

"8. In order to express my gratitude for having heard and learned the true religion I will be born in this life whenever the true religion may prosper, and will guard it generation after generation and birth after birth by arousing a firm faith in the true religion and by becoming a disciple of (the Three Treasures as) my Master.

"These are my vows and desires, and I write this down in order to give testimony to them.

"If I should violate the substance of these vows, let the Three Treasures, Buddhas and Patriarchs, celestial beings and *Nāgas*, and all other guardians of the religion, inflict severe punishment upon each of the eighty and four thousands of pores of my, Takemochi's, body; let me suffer in this life from the white and black leprosies, and make me lose the opportunity even of coming into contact with the religion of Buddha during seven rebirths in future.

"I humbly beseech the Three Treasures that they should testify, approve and protect this, and that *Nāgas* and celestial deities accept these vows and let them be fulfilled.

"The 15th day of the 8th month
in the 3d year of Yengen (1338)

Signed.

COMMENTS ON "MORAL LAW AND THE BIBLE."

BY A. KAMPMEIER.

NINE years ago I began as a contributor to *The Open Court* with an article on "Pious Fraud." Although even to-day I would not on the whole take back the position I took then, and although my purpose then was entirely pure, deploring how greatly true religion had been harmed by what I criticized, still my article called forth some just criticism, and really was "onesided" in its statements, as the editor of *The Open Court* said, though he otherwise defended me. The case is somewhat similar with Westermayr in his article "Moral Law and the Bible" (*Open Court*, Sept., 1916). Whether his purpose was or was not the same he may decide.

First of all I will quote some erroneous statements of his with refutations, and these I think will justify some other criticisms which may be more debatable. I will add that I am not a "revelationist."

"Drunkenness finds no serious denunciation, certainly no grave punishment anywhere in the so-called books of Moses." How about the draconic law against the "riotous liver" (Rev. Vers.) "glutton" (A. V.) and the drunkard, Deut. xxi. 20?

"Lying is not reprehended in the Decalogue." What is bearing false witness? Lev. xix. 11 says: "I am Yahveh, your God. Ye shall not deal falsely, neither lie one to another." Besides this, lying, deceit and trickery—sins held up with especial delight by Gentiles to Jews as their national defect—get their condemnation by the wholesale in their own scriptures. A glance into any good concordance of the Bible, even taking only the Old Testament into consideration, will give full satisfaction.

"Rape and prostitution were commanded by the Lord, against which there could be no higher law." As to the first crime, Deut. xxii. 25 places death on forcing a betrothed maiden, while on the seduction of an unbetrothed there is a punishment of fifty shekels with the obligation to marry her (verse 29). Further, why was the tribe of Benjamin once almost exterminated? The Hebrews had an extremely characteristic word for sins of unchastity, *nebalah*, "folly," "madness." Is not Mr. Westermayr aware of the folly and madness of his assertion? Could any society exist where rape and prostitution were divinely commanded? As to the latter it is expressly forbidden in Lev. xix. 29, and moreover the custom of male and female prostitutes in honor of religious worship (common among other peoples at that time) is repeatedly forbidden. If Mr. Westermayr bases his assertion on Deut. xxi. 10-14, he forgets that this law was intended to lessen the barbarities of ancient warfare, forbidding the victor to take a captive for wife before a month's mourning for her relatives, or to sell her as a slave, after he has ceased to care for her. This law surely throws a bad light on the times, but is it a divine command for rape and prostitution? As to Hos. i. 2, the prophet receives no command for prostitution, but for a marriage in which he is to have children. Of course the woman he marries is not of good repute, "for the land (Israel) doth commit great whoredom, departing from the Lord," as it says in the context. This, as Mr. Westermayr himself says, means recognition of other divinities. The whole passage refers to the union of Yahveh with faithless Israel, and the act of Hosea is likewise symbolic, as are also the names of Hosea's children.

Another assertion is that God approved of the act of Onan. And yet Gen. xxxviii. 10 says: "And the thing he did was evil in the sight of the Lord and he slew him."

In regard to the ingratitude toward his benefactors for which Moses is flayed, note the following. Many tribes were subsumed under the name Midianites, roaming over different regions. In the Balaam story the Midianites stand in close connection with the Moabites. But the tribe to which the father-in-law of Moses belonged, the Kenites, was incorporated with the Israelites. One branch lived in northern Palestine, one on the southern border, and received friendly treatment from Israel. Compare Judg. i. 16; iv. 11; 1 Sam. xv. 6; xxx. 30. Jael, glorified by Deborah (not by God, as Mr. Westermayr says) in her song, was a Kenite. Of course no one defends the deed, nor is it necessary to make as much of this matter as Mr. Westermayr does. The Hebrews were not the only ones who glorified patriotic assassins.

The above very hasty assertions will justify us in casting doubt on other statements. The divisions "ante-Mosaic" and "Mosaic" are open to criticism. We have no documents from ante-Mosaic, not even from Mosaic times. The Pentateuch in its present form has been brought about gradually and very late (from about 621 B.C. till even later than the exile). Even the oldest portions inserted in it do not date farther back than from the earlier times of the Hebrew kings, i. e., centuries after Moses. As to the legends of Genesis, they of course rest on oral tradition and have been so worked over and over by successive redactors holding different views that if we had the original ones we very probably should not recognize them. For instance, as Gunkel says, "the chronology of the redactor P (priestly), when injected into the old legends, displays the most absurd oddities, so that Sarah is still beautiful at 65, and Ishmael is carried on his mother's back when sixteen." Besides, many legends are plainly late etymological stories tinged with reflections on later political relations between the Israelites and other peoples, e. g., Noah's curse of Canaan, and the Jacob and Esau story, while the story of the origin of the Ammonites and Moabites is surely a fiction of race hatred, probably not without religious and moral reflections on some lascivious rites in the worship of these people, similar to those of the Canaanites in the Noah story. Furthermore the figures in the patriarchal legends are not historical persons, but, at least to a great extent, eponymic heroes, dimly reflecting the early movements of the Hebrews and their intermixture with other peoples.

Since we have no documents on the prehistoric period of the Hebrews, we cannot form any definite ideas about their morality. We can only say that even the primitive Hebrews, though on a

lower stage of civilization, must have had some unwritten moral code instead of none whatever as Mr. Westermayr implies; for not even the most primitive society can hold together without some such laws. And Mr. Westermayr imagines that the Hebrews have suddenly jumped from such an unmoral stage to a moral stage through Moses! This would have been a miracle and against all the laws of history and development. Laws gradually grow as needs for them come up. On the other hand we may infer from a historical fact that in some respects the primitive Hebrews were freer from vices than after they had come in contact with the higher civilization in Canaan after the conquest, just as happens to-day when primitive peoples come in contact with higher civilizations. In Jeremiah we read of the Rechabites, who taught that people should go back to the simple life of the fathers and avoid wines and the luxuries of civilization.

If the primitive Hebrews must have had some moral code, their wrong doings must have been followed by consciousness of guilt and consequent forgiveness by atonement, a thing which Mr. Westermayr likewise entirely denies to them. Granted that he has the right to form his judgments in regard to the morality of the ante-Mosaic epoch upon the present documents, he ought to be fair in using them. To pick out some of the culprits of his long list, the acts of Jacob to Esau are characterized in the documents as deceit (as also that of Simeon and Levi) besides the curse delivered on the latter by their father on his death bed. Abraham is reproved for his lying and contemptible cowardice by Abimelech. There is a peculiar candor about these narratives in representing the national worthies as they actually were, while letting their victims stand out as nobler. This candor has led one of the redactors of the legends, according to Gunkel, to excuse jesuitically the lie of Abraham, Gen. xx. 12, the only attempt I can remember to white-wash the patriarchs.

As to the consciousness of guilt, why does Jacob flee before Esau, fear to meet him on his return, try to make atonement and confess in his straits: "Lord, I am unworthy of all thy mercies?" Why does Judah say of Thammar: "She is more righteous than I"? Why do the brothers of Joseph, when hard pressed by him, confess among themselves: "The Lord has found out our iniquity," and what does Judah say before Joseph? He is willing to undergo slavery for Benjamin in order not to bring the gray hairs of his father to the grave, a proof of filial and brotherly piety, denied by Mr. Westermayr to the ante-Mosaic epoch. There is more psychological delineation of guilt and its consequences in the simple state-

ment of facts than if they were accompanied by much moralizing. And if Mr. Westermayr took so much pains in making out a long list of culprits, how did he happen to skip Joseph saying to Potiphar's wife: "Why should I do such a great evil, etc.?" By the way we might bring the same accusation of unconsciousness of sin against modern times, when the same sins happen daily. Man is about the same now as he ever was, and in morality he has made about the least progress, witness our terrible times.

Further, I can nowhere find any hint that the ante-Mosaic documents represent God as favoring the patriarchs just on account of their wrong doing, any more than the Homeric poems represent the heroes of the different warring parties as favored by this or that deity just on account of their moral defects. The Greek or Hebrew heroes are favored simply by the grace of the Greek or Hebrew deity. I do not deny that the racial ancestors of the Hebrews have the marks of their racial moral defects as well as those of other peoples in their pre-historic legends; this is natural, but they surely also have their virtues. And we must never forget this if we would be fair.

Coming to the Mosaic epoch I would say that Moses is considered by Biblical critics less a legislator than a genius who was able to unite the Hebrew tribes under the religion of Yahveh of Sinai, to whom alone they should owe strict fidelity, excluding all other gods. This religion gradually developed into a stern monotheism. Of course all law was later derived from Yahveh through the intervention of the great leader Moses, and even later Babylonian elements were subsumed under it. But that from this time on the Hebrews were taught for the first time not to steal, to kill, etc., as Mr. Westermayr puts it, seems to me as naive as that the law giving of Moses, if he ever gave much, was all due to the Egyptian civilization in which he had been brought up. At least he was very independent of Egyptian religion. As to the Decalogue, it is very uncertain what the "ten words," as they are called in Hebrew, were, for there are different reports of it, two even in Exodus.

Though Mr. Westermayr has rightly given up his belief in the divine revelation of the Bible he seems still to cling to its traditional interpretation and to the assumption that Hebrew history followed exactly in the order of events represented in the historical writings of the Old Testament. He probably even, as I know that men of his type do, derives the flood from the marriage of Sethites and Cainites, in this respect one with the staunchest orthodox, while

Gen. vi says something entirely different. If he had been somewhat trained in the methods of scientific Biblical criticism he would have never written his article, for this method first tries to find out by extremely painstaking work when the different portions of the Old Testament were written, and then to reconstruct Hebrew history and law as it really took place. By such a minute analysis and dissection of the Hebrew law he would have come to the conclusion that this law not only had the flaws against which he now continually rails, but that it also had some very humane elements; for instance, that it not only imposed class legislation, as in taking interest from the stranger, but also had many laws against oppressing him. It even has a law against delivering up a fugitive slave.¹ The Hebrew code, like all such collections, is a strange medley of good and bad, as is natural in the evolution of law through long periods.

In regard to the prevarications of Yahveh, I fully agree that the national God, like all national gods, is naturally colored by the naive human language of the times. Human strategy is attributed to God. Nowadays we no longer attribute our prevarications to God. Still we must not go too far in our criticisms of the prevarications of Yahveh as in the matter of the exodus from Egypt, and the whole situation must be taken into consideration. I do not lay especial stress upon the following and beg that this fact will not be forgotten. Truly, God is represented in Ex. iii. 18, as telling Moses to ask Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go into the desert three days' journey to sacrifice to their God, and this actually took place afterward. But God (according to verse 19) is convinced from the start that the king will not even concede this, and that only by strong pressure will he be compelled to let the Israelites go. It is also stated repeatedly in the history of the exodus, that when Pharaoh is finally compelled to let the Israelites go after terrible plagues, Yahveh will give them favor in the sight of the Egyptians to let them have things they ask for. After the last plague Pharaoh says to Moses: "Go, you and your people, go serve the Lord and bless me also." Then we read the words: "And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people to send them out of the land in haste for they said, we be all dead men. And Yahveh gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians to let them have what they

¹ Even harsh laws, as those against witchcraft, had their reasons, for that superstition was connected with many murders and poisonings. Other nations had them also, if I am right. As to the persecution of witches in the Middle Ages to which Mr. Westermayr refers, I could give some very interesting details as to the mildness of the church in the earlier Middle Ages compared to what it was later. Witchcraft at first was not punished by death, but only by church penances. The church has always had its liberals and its fanatics.

asked," Ex. xii. 36 (Rev. Vers.). Can all this not mean that the Egyptians were not only glad, as Ps. cv. 38 gives it, to let the Israelites go, but even (for Pharaoh is long convinced that the Exodus is final) also to let them go with what they ask, for fear that something worse might befall them from the God of the Israelites? The word *shaal*, translated "borrow" in the authorized version, never has that meaning according to Dietrich, the editor of the seventh edition of Gesenius, but simply means "ask," "beg." The Septuagint also translates by *aiteo*, that is "ask." The whole transaction has always been understood by Hebrew interpreters from Josephus, *Ant.*, II, 14, 6 down to modern times as gifts given the Israelites, when sending them off, and as a justifiable return for their enslaved work for centuries, while Gentiles such as Justin XXXVI, 2, 11-15, as also the Egyptian priest Apion, I think—against whom Josephus wrote—turned the story into an expulsion of the Jews on account of their diseases, when they took with them holy vessels, which Pharaoh went after them to regain. Those who hold that *shaal* must by all means be translated "borrow," may console themselves by the thought that if they are right, the Bible itself has rendered the strongest verdict against the Israelites by the words: "The wicked borroweth (*lavah*, the especial Hebrew word for "borrow") and payeth not again" Ps. xxxvii. 21.

As to the matter of good and evil proceeding from God, this ought not to trouble us much. Homer and the Greek tragic poets dealt with the subject in the same way. In the earlier books of the Old Testament the spirit is monistic. Later books, as the Chronicles, try to solve the question by dualism, attributing evil to an evil spirit Satan. The modern mind, I think, will incline more to the monistic view, and will not apply hair-splitting methods to the passages referred to by Mr. Westermayr. The case is similar with the passage: "Think not that I come to send peace, etc.," the old stock argument ever again brought forward by radical freethinkers, saddling upon Jesus all the persecutions of the church, the Inquisition, etc. Has not every advanced step in science or in any other line caused strife? Did Jesus intend to say more than this?

As to the practical value or morality of his teachings as a whole, they may be impracticable and not "moral" as Mr. Westermayr infers, but if understood with a little grain of salt and followed they surely are, and have been, of great importance in mitigating harsh customs and rectifying lax principles, just like similar teachings of Buddha, Lao-tse, Socrates and others.

In conclusion, I would say that if any one writes on "Morality

and the Bible" he ought before all to apply morality to this task: that is, be fair, and not impute things to the Bible which are nowhere found in it. If any one had never heard of the Bible before and would read some of the statements Mr. Westernmayr has made about it, he would get the impression that it is the most immoral and bestial book that has ever seen the light, and that every copy of it ought to be destroyed. The article under discussion is representative of a type of minds, who after losing belief in the Bible as a divine inspiration—the most deplorable and unhistorical dogma ever made—now fall into the same unhistorical and uncritical attitude themselves and refuse to find anything redeeming in it.

NATURAL MORALITY, RELIGION AND SOME UNSETTLED PROBLEMS.

BY VICTOR S. YARROS.

TWO admirable articles appeared in *The Open Court* for September, 1916, which deserve wide circulation. It is a pity that tens of thousands of conventional moralists and theologians cannot be somehow induced to digest, ponder and honestly meet the arguments presented by Messrs. Lyman and Westernmayr in their respective articles on "Natural Morality" and "Moral Law and the Bible." Not that these writers will claim striking originality; what they say has been said before, many times. But what they say is said so simply, clearly, reasonably, that it is calculated to impress minds that are repelled by more aggressive polemics, or minds that cannot be reached by metaphysical subtleties.

But the very reasonableness and persuasiveness of these articles invite certain frank comments and questions. I wish to call the attention of the writers, and of the readers of this magazine, to certain assumptions that are often made and to certain problems that remain unsolved in the ablest expositions of natural morality and scientific religion.

Of course, all religions and moral systems are in one sense "natural." Nothing that exists is supernatural. The distinction between the natural and the miraculous, or supernatural, spells intellectual babyhood. It was, however, perfectly natural for the slowly ascending human race to make this distinction. Nothing in the crudest religion or mythology is unnatural or strange. We can see now, in the light of several sciences and of contemporaneous