

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THERE is an article in *The Expositor* for October on the lying Cretans. It is written by Dr. Rendel Harris.

We have misjudged the Cretans. They were not liars all round. It is doubtful if they were liars at all, or at least exceptionally, for perhaps all men are liars. They seem to have obtained their evil repute from persisting in a single lie. And it depended upon a man's religious belief whether he called it a lie or not.

It is in his Epistle to Titus (1¹²) that St. Paul speaks of the lying Cretans. He does not give them the name himself. He quotes it from Epimenides. And Epimenides was a poet of Crete. So the title was likely to be true, and the Apostle was inclined to believe in it. But Dr. Rendel Harris traces it to its source. And he finds that the reason why the Cretans were called liars was that they asserted, and persisted in asserting, that the great God Zeus had died in Crete, and was buried there.

They persisted in this. That is why they are said to be *always* liars. And they were not likely to desist. For they had the tomb of Zeus in their midst.

It was a single lie that gave them their reputation. Was it a lie? That depended, we say, upon the religious belief of those who spoke of it. To the early Christian apologists it was no lie. They readily accepted the statement of the Cretans that Zeus was dead and buried in their island. They turned it to good apologetic account. When Achatius was ordered to sacrifice to Jupiter, he asked, 'To the one whose tomb they show in Crete? Has he risen from the dead?' And even Lucian makes one of his characters laugh at Zeus and tell him it is time for him to bestir himself, 'unless the Cretan myth should turn out to be really true, which they tell of thee and thy tomb.' But, of course, the worshippers of Zeus would hear of no such thing. To them the Cretans were always liars.

Now if the Cretans were not liars, neither were they 'evil beasts' and 'slow bellies.' For it is evident that these are a poet's epithets. They are thrown off rhetorically in the heat of poetic passion. And if they are particularly vigorous, that is due to the circumstance that the passion is the passion of religious fervour as well as of poetry. Epimenides, it is evident, did not accept the tradition of his countrymen that the great god Zeus was dead and buried.

But the Cretans had circumstantial evidence for it. They had the tomb in their midst. And they

had the particulars of the death of Zeus. Dr. Rendel Harris has in his possession a copy of a rare Nestorian commentary upon the Scriptures, known as the 'Garden of Delights.' This commentary is full of valuable extracts from Syrian fathers, of the Eastern school especially, and it has incorporated a very large number of passages from Theodore of Mopsuestia. Among the rest it contains a passage, which has no author's name attached to it, but which Dr. Rendel Harris believes to belong to Theodore, in which there is an account of the circumstances under which Zeus met his death.

This is the passage: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." The Cretans used to say of Zeus, that he was a prince, and was ripped up by a wild boar, and he was buried: and lo! his grave is with us. Accordingly Minos, the son of Zeus, made over him a panegyric, and in it he said: "A grave have fashioned for thee, O holy and high One, the lying Cretans, who are all the time liars, evil beasts, idle bellies; but thou diest not, for to eternity thou livest and standest; for in thee we live, and move, and have our being."

This passage has very considerable religious interest, and Dr. Rendel Harris makes good use of it in that interest. For he is none of those who defend their ignorance of Comparative Religion by doubting its utility. But its most immediate interest for us lies in the quotation of the words, 'in thee we live, and move, and have our being.'

St. Paul used these words in his speech at Athens. Are they his own? We have always understood they were. But Dr. Rendel Harris throws doubt upon it. In the first place, Theodore seems to be writing for the very purpose of tracing them to their source in some Greek poet; and in the second place, they are evidently an essential part of the panegyric which that poet puts into the mouth of Minos. For if they were not, and if Theodore himself had

added them at the end of it, we should not find the word to be 'thee' but 'him.' 'In *thee* we live, and move, and have our being,'—that is manifestly meant to be part of the address of Minos to his father, Zeus.

Who, then, is the Greek poet from whom Theodore of Mopsuestia makes the quotation? It is Epimenides of Crete. Dr. Rendel Harris has little doubt that it is Epimenides. But what would put it into the mind of St. Paul to quote Epimenides to the Athenians? It would be the connexion of Epimenides with the city of Athens and the altar 'to the Unknown God' which the Apostle saw there.

For there was a day when a great pestilence raged in Athens, and the Athenians sent for Epimenides to quench it. Epimenides came. When he came he let loose over the Areopagus some white and black sheep, and he ordered that wherever one of them lay down an altar should be erected to the appropriate god ($\tau\omega$ προσήκοντι θεῷ). And that is the reason, says Diogenes Laertius, why you find at Athens $\beta\omega\mu\omicron\nu\varsigma$ ἀνωνίμους, altars without names.

Dr. Rendel Harris believes that the sight of the altar to an unknown god brought Epimenides into the Apostle's mind, and when he proceeded with his speech he perceived the value of making a quotation from Epimenides which would be at once familiar and grateful to his audience.

'And Jesus looking upon him loved him' (Mk 10²¹). A great and welcome change has come over the study of the Bible. We are still in the midst of much controversy, and it is difficult to mark accurately the progress we have made. But when occasion calls us to examine the interpretation of so simple a passage as this, we see at once that we have been moving, and that we have left some things behind us for ever.

'And Jesus looking upon him loved him.' The

words are intelligible enough. The expositor passes them by now without remark; or his remark is a mere reference to the natural beauty of the statement. Why should Jesus not love this young ruler? Why should St. Mark not say so?

But this attitude is all new. To the older expositors the words were a great difficulty. There were few passages in the Gospels, indeed, which gave them more trouble to expound.

Their difficulty was a theological one. For they had a way of forming their theology first, and attempting the interpretation of the Bible afterwards. And when the Bible and the theology disagreed, they did not always alter the theology. We are no better students of the Bible than our fathers were. But we have a better method. We are interpreters of the Bible first, and systematic theologians after.

It is not necessary to go far back in the history of interpretation for our illustration. We find it in Dr. Addison Alexander, of Princeton: *And Jesus looking upon him loved him*—'Most probably,' says Dr. Alexander, 'love, as in many other places, here denotes, not moral approbation nor affection founded upon anything belonging to the object, but a sovereign and gratuitous compassion, such as leads to every act of mercy upon God's part. The sense will then be, not that Jesus loved him on account of what he said, or what he was, or what he did, but that, having purposes of mercy toward him, He proceeded to unmask him to himself, and to show him how entirely groundless, although probably sincere, was his claim to have habitually kept the law. The Saviour's love is then mentioned, not as the effect of what precedes, but as the ground or motive of what follows.'

Now, Dr. Addison Alexander was a great and influential expositor in his day. And in his day that was the best thing that could be said. It

cannot be said now. It is to us perfectly natural that Jesus should look upon the young ruler and love him. Perhaps we have a different conception of Jesus. We have certainly a different way with the Bible.

But our modern way with the Bible does not deprive it of all its mystery and wonder. We are as much astonished at this incident as our fathers were. Only our wonder is transferred from Jesus to the ruler. We do not wonder that Jesus loved this young ruler, we wonder that he did not love Jesus.

This is for ever the mystery of all mysteries. Not why Jesus loves. Jesus is love, and whether His love costs Him pain, as it did when He wept and said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together,' or as perhaps it did when He looked upon this young man and loved him; or gives Him pleasure, as when He loved His own who were in the world and loved them to the uttermost, still He loves and cannot help loving. But we can. And that is the mystery. We can see Him loving us, and refuse to return His love. Dr. Frederick Field was a great expositor, one of the greatest of the last generation of great expositors, and he was not sure that we should not translate the word here 'caressed him.' And Dr. Edwin Abbott (*Johannine Vocabulary*, p. 257 ff.) is inclined to agree with him. In any case, the word is that word for loving which means manifesting love in action, and the ruler could be in no doubt of the fact of it. Jesus loved him, and he knew it, and yet he went away. That is the wonder.

If we were to discover in the Gospels a quotation from a Buddhist writing, what should we think of it? Mr. Albert J. Edmunds, the author of a book on *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, believes that he has made the discovery.

And he is not disconcerted by it. He believes

that he has discovered in St. John's Gospel two quotations from Buddhism, and it seems to him the most natural thing in the world. For if the Buddhist story of Barlaam and Joasaph could be worked up into a Christian romance in the sixth century, he sees nothing to hinder Buddhist texts from penetrating to Palestine in the first century, and finding their way into one of the Gospels. He sees, indeed, a great appropriateness in their discovery in the Gospel according to St. John, 'that most mystic and recondite of the four, charged as it is with the philosophy of Ephesus and Alexandria, where the thought of all nations found a home.'

The first quotation is in Jn 7³⁸, 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'

Now on this passage Alford says: 'We look in vain for such a text in the Old Testament, and an apocryphal or lost canonical book is out of the question.' Most of the expositors find the *sense* of the words in various passages of the Old Testament, and are compelled to be content. But Dr. Plummer remarks with wonder that 'none of them contain the very remarkable expression *out of his belly*.'

Mr. Edmunds turns to the Buddhist *Way to Supernal Knowledge* (Patisambhida-maggo), i. 53. This is his translation: 'What is the Tathagato's knowledge of the twin miracle? In this case the Tathagato works a twin miracle unrivalled by disciples; from his upper body proceeds a flame of fire, and from his lower body proceeds a torrent of water. Again, from his lower body proceeds a flame of fire, and from his upper body a torrent of water.'

Is the parallel not very striking? But it is possible. And it has the phrase which astonishes Dr. Plummer. What now if we were to admit it? Should we have to give up St. John's Gospel? All the Gospels? The Bible itself? If the worst

came to the worst there would still remain one word with us, and that one word makes the difference between earth and heaven. It is the word 'living.' The Buddhist says 'a torrent of water'; the evangelist says 'rivers of living water.' We know where that word 'living' came from. It came from the prophets of Israel, or it came from the Lord Himself. The prophets have it, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah; and our Lord has it again in the conversation with the woman of Samaria. There is no hint of the water in the Buddhist writing being living water. And that word 'living,' as Mr. Edmunds sees, transfigures the passage and makes it Scripture.

The other passage is Jn 12³⁴, 'The multitude therefore answered him, We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth for ever' (εις τὸν αἰῶνα, 'for the æon').

The law has no such statement. Again, the commentators are driven to gather the general sense of various passages in the Old Testament. Mr. Edmunds' Buddhist parallel is taken from the 'Book of the Great Decease' (*Books of the East*, xi. 40): 'Anando, any one who has practised the four principles of psychical power, — developed them, made them active and practical, pursued them, accumulated and striven to the height thereof, — can, if he so should wish, remain [on earth] for the æon, or the rest of the æon. Now, Anando, the Tathagato, has practised and perfected these; and if he so should wish, *the Tathagato could remain [on earth] for the æon, or the rest of the æon.*'

The parallel is closer than before. For there is no word of spiritual meaning to lift the saying out of the earthly; and the tense, in which the greatest difference lies, might be future in St. John. Moreover, the saying has no place in the doctrine of the New Testament. And the fact that it is ascribed to 'the multitude' gives it the appearance of some popular extra-Biblical source. But who is Tathagato, and do the dates make quotation possible?

It is 'The Tathagato.' And the Tathagato is a title, not a personal name. It is a title as 'The Christ' is a title. What its meaning is men are still debating, but Mr. Edmunds thinks that Professor Rhys Davids' translation, 'the Truth-winner,' is probably as near the mark as we shall ever get.

And he thinks that the dates make it quite possible that the idea comes from Buddhism. For it is found not only in the 'Book of the Great Decease,' but also in the 'Enunciations,' and these are two of the oldest of the Pali writings, the Enunciations being also one of the Nine Divisions of a lost arrangement of the Canon. And more than that, it is found in Sanskrit in the Book of Avadanas, which has been transmitted independently of the other books.

'The righteous shall live by faith' (Gal 3¹¹). This is the most momentous text in the Bible. There are other texts which are more endeared to us. Some men's thoughts return at once to St. Paul's 'faithful saying' about the chief of sinners; others will let their minds rest upon the gracious invitation of Christ to the weary and heavy-laden. But this is the most momentous text. It has had more to do than any other with the great religious movements which have taken place in the world.

There have been four great religious movements in the world with which this text has had to do. Each of the movements is associated with a great name.

The first is associated with the name of Abraham. 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed' (He 11⁸). For Abraham had made two discoveries. He had discovered that God is, and he had discovered that He is a rewarder.

These two discoveries are the start of faith. As the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, 'without faith it is impossible to please God, for he

that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' Abraham started with that. He left his country and went out, not knowing whither he went, because he had discovered that God is, and that He is a rewarder.

He had discovered that God is. We cannot suppose that the contemporaries of Abraham had lost all knowledge of God. We know that they had not. But their knowledge was not of a living and true God. There were gods many in Ur of the Chaldees. And these many gods were unworthy of the name, and had none of the proper influence of God. They were not incorruptibly righteous. They were not free from passion and from prejudice. They could be played off the one against the other. And by playing them off (and paying a little for it), the sinner could always escape. Abraham had discovered that God is.

And he had discovered that God is a rewarder.

Men cry out in our day against the doctrine of reward. They call it enlightened selfishness. And we who know that it is not selfishness, are still a little troubled by George Eliot's taunt of 'other-worldliness.' We are almost afraid to promise a reward to those who seek God diligently. But the Bible is packed with promises of reward. And the seeking of God diligently is impossible without it. And we cannot come to God at all if we do not come in the faith that He is a rewarder. Abraham believed that God is a rewarder; and in that belief, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, he obeyed and went out.

He went out, not knowing whither he went. It cost him something to go. It costs every emigrant something. We never see them leave our shores without seeing that it costs them something, although they know quite well where they are going. Did Abraham feel nothing of the pain of uprooting? Did he care not that he had to cut his

family in twain and leave half of it behind? The after events are eloquent. It is to the home country that he sends his servant to fetch a wife for his son Isaac. And the love of the homeland remained as a tradition in the family, so that it was towards Paddan-aram that Jacob turned his steps when he had to leave his father's house. It cost Abraham something.

But we say he had his reward. Well, what was the reward that he looked for? We see that clearly enough. It was a new country. It was a land of prosperity where he could build up a new home, found a family, and leave himself a name. Did he get it? The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says he did not. 'By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.' And we see for ourselves that he did not. When Sarah died (and they had spent many days together), he had to approach the inhabitants of the land and buy a few feet of earth to lay her body in.

It is one of the most pathetic tales in history. Surely we cannot miss the fact that the hope of Abraham's heart was to found a family? 'After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.' And what was Abraham's response? 'And Abram said, Lord, God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?' 'Abram, I am thy reward.' But Abraham was a long way from that yet. 'What wilt thou give me,' he said, 'seeing I go childless?' For this was the reward he longed for, a child and a family and a great family name—and he never got it.

It is deeply touching. There is no parallel to it in history till we come to Sir Walter Scott. This was his ambition also. He did not care for fame except for his family's sake. He built Abbotsford for the sake of founding a family and sending his name down through the generations that should

follow. Sir Walter Scott never reached his ambition, and Abraham never obtained his reward.

It was well for Abraham that he did not, and it was well for us. For if he had obtained the reward for which he left his country, he would never have been the father of the faithful. By faith Abraham went out, for he had discovered that God is a rewarder. But if his faith had failed him when the first disappointment came, and he discovered that the reward was not to be that which he came out for, his faith would never have been counted to him for righteousness.

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country. When God came to him at the time of the first deep disappointment, and said, 'Abram, I am thy reward,' Abraham was not ready for that. 'Lord God, I go childless.' There is a tone of reproach in it, a tone of surprise and gentle reproach. So the child came.

Is God to lose Abraham, then? Is he to be the father of a prosperous family in the land of promise? Is he to become rich in cattle and in land, and pass away as a great Eastern sheikh? Are we to lose him also? Isaac is born,—but Isaac must die. So it came to pass after these things that God did test Abraham, and said unto him, . . . 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.'

'Whom thou lovest.' The words are not accidental. And it is more than the love of the father for the son. Ishmael was his son also, and Abraham loved him. It is more than the father's love for the son of his old age. 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.' It is the surrender of the dearest hope of his life, the hope of the family and the name. But Abraham is ready now. When God first came to him saying, 'I am thy reward,' he was not ready. 'I go childless,'

he said pleadingly then. But he knows God better now. He has had rewards he never dreamed of. He has had a vision of a God who breaks the letter of His promise in order that He may keep it with overwhelming excellence in the spirit. He has seen that nothing is impossible with God, and that He is able to give him Isaac back again. Or if not—and this is now the secret of the father of the faithful—he has discovered that when God says He is a rewarder, the reward,

the final and the full reward, is Himself. So Abraham went to the land of Moriah, and he who had received the promise went to offer up the son through whom alone the promise could be fulfilled, not because faith is blind and unreasonable, but because, dearly as he loved Isaac, and fondly as he still hoped that through him should arise the family by whom all the nations of the earth should be blest, God Himself had at last become his shield and his exceeding great reward.

The New Testament

IN THE LIGHT OF RECENTLY DISCOVERED TEXTS OF THE GRÆCO-ROMAN WORLD.

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III. The Importance of the Texts for the Literary Interpretation of the New Testament.

THE foregoing estimate of the New Testament may be reached also from the point of view of the historian of literature, and again it is the texts of the imperial age that furnish the proper standard for criticizing the New Testament as literature.

The principle thus enunciated seems, however, to place us in an awkward situation. We have repeatedly insisted on the fact that the texts in question are largely of a *non-literary* character, and shall we now expect light on the state of literature from non-literary texts? That seems to involve a contradiction; and we admit that it may sound surprising at first when it is claimed that from such poor texts as papyrus and potsherd often afford, we can learn to estimate rightly the Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians, and at length to comprehend the literary development of Primitive Christianity.

In speaking of the literary development of Primitive Christianity we approach a subject which has not yet been recognized by many persons in its full importance. Huge as is the library of books that have been written on the origin of the New Testament and of its separate parts, the New Testament has not often been studied by historians of literature; that is to say, as a branch of the history of ancient literature. Indeed, the whole

problem of the literary study of Primitive Christianity has been understood by very few scholars. An honourable exception must be mentioned, Franz Overbeck, with his important treatise on the beginnings of patristic literature.¹ As a rule, the very existence of the problem is not realized, because people approach the New Testament with the idea that the early Christian writings collected and preserved in this book are each and all of them literary works.

But the problem calls for consideration. Whoever looks on the New Testament simply as a collection of small literary works, and studies it as such, commits the mistake of which a writer on art would be guilty who should deal with a collection of curios in which natural petrifications lay side by side with ancient sculptures, as if it were simply and solely a collection of works of art. It is wrong to *assume* that the New Testament is literary in all its parts; it is our duty to inquire whether it is so. This question coincides with another, somewhat differently formulated: Was Primitive Christianity literary from the beginning? or, When did Primitive Christianity become literary, and what are the separate stages in its literary development?

¹ *Historische Zeitschrift*, 48; Neue Folge, 12 (1882), pp. 429 ff.