

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

SOME years ago Professor Harnack suggested that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by a woman. Or, if not by a woman alone, by a man and a woman together. He suggested that it was written by Priscilla and Aquila—with a distinct preference for Priscilla as the predominant partner.

If the suggestion had been made by a smaller man than Professor Harnack it is just possible that we should have heard little about it. Nevertheless, it was not because Professor Harnack made it, but because of the reasons which could be produced in support of it, that the suggestion met with favour from scholars like Dr. Moulton, Dr. Peake, and Dr. Rendel Harris.

For in the opinion of Dr. Rendel Harris it is 'an entirely reasonable hypothesis and capable of strong support.' In his new book, *Side-lights on New Testament Research* (Kingsgate Press; 6s.), he gives a complete chapter to the discussion of the hypothesis. The proof is in the Epistle itself. Dr. Rendel Harris finds enough—enough both for and against the hypothesis—in the eleventh chapter alone.

The eleventh chapter is familiarly known as the Roll-call of Faith. It contains an enumeration, and some estimation, of the heroes of Hebrew history. And among the heroes there are some

heroines. Dr. Rendel Harris asks us to turn our attention to the heroines.

Two of them are mentioned by name, Sarah and Rahab. Is this not something of a surprise? 'The mention of Sarah,' says Professor Harnack, 'is an astonishment to the expositor.' 'It certainly does astonish one,' agrees Dr. Rendel Harris, 'to find Sarah claimed as a great believer, when the Old Testament lays such emphasis on her incredulity of the Divine promises.'

But if Sarah is a surprise, what shall be said of Rahab? There was a time when the modern conscience sought relief for its trouble about Rahab in a mistranslation. 'Innkeeper' some influential expositor suggested, in place of 'harlot,' and the Christian conscience leaped to the suggestion. Now, when we know that innkeeper will not do, we prefer to pass over Rahab in silence. But the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not pass her over in silence. He (or she) singles her out. Of two women who are named in the Roll-call of Faith, Rahab the harlot is one.

Dr. Rendel Harris thinks that Rahab may have been named, because at the time of the writing of the New Testament Epistles it was a question much debated whether Rahab was saved by faith

or by works. Perhaps the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wished to take a side in that dispute. James says works. The author of Hebrews says faith. However that may be, there she is. In the list of heroes there are two heroines, Sarah is one, Rahab is the other. It seems to Dr. Rendel Harris that the writer goes out of his (or her) way to bring these two women in.

And what then? Then the author would be guilty of feminization. For the mention of two women? Not that only. But for the mention of two women who had to be drawn forward and have the glory of great faith thrust upon them. And for other less obvious references to women, which Dr. Rendel Harris proceeds to point out.

First of all, there is the curious statement that 'women received their dead raised to life again.' What women were these? Dr. Rendel Harris says they can only be the Shunamite and the Woman of Sarepta. But why should they be credited with exceptional faith? And why should no mention be made of the great prophets by whom these miracles were wrought? It is suggested, both by Professor Harnack and by Dr. Rendel Harris, that the omission of the prophets and the mention of the women is due to feminization. The writer has gone out of the way to mention these women because she was herself a woman.

But if the author was so anxious to introduce women into her Roll-call, surely she was ill-acquainted with Hebrew literature. What has become of Esther, and of Judith, and of Susanna? Yet it cannot be ignorance that has omitted these and others who might have been named. For Barak finds a place in the list, while both Deborah and Jael are passed over in silence. Feminization? Is there not some danger that the argument for feminization is to become an argument for defeminization, an argument not for the mention of women, but for their omission?

Now Dr. Rendel Harris has been much addicted

of late to what we may be allowed to call Geminization. That is to say, to the discovery of Gemini or Twins all over the world. His detective experiences there stand him in good stead here. Therefore it is that just when the case for Priscilla seems to be breaking down he comes to the aid of the argument (with the help of Clement of Rome), and, as he says, shows that it is 'an entirely reasonable hypothesis and capable of strong support.'

With the help of Clement of Rome. For Clement of Rome was a close student of the Epistle to the Hebrews like Dr. Rendel Harris, and like him spent some time in identifying the persons referred to in the eleventh chapter. Well, in one place Clement says, 'Many women being strengthened by the grace of God have performed many manly deeds,' and proceeds to refer to Judith. His language is full of recollection of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Dr. Rendel Harris makes the likeness more striking by the use of parallel columns, in this way:

CLEMENT.	HEBREWS.
Many women were made strong by the grace of God ;	Out of weakness were made strong ;
performed many manly deeds ;	waxed valiant in fight ;
Judith went forth to the camp of the aliens.	turned back camps of the aliens.

It seems, then, that in Clement's judgment the persons who were made strong and waxed valiant in fight were women. To make them so demands a slight alteration of our present text of Hebrews. But if the name of the author of Hebrews was suppressed in Rome, as Professor Harnack thinks, it is not unlikely that the text would be tampered with also. And the change is very slight. It simply means that the word 'women' should stand higher up in the sentence in v.<sup>35</sup> than it does at present. It is true that the adjective for 'strong' is in the masculine, but so it seems to have been in Clement's text, who explains it by saying that 'weak women became strong (men) in fight.'

In this way Dr. Rendel Harris recovers Judith. He recovers Esther also, though with more difficulty and less assurance. He does enough, in short, to restore the argument for feminization, and to show that in the Epistle to the Hebrews there is undoubtedly a desire to refer to as many women as possible among those who in Hebrew story were conspicuous for the exercise of faith.

And there is another argument. Dr. Rendel Harris observes the place that is given in the eleventh chapter to what he calls 'the grace of detachment.' The faith of Abraham was the faith of an exile. By faith Joseph, dying in a strange land, gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses forsook Egypt and became a stranger in Midian. Now is there any one we know of who knew the grace that is given to those who are exiles? The answer is Priscilla and Aquila. For them the decree of Claudius meant flight from Rome, as for Moses the threatened wrath of the king meant flight from Egypt. Dr. Rendel Harris thinks that the peculiar atmosphere of the alien, which hangs over the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, is a testimony in favour of joint authorship by Priscilla and Aquila.

On behalf of the dual authorship there is the transition from 'we' to 'I,' a transition which is found not only in the eleventh chapter but throughout the Epistle. Altogether the case may be admitted to be a strong one. It might even be felt to be irresistible if it were not that in order to make it out certain liberties have to be taken with the text. One of these has been noticed already. There is another, and it is more hazardous.

In moving from 'we' to 'I,' the author, in v.<sup>82</sup> of the eleventh chapter, says, 'The time would fail me to tell.' The Greek is a participle. And the participle is in the *masculine* (ἐκλείπει με γὰρ διηγούμενον). That is the real rock in the track, says Dr. Rendel Harris. He is not prepared to alter the text to suit the theory. And

at present he sees no other means of removing that rock out of the way.

The method of communicating knowledge to the world by lectures seems to be growing in popularity. In place of enumerating the new magazines started in a year, we now enumerate the new lectureships founded. And the lectureships have an advantage over the magazines. They do not depend for their continued existence upon a fickle public. Men may come and magazines may go; but the income from a Trust goes on for ever.

At the moment of writing, the latest lectureship that we hear of is the Schweich. The Schweich Lectureship was founded in 1907 in memory of the late Mr. Leopold Schweich of Paris. The income of the Trust, consisting of £10,000, has been handed over to the British Academy. The Trust Fund is to be devoted 'to the furtherance of research in the archæology, art, history, languages, and literature of Ancient Civilization with reference to Biblical Study'; and a portion of the annual income of the Trust has been appropriated to providing 'not less than three lectures to be delivered annually on some subject coming within the scope of the objects which the Trust is intended to promote.'

It is evident that the British Academy is allowed some latitude in the choice of lecturer. The first lecturer chosen was Professor Driver. And Professor Driver has delivered three lectures which are easily within the scope of the lectureship. They are lectures which will immediately bring this Foundation under the notice of students of the Bible in every land. They have been published for the British Academy by Mr. Henry Frowde at the Oxford University Press. The title of the volume is *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible* (3s. net).

The price of the volume makes it manifest that

the Schweich Trust has made provision, not only for the engagement of a lecturer, but also for the publication of the lectures. For this is a handsome octavo volume, filled with illustrations, most of them printed on plate paper. It contains a short masterly account of the work that has been done by exploration for the illustration of the Old Testament during the past century. It contains also a more detailed and not less masterly description of Canaan, as it has been made known to us through inscriptions and excavation. And the illustrations which it contains are not those scenes and figures which have been made so familiar to us by their repetition in every popular Aid to Bible Study of the last five-and-twenty years. They are reproductions of the most recent discoveries of Mr. Macalister, Professor Sellin, and other explorers. Let us see what Professor Driver has to say about one of Mr. Macalister's discoveries.

Mr. Macalister's discoveries have been made at Gezer. And it is at Gezer that that discovery was first made which has touched the popular imagination more actively than all the other results of recent exploration, the discovery of a whole cemetery of new-born infants.

The infants were all newly born. None of them were probably more than a week old. They were placed separately in large earthenware jars. And either inside the jar, or near it on the outside, two or three smaller vessels were found, generally a bowl and a jug, intended no doubt to supply the food which the infant might need in the other world. The jars lay in a stratum of earth, beneath the High Place at Gezer. An infant cemetery was also found by Professor Sellin at Ta'anach, but the infants were not all newly born. Some of them were as old as five years.

It has been suggested by the discoverers that these infants were the first-born of their mothers, and that they were sacrificed to some deity. Professor Driver casts no discredit upon the sug-

gestion. He is not sure, it is true, that the Ta'anach infants were sacrificed. Professor Sellin himself suggested that these were children who had died too young to be buried in the family sepulchres. But there is no doubt that the custom of sacrificing children, in order to appease the anger of the god, or obtain his help in times of national danger or calamity, existed among the Phœnicians and the Carthaginians. Hard pressed by the invading Israelites, Mesha, King of Moab, sacrificed his eldest son to Chemosh. And the practice is found even among the Israelites themselves under degenerate kings like Ahaz and Manasseh. In a well-known passage (6<sup>7</sup>) Micah the prophet represents an Israelite as asking—

Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,  
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

The question then arises, Did this gruesome custom ever belong to the legitimate worship of Jehovah? With our present documentary evidence it is impossible to say yes. The books of the Old Testament before us belong to a higher level of civilization. But it is impossible to say no. For we cannot tell what editing may have done to these books. It was certainly the custom to regard the first-born of men, not less than the first-born of animals and the first-fruits of the field, as sacred to the national deity. But at least by the time that the Old Testament documents came into their present form, the first-born of men were redeemed at a money valuation, and only the first-born of clean animals, such as the ox and the sheep, were actually offered in sacrifice to Jehovah.

At Gezer the infants were found buried under the High Place. Again, at Ta'anach they were found buried about a rock-altar. At Megiddo also, four jars with bones were found which undoubtedly belong to the period of Israelite occupation. The jars were found buried beneath a corner of the temple. All this seems to point

to sacrifice of some kind. But even if we are compelled to admit the probability of the sacrifice of infants in Israel, it does not follow that these victims were offered in ordinary sacrifice to Jehovah. It is quite as likely that they are examples of what is called the Foundation Sacrifice.

For it has been a custom in many parts of the world to offer sacrifices when the foundation of a new building was being laid, and to deposit the sacrifice under the building. Traces of the custom have been found in India, in New Zealand, in China and Japan, in Mexico, in Germany and Denmark, and in our own country. There are stories that tell how workmen were unable to complete a building—a church, a castle, a bridge, or even a private house—without the sacrifice of a human being. And a child was taken, or even an adult, and either sacrificed before burial or buried alive. Professor Driver tells the story of the workmen at Scutari who could not make the fortifications stand until they seized a girl who brought them their dinner and immured her. And he recalls the legend of St. Columba. St. Columba was unable to build a cathedral on the island of Iona till he could secure its stability by a human sacrifice. So he took his companion Oran and buried him alive in the foundations, after which he had no further trouble.

Is there evidence for the Foundation Sacrifice in Israel? One example is quoted. After Jericho had been destroyed by the Israelites, Joshua uttered a curse upon any one who should essay to rebuild it: 'With the loss of his first-born shall he lay the foundation thereof, and with the loss of his youngest son shall he set up the gates thereof' (Jos 6<sup>26</sup>). The curse is said to have fallen upon Hiel the Bethelite. In the days of Ahab 'did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho; he laid the foundation thereof with the loss of Abiram his first-born; and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub' (1 K 16<sup>34</sup>). The old explanation is that the judgment of God

came upon Hiel according to the word of the Lord by Joshua, and that it came in the form of some accident which befell his sons while the work of rebuilding was in progress. The new explanation is that Hiel, unconscious of Joshua's ban, took his own sons and laid them in sacrifice beneath the foundations to secure the goodwill of God and the stability of the city walls.

It is right to add that these Foundation Sacrifices, the meaning and the fact of them, have recently been questioned. They have been questioned by Professor J. G. Frazer. Dr. Driver states Professor Frazer's view in a footnote. The victims, says Professor Frazer, were buried under the threshold of the house, not to secure the stability of the building, or even the prosperity of its inmates, but in order that the souls of those that were buried might be reborn into the family. He believes that the infants whose bones have been found at Gezer had not been sacrificed at all, but had died a natural death, and had been buried by their parents under the sanctuary in the hope that the Divine power dwelling in the sanctuary might cause them to live, to enter their mother's womb again and be once more born as her children. The belief is widespread. Is it possible that such a belief was at the back of the mind of Nicodemus when he put his question to our Lord, How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?

Dr. F. C. Conybeare, late Fellow and Prælector of University College, Oxford, and Fellow of the British Academy, has written a book on Christ and the Gospels, which he has called by the name of *Myth, Magic, and Morals*. He has published it through the Rationalist Press Association (Watts; 4s. 6d. net).

This is the first time that the Rationalist Press Association has published a book by Dr. Conybeare, or by any scholar of his standing. Hitherto

their highest reach has been a book by Mr. J. M. Robertson or a translation of Haeckel—something well weighted with hatred of Christianity, but not weighed down with theological scholarship. Dr. Conybeare is a scholar. Behind this book, he tells us, 'lie twenty years of close study of the Christian literature and rituals of the first five centuries.' Dr. Conybeare is a scholar, and he would call himself a Christian. It does not mean that the Rationalist Press Association has changed its attitude to Christianity. It means that the Association is quite content with Dr. Conybeare's Christianity and Dr. Conybeare's Christ.

Dr. Conybeare calls his book *Myth, Magic, and Morals*. The title is entirely after the mind of the members of the Rationalist Press Association. But Dr. Conybeare does not write for the members of the Rationalist Press Association. He writes for Christians. Then why choose such a title for his book? Can it do otherwise than wound and shock Christian sentiment? Dr. Conybeare is alive to the possibility. He hears his readers ask these very questions. What is his answer? It is not that a myth when found in the Gospels is better than any other myth. It is not that magic when applied to the casting out of devils by Christ is more religious than the magic exercised by a Bantu medicine-man. His only answer is an appeal to his Christian reader to be patient and hear him out. And to make his request the more palatable he asserts that 'most Christians can allege no better reason for holding the faith they profess than they can for the colour of their hair being what it is.'

Let us therefore be patient and hear him out. He finds that the New Testament is occupied with two distinct persons, one fictitious and the other real. The real person he calls Jesus, and the fictitious Christ. Of the real Jesus we know so little that he is not surprised at those who entirely deny His existence. But he does not himself deny His existence. He believes that it is still possible to ascertain a few facts regarding

His actual life. 'I think we may take it as true,' he says, 'that sometime about the beginning of our era there was born in Nazareth, of parents whose names were Joseph and Mary, a child who was duly circumcised and named Jesus.' In course of time He was baptized. He came to John to be baptized by him in Jordan. Dr. Conybeare does not take this fact from the Gospels. The Gospel account of the baptism is fictitious. He takes it from the tradition of the Church. There are difficulties about it. For one thing, Dr. Conybeare believes that the interval of time separating John from Jesus was far greater than is usually supposed. Still, there are early representations on stone or in ivory of Jesus's baptism. And Dr. Conybeare is inclined to accept it.

Dr. Conybeare is not tedious over the life of the real Jesus. There are just two more facts which he thinks credible. One is that He was a successful exorcist. The other is that before the end of His life He had the belief thrust upon Him by His enthusiastic followers that He was the Messiah, and then began to say that He would return after death and inaugurate a reign of God upon earth.

Before going further, let us mention one or two trifling difficulties that occur to us. Why did the disciples of Jesus recognize Him to be the Messiah before He recognized Himself? It could not be that they were clearer sighted. Dr. Conybeare would not hear of such a thing. For he has an extremely poor opinion of the disciples, one and all, while he has quite a good opinion of Jesus. Nor could it be that Jesus was too honest to adopt the rôle of Messiah until the disciples thrust it upon Him. For when He did accept it, He assumed the much mightier rôle of one who would return after His death and set up a kingdom of God upon the earth.

Another difficulty is about this return after death. Dr. Conybeare seems to have forgotten himself a little here. In a much later page of his

book he says that even at the Last Supper Jesus did not foresee His death. He intended to establish the kingdom of God upon the earth. But He did not intend to die first. So much was this the case that when He did die His disciples were completely taken by surprise. He had never foreseen or foretold that He would die before He established the kingdom. They were therefore driven, 'when the blow fell,' 'either to resign their hope and abandon the movement for which they had given up all, or to modify the Messianic scheme and make room in it for the crucifixion and death of their Messiah.'

But it is time to leave the real Jesus. Let us come to the fictitious Christ.

Now when we come to the fictitious Christ our first question is, Who invented Him? It is the first question, and it may easily be the last. For here Dr. Conybeare has no surprises for us. The Christ of the Gospels and of Christianity was invented by Saul of Tarsus.

And as the creator is always greater than that which he has created, we must come to the conclusion that Saul of Tarsus was greater than the Christ of the Gospels and of Christianity. Dr. Conybeare has no hesitation in saying so. 'Jesus,' he says, 'had no message except for His own countrymen, nor ever dreamed of any but Jews sharing in the heavenly kingdom, whose near approach He proclaimed.' But Paul was an idealist. And his idealism 'launched him in the way of a larger and more liberal teaching.' Yet Dr. Conybeare is careful to be just to Jesus. If Paul had 'a soul above taboos,' so really had Jesus. And if only His horizon had not been confined to Galilee, He 'might equally have cast off the slough of Jewish ceremonialism, and have

opened his Messianic kingdom to all who had become monotheists.'

How, then, did this man Paul succeed in being so great? The explanation is very simple. He was an epileptic. And being an epileptic he was a visionary. For with epilepsy there often goes that temperament which sees visions and dreams dreams. He 'perpetually saw Christ and conversed with Him in visions.' Of course the visions were not worth anything. Often as Paul spoke of his revelations, often as he 'sneered at the exclusive pretensions of the twelve apostles and fell back upon his own visions,' he really 'evolved the Christ of the Gospels out of his own ecstatic consciousness.'

Dr. Conybeare, we have said, has no surprises here. Paul and the disciples of Jesus were from first to last in irreconcilable antagonism. They scoffed at his revelations, and he sneered at their pretensions. They went so far as to identify him with the Antichrist. He turned his back upon them and relied upon his visions and revelations. And in the end he beat them. He beat them so completely that if it had not been for the Christ of Paul's creation, Jesus would have remained a mere human Messiah of the Jews, and 'Christianity would have fallen still-born on the world and have vanished as it began—an obscure sect of messianically-minded Galileans.'

He was a great man. Amazingly great. We mean Saul of Tarsus. And when he said, 'To me to live is Christ,' or when he said, 'Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' we see that he must have been a man of extraordinary range of imagination. For the Christ of whom he said these things was evolved out of his own ecstatic consciousness. Dr. Conybeare tells us so.