-making discoveries of the recent excavations at Nippur.

Among the most important results achieved on the last campaign, as referred to by Professor Hilprecht, besides the many valuable discoveries of antiquities, may be said to be the determination of the character of the Babylonian temple and its storeyed-tower, or ziggurat. His understanding of the tower of the Temple of Bel, is especially interesting to biblical students, as it offers the first reasonable interpretation of the passage in Genesis concerning the erection of the Tower of Babel. The expression, 'whose top may be in the heavens,' is found to have been commonly used on building inscriptions concerning these towers. Dr. Hilprecht has shown that most of the names of the Babylonian temples

express a cosmic idea. Anu was god of the upper or heavenly ocean, or 'the waters which were above the firmament.' Ea's region was the underworld, the terrestrial ocean, or 'the waters which were below the firmament.' Bel's sphere of influence embraced the world, and was not only between that of Anu and Ea, but extended into them. Professor Hilprecht now shows that the ziggurat of Bel, *Dur-anki*, 'the link of heaven and earth,' as it is called, is the local representation of the great mythological mountain of the world, the summit of which reaches into the heavens, and the foundation of which is laid in the subterranean ocean.

Contrary to the view that these storeyed-towers had been introduced by Ur-Gur, 2700 B.C., Professor Hilprecht has shown that they had their origin prior to the fourth millennium B.C., in the early Sumerian period. Four feet behind Ur-Gur's facing wall of the Nippur tower were found the facing bricks of another. These were characteristic of the period of Naram-Sin, 3750 B.C. Ten feet within the latter was found the smooth and plastered surface of a ziggurat of the early Sumerian days, recognized by the peculiar crude bricks of that period.

The walls of the temple area were partly excavated. While the ziggurat was the most prominent feature of the temple complex, it has been determined that it was not the temple proper. This stood alongside of the tower, and was the 'place where sacrifices were offered, and the most valuable votive offerings of the greatest Babylonian monarchs deposited.' The complete excavation