

The Bible Champion

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THE ARENA.

An Examination of the Testimony of the Evangelists.

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Part 2.

MATTHEW, called also Levi, was a Jew of Galilee, but of what city is uncertain. He held the place of publican, or tax-gatherer, under the Roman government, and his office seems to have consisted in collecting the taxes within his district, as well as the duties and customs levied on goods and persons, passing in and out of his district or province, across the lake of Genesareth. While engaged in this business, at the office or usual place of collection, he was required by Jesus to follow him, as one of his disciples; a command which he immediately obeyed. Soon afterwards, he appears to have given a great entertainment to his fellow-publicans and friends, at which Jesus was present; intending probably both to celebrate his own change of profession, and to give them an opportunity to profit by the teaching of his new Master. (Matt. ix. 10; Mark ii. 14, 15; Luke v. 29). He was constituted one of the twelve apostles, and constantly attended the person of Jesus as a faithful follower, until the crucifixion; and after the ascension of his Master, he preached the gospel for some time, with other apostles, in Judea, and afterwards in Ethiopia, where he died.

He is generally allowed to have written first, of all the evangelists; but whether in the Hebrew or the Greek language, or in both, the learned are not agreed, nor is it material to our purpose to inquire; the genuineness of our present Greek gospel being sustained by satisfactory evidence. The precise time when he wrote is also uncertain, the several dates given to it among learned men, varying from A. D. 37 to A.

D. 64. The earlier date, however is argued with greater force, from the improbability that the Christians would be left for several years without a general and authentic history of our Saviour's ministry; from the evident allusions which it contains to a state of persecution in the church at the time it was written; from the titles of sanctity ascribed to Jerusalem, and a higher veneration testified for the temple than is found in the other and later evangelists, from the comparative gentleness with which Herod's character and conduct are dealt with, that bad prince probably being still in power; and from the frequent mention of Pilate, as still governor of Judea.

That Matthew was himself a native Jew, familiar with the opinions, ceremonies, and customs of his country-men; that he was conversant with the Sacred Writings, and habituated to their idiom, a man of plain sense, but of little learning, except what he derived from the Scriptures of the Old Testament; that he wrote seriously and from conviction, and had, on most occasions, been present, and attended closely, to the transactions which he relates, and relates, too, without any view of applause to himself; are facts which we may consider established by internal evidence, as strong as the nature of the case will admit. It is deemed equally well proved, both by internal evidence and the aid of history, that he wrote for the use of his countrymen, the Jews. Every circumstance is noticed which might conciliate their belief, and every unnecessary expression is avoided which might obstruct it. They looked for the Messiah, of the lineage of David,

THE CLUB.

IMAGERY OF THE BIBLE CORRECT.*

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The theory of the correctness of the imagery of the Bible is being sustained, as witnesses the whole body of discoveries from the very beginning of archæological research to the present time. This theory is another proof of the fundamental and universal working theories of criticism which is, however, sometimes, in the heat of controversy, forgotten, and its importance overlooked or even belittled. But, whatever the theory of the origin and the authorship of the various books of the Bible, there is always, with only a few special exceptions, the underlying assumption on the part of the critics of the correctness of the imagery reflecting the topography, the flora and the fauna, the seasons, the customs and the institutions. Indeed, upon the trustworthiness of the imagery as upon exactness in the use of words, criticism depends. Etymology only provides the bones of words, it is imagery that supplies flesh and blood and the breath of life, and sometimes something more, also; it supplies that which in a person we call the countenance.

Thus the importance of the imagery becomes very far-reaching. It is no mere unimportant accident of the characteristics of a book that its imagery is correct. If it had a false countenance, it would be so far a false book. It has professedly an imaginary countenance, it so far definitely limits its scope for teaching the truth. This truthfulness of countenance marks the difference between romance and realism in fiction and gives to realism so much wider field for the teaching of the truth. It makes to some extent also the difference between history of the old school and history of the new; between the impassioned declamation of Prescott and the word painting of Ridpath. It makes, alas, the difference between a real newspaper and the works of fiction which

the so-called journalism of today so often inflicts upon a too credulous public.

Then, a witness in court who is caught in inaccuracies of coloring in his description of an event, i. e., the imagery of whose story is not correct, is a discredited witness; while the witness, the imagery of whose testimony is accurate in every respect, ingratiates himself at once in the esteem of the jurymen as probably in other respects a trustworthy witness. So, while the correctness of the imagery of the Bible does not extend its guarantee to every detail of the testimony of the book, it does give it a *good countenance*, which commends it much. *Without* that good countenance, the Bible would be a discredited book. And it is not difficult to imagine how such inaccuracy of imagery, if it existed, would be used by critics to discredit utterly the book as a revelation from God, or even a trustworthy teacher of this modern, self-sufficient world in any respect.

Now, this correctness of imagery, this underlying assumption of criticism of every hue, is being confirmed indisputably in its general features, and corroborated year by year in its minutest details, even in those special features of the imagery which for any reason have been disputed. To this end testify the whole company of Oriental residents, intelligent travellers and scientific investigators, from Napoleon in his account of his Eastern campaigns, to Robinson and Stanley, learned travellers; Thompson, for nearly half a century a resident of the land; Van Lennep, Palmer, in the *Desert of the Exodus*; and the distinguished Clermont Ganneau, in his *Archæological Researches*. To these now may be added Van Dyke, of the present day, traveler, essayist, poet, who comes to us with what he says is to him a new conviction "that Christianity is an out-of-doors religion. From the birth in the grotto, at Bethlehem, (where Joseph and Mary took refuge because there was no room in the inn) to the crowning death on the hill of Calvary, outside of the city wall, all of its important events took place

* "The Deciding Voice of the Monuments in Biblical Criticism."

out of doors. Except the discourse in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, all of its great words from the Sermon on the Mount to the last commission to the disciples, were spoken in the open air. How shall we understand it unless we carry it under the free sky and interpret it in the companionship of nature?" Because we can do so and find the imagery corresponding to the reality, the interpretation carries conviction with it.

LUTHER AND THE MODERN PULPIT.

Dr. J. B. Remensnyder, ex-president of the Lutheran General Synod, sounded some warning notes to Protestantism in St. James' Lutheran Church, where was observed the three hundred and ninety-sixth anniversary of the beginning of Reformation by the act of Martin Luther in nailing the theses to the Wittenburg Cathedral door.

From this able and impressive sermon we select for *THE CHAMPION* one very striking paragraph which will be of great interest to our readers.

"The Reformation was a great movement in behalf of liberty. By it, freedom of conscience, the greatest boon of the last four centuries, was given to the world. Even Michelet, the Catholic historian admits: "To whom am I indebted for the liberty of publishing what I am now inditing, but to Luther, the emancipator of modern thought." But every great movement tends to extremes. And so we see to-day in many quarters, dangerous abuse of this evangelical liberty. Liberty that does not degenerate into anarchy must be regulated by law.

"The outcry against creeds in many quarters of Protestantism is an abuse of Christian liberty. What is a creed? It is a concise, definite statement of the teachings of the Bible as arrived at by the consciousness of the Christians of the ages, and then formulated by the Church's greatest theologians. The creed thus becomes the confession of the Church universal. What reason, then, in this railing against creeds as outworn, tyrannical, and divisive? The creed charts the Bible. The Bible can no more be any man's creed than the stars can

be any man's astronomy. The creed is the strongest bulwark in defence of evangelical Christianity.

"That is just the reason the religious free-thinkers and destructive radicals so hate it. Protestants who decry the great ecumenical creeds are trying to subvert the mighty pillars of Christianity.

"Such are some of the proversions of evangelical liberty far too common among Protestants. They are the apples of Sodom borne by counterfeit Protestantism. They are far too prevalent to be overlooked, and they constitute a grave danger. They place a powerful argument in the hands of Roman Catholics against the whole Reformation movement. And it is fitting that on this Reformation anniversary a warning note should be sounded. When Protestantism surrenders the evangelical principle of justification by faith, ignores the necessity of the Church for salvation, and maligns the creeds which enshrine the Christian faith, then it will write the Reformation a failure. What Christendom needs for power and progress is not so much an evangelistic campaign as it does a revival of Luther's teaching on these vital Gospel truths."

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THE CRITICAL GYROSCOPE.

HERBERT W. MAGOUN, PH.D.

It is a well known fact that the grounds upon which the critical theory rests have been repeatedly altered. The original position took the divine appellations as a basis for the division of Genesis into two documents that are wont to be designated as J. and E. Roughly speaking, this was soon found to be at fault, and the "redactor" was drafted into the service to meet the new needs. When that combination broke down, Hupfeld postulated a second "Elohism," to whom, with further help from the "redactor," was consigned the task of accounting for the mixed condition revealed in the supposed texts by the stylistic tests that had been devised. This, at least, is, in a general way, what took place. Exact details are hardly necessary, since the purpose in hand has refer-