

of God. It was in virtue of this revelation that the Christian religion was first founded, and it is in virtue of nothing else that the Christian religion continues irrefragable in the presence of all advances made by science and by the general progress of humanity. The *application* indeed of that revelation is capable of continued and ever-changing development, but the revelation itself is capable of no further perfection.

5. *This view does not diminish the value of Scripture, in general, for all Scripture remains a commentary upon the central revelation embodied in Christ.*—

The Old Testament leads up to that revelation. The New Testament is the chief means by which we know the mind and will of Christ, which mind and will constitute the core of the religion in question. This view, moreover, exalts Christ, in that doubtful parts of Scripture are brought before the tribunal of His direct personal teaching. To think thus is to carry the Reformation Scripture-principle to its necessary and proper fulfilment. And that any creed, or statement of what Christianity is, should continue to lie open to the test of proof, is in perfect accord with the true spirit of the Reformation.

The Merchants of Ur.

BY W. ST. CHAD BOSCAWEN, F.R.H.S.

THERE are two periods in the history of the Hebrew people which are intimately associated with ancient Chaldea—periods of vast importance in the social and religious history of this people. The one is the age when Abram dwelt among his own people, and in his father's house in Ur of the Chaldees; the other that period when the captive people sojourned beside the waters of Babylon. Both these associations mark vital epochs in the life of Israel, for the first may be justly termed the birthday of the Hebrew people, while the second is the age of that most marvellous renaissance of national and religious life. It may be well imagined that any light which the monuments may throw upon the life of Chaldea in these times would be eagerly welcomed by biblical students. With regard to the second period, the material for the study of the social and religious life is ample, indeed. The commercial documents—legal, and other records of the great banking firms of Babylon, such as the Egibis and others, who flourished in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors—enable us to reconstruct almost every detail of the life of the people during the age of the Captivity; but material in any quantity has been wanting for the study of the earlier epoch. The old proverb that 'all things come to those who wait' has had many exemplifications in the field of Oriental discovery; and yet another is now given us in the acquisition by the British Museum of a large number of tablets, which place vividly before us the social, commercial, and religious life of Ur and the

other cities of Chaldea in the days when Abram was resident there. It has long been evident from the lexicographical and other inscriptions from Babylonia that the first Semitic settlers in Chaldea very quickly associated themselves with trade, and as time went on formed in most of the large cities trading communities, who rapidly attained a high position in the land; and thus the epithet of Isaiah (xxiii. 8), 'whose merchants are princes,' was applicable to the Chaldeans at a period much more remote than was generally imagined. The fact that in the earliest Akkadian inscriptions we find the *mana* or *maneh*, the recognised standard weight, shows the great influence which the Semites had exercised on trade. Indeed, we know that the *maneh* standard weight was fixed by Dungi, king of Chaldea, as early as B.C. 2800, for the British Museum possesses a stone weight of 'one *mana* according to the standard fixed by Dungi, king of Chaldea,' which was made in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. In the days of Abram's residence in Chaldea, which cannot be placed earlier than B.C. 2300, trade must have been already quite settled, and the laws of commerce established on a firm basis. That such was the case we have now ample proof afforded us by the tablets above mentioned; which show not only that the laws of commerce were settled in Chaldea, but also that those rules were the recognised code throughout the whole of Western Asia; and hence we have a clear explanation of the reason why all the details of the purchase of the cave of Machpelah so

closely resemble those of a Babylonian contract tablet (Gen. xxiii.). If the merchants of Chaldea had wandered throughout the land of Canaan we can well understand how the 'money current with the merchant' (Gen. xxiii. 16) was that of the Chaldean standard, and the merchant who had introduced trade into the land had no doubt carried with him some elements of Chaldean culture. And thus we can see how in later times the cuneiform writing, the cursive script of commerce, became the literary script of Canaan and Aram Naharaim, as shown by the Tel-el-Amarna tablets.

The tablets which have been obtained for the British Museum by Dr. E. A. W. Budge are of the interesting class known as envelope tablets—that is, double, one being placed inside the other, so that two documents always existed to record the deed, probably the open and sealed evidence of Jer. xxxii. 10, 11. The documents record the trading transactions of a large firm of merchants, the head of which was a man named Zini-Istar (the favourite of Istar). As banking originated in the West as an adjunct of the business of the jeweller and goldsmith, so in Chaldea it seems largely to have been associated with the trade of 'slave-dealing,' for this seems to have been a great feature, if not the chief one in the business of Zini-Istar and his sons. In Chaldea, slavery was a recognised institution; but, as among the Hebrews, was robbed of its severity by the existence of a code of human laws as to the position and status of the slave. There are two tablets in this section of great value. The first is one which proves the existence of a foreign slave trade and the purchase of selected slaves, as in the case of Joseph—to bring to the wealthy dealers in Chaldea. In this document we have the element of barter introduced. It reads as follows: 204 measures of oil, the standard of the sun-god of the value of one-third of a *maneh*, two-thirds of a shekel for the price of the *white slave* from Guti, which Ubala-abi-umi as commission has bought on commission from certain dealers. 'In one month the white slave of Guti he shall bring. If in one month he brings not the money he shall refund according to his sealed contract.' Here, then, we have slave-dealers going into the land of Guti or Kurdistan, the Goim of Gen. xiv., and bringing white slaves for sale in Chaldea, in the days of Abram. It is also curious to notice that estimating the silver value at five shillings per ounce, this slave is £22, 6s. 2d., a price very nearly

equivalent to that of Joseph, twenty pieces of silver, that is, £22, 13s. 4d.; and so there was perhaps a recognised price for these special slaves. The second inscription which may be selected is one relating to a female slave. A man named Sin-bil-annu ('the moon-god is our lord') gave as a present to his wife Saddasu ('the beloved') a female slave named Mutebaste, and makes the following stipulations:—'His sons shall have no right of reclaiming, and all children that are born to her shall be the property of the wife.' A daughter of the woman born before marriage is also specified as her property. Here we have a clear indication of the special handmaidens of the wife, as in the case of Hagar (Gen. xvi. 3), who were not part of the estate to be claimed by the sons, but the special private property of the wife, and at her disposal. Such a custom exists to this day in the East.

The firm also did a large business in the hiring out of slaves for stated periods, and these are interesting as giving the rate of wages, which was only two and a half shekels, about six and eightpence per annum; but then the hirer to find all food and clothes, and pay the slave one and fourpence, or half a shekel, for himself (possibly monthly). Of course it must be remembered that these small amounts in no way represent the real value, as the purchasing power of silver was much higher in these days. The tablets relating to land agency are of great value, as they are quite in agreement with the conditions of the purchase of Machpelah. In several cases the trees planted on the land are mentioned, and of course the borders carefully given (Gen. xxiii. 16). Such dealings often lead to disputes, and an adjournment was then made to the local law court situated in the 'gate of the city' or in the courtyard of the local temple. Such an example as the following gives us a wonderful insight into the life and times of Abram. Zini-Istar and his brothers are partners in business, and a house is bought by them from Irba Sin, another great trader. It seems, however, not to have been a transaction of the firm, but of Zini-Istar alone, for a deed is preserved, which he says: 'Zini-Istar, in the temple of the sun-god, spake thus: With the money of my mother have I bought it, and not with the money of us two: his brother has no claim over the house.' These deeds are carefully attested by a number of witnesses, and sealed with their seals or marked

with the nail marks, and oaths are sworn by the gods of the city, either Samas or Merodach, and by the name of the king.

Although the main features of the commercial legislation in these tablets is of Semitic origin, many of the technical terms are Akkadian; often, I am inclined to think, used as abbreviations.

One feature especially brought before us is the high position and freedom accorded to women, and this no doubt was due to the survival of the old Akkadian respect for women and of the law of matriarchal descent. With these and an important series of inscriptions relating to adoption, I propose to deal in my next paper.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF II. CORINTHIANS.

'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again.'—2 Cor. v. 14, 15 (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

'For.'—Paul now *proves* what was implied in ver. 13, that his whole working was done not in his own interest but for God and the brethren; the love of Christ holds him in bounds, so that he cannot proceed or do otherwise.—MEYER.

'The love of Christ.'—The Greek, like the English, admits of two interpretations—Christ's love for us, or our love of Christ. St. Paul's uniform use of this, and like phrases, however, elsewhere (Rom. v. 5, viii. 35; 1 Cor. xvi. 24; 2 Cor. xiii. 14), is decisive in favour of the former. It was the apostle's sense of the love that Christ had shown to him and to all men that was acting as a constraining power, directing every act of every spiritual state to the good of others, restraining him from every self-seeking purpose.—PLUMPTRE.

That the love of Christ mean's Christ's love to us, and not our love to Him, is shown by the fact that Paul goes on at once to describe in what it consists. 'It constrains us,' he says, 'because we have come to this mind about it: One died for all; so then all died.' Here, we may say, is the content of Christ's love, the essence of it, that which gives it its soul-subduing and constraining power: He loved us, and gave Himself for us; He died for all, and in that death of His all died.—DENNEY.

'Constraineth us.'—The word translated *constrain* signifies to *coop up, keep within narrow bounds.*

Cp. Luke xii. 50, where the same word occurs. It is also used by St. Luke of diseases, as in Luke iv. 38; Acts xxviii. 8; and of a multitude crowding, as in Luke viii. 45. Here it means 'prevents us from doing anything but serve you for Christ's sake.'—LIAS.

'One died for all.'—For all men in general, so that no one is excluded from the effect of his propitiation, and every one, so soon as he becomes a believer, attains subjectively to the enjoyment of this effect. This subjective realisation, although in the case of those who refuse belief it is frustrated by their guilt, is, in the divine plan of salvation, destined for *all*, and has already taken place in the case of believers; hence Paul, who himself belonged to the latter, might justly from this his own standpoint in the *all died*, without meaning by *all* only believers, prove the restraining influence of the love of Christ, which he himself had experienced.—MEYER.

'Therefore all died.'—Not, they *are to die*; not, they were *subjected to death*; nor, they *must have died*; nor, it is *just as good as if they had died*; but, they *died*, which is to be considered as a real fact, objectively contained in the fact of the death of Jesus, and subjectively accomplished in the consciousness of individuals through faith.—MEYER.

'That if one died for all, then were all dead' is an unfortunate mistranslation and wrong reading for *that one died for all, therefore all died*. What compels Paul to sacrifice himself to the work of God for his converts is the conviction, which he formed once for all at his conversion, that One, even Christ, died on behalf of all men (Rom. v. 15-19) a redeeming death (ver. 21); and that consequently, in that death, all potentially died with Him—died