

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

OUR Guild proposals have received, and are daily receiving, an encouraging welcome. We shall continue to enrol the names of regular and honorary members, and shall be greatly pleased if our readers will mention the Guild to their friends, especially to laymen and to ladies. Prospectuses will be gladly sent. We are now prepared to receive notes and short articles on Isaiah i.-xii. or Hebrews. Let them be as brief and pointed as the subject will allow.

The Clarendon Press has recently sent forth the third volume of *Studia Biblica*. Some account of its contents and character will be found under the Literature of the Month. But it contains one article which may be separately dealt with here. It is an exposition of the argument of Romans ix.-xi., by the Rev. Charles Gore, M.A., Principal of Pusey House.

In the *Contemporary Review* for August, there is an article by Dr. W. E. Ball on "St. Paul and the Roman Law," which apologetically opens with the sentence: "In these days theology is not popular." On reading this sentence, the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth* is moved to tell how at a certain hotel, even in these degenerate days, a promiscuous company was suddenly awakened to life and interest by the introduction of a point in theology, after all other topics had failed, an interest which was easily sus-

tained throughout the evening. And yet Dr. Ball is not altogether wrong; for it depends upon the theology. The editor of the *Christian Commonwealth* being in that hotel, we are not surprised at the conduct of the promiscuous company. And neither shall we be surprised if this short article by Principal Gore does more than all the others to make popular the third volume of *Studia Biblica*, though it is the only purely theological article in it.

If we are to understand St. Paul's doctrine of election, as contained in these three profound chapters, Mr. Gore says that we must have in mind, when we go to the reading of them, certain general considerations as to this apostle's method of writing. He mentions three. (1) St. Paul, unlike St. John, is an argumentative writer. His thought is exhibited to us in process. You cannot separate it into texts without robbing it of its true force, since every text looks before and after, and has its meaning only in reference to the whole argument. (2) He deals with one side of a subject at a time, and pursues it as if it were complete in itself, not being careful, as a modern writer would be, to guard himself from being misunderstood, by making the necessary qualifications at every step. Thus, in Romans i. he treats the history of the development of sin as if it represented the whole history of fallen man, and then in Romans ii. 14-16 he gives us a glimpse of another principle

which had been at work all the time, viz. the rectifying action of the human conscience. (3) St. Paul, like St. Augustine, is almost always answering an antagonist. He has some opponent in his mind, and to understand St. Paul you must have a clear idea of the position of his opponent.

Perhaps the most original thing in Mr. Gore's article is the clever use he makes of this third principle. Throughout these three chapters he believes that the apostle is hearing an opponent uttering his objections. Every step of the argument is in the form of a reply to this objector, whose presence and attitude must be taken into account if we are to follow the argument out. Here the opponent is a Jew. He is a Jew of the Pharisaic type, whose hope and whose boast it was that he had Abraham to his father. Mr. Gore, accordingly, brings him boldly forward; makes him utter his objections audibly; and shows how the apostle answers him.

Whereupon Principal Gore finds that the "election" which St. Paul is arguing for, is not the election of individuals to eternal salvation, but the election of a chosen body—first the Jewish race, and then the Christian Church—to a special position of honour and responsibility. Here is his *medulla theologica*, the marrow of the whole matter. The apostle is not speaking, primarily, of individuals, and he is not thinking of eternal salvation. He is discussing election; and he says in the most unreserved manner that it is of God's absolute sovereignty that the election is made; but it is an election simply to certain high honours, involving certain responsibilities here and now. There are vessels of honour and there are vessels of dishonour, and it is in the potter's power to make of a lump of clay a vessel to occupy the one position or to occupy the other, just as it seems good to him. So it is needless to ask why God chose Jacob and his posterity to be an honoured and highly-placed nation, and gave Esau and his seed to occupy a humbler and less trying place. That is God's sovereign right, and it does not in

any way interfere with the freewill either of Jacob or of Esau, of Israel or of Edom. It is for them to conform to the position in which they find themselves. In that there is scope enough for the exercise of the will, responsibility to face, room to stand, and freedom to fall.

This is what is meant by the "loving" of Jacob and the "hating" of Esau. In the original, to which St. Paul is referring (Mal. i. 2-4), Esau is simply a synonym for Edom, and so Jacob stands as the head and representative of the nation of Israel. It was of God's absolute choice that the one was raised to higher privileges than the other. But that has nothing to do with their eternal salvation. Nor is it different when the reference is to an individual. The "raising up" of Pharaoh (Rom. ix. 17) is his introduction upon the stage of history. It lies in the Divine will why this particular man was chosen to be king of Egypt at that special time—a man of a hardened heart. But the hardening itself was due to Pharaoh's own disobedience.

We have mentioned Dr. Ball's article in the *Contemporary* on "St. Paul and the Roman Law," and its apologetic introduction. Of all the articles in the magazines of the month it probably needed that apology least, for it deals with the queen of the sciences in a royal fashion. It is a real contribution, fresh, original, and important, to the very subject upon which we have been touching—the theology of St. Paul. It compels us to believe that even yet there is fresh light to break forth from these wonderful epistles, to the hand of him who with patience and reverence will seek for it.

Of the things which St. Peter found hard to be understood in these letters, we wonder if adoption was one. It would not be surprising if it were. For not only does St. Peter himself make no reference to adoption, but, being a Jew, and not also a Roman citizen, like St. Paul, he must have been unacquainted with the technicalities of it, and even opposed to its very idea. "Adoption,



as we know it in English life," says Dr. Ball, "is a comparatively rare social incident. It has no place in our laws, and can scarcely be said to have any definite place in our customs. Among the Jews, adoption was hardly even a social incident, and, in a legal sense was absolutely unknown. The family records of the chosen people were kept with scrupulous care, in order that the lineage of the Deliverer might be identified. Fictitious kinship could manifestly find no recognition in Hebrew genealogies."

Amongst the Romans, on the other hand, adoption was a most familiar fact in social life. And not only so, but it was performed in strict accordance with the law of the state, in which its ceremonies occupied a large and important place. Now, St. Paul was a Roman citizen, and as a Roman citizen he may have possessed something of the Roman's "innate genius for law." Some knowledge of law and its technicalities he was bound to possess; for in these days every man was his own solicitor. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find that he alone, of the New Testament writers, makes use of the metaphor of adoption, and shows himself familiar with the ceremonies which belonged to it. The surprising thing is that these ceremonies have never before been resorted to in order to explain the apostle's metaphor.

The great passage is Romans viii. 14-16. The Revisers give it thus: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." Our Lord, speaking to Jews, could not have used this language. They would not have understood it. They would seriously have misunderstood it. He, therefore, made use of the metaphor of the new birth. "Ye must be born again." But St. Paul is writing to Romans, to a nation of lawyers, and the very same funda-

mental fact he describes by a metaphor which is at once exceedingly appropriate and perfectly intelligible. By adoption under the Roman law, an entire stranger in blood became a member of the family into which he was adopted, exactly as if he had been born into it. He became a member of the family in a higher sense than some who had the family blood in their veins, than emancipated sons, or descendants through females. He assumed the family name, and partook in its mystic sacrificial rites. He could no more marry in the family of his adoption within the prohibited degrees than those related by blood. His former family connection ceased to be. His previously existing personality was lost. So complete was the change which adoption made in the eye of the law that for many centuries it operated as a legal extinction of the person's debts.

St. Paul, accordingly, exchanges the physical metaphor of regeneration for the legal metaphor of adoption. For the adopted person became in the eye of the law a new creature. He was born again into a new family. By the aid of this figure the Gentile convert was enabled to realise in a vivid manner the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of the faithful, the obliteration of past penalties, the right to the promised inheritance. He was enabled to realise that upon this spiritual act "old things passed away, and all things became new."

But the passage before us bears witness not only to St. Paul's knowledge of the fact of Roman adoption, but to his acquaintance with its singularly intricate and highly dramatic ceremony. The proceedings took place in the presence of seven witnesses, and formed a kind of public sale. Hence the essential thing was to distinguish it from a sale into slavery, which was not only also a public sale, but of which the ceremonial was remarkably similar. Accordingly, "Ye received not the spirit of bondage," says the apostle, "again to fear; but

ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Suppose that the adoptor has died, and that the adopted son comes forward to claim the inheritance. His claim is disputed; his status as son is denied; they tell him he was merely sold to be the deceased man's slave. "No," he pleads, "the ceremony was that of adoption, he claimed me as his son, I called him father." But the law demands corroboration. One of the seven witnesses is called. "I was present," he says, "at the ceremony. It was I who held the scales and struck them with the ingot of brass. The transaction was not a sale into slavery. It was an adoption. I heard the words of the vindication, and I say this person was claimed by the deceased, not as his slave, but as his son." And who is the witness to that spiritual adoption which makes us sons of God? It is the Third Person in the Trinity. Says the apostle: "The Spirit himself beareth witness (along) with our spirit, that we are children of God."

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 IDLERS all day about the market-place

They name us, and our dumb lips answer not,
 Bearing the bitter while our sloth's disgrace,
 And our dark tasking whereof none may wot.

Oh, the fair slopes where the grape-gatherers go!—
 Not they the day's fierce heat and burden bear,
 But we who on the market-stones drop slow
 Our barren tears, while all the bright hours wear.

Lord of the Vineyard, whose dear word declares
 Our one hour's labour as the day's shall be;
 What coin divine can make our wage as theirs
 Who had the morning joy of work for Thee?

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 We owe these touching words to a recent number of the *Century Magazine*. Irresistibly they lead us to ask again the question: What, then, is the one especial lesson which this parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard is meant to teach? In this Mr. Lynn, as we have seen, agrees with Mr. Connor. It is the Master's abhorrence of the mercenary spirit. It is the wisdom of making no bargain when we enter the service of the great Lord of the Vineyard: leave

it all to Him; trust Him; and when the evening comes, and the labouring tools are laid aside, His generosity will be found a great and glad surprise. The interpretation is identified with many honoured names; and recently it has been made so popular and persuasive by one of our most eloquent expositors of the parables, that one must think many times, and be driven to it, before disturbing so widespread and settled a conviction.

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 The parable rose out of certain events which are recorded. On this all agree, and we need not go further back than the visit of the rich young man. Jesus made him an invitation to enter the vineyard, but he was unable to accept it. And as he departed in sorrow, the Master looked longingly and lovingly after him, and said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." Why did the young man refuse the invitation? Dr. Dods says: "A young man of high character and still higher aspirations, *but of unfortunately great wealth.*" It was not the want of character or aspiration, it was outward circumstance that was too much for him. "Unfortunately;" that is just the word. A fortune, we say; no; his great fortune was his greatest misfortune, and kept him out of the vineyard. "*For he was very rich.*"

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 But will it keep him out for ever? We do not know that. It may be that some day he will come again, the great hindrance gone—for such things are not impossible with God—and cheerfully, thankfully, accept the invitation which most assuredly will again be made him. We do not know.

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 But meantime he is scarcely gone when Peter's active mind has leaped to the conclusion that he and the rest, having done what this highly honoured young man failed to do, have really accomplished a very meritorious thing: "Lo, we have left all and followed Thee!" And not only

so, but at the same moment he sees that the reward must be very great. "What shall we have, therefore?" The young man expected the reward of doing his "good thing"; and Jesus promised it, if he would only do that greater thing, "Sell all that thou hast . . . and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." "Lo, we have done it," says Peter; "what shall we have, therefore?" Whereupon Christ makes the distinct promise: Yes, you have done it, and you shall certainly have your reward. But—

There is no more unhappy division in the New Testament than that which separates the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of St. Matthew. But, fortunately, the twentieth commences with a little word which compels us to turn back a step to catch the sense. "*For*, the kingdom of heaven is like . . ." The parable which commences thus is introduced and is concluded with the same words, "But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last." "So the last shall be first, and the first last." These are words with a deep meaning, but it is hidden from sight, and the parable is intended to draw it forth.

Now, these words, as we have seen, arose directly out of Peter's question, "What shall we have?" "A hundredfold,—but many shall be last that are first." And Peter's question arose directly out of the rich young man's refusal. We are bound, therefore, to ask what there was in the relation of these two persons to call forth those mysterious words of Jesus. Peter was exhibiting a mercenary spirit, it is said; he was making a bargain with Jesus. Perhaps he was. But what then of the rich young ruler? If that is the point of the parable, the rich young ruler is already passed out of Jesus' thoughts, though the loving look has not yet faded from His face. Moreover, Peter's question was a direct challenge of comparison. "We have left all:" *he* would not, but *we* have. And we must expect that Christ's full reply will bear that comparison in mind.

It surely does so. The bargaining may be there as an element, though one is surprised to find how little there is about bargaining throughout the parable, and how subsidiary that little is. He *agreed* with the first-hired labourers for a penny: it is really all in that one word. And may not that one word have been introduced to show the justice of the subsequent action of the master? "Did I not *agree* with you for a penny?" he says; whereby he shows that they had no ground whatever, in common justice, for their complaint. The agreement was made, and the agreement was kept. The master shows that he is right in keeping it, he never hints that they were wrong in making it. They *may* have been wrong in this; but neither does the lord of the vineyard say so, nor does our Lord ever allude to that as the point of His story.

Yet He does make the point of it plain enough. One thing is condemned, and one only. It is called an evil eye. "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" Now an evil eye is an envious eye; and this was the very thing they did, they envied the superior good fortune of their neighbours. They bargained, if you will. Well, they did their work, and got their wages. "Ye that have left houses . . . shall receive . . . houses." Thus all is just and right. But then they envied others because they received more than simple justice. It was the very generosity of the master, his gracious lavishness might we say? that roused their envy. As he puts it, their eye was evil just *because* he was good. This was their one fault, that they could not see him filling another's cup of happiness till it was running over, even though he had poured into theirs with a just and even hand. "Surely," he says, "I may be as liberal as I will with my own, when I am always just to all."

Thus the last were first, not because the first bargained and lost their place, but because the Master chose to make them first. Being just to all, He may be as generous as He will to some. And if it is asked why He is generous to some,

there is a partial answer which may be given. Here let us refer to an interesting letter which has come from the far north, in reference to this very subject. Says the Rev. John Love, of Mid Yell, Lerwick : "The circumstances of the workers are not all the same. Some have fewer opportunities than others. Should they suffer loss on that account? 'Yes,' says the world. 'Not so,' says Jesus. And He makes the master give the full hire to the eleventh hour labourers as well as to all the others." Circumstances—the word does not cover it all, but it seems to run in the right direction. Lo, we have left all, said Peter. Yes, but what had Peter to leave? The young man could not leave his all, *for he was very rich*. And some, in like manner, never have had the temptations or the trials; have found the path to Jesus smooth and alluring, for a mother's hand, it may be, smoothed and made it pleasant for them, and they shall have their reward. But the last shall not be forgotten. For there is more joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

THE time for toil is past, and night has come,
The last and saddest of the harvest eves;
Worn out with labour long and wearisome,
Drooping and faint, the reapers hasten home,
Each laden with his sheaves.

Last of the labourers, Thy feet I gain,
Lord of the harvest! and my spirit grieves
That I am burdened, not so much with grain,
As with a heaviness of heart and brain—
Master, behold my sheaves!

Few, light, and worthless, yet their trifling weight
Through all my frame a heavy aching leaves;
For long I struggled with my hapless fate,
And stayed and toiled till it was dark and late—
Yet these are all my sheaves.

Full well I know I have more tares than wheat,
Brambles and flowers, dry stalks and withered leaves;
Wherefore I blush and weep, as at Thy feet
I kneel down reverently, and repeat—
"Master, behold my sheaves!"

I know these blossoms, clustering heavily,
With evening dew upon their folded leaves,
Can claim no value or utility;
Therefore shall fragrance and beauty be
The glory of my sheaves.

So do I gather strength and hope anew;
Full well I know Thy patient love perceives,
Not what I did, but what I strove to do—
And, though the full ripe ears be sadly few,
Thou wilt accept my sheaves.

++ Saint Paul..¹

BY REV. GEORGE JACKSON, B.A., EDINBURGH.

It is a dainty little volume that lies before me as I write, only fifty pages in all, and costing but half-a-crown; but it "hath dust of gold." It is by no means a new book. My copy bears the date 1890, but the poem first saw the light as far back as '67. It has been reprinted several times since, and judging from the figures which (in accordance with the very commendable practice recently adopted by the publishers) are furnished by the book itself, with increasing rapidity during recent years. Turning over the title page this inscription meets us—

Dedicated
to
J. E. B.

September 1867.

In the original edition, a copy of which I have not yet been able to see, were added these words (in Greek): "To whom I owe my own soul also." When the omission was made, I do not know; why, I can only guess.

"J. E. B." is Mrs. Josephine Butler. Of her it is needless to speak. What she has done will only be fully known when "in that day" thousands haste to acknowledge that to her—as Philemon to Paul—they owe their own souls. But the faith that through all the long agony of these twenty years has made her gentle spirit strong to do and to endure, is known to all. That same faith breathes in every page of this noble poem. Mr. Myers, it is true, is far away now from his early creed; yet whoever reads this sweet song of a once confident hope may do so, not only with deepening

¹ *Saint Paul*. By Frederic W. H. Myers. (Macmillan & Co.)