

## SOME CONTEMPORARIES OF MOSES.

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Amongst the chief leaders of men Moses takes a prominent place. In literature he formed one of the grandest styles ever known, and which remained a model of fine composition for a thousand years. In religious thought he made an epoch, the second greatest known to mankind. As a ruler of men he has no superior. Where did he arise? What were the formative influences of his literary skill, his religious force, his statesmanlike ability? The inquiry is worth pursuing. We recognize in him a divine gift to the world. He was one in whom was found the Holy Spirit of God. But that does not destroy our desire to know if in early life he had any special surroundings out of which his greatness was evolved. Stephen, in the presence of a number of the scholars of his day, asserted "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Can we ascertain anything about that wisdom? It is not long since the time when we must have answered, No. But in the last few years in a marvelous way a very large amount of ancient Egyptian literature has been brought to light, and to some extent the power to read it recovered. That enables a different reply. Now, scattered in many museums are inscribed stelas and papyri. And on the walls of tombs and temples on the Nile extensive inscriptions have been copied. Very much of this has been read, and it has yielded no little information of the opinions prevalent in ancient days. In our inquiries into the evolution of human thought, especially on religion, this cannot but be important. And it ought to have some influence on Biblical criticism. The attempt has not been unknown of recent years to fix the date of a portion of scripture by a consideration of the evolution of religious thought. For example, it has been boldly asserted that

the books of the Old Testament ascribed to Moses could not have been written by him, because they reveal beliefs and ideas which were not evolved till a later date. The principle may be admitted, but the great consideration is a correct knowledge of the beliefs and ideas of the period. In a critical work recently published by an author of high reputation it is asserted that Job could not have been written before the age of Solomon, because of the expression, "gold of Ophir," not knowing that it is found in writings ages earlier than Moses. This writer further argues that it could not have been as ancient as generally imagined, because of the descriptions of the conditions of life and manners, ignorant, evidently, that many of these descriptions precisely agree with some recently discovered of much earlier date than Exodus. It is not, however, the object of this article to criticise critics, but to make known some of the large amount of literature of the Mosaic age which recent discoveries have brought to light, and which cannot but affect the views that are held of this great lawgiver and statesman and seer. Let us examine some of the monumental remains of the nineteenth dynasty, which is now almost universally believed to be the age in which Moses lived. Epitaphs, used aright, are of the very highest value. They may not be true of the person upon whose tomb they are inscribed, but they reveal the religious thought of the time.

KANRO.—In the Egyptian museum of the Louvre at Paris there is the monument of one of this name, who was of the court of Ramses II., the Pharaoh of the oppression. Hence Kanro was a contemporary and possibly an acquaintance of Moses. He is described as "a royal scribe, master of the mysteries of heaven, of earth and of hades." From the inscription we extract the following: "Hail, my Lord, passing through unending time, dwelling in eternity." "Lord of unending time, ruler of eternity." "Lord of lords, ruler of rulers, God of gods." "With thee righteousness is established before thy face, let me rejoice in righteousness and beauty."

“They who exist, amongst gods and men, are in thy hand. Thou appointest each his place in the unseen world; they pray to thee. Moving on millions of millions of years they arrive at thee. They who are in the womb have their faces towards thee.” “The great, as well as the small, are with thee. They who live on earth approach thee in one place. Thou art their Lord. There is none beside thee.” “What is and what is not depends on thee.” Such sublime thought of God was held in the circle in which Kanro moved, the learned men of the age of Ramses, which was in the highest probability the station of Moses in his youth.

**RAMSES.**—We shall be mistaken if we imagine that all the scribes of that generation held similar lofty views. There was diversity then as now. In the Louvre there is a fine palette of a scribe of the same age, of the name of Ramses (begotten of the sun). It has a long inscription and its possessor was evidently a religious man. It assuredly indicates a great respect for religion at that time, so that pious expressions were engraved on articles of daily use. In this there is little of the spiritual as with Kanro, but much of the ritual. Ramses speaks of offerings of oxen and geese, of libations of wine and milk and all things beautiful and pure and gifts of flowers. He gives quite a list of gods whom he serves, and from whom he hopes to have “a good burial, a prolonged old age and a place among the glorified where his limbs may be regathered.”

**BEKA.**—On a stela, now in the museum of Turin, there is an epitaph to one Beka, of the same generation. He was of rank, a “superintendent of public graneries.” This is interesting and points to a governmental department formed by Joseph. In the epitaph he boasts of being beloved by the monarch and of having risen by merit to his preferment. The religious views here expressed are of a philosophical cast. There is no mention of any worship of gods, yet acknowledgment of the Supreme. At the commencement he says: “I am just and

true, without malice, having set God in my heart and become accustomed to discern his will." "Now I have reached the city of those who are in eternity." "I have rejoiced to speak the truth, and know the glory of doing so on earth from the beginning to the tomb. My defense will stand. It will be said in that day when I arrive before the divine judges, experienced interpreters, punishers of sin, 'My soul is pure.'" There is no mention of Ra or of Osiris, but the anticipation of judgment by just assessors who know all. He speaks of affection to his parents, which appears to have been considered a great virtue in ancient Egypt. He concludes by commending others to be happy. "Pass your life in enjoyment until you rest in your tomb."

ANI.—One of the most precious treasures of the British Museum is the well-known Ani papyrus of the Book of the Dead. The marvelous collection of religious treatises to which that term has been given in modern times was complete before the age of Moses, and there is evidence that it was very well known in his time. It unmistakably teaches the doctrine of a future judgment, the resurrection of the body and an eternal life of blessedness for the righteous. In this copy there are a number of splendid colored illustrations. It was the product of a body of men with which we may well imagine Moses to have been associated, the scribes and high officers of the court of the great Pharaoh. Ani appears to have been a kind of Chancellor of the Exchequer and had charge of graneries. In a spirited colored picture at the commencement he is represented standing in an act of adoration, with hands uplifted as if in prayer. This suggests that in those days it was believed that piety was appropriate to a man of high rank. He wears a white robe with large loose sleeves, and an embroidered collar round his neck. He has a serious, thoughtful countenance, his face well shaven, and his hair dark and hanging in curls. His appearance is that of a thoughtful, wise, good man. His wife stands near; Tutu is her name. She is slim and

graceful, evidently a court beauty. She wears a plain white dress, with a green embroidered collar. Her black hair hangs in ringlets down to her waist and is crowned with a large lotus lily. She was one of the temple choir. There was evidently strong affection between the husband and wife, for they are represented as going hand in hand together to the judgment, through the many mysterious portals of the unseen world, and enjoying together the bliss of the future. The illustrations of this remarkable papyrus force the conviction that Ani and Tutu enjoyed a very refined life. And the position of Moses as a favorite of a royal princess and well educated in the learning of the age, and certainly of no ordinary intellectual power, or the capacity to rule amongst men, may have brought him into the friendship of this lady and gentleman before he felt it his duty to accept banishment rather than disavow his sympathy with the distressed Israelites.

**HUNEFER.**—The papyrus of Hunefer in the British Museum is another fine specimen of the work of a school of scribes of the age of Moses. It brings further evidence of the lofty idea of the marriage relationship held by some in that age. Hunefer and his wife, Nasha, walk and worship side by side in life. His death fills her with poignant sorrow. They are happily united in the future state. Here is found a very fine hymn to Ra, which throws a light on the religious thought of the cultured men of that generation. It appears to be addressed to the Supreme Being, or to the personification of one of his attributes; or it may be simply a poetic mode of address to God, as we sing "Lead, kindly light" or "Sun of my soul." The fact is, there is sufficient to justify the conclusion that with many Egyptians of olden days no more was meant by Amon or Horus than we in a hymn to "Eternal light" or the "Sun of righteousness." It commences, "Thou art crowned King of gods, thou art Lord of heaven and Lord of earth, Creator of heights and depths, one God, evolved in time, Maker of earth, Creator of man, Maker of the river of the sky, Maker of the river

of Egypt, Maker of waters giving life to all therein; girding the mountains, evolving men and cattle, Maker of heaven and earth, traversing heaven with glad heart." It gives a very vivid picture of the judgment of the scales where Hunefer is led to see his heart weighed against the symbol of righteousness, or of law, in the presence of a retinue of judges. Hunefer was a royal scribe of the court of Leti I., hence possibly a little earlier than Moses, who might, however, have been at his funeral and was almost certainly acquainted with this grand hymn to divine light, which has not been found elsewhere.

LITERATURE.—It was at one time thought that Moses was the father of literature, and that the Pentateuch was the oldest book extant. Now a very large number of works of a very varied character have been discovered of the age and of ages much earlier. There is a work on Mathematics, and a medical treatise. There are a number of works of fiction, some giving very entertaining stories. There are counsels for the guidance of life, such as the precepts of Ptah Hotep, a very remarkable book, full of common sense, showing a highly developed state of society. There are narratives of travel and adventure. The age of Moses was rich in poetry. There was the splendid epic of Pentaur. There was "The Book of Hades," an extraordinary conception of the journey of Ra, by night, through the region of darkness, meeting with the disembodied spirits awaiting judgment, not of men only, but of gods; showing a belief that beside human beings there were other creatures who lived and died and were judged for a future resurrection and were called by the word we translate gods. And there were minor or short poems, some of great beauty, such as the one called "The Harper's Lament," engraved on a tomb of the eighteenth dynasty. One of the most indubitable signs of the high mental culture of the age is found in the ruins of the majestic temples. In the breadth of the conception, in the beauty of the ornamentation they reveal the work of men of no ordinary power and taste.

Moses must have seen some of these, perhaps in their glory; and his imagination could not have been uninfluenced by their splendor. The Hall of Columns at Karnak, the Temple of Osiris at Abydos, the tomb of Leti at Thebes, and the wonderful Memorium at Gurnah were probably completed during the youth of Moses. To this day even the ruins stand amongst the wonders of the world, and cannot but be the work of a generation of very great taste and skill.

It was an age of great mental power and taste, and it was also, as we learn from the Pentateuch, and age of gross brutality and oppression. It was not wholly destitute of finer thinking. One more quotation from a poem in the Gizeh Museum by one who might have been an acquaintance of Moses: "Hymns to thee, framer of gods, supporter of heaven, founder of earth. Awake in strength, Lord of eternity, Maker of everlasting time, \* \* \* Ruler of mankind. Hidden is his name from his offspring, that name which is Amon" (the concealed); Maker of men, sustaining them, forming their life, distinguishing the skin one from another; listening to the wretched in captivity; gracious of heart when one cries to Hun; delivering the fearful from the violent of heart, judging the poor and the oppressed, Lord of mercy greatly loving."

It is difficult to ascertain anything satisfactory with regard to the mental or religious condition of the Israelites with whom Moses came into contact. There is, however, one source of information which has not received the consideration it deserves. Some idea may be gained from the names men received. This is especially true with regard to ancient Egypt. Ramses means a child of the sun and indicates the prevalence of the sun worship of God under the name Ba. Akenaten, "Glory of the disc," suggests the existence of another form of sun worship which history informs us that king's mother introduced into Egypt. The name Merenptah indicates that that tyrant's mother desired that he should be the

beloved of Ptah, the creator. Now, applying this to the first chapter of the Book of Numbers, we come to the conclusion that the oppressed people, however much degenerated, had not entirely forgotten the God of their fathers. We may read: "And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers. And these are the names of the men that shall stand with you: Of the tribe of Reuben, 'God the rock,' the son of 'Almighty the light.' Of Simeon, 'Peace of God,' the son of 'Rock of the Almighty.' Of Judah, 'Enchanter,' the son of 'People of Freedom.' Of Issachar, 'Gift of God,' the son of 'Little One.' Of Zebulon, 'God the Father,' the son of 'Strength.' Of the children of Joseph; of Ephraim, 'God hears,' the son of 'People of Renown.' Of Manassah, 'Reward of God,' the son of 'Redemption Rock.' Of Benjamin, 'Father, Judge,' the son of 'My Breaker.' Of Dan, 'Brother of Help,' the son of 'People of the Almighty.' Of Asher, 'Entreaty of God,' the son of 'Trouble.' Of Gad, 'God Increases,' the son of 'Knowledge of God.' Of Napthali, 'Brother of Calamity,' the son of 'Fountain.' "

This conclusion is unquestionable that whilst in almost every name of an Egyptian found in sepulchral records there is some mention of one of the false deities; in this list there is not a single reference to any, but many to Him the patriarchs worshiped. The twenty-four men whose names are here translated were born in Egypt just at the time when the chosen people were in their most depressed condition. So far there is a suggestion that they were free from contamination with the idolatries by which they were surrounded. This is also seen in such names as "People of Freedom," "People of Renown," "People of the Almighty." More than half the names indicate that their parents had thoughts of the true God. Eight have El, suggestive of The Mighty One; three have Shaddai, which some Jewish authorities assert indicates the tenderness, the motherhood in God. Some names indicate a Belief in prayer, and some that



He is the rewarder of those who seek Him. The term "Rock" is interesting, being one which Moses adopted and afterwards became a favorite. The name "Eliab" is especially noteworthy as indicating the grand, universal faith in the Fatherhood of God.

We have but touched the fringe of a consideration which deserves more attention than it has hitherto received. The modern deeply interesting study of the evolution of religions should be founded on fact, not on theory. The religious opinion of an age should be studied in the monuments of that age, not in a preconceived notion of what that opinion should have been on the theory of evolution. Recent discoveries in Egypt have brought to light facts which give an entirely different view to that previously held on the spiritual condition of the age of the Exodus, one which must considerably modify much that has been written about Moses. The stores of information of the thought and opinion of those days, recently brought to light, are as yet, it is admitted, but imperfectly understood. But they introduce us to a pre-biblical literature of very great extent, of subtle thought and rare poetry, which fills us with astonishment at its wondrous and unexpected splendor.