

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE Unpardonable Sin is still a reality. The Notes in last month's issue have awakened an unexpected interest. That they have not always satisfied is no surprise. They were not written to satisfy. On this subject no man has ever been able to write to satisfy. What the Unpardonable Sin is we all know, and why it is unpardonable. But we cannot explain all we know. And if a little more is attempted now, it is with a clear conviction that it is not sufficient and not yet satisfactory.

The Old Testament writers have a simple way of classifying men as good and bad. The good occasionally do bad things, as David did in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. The bad sometimes do good things, as when Saul in the flush of victory spared his enemies and said, 'There shall not a man be put to death this day.' Still the one is good, the other is bad. We write lectures on the good men of Scripture and on the bad, and we never dispute about their names or number. It is the same in the New Testament, and especially in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats. Some one has said, 'I understand what is to become of the sheep, and I understand what is to become of the goats; it is the portion of the alpacas that I do not know.' But there are no alpacas. There is no room for them. The race

is exhausted when you have all the sheep on the right hand and all the goats on the left.

It is a matter of character, says the modern moralist. No doubt. But what is character? It is the result of opportunities won or wasted, of acts done or left undone. If it is said of any man or men, 'Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost,' the expression reveals character, but at the same time shows us character in the making. This sentence is, in fact, the point of view of all the New Testament writers. It is the point of view of Christ Himself. It is the test which even the Old Testament applies in dividing its sheep from its goats. They who are bad do always resist the Holy Ghost. That is the unfailing evidence of badness. It is also its cause.

And a man may resist the Holy Ghost—resist until he has settled down into a character of resistance—and yet be apparently religious. The Pharisees were such men. There is just one way in which the Holy Ghost urges us. It is the way of unselfishness. The Pharisees were very religious, but they were also very selfish. They devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers. While always found where the Holy Ghost is most expected to be, they had nevertheless so persistently resisted the Holy Ghost that in many cases they were bad. And

now, let the occasion arise of a supreme act of resistance and they will not fail to resist. One day they left their homes in the morning. It was a day like other days. They went as at other times to inquire of the Lord. But the occasion arose. They blasphemed the Holy Ghost and committed the Unpardonable Sin.

Jesus had cast out devils. The Holy Ghost was the agent. Only by the Holy Spirit can the unholy spirits be driven forth. The Pharisees knew that. But the act was done by One who exposed their selfishness. It was itself an exposure of their selfishness. To admit that it was of the Holy Ghost was to confess their own hypocrisy. So they denied that it was of the Holy Ghost. They said it was an unclean spirit's work. In saying so they committed the Unpardonable Sin.

It was a single act. But many acts went before it, acts numerous enough to make character. It was the character that committed the Unpardonable Sin. The single act came as the revelation of character.

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil  
side;

Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the  
bloom or blight,

Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the  
right,

And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that  
light.

Even so. It is the moment that seems to do it. It is the moment that receives the judgment. But the decision is not due to the moment. 'Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost'—the decision is due to that.

Professor Owen H. Gates sends a short exegetical note on Jg 6<sup>14</sup> to the *Biblical World* for October. The words are 'Go in this thy might.' They are addressed by the angel to Gideon. The word 'this' is isolated and emphatic. Usually with, it

is here without, the article. It has the force of a gesture. 'This might heré!'

What was the might? It was physical. Gideon was beating out the wheat vigorously. It was mental. He was doing it in a wine-press to conceal it from the Philistines, finely adapting himself to circumstances. It was moral. He at once questions the reasons of Jehovah's abandonment of His people and at the same time testifies His faith in God, as alone able to deliver them. Go in this thy might, God being with thee, and thou shalt conquer.

To the same issue of the *Biblical World* Professor G. Gilbert of Chicago sends a note on Jn 16<sup>12</sup>. The words are: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' Of what nature were these 'many things'? They were, say some, of the nature of new doctrines. Professor Gilbert holds that to be impossible. Exegesis is against it.

For, in the first place, Jesus gave the gospel complete, with all the doctrines that belong to it. He said (Jn 15<sup>15</sup>), 'All things which I heard from the Father I made known to you.' In Jn 17<sup>4</sup> He speaks of having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. And in Jn 17<sup>6</sup> He says, 'I made known Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me.' The name was the revelation of God. He had already completely revealed God's will and character.

And, in the second place, it is the work of the Spirit to apply and unfold this revelation. The work of the Spirit is with the name of Jesus, as His was with the name of the Father. There is one great truth which the Spirit is to unfold and apply. It is the truth of indwelling—that Jesus is in the Father, the disciples in Jesus, and Jesus in them. It was not a new truth. It had already been given. The Holy Spirit is to call it to their remembrance. 'He shall glorify Me'—that is

His work, but how?—‘for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.’ He reveals no new doctrine. He unfolds the old and applies it to the needs of life.

There are few of our modern expositors who can keep in such close touch with the pulpit as Professor Godet. For the most part they are content to discover knowledge, he desires that knowledge may run to and fro and be increased. In his *Introduction to the New Testament* there is not only an unsleeping vigilance lest the science it offers be unworkable and therefore science falsely so called; but there is also an occasional deliberate offering to the pulpit of some clear and practical exposition.

In the second volume, of which Messrs. T. & T. Clark have just published the translation, and in the middle of it, we find two such expositions on the conception of the Kingdom of Heaven in St. Matthew's Gospel, and on the Second Coming of the Lord.

There are just two ways, says Professor Godet, in which the phrase ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ may be taken. Either it is a simple synonym for ‘the Kingdom of God,’—‘Heaven’ or ‘Heavens’ being used to designate God, as was frequent with the Rabbis in their mistaken ideas of reverence, and as is still heard among ourselves in phrases like ‘Heaven preserve me!’ or ‘Heaven helps those that help themselves.’ Or else it describes a Kingdom which, pre-existing in Heaven, is to take the place of the kingdoms of the earth, and is called the ‘Kingdom of Heaven,’ or ‘of the Heavens,’ to distinguish it from the kingdoms that are of the earth.

Professor Schürer considers that ‘Heaven’ is a synonym here for God. But Professor Godet cannot believe that Jesus would have described the Father, with whom He lived so familiarly, as ‘Heaven.’ It is true He represents the Prodigal

as saying, ‘I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.’ But there the prepositions are different. It is *against* Heaven, it is *before* thee. And that proves to Professor Godet that the two governed words are not synonymous.

Still, Professor Godet does not think the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ of St. Matthew differs much from the ‘Kingdom of God’ of St. Mark and St. Luke. It is only a little more definite. The Kingdom of God is opposed to heathen kingdoms generally. But in following Jesus Matthew found himself at every moment in presence of a political and religious world that was essentially *earthly*, and therefore ready to fall. His whole heart was transported into a new order of things, heavenly in nature and origin, which would come in the person of his glorified Master. And to express the contrast vividly he chose the phrase, the ‘Kingdom of Heaven.’

Is this Kingdom of Heaven, then, wholly future? Is it an expression that should be treated under Eschatology, or is it in our midst? Professor Godet believes that it is in our midst. And not only so, but that it is *within* us. No doubt its full realization is future, and will be ushered in by a great catastrophe, which will visibly come from heaven and terribly shake the earth. But the kingdom of heaven is ‘at hand.’ It has already ‘come upon’ (ἐφθασεν ἐφ) Christ's adversaries. And especially it ‘is within’ the disciples (Lk 17<sup>21</sup>). For Professor Godet cannot admit that ‘within’ (ἐντός) is merely a synonym for ‘among’ (ἐν). In Ps 39<sup>8</sup> the expression is the very same: ‘My heart was hot *within me*’ (ἐντός μου), and there the proper meaning of *within* is easily seen and strongly accented.

The more important question, from the point of view of the pulpit, is, What is meant by the Second Coming of the Lord? The secret of the answer Professor Godet finds in a passage in St. Matthew: ‘I say unto you that *henceforth* (ἀπ’ ἄρτι) ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of

power, *and coming* on the clouds of heaven' (Mt 26<sup>64</sup>). The word 'henceforth' applies not only to the sitting but also to the coming. Jesus regards the whole of the time which is to elapse till the end as the period both of His sovereignty in heaven and of His return to the earth.

Accordingly, Professor Godet sees the Second Coming of the Lord first of all in the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the same breath as He promises to send the Holy Spirit He promises to come Himself. 'I will send Him unto you. . . . I will come to you.' As He gives the Holy Spirit His work to do, He announces that He will do it Himself: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man open to Me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.'

Professor Godet also sees the coming of the Lord in the death of each believer. 'From on high,' he says, 'where Jesus hovers sovereignly over the course of the ages, His hand is lowered to pluck the ears that have reached maturity.' His proofs are such familiar passages as these: 'I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also' (Jn 14<sup>3</sup>); 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?' (Jn 21<sup>22</sup>); 'Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find him watching, . . . let your loins be girded and your lamps burning.'

He also finds the Second Coming of Christ in the Destruction of Jerusalem. Here he finds the place for that difficult text about the generation that was then upon the earth: 'This generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished' (Mt 24<sup>34</sup>). Here also he places that other text almost as definite in time, Mt 10<sup>23</sup>: 'Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.'

And, finally, he sees the Second Coming of Christ in the judgment, the moral judgment, that daily falls on nations or churches or individuals.

'Repent . . . or else I will come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place' (Rev. 2<sup>5</sup>); 'If thou dost not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee' (3<sup>3</sup>).

The common conception of the Second Coming of Christ as wholly a future event Professor Godet thus regards as a mistake. And he believes that the mistake is due to the confusion of two separate things: Christ's Coming and His Arrival. In the Greek it was scarcely possible to keep these ideas separate. The one Greek word (*ἔρχεσθαι*) involves them both. But we have two words, and can keep the ideas separate easily. We have seen what the Coming is. The Arrival is the end of the Coming. It is the sensible manifestation of Jesus as King. In the beginning of the Apocalypse (1<sup>4</sup>) Jesus is described as 'He who is, who was, and who is coming' (*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*)—that is His Coming properly. But immediately after it is added, 'Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him'—that is His Arrival.

We could easily keep the two thoughts separate. But we are not careful. In the end of the Apocalypse we read, 'Yea, I come quickly' (*ἔρχομαι ταχύ*). We read it as if it were, 'Yea, I come soon.' But the reference is not to the Arrival. And the meaning is not, 'I shall soon be there,' but 'I am coming swiftly.' It means that His pace is not really slow at any time, however slow it seem. And the Church says, 'Amen, come Lord Jesus'; and as she says so, she does not presume to hasten the moment of His arrival, but she undertakes to do all that is in her power to clear the way for His daily coming to judgment or to consolation.

Of the duration of the Coming we know nothing. The disciples knew nothing. It was uncertain even to the eyes of Jesus. The disciples did not know that they knew nothing, and greatly shortened its duration. But that

was of little moment. For the duration of the Coming, like all questions of time, is of secondary importance. What is of primary importance is the fact of His Arrival. For His Arrival places the last completing stone upon the edifice of His work. And the disciples were certain of the fact of His Arrival and faithfully attested it.

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In 1892 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America met and resolved that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were without error. In 1899 the General Assembly has met and affirmed the resolution. For the ministers and members of that great Church the inerrancy of the Scripture is a necessary article of belief.

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But there are ministers and members of that Church to whom the doctrine of inerrancy is incredible. One of them is Professor Adams Brown of Union Theological Seminary. In the *Evangelist* of 7th September he writes an article under the title 'Inspiration a Property of our Present Bible.' He believes in the Inspiration of Scripture. But he does not believe in Inerrancy. He believes that Inspiration is necessary to the Authority of Scripture. But he does not believe that Inerrancy is necessary for any purpose.

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Professor Adams Brown finds that there are two ways in which the Inerrancy of Scripture is defended. Either it is necessary to the veracity of God, or it is essential to the guidance of man. He considers each way by itself.

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The Inerrancy of Scripture, it is said, is necessary in order to maintain the veracity of God. For Revelation is the self-communication of God, and since God is perfect, the communication which He makes of Himself must be perfect also. Now the self-communication of God is the

Bible. That is what we mean when we call it the Word of God. The Bible must therefore be without error, else God is convicted of untruthfulness.

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Professor Adams Brown states the argument as it appeals to the American Presbyterian. It does not appeal to others with equal force. For it is to be observed that it is an argument that is purely deductive, and we have long since grown suspicious of deduction in theology. Is it possible that the decision of the General Assembly may be traced to the professors of Logic in the colleges of America? No doubt there is a threatening in England of a reaction. Professor Moberly of Oxford has boldly cast himself and all who cleave to him upon the deductive method in theology. But this generation will have none of it. One error in Scripture is enough to outweigh the most rigid argument for inerrancy that ever was put together.

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But Professor Adams Brown is writing for American Presbyterians, and he answers the deductive argument deductively. He says that it forgets one element in the premises. There is in revelation a manward as well as a Godward side. God reveals, but He reveals to man. And His revelation must be suitable for man as it finds him. Now man grows. At one time he is weak. At a later time in his history he is stronger, both intellectually and morally. It is the revelation of God coming to him that makes him stronger. But it could do nothing for him if it did not reach him in his weakness. If it did not condescend to his weakness, it could not lift him up to its own strength. There is the matter of divorce, for example. For the hardness of their hearts God allowed men to put away their wives. It was a descent, no doubt, from an earlier height. But it was a descent in order to a subsequent rising. 'I say unto you, He that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery.'

The other argument for Inerrancy is that if there are *any* mistakes in Scripture, or even if there is the possibility of mistake, man has nothing left to guide his steps. You say there is a manward side as well as a Godward side. Will you kindly print us a Bible in which you have carefully distinguished the manward parts from the Godward parts? You may use any device you please, even to the length of calling it a Polychrome Bible. But tell us plainly what is God's and what is not—that we may believe the truth of God and reject the errors of man.

But Professor Adams Brown cannot do that. He does not believe that this sentence is God's and that sentence is man's. He believes that every sentence is both God's and man's at once. He does not think that the Bible was ever intended to be an infallible guide in that way. It is true that there are those who must have an infallible guide. And if they cannot get it in the Bible they rush into the arms of the pope. But Professor Adams Brown does not believe that God ever meant man to have an infallible guide of that kind. He does not believe it would be good for man to have such a guide. He believes that the very condition of progress is that every man and every woman should have their own senses exercised to discern good and evil.

But Professor Adams Brown deserts the deductive method here. He makes his appeal to facts. The Bible as we now possess it is not free from error. This is admitted. But the error, it is said, is due to transmission. The original autograph was faultless. To which the reply is made that if God did not preserve His revelation from error, it is to be presumed that He did not originate it without error. But such arguments are not worth stating. It is the Bible as we have it now with which we have to do. And Professor Adams Brown thinks we may just as well face the facts. There are discrepancies within the Bible itself which no ingenuity can reconcile.

Professor Adams Brown's article is more courteous and comforting than we have represented it to be. Yet when the Editor of the *Evangelist* published it he felt that the matter could not rest there. So he asked Professor Curtis of Yale to write. Professor Curtis is not a Presbyterian. He has much respect for the Presbyterians of America. 'Their words are worthy of respect and consideration by all Christians.' But he fears for the future of any Church that takes to the formulation of doctrines of Inerrancy. 'It need hardly be stated that modern biblical scholarship, having undergone a change of opinion during the last one or two score years, has almost entirely repudiated the doctrine of inerrancy. Its advocates are becoming fewer and more few. They produce little commanding literature. The stronger men are on the other side.' And Professor Curtis fears that the Church which tolerates only the doctrine of inerrancy, though 'it may live as a respectable religious organization and accomplish much good in the world,' has nevertheless 'ended its career as a scholarly and progressive Church.'

Professor Curtis was himself brought up to Inerrancy. When he graduated from Union Theological Seminary in 1879 it seemed to him that the argument for Inerrancy was sound. But the argument was deductive. It did not depend upon what was but upon what ought to be. And the study of the Bible destroyed it. As our readers know, Professor Curtis is a great chronologist. The chronology of the fifth chapter of Genesis is an integral part of the Bible. But that chronology is erroneous. It is erroneous now whatever it may once have been. And no man's ingenuity can put it right. So Professor Curtis was driven to abandon the doctrine of Inerrancy. 'I could not hold it either with good conscience or reason.'

And yet no change has resulted in his religion. He has lost no consolation. He has lost no

guide. God continues to speak clearly and distinctly in the Bible. It is still the supreme written authority of religious belief. For religious belief does not depend upon an inspiration that keeps men free from scientific or historical error. The

processes of divine revelation, grace, and redemption have appeared to Dr. Curtis larger and more glorious, Christianity has become more genuine and real, since he found himself freed from the burden of forced interpretations.

## The Missionary Methods of the Apostles.

BY THE REV. JOHN REID, M.A., DUNDEE.

It is proposed in a brief series of papers to examine the New Testament records, with reference to the missionary methods of the apostles. We begin with the form in which the gospel was presented.

In the Four Gospels we have the form in which the 'good news' was proclaimed by the Saviour Himself. The Johannine representation is now accepted as historical by an increasing number of competent critics (Wendt, Beyschlag, etc.). The light and beauty of the grace and love of God in Jesus Christ, shine there with a radiance which is the hope and glory of man for time and for eternity. If the work of the first preachers had fallen into oblivion, there could have been no question as to the form in which they proclaimed the 'glad tidings of great joy.' The Four Gospels would have been regarded as the fixed and universal types of their preaching. Every one would have concluded that the kingdom of God was their theme, and that the grace, laws, and life of that kingdom, as revealed by Christ, were the distinctive elements of their message. It was this gospel which they had heard. It was for the proclamation of this that they had been chosen (Mk 3<sup>14</sup>). It was this which they preached, when He sent them forth throughout the towns and villages of Galilee (Lk 9<sup>1-6</sup>). It is too often forgotten that their preaching did not begin at Pentecost. The message which they delivered in these early days, must have been the message they had heard from Him. Their preaching must have been modelled on His. The oral tradition, and the form of preaching, were already taking shape during the lifetime of our Lord. The message may even have been revised and corrected by Him. Further, nothing is more certain than that it was the gospel as they heard it, which they were

commissioned to preach. They were to 'make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have said unto you' (Mt 28<sup>19, 20</sup>). Such were their 'marching orders.'

But when we read the rest of the New Testament, it does not appear, at first sight, that the earliest preachers fulfilled this definite and solemn charge. The record of the preaching of the original apostles, so far as it is given in Acts, does not contain a single reference to the kingdom of God. It is Philip, one of the seven (8<sup>12</sup>), and Paul (14<sup>22</sup> 19<sup>8</sup> 20<sup>28</sup> 28<sup>28-31</sup>) who preach (*κήρυσσεν*) 'the things concerning the kingdom of God.' In the section of the New Testament following Acts, we only find general or idealised references to the kingdom of God in 2 P 1<sup>11</sup>, Ja 2<sup>5</sup>, He 12<sup>28</sup> (possibly also in 1<sup>8</sup>), Rev 1<sup>9</sup> 12<sup>10</sup> (possibly also in 1<sup>6</sup> 5<sup>10</sup> 11<sup>15</sup>). It is Paul again who seems most faithful to this distinctive phrase. He refers to it thirteen times in his Epistles. The fuller record of Paul's activity which we possess, no doubt accounts in large measure for his apparent superiority in this matter.

In the Acts of the Apostles the bulk of preaching is more concerned with apologetics than evangelization. On the day of Pentecost Peter's sermon is taken up (1) with a defence of the men who spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit (2<sup>14-21</sup>), and (2) with the proof of the Messiahship of Jesus, by the fact of the Resurrection (2<sup>22-30</sup>). In both parts he makes large use of O.T. predictions (Jl 2<sup>28, 29</sup>, Ps 16<sup>8-10</sup>). In Ac 3-5 Peter uses the same method. It is the fact of the resurrection and the predictions of prophecy on which stress is laid. Stephen practically follows the same lines. When Paul speaks in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, he too employs the apologetic method, lays stress on the Resurrection, and