

The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

The Bible Student and Religious Outlook.

Vol. VIII., New Series. SEPTEMBER, 1903.

Number 3.

More Than A Mere Coincidence.

In the *Sunday School Times*, for August 8th, we find an editorial under the caption "The Bugbear of Development vs. Revelation." In the July issue of the *Princeton Theological Review*, Dr. A. C. ZENOS presents us with a paper entitled "Revelation or Discovery." And in the latest edition of Dr. FRIEDRICH DELITZSCH's now famous lectures "*Babel And Bible*," in which the German scholar replies to his critics, we find him saying,

"And this inconsistency produces an increasingly widening gulf. When, e. g. a theologian of no less authority writes (26th January, 1903): 'You criticize a conception of Revelation which sensible Protestants no longer share; it is that of the antiquated Lutheran Dogmatist. * * * All divine revelation is of course, affected by the human medium, and must therefore have historically developed;' he describes exactly the standpoint that I myself advocate, only I regard the conceptions of 'divine revelation' as held by the Church and of a historical, i. e., a human, development to be irreconcilable contradictions. Either we take the one or the other. *Tertium non datur.*"*

That these several pronouncements should have all come so close together is, of course, from one point of view a mere coincidence. From another, however, it is much more than a

**Babel and Bible: Two Lectures; Also Embodying the Most Important Criticisms and the Author's Replies.* P. 106. Open Court Pub. Co., Chicago, Ill., August, 1908.

mere chance. It shows that the *Sunday School Times* is approximately correct in saying that

"Just now a great many religious people are distressed over the question of development or revelation. There are not wanting those who feel that the two things are essentially antagonistic, * * *†

Indeed, it shows more. For it indicates not obscurely that the most serious and scholarly minds of two continents are—we will not say "distressed," for that word would hardly be accurate, but are—of the opinion that the time has arrived for themselves and others to get their bearings and to define their position upon the relation between the ideas expressed by the words "revelation" and "development."

Position of S. S. Times a Matter Of Interest.

We have no apology to make for feeling and expressing a more than ordinary interest in any position that the *S. S. Times* takes upon a subject of such large importance as this. It goes into too many of our homes and Sabbath Schools; it is read with an unsuspecting confidence by too many of our best and brightest, but immature young people—and old people too—for us to feel anything but the liveliest interest in its handling of a subject that is just now calling for the most discriminating treatment of our most

†*S. S. Times* *et seq.*

Current Biblical Thought.

The Text of an "Exegete" and The Text of A "Critic."

The Rev. K. LAKE, of Oxford, is already well-known as one of the acutest members of that very acute school of recent students of the text of the New Testament who are seeking to get behind the MSS. and obtain for us a pre-manuscript text of the New Testament. His little manual of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament published in 1901 by the Rivingtons is full of the evidence of his competency for the work of a textuary; and his numerous papers in the theological journals exhibit the breadth of his scholarly equipment. In the April number of *The American Journal of Theology* he prints a paper on "Dr. WEISS's Text of the Gospels," to which he adjoins the further descriptive title of "the thoughts of a textual critic on the text of an exegete." Though Mr. LAKE speaks throughout with the highest respect for Dr. WEISS and everywhere expresses his interest in the "text of an exegete" and his desire to possess the exegete's aid in forming the text, it can scarcely be unjustified to detect a slight depreciatory tone in the designation employed. Mr. LAKE at least appears to suggest that the "text of an exegete" can scarcely be expected to compete with the text of the textualist. Every one is best, in his own department; and while it may be interesting and instructive to observe an exegete disporting himself in the domain of the textualist, and the textualist may find it to his advantage to pause and observe him: yet, after all, this is scarcely the thing the exegete can do with authority. The great features of Dr. WEISS's text, Mr. LAKE finds to be these: "(1) It is subjective and does not follow any definite system of valuing and grouping au-

thorities. (2) It regards Greek manuscripts as of paramount importance and surpassing in value any version or any patristic evidence." It must not be supposed that by the first of these findings Mr. LAKE intends to be severely condemnatory. He fully recognizes that all texts must be more or less "subjective;" that is to say, must depend more or less on "internal evidence." And he takes occasion here to point out that in the scheme of WESTCOTT and HORT much more is made of "internal evidence" than is sometimes supposed. This is true enough. There is a sense even in which Dr. HORT's whole system of criticism is founded on "internal evidence." "Genealogical evidence" properly so-called is measurably independent of it. But purely "Genealogical evidence" carries us only a part of the way. And the appeal to "groups," whether genealogically or empirically determined, is explicitly founded on the verdict of internal evidence. That the "Western" text is a bad text, and the Neutral text a good text; that BN is a good combination DEF a bad one—these decisions are based directly on a very scientific application of internal evidence. Mr. LAKE is quite right, therefore, in saying that the point is not whether "subjective considerations must be used," but to determine "at what point their special introduction is legitimate." His complaint against WEISS is that he introduces them at the wrong point. WEISS uses the internal considerations to determine the relative values of the witnessing documents and then uses the documents, in accordance with the values thus assigned them, in determining the text. If we understand Mr. LAKE he would reverse this method. He would first marshal the documentary evidence and then call in the internal evidence to

decide in each instance between the several readings attested. Opinions may fairly differ in a matter of this kind: but we find ourselves of Dr. WEISS's way of thinking. Of course we can never do without internal evidence even at the point of final decision between the individual readings: we can never consent to apply the documentary evidence mechanically. But we certainly must not refrain from the use of internal evidence until we reach this point. We must in some way determine the relative value of the documents, before we apply their evidence even provisionally; and no other way is available except the testing of them by internal evidence. Nay, we will go further: we cannot proceed very far in detailed criticism without forming an opinion as to the relative value of the constantly recurring documents. Will any one contend that if we find we establish the text on internal grounds in nine cases out of ten according to the reading of one class of documents, we can avoid beginning to feel that this class of documents is the best class and according a certain presumption to its readings as yet not determined upon? This is in essence Dr. WEISS's method; and Dr. HORN's; applied by the two somewhat differently. If we understand Mr. LAKE's method it makes an effort to apply the documentary evidence primarily according to the territorial distribution of it. We believe this method illusive and impracticable and incapable of yielding solid results. Ultimately, witnesses will necessarily group themselves on the ground of affinity, not of geography; and we deceive ourselves if we fancy that they can be marshalled otherwise. With respect to the comparative value of manuscripts on the one side and versions and quotations on the other, we fear we are again of Dr. WEISS's opinion.

Mr. LAKE asks: "Is Dr. WEISS right in thus relegating the versions to a secondary position and ignoring readings which are not found in the Greek manuscripts?" And he answers: "I think not, and believe that this is the really weak point and incurable defect in Dr. WEISS's method." Of course the matter may be overdone: and we are not concerned here to inquire whether Dr. WEISS may not have overdone it. But we are clearly of the opinion, that, speaking generally, in the case of a text like that of the New Testament transmitted so accurately and so fully in manuscript, the manuscript evidence must be treated as primary and the evidence of versions and quotations as secondary. In the circumstances in which the New Testament text has been transmitted to us we would be precarious in the highest degree to adopt readings supported by versions alone, or by quotations alone. Nor do we think that this general verdict can be set aside by showing that a few rare exceptions must be admitted and that a few more puzzling cases may be added. We must not lose our hold on the broad history of the transmission of the text and its lessons, and cast ourselves to the guidance of a few exceptional cases. And it is just here that we think "the weak point and incurable defect" of some of the most recent essays in the textual criticism of the New Testament may be found. The effort to get behind the manuscript attestation in favor of any other kind of evidence whatsoever, save in a very few exceptional instances, we think foredoomed to failure. And there is another application of this same zeal to penetrate below the bottom to which Mr. LAKE's article draws our attention afresh. He would like to get behind not merely the transmitted text but any text of the Gospels; and he speaks

as if there were no "original" text to seek because forsooth the Gospels themselves were of gradual growth. We must let him, however, speak for himself here. He says: "We still continue to talk of the 'true' text or the 'original' text, in the same way that our ancestors talked when they believed that the Gospels were written in their present form by the writers whose names they bear. In other words we still talk about the text as though the synoptic problem had not been discovered. But in reality the synoptic problem has profoundly altered the conditions of the textual question. Unless I am deceived, the line which is drawn between the last redactors with whom the higher critics deal, and the early glossators, with whom the textualists deal, is an entirely artificial one. The work of the redactors, who added a little here and modified a little there, went on for a long time, and in many places, the result being that the ultimately received text in one part of the world differed from that in another." Well, we are sure he is deceived: and part of the proof of it is that "the ultimately received text" in one part of the world did *not* differ from that in another. The theory of the gradual growth of the Synoptics here suggested is, indeed, a flaringly radical one: scarcely any critic of reputation would fully endorse it. And the fact is that, no matter out of what pre-existent materials the Synoptics were made, they were each of them distinctly *made* and did not *grow*. Each bears the impress of an individuality in its very structure, call him a compiler or an author as you choose. Each, then, has an original text, which has been transmitted to us: and the work of the textualist, which is to discover it, and the work of the higher critic, which is to investigate how it was itself made, are essentially different

processes, which cannot be confounded without confusion worse confounded. And our chief complaint against the most recent school of textual criticism is that they do confound these two essentially different tasks, and by confounding them incapacitate themselves from performing with sane judgment the functions that belong to them as textualists. Even were the Synoptics really gradual growths and not manufactured articles, there obviously was a point at which this growth ceased and each became a fixed book which has been transmitted to us as such: and the task of determining the text at this point would be essentially the task of the textuary, while the task of tracing the growth of the book up to its final documentation would be the task of the higher critic. But in the actual state of the case, each Gospel having taken its own form from the first, as a "book," the confusion between the two functions is much more injurious. Any textual critic who really believes there was nothing "permanent" in the Gospel text, but all was "transitory"—up to, when shall we say?—has simply abrogated his function altogether and merged it in that of the higher criticism. As a textual critic he has by his very act ceased to be, and of him as of any other *non ens* nothing is to be expected. It surely is not wise thus to stretch oneself beyond one-self and so to go up in—air.

The Syriac Versions of the Gospels.

In the *Church Quarterly Review* for April, 1903, there is an informing and comprehensive paper on *The Earliest Versions of the Gospels in Syriac*. Its occasion is taken from the publication in 1901 of the long expected critical edition of the Peshitta Gospels by Mr. G. H. GWILLIAM, and

the appearance of an essay by him in a recent part of the Oxford *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica* on the Place of the Peshitto Version in the Apparatus Criticus of the New Testament. Along with these publications account is taken also of Mr. BURKITT'S essay, in the Cambridge *Texts and Studies*, on *St. Ephraim's Quotations from the Gospel*, and Herr HJELT'S investigation into *The Ancient Syriac Version of the Gospels and Tatian's Diatessaron* first published in 1901 and recently reprinted in ZÄHNS' *Forschungen*. The paper at present before us gives first of all a survey of the editions of the Peshitta from WIDMANSTADT (1555) down. There is pointed out the insufficiency of the MSS. basis on which they have all been built, up to Mr. GWILLIAM'S. But we are reminded as well of the stability of the text of the Peshitta, the result of which is that Mr. GWILLIAM'S critical text differs remarkably little from the uncritical ones that preceded it, and the chief gain we derive from it is that we are now better assured that this and no other is the true text of the Peshitta. Then the writer proceeds to an investigation into the original form of the Syriac Version and the course of its early history. His own summary of conclusions (pp. 170-171) is as follows:

"The history, then, of the Syriac translation of the Gospels may be briefly set forth as follows. The first translation, that of the old Syriac, was made during the second century, and must have been already in existence for some time before the year 172 A. D., the date of the Diatessaron. This version, however, was not the work of a single translator, but the different Gospels were translated separately by different scribes, the oldest translation being that of St. Matthew, and the latest that of St. Luke. Of this old Syriac version we possess two manuscripts, representing two different recensions. Of these the earlier, the Sinai Palimpsest, is on the whole a faithful witness to the text of the second century, while the second, the Curetonian

MS., represents a late recension of the third century. The Old Syriac translation of the second century, however, was soon followed by a rival version, which quickly ousted it from popular favor. In 172-3 A. D. TATIAN completed his Diatessaron, a Harmony of the Four Gospels, from the older version, which he revised with the help of a 'Western' copy of the Greek text, at the same time introducing a number of arbitrary changes in accordance with his theological views. . . It is certain that the Diatessaron enjoyed a wide circulation during the third and fourth centuries, while the extent of its influence is reflected in the later recension of the old Syriac represented by the Curetonian manuscript. The last step in the Syriac translations of the Gospels is represented by the Peshitta, or Syriac Vulgate. This revision of the Old Syriac, in conformity with the Greek text then current, was carried out under the auspices of Rabbula soon after 411 A. D. Henceforward the Diatessaron disappeared except among the Nestorians communities, and the Peshitta was alone accepted as the ecclesiastical text."

To the present reviewer these conclusions appear sober and well-grounded. The main point of interest concerns, of course, the sequence assigned to the several forms in which the Old Syriac has come down to us: the Sinai MS., the Diatessaron, the Curetonian MS. Behind this, however, there lies the more important conclusion that there existed antecedent to the Peshitta, an Old Syriac represented in one or another state of textual transmission by these three documents. That is after all the chief matter. The date assigned to the revision which produced the Peshitta hangs on Mr. BURKITT'S determination that Ephrem's quotations are not taken from the Peshitta, but from the earlier version in the form in which it appears in Tatian. This dating permits the identification of this revision with that which is historically attested as having been carried through by the great prelate Rabbula. (411-435).

B. B. W.