

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE first number has been published of *The Oxford and Cambridge Review* (Constable; 2s. 6d. net). Within a dazzling orange cover, it contains fifteen articles, which run to one hundred and seventy-six pages. It is not Biblical, nor is it Ecclesiastical. The Bible and the Church are already well served in the Universities by the *Journal of Theological Studies*. But it is not going to ignore Religion. And the article which we have found it necessary to read with the greatest care is entitled 'The Altar of Mercy.'

It is an article on Religion, as its title seems to say. It was not its title, however, that drew us first of all to the reading of it, but its author. Its author is A. W. Verrall, Litt.D. Now Dr. Verrall belongs to Cambridge. Let us rather say, without exaggeration, with just that idealizing touch which he has taught us the use of, that Cambridge belongs to him. Before the University knows its own thought, Dr. Verrall has expressed it. He is the keeper, in short, not of its conscience, which in a University is of less account, but of its understanding.

It is true that the article in this first number to which the editors of *The Oxford and Cambridge Review* request most particular attention is that by John Stuart Mill on 'Social Freedom.' And an unpublished article by John Stuart Mill is

sure to command attention. It is, moreover, the longest article in the number. But the article of greatest moment is Dr. Verrall's. For it handles the greatest subject of human interest. And it handles it, not only with the deliberate intention of changing the course of men's minds upon it, but also with that inevitable result. Its intention is to prove that when St. Paul began to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, the Gentiles were not merely ready to receive the new religion, but had anticipated it.

The article is occupied with the *Thebaid* of Statius. Now Dr. Verrall does not upbraid us for not knowing the *Thebaid* of Statius. Very mercifully he ignores our ignorance, saying simply, 'How we read the *Thebaid*, it were perhaps best not to inquire.' More than that, he does not ask us to read it now. It is enough that he reads it. In the *Thebaid* of Statius he finds the evidence that the Greek at least, if not the Roman, knew Christ before He was known of either St. Peter or St. Paul.

For the Greek had discovered that the deepest need of mankind was the need of mercy. The discovery came along the lines of a curious ritualism with which we need not at present concern ourselves. The thing of importance is that (as something which was more than war and

victory, more than art and letters, more than the heroic gods or even the family altar), there had arisen a sense of the value and the necessity of forgiveness. And a place for it had been found on earth. In the centre of the city of Athens the Altar of Mercy had been erected, to which the nations were invited to come. And no one who came was ever cast out.

This is not the Word made flesh. The idealizing of a city as a place of refuge for the down-trodden is still a long way from the Son of Man with His authority in heaven and in earth, and His invitation to the weary and the heavy-laden. But when Dante, in the thirteenth century, read the *Thebaid* he was so impressed with the Christ-likeness of an Altar of Mercy in the centre of Athens, to which the nations were invited to run, that he claimed the author of the *Thebaid* as a Christian.

Dr. Verrall believes that in its estimate of 'paganism' the thirteenth century was nearer the truth than the twentieth. Dante was no doubt wrong in fact when he claimed Statius as a conscious follower of Jesus of Nazareth. But he was right in spirit. In spirit he was nearer the first-century estimate of paganism than we are.

For although Dr. Verrall tells us that it is no part of his purpose to consider the position in history which should be assigned to the Acts of the Apostles, he is confident that 'the author of that book, and those by whom it was invested with authority, did not desire to overlook or to minimize any advantage which the new religion might obtain from its claim to embrace, absorb, and satisfy that gentle doctrine of humanity, which had radiated, or was at least supposed by the world to have radiated, from Mars' Hill.' Which is to say, that when St. Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, he knew that he was standing in the ideal centre of that sorrow for humanity and offer of peace which was the highest attainment of the religion of heathendom; and as he said 'Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are

exceedingly God-fearing,' he took advantage of the very nearness of their approach to offer them, through Christ, that God whom they already worshipped, though ignorantly.

There is an article in *The London Quarterly Review* for July on Psychical Research. Now *The London Quarterly Review* is an organ of scholarly Methodism. It is true that the article is printed in small type and appears in an appendix of Notes and Discussions. Nevertheless it appears. And it advocates without reserve the place of psychical research in religion.

The writer of the article is Mr. Cyril Lockhart Hare. Mr. Hare claims that psychical research may help us in three of the mightiest moments of our spiritual life. It may help us in prayer, in regard to special providences, and in our thought of the life to come.

It may help us in prayer. 'It may now be taken as practically certain,' says Mr. Hare, 'that the communication of mind with mind without the aid of the ordinary channels of the senses is an everyday possibility.' We call this communication telepathy. The more this power is put to the test, the more prevalent it is found to be. At present it approaches nearer to actual demonstration than any other form of psychical research.

But is it only between man and man that this communication may occur? If at a distance and without the aid of the senses the mind of one man holds intercourse with the mind of another, will it not be possible, will it not be easier for man to hold intercourse with the unhampered mind of God? We call such intercourse prayer. If, therefore, we are ever tempted to wonder whether our prayers enter the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, Mr. Hare bids us take courage, remembering what can be accomplished by telepathy. He does not base his belief in the efficacy of prayer upon the argument from telepathy. But it is an argument,

he thinks, that may come in to strengthen other arguments. And thus psychical research, upon which the Church has hitherto looked askance, may be found in agreement with the deepest of our convictions.

Upon the subject of special providences there is some disagreement among professing Christians. There are those who cling to a belief in special providences tenaciously. Others deny that they are ever more than a coincidence. Mr. Hare thinks that psychical research may put an end to the dispute. Modern psychology has much to say about the Subliminal Self. The psychologist believes that in our ordinary states we make use of only a part of our consciousness—and that perhaps the smaller part—whilst below the surface, as it were, and submerged, there is a far more wonderful self, endowed with faculties for gaining and transmitting knowledge and for action, greatly exceeding those of which we make use in our everyday life. It may be that in another life, when we are freed from the hindrances of our present bodies, we shall be able to bring our whole consciousness into play, including this Subliminal Self, and shall then find that we possess powers which before we had not dreamt of.

But Mr. Hare believes that even here and now there are times when we may trace the workings of our Subliminal Self. He refers to a remark of Maeterlinck's. In one of his books Maeterlinck writes on the subject of luck. And he suggests that when a railway accident or some such disaster takes place, the sufferers are involved in it owing to the failure of their Subliminal Selves to warn them. Others, more fortunate, received some kind of notice which enabled them to avoid the disaster. Mr. Hare thinks that the theory is a tenable one. He thinks that we have all experienced at times an instinctive feeling that we ought to pursue or desist from a certain course of action. We call it a presentiment. We know not whence it comes or how; we know only its presence and its strength. We act upon it sometimes even when our reason

rebels. And the result justifies us in what we have done. Some call the presentiment a special providence; others a bit of luck. Mr. Hare believes that special providence is nearer the mark. It is Providence working, not independently of our faculties, but through our Subliminal Self.

With his third example Mr. Hare takes courage and declares his faith in spirit-rapping. He does not use that word. He seems to avoid the use of it. He speaks of 'telepathic communications from the dead.' But he means spirit-rapping. And he claims that although the dead have not yet been seen, 'a vision telepathically conveyed by the dead to the recipient is at least a plausible explanation of what takes place.' And Mr. Hare believes that the time is coming when those who reject every proof of the life to come, except the strictly scientific, will be given strictly scientific proof that when a man dies he shall live again.

There is a writer in *The Churchman* for July who believes that the real Commentary on the Bible has yet to be written. For all the Commentaries have been written by Westerns, in a Western atmosphere. The real Commentary must be written by an Eastern, or at least by one who has made the Eastern way of looking at things his own. It must be written by one who, when he says, 'I slept just two hours last night,' does not mean that he slept just two hours, but only that he had a short night; who when he says, 'I did not sleep at all last night,' does not mean that he did not sleep at all, but only that he was somewhat wakeful.

The writer is the Rev. G. E. White, D.D. And he must know what he speaks about. For it has been his good fortune to spend sixteen years of the life of a missionary in Turkey. He says himself that it has been his good fortune. Not because Turkey is so desirable for man or missionary, but because he has come to understand the Bible. He has grown intimately

acquainted with both the Mohammedans and the Christians of Asia Minor. And familiarity with Eastern modes of thought and speech has 'cast a new light and a new colour over the pages of the dear old Book.' He believes that he understands the Bible very much better than the modern exegete who carries with him into its 'Sunrise realm' the pragmatic preconceived up-to-date notions of an Anglo-Saxon.

What are the gifts of a true expositor? The first appears to be a facility for unlimited exaggeration. We have had an example of that. It is the ability to exaggerate without calling it exaggeration, without thinking of it as exaggeration, without, in short, its being exaggeration, but just a well-recognized mode of utterance.

The second gift is indifference to number. And not only to number, but to separate facts of any kind. 'I once heard the *mufti* in a sermon affirm that each of the seven prophets was endowed with a special sign. When I asked him to explain a little more fully in private, he readily did so, and named *eight* prophets, and the sign of each.' That is one example. Not very long ago two villagers separately described their village custom of offering a sacrifice in the spring of every year. One said, 'We sacrifice a bullock'; the other, 'We owe our *noumen* two sheep.' That is another example. The one who said a bullock may sacrifice two sheep, and the one who said two sheep a bullock. The number is nothing, nor the animal. The sacrifice is the thing. But, says Dr. White: 'If a few thousand years hence these two statements, alleged to be by contemporaries, from the same village, and describing the same rite (one including a relic of Anatolian polytheism), could be adequately treated, just think what a pretty piece of criticism might result!' Might result? Has resulted. For do we not read in Dt 16² that the Paschal animal might be from the flock or from the herd; and have we not been told that the alternative is impossible, and that in actual fact a lamb was always used, and never a bullock?

But the Western scholar is, apparently, not always out of it. Dr. White has found a Commentary on Ezekiel (it was written by the late Professor A. B. Davidson) in which the following words occur: 'While the sacrifices in general, and the ideas which they expressed, were fixed and constant, the particulars, such as the kind of victims and the number of them, the precise quantity of meal, oil, and the like, were held non-essential, and alterable when a change would better express the idea.' That is a Western expositor with whom Dr. White has no fault to find. He simply remarks, in further illustration, that in an Armenian village, where they cannot obtain wine for sacramental purposes, they use a mixture of soured milk and water. The lack of a desirable habitual feature of worship does not prevent or vitiate the worship.

We have spoken of exaggeration. It is not a good word. It is a Western word with an offence in it. There is no offence in the Eastern figure of speech to which we apply it. 'A wandering *Kaderi* dervish, who was a guest in my house some months ago, told me that he was a Shukhbazari; and then, to enlighten my ignorance, explained that Arabs, Circassians, and Shukhbazaris are "own brothers, children of one father and one mother." He used a Scripture form of expression to make me understand that the three peoples possessed the same traits of character.'

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It is only Eastern. When one person in the East has been in service to another, and the relation has terminated, the departing servant expects a present from his former master, and the master expects to give it. The custom is of universal observance. Women especially cannot be refused. But when they have got their present and are away, it is very Eastern of them to rejoice, even although they expected it, and to say, 'Aha, we have spoiled the Egyptians.'

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Will that translation stand? It suits Dr. Verrall's argument. It suits his argument as thoroughly as the 'too superstitious' of the Authorized Version would smite it. But Dr. Verrall and his argument are nothing when we are in search of the right translation.

The question is this. Did St. Paul desire to condemn the Athenians or to commend them? Did he say that they were superstitious, or did he say that they were religious? That is the question in its simplicity. The exact shade of condemnation or of commendation may be postponed for a moment.

The translators are equally divided. The Vulgate began with 'superstition'—*Viri Athenienses per omnia quasi superstitiosiores vos video*. This was rendered by Wyclif, 'Men of Athenis, bi alle thingis I se you as veyn worschiperis.' The English versions carry on this inheritance, not directly from Wyclif, for Luther also has 'allzu abergläubisch,' and Tindale was able to reach immediately to the Greek. Tindale gave the English translation its familiar form. In his New Testament of 1526 he has, 'Ye men of Attens, I perceave that in all thynges ye are somewhat

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But numbers go for nothing. However it may be with parliamentary elections, in the determination of the meaning of a word in the New Testament one scholar who has entered into the matter is of more account than ten popular expositors who follow their predecessors. Now the translation of this word has been carefully examined by Cremer in the second part of his *Biblico-Theological Lexicon*; by Dr. Frederick Field in his *Otium Norvicense*, afterwards published (with additions on this and other passages) as *Notes on Translation of the New Testament*; by Hatch in *Essays in Biblical Greek*; by T. K. Abbott in the *Church Quarterly Review* for 1890 (p. 284), afterwards published in *Essays on the Old and New Testaments*; and by Chase in *The Credibility of the Acts*. And it is time that the translation of the word was settled, for there is nothing to be discovered about it which these (and Nestle, of whom we

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shall speak in a moment) have not already discovered.

The Greek word (*δεισιδαίμων*) seems originally to have been used only in a good sense, and there is evidence, though it is not absolutely conclusive, that the beginning of a bad sense was due to the philosophers. For the old Greek philosophers had as much dislike to the element of fear or submission in religion as have the modern agnostics. Now this word has the idea of fear as one of the materials out of which it is constructed (*δεισιδαίμων* from *δέιδω*, 'to fear,' and *δαίμων*, 'a demon'). The philosophers therefore threw contempt upon it. In their vocabulary, at least, it came to stand for 'superstition.'

Gradually the word lost caste. About the beginning of the Christian era there are examples to show that it could still be used without reproach, but the use is old-fashioned or eccentric. There does not appear to be the shadow of a doubt that when St. Paul used it on Mars' Hill the only meaning that the ordinary hearer would take out of it would be that of 'superstitious.'

But St. Paul himself was a Jew. If one who addressed the Athenian philosophers was not likely to use the word in the sense of religious or devout, how much less when he who addressed them was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. This aspect of the matter was never adequately presented until Professor Nestle presented it in the eleventh volume of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. That in later Greek, from Theophrastus to Plutarch, the general use of the word is in a bad sense, had been shown by Field and others. But it had never before been shown that a Jewish writer could scarcely use it in any other sense. For it contains in its composition that most offensive word 'demon.' It is significant, therefore, that when Philo uses it or its substantive, as he does sometimes most pertinently for this passage, he always uses them in the sense of superstitious or superstition.

The translation of the word itself ought now to be settled once for all. Bishop Chase translates it 'superstitious,' and there is no possibility of challenging his judgment when he says, 'In no other sense could the word be understood by Athenians, who would instinctively recall the literary associations of the word, still less by the philosophers among St. Paul's audience, who themselves despised and ridiculed the popular religion, to which, nevertheless, from motives of convenience they conformed.'

As St. Paul uses it, the adjective is in the comparative degree. What is the reason of that? Some seem to think that his purpose was to make a comparison between the superstition or religion, as the case might be, of the Athenians and that of others. Ramsay translates 'More than others respectful of what is divine,' which Baring-Gould, in his *Study of St. Paul*, exactly repeats. And a neat expression of this thought is to be found in Lloyd's *Corrected New Testament*, the most recent of the modern translations, 'Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in every respect ye are unusually religious.'

But the comparative in Greek does not necessarily make a comparison. It often expresses either defect or excess. Tindale, we remember, took it first in the one way ('somewhat'), and then in the other ('too' superstitious). And if it is not a true comparative, the probability is that it expresses excess rather than defect, though whether mildly, as Nestle thinks ('rather superstitious'), or strongly, as Chase ('very superstitious'), it is difficult to say. Blass, however, has shown that on the whole the more likely sense is the more outspoken one.

We come then to this conclusion, that when St. Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and addressed for the first time an audience which was made up chiefly of philosophers, he began with the startling words, 'Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in every respect ye are very superstitious.'

Whereupon what an outcry arises. Not from the Athenians, but from modern expositors. 'It is incredible,' says Canon Knowling, 'that St. Paul should have commenced his remarks with a phrase calculated to offend his hearers.' And that is one of the mildest ways of putting it. 'Paul,' says Professor Schaff, 'was too much of a gentleman, and had too much good sense, to begin his address to the Athenian philosophers with an insult.'

Now it is never wise to interpret Scripture by our sense of the fitness of things. But is even the fitness of things all on the other side? Has not Dr. Schaff just said that St. Paul's audience was an audience of philosophers? That it was mainly

so is evident. What offence was it to philosophers to call the Athenians superstitious? They called them so themselves. Instead of irritating, nothing would conciliate them more than to find that the Apostle was with them in their contempt of the superstitious practices of the people.

But it may be questioned if the matter once engaged the Apostle's attention. St. Paul was no doubt both a gentleman and an orator, but his first consideration always was for the truth as it is in Jesus. And Dr. Field is not wrong in suggesting that here, as elsewhere, he delivered his message 'with all boldness' and not 'with enticing words of man's wisdom.'

Another Estimate of Ritschl.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. J. DICK FLEMING, B.D., MANITOBA COLLEGE, WINNIPEG.

IT is not easy to determine the position of Albrecht Ritschl in the theological world. The Orthodox we know: the Liberals we know; but where does Ritschl stand? It is certain that the Göttingen professor desired to be classed with no theological party, and that he had his desire. From both sides of the theological world he was most bitterly assailed. His criticisms of the pietistic and pagan features of the religious life, and the outworn metaphysic that prevailed in theology, were met by the overwhelming counter-charges of rationalism, phenomenalism, materialism, scepticism, or even nihilism. The very variety and inconsistency of the charges argued at least the apprehension of something portentous in the Ritschlian mode of thought. As Ritschl once observed, he was apparently regarded by his opponents as a kind of theological St. Catherine's wheel, spitting out the fire of heresy to every point of the compass.

To the Liberal theologians Ritschl first gave deep offence by his defection from the Tübingen School of Theology, and by the self-confident tone in which he exalted himself above his former teachers. 'The pigmy, forsooth, making himself

out to be superior to the great master (F. C. Baur), to whom belongs the honour of every trace of scientific method he still retains.'¹ But if Ritschl thus seemed to the theological Left to be veering round in a retrograde direction, and to be desirous of ingratiating himself with the orthodox party, he encountered no less the stern opposition of the representatives of orthodoxy. At his death in 1889, the 'Church News' of Berlin—*der Kirchliche Anzeiger*—representing the orthodox side of German opinion, raised a lament that so many of their students were being infected with the Ritschlian doctrines. 'It is deeply to be regretted that the disciples of Ritschl have now a prominent place on the teaching staff of several universities, and that through his influence a great number of young theologians have entered on the ministry without holding the faith of the Church on matters most essential. The Church will need to put forth great efforts before she can succeed in freeing herself from the baneful influence of the Ritschlian theology.' So far from freeing herself from this 'baneful influence,' however, the faith of the

¹ C. Schwarz, *Geschichte der neuesten Theologie*, p. 173.