

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

IN his new book on *The Approach to the Social Question* (Macmillan; 5s. net), Professor PEABODY says that both for Religion and the Social Question the most imminent peril of contemporary thought is the peril of provincialism.

And what is provincialism? It is 'the handling of great truths as if they were small and shut-in experiences, set in a corner of life as the special concern of a single class.' Professor PEABODY has to find out the reason why the Church is so reluctant to take up the Social Question, the reason also why the Social worker will have nothing to do with the Church. In both cases this is the reason.

It is quite clear to Professor PEABODY that the Church is reluctant to take up the Social Question. There are many devout people who view with scepticism, if not with hostility, the deflecting of religion from its traditional path of worship to these new ways of work, and the exhausting of the instincts of piety in the activities of philanthropy. Religion, they have been taught to believe, means a personal redemption from sin, or a definite allegiance to Christ; and to identify religion with boys' clubs, gymnasiums, and social settlements, seems to them in some degree disloyal to the cause they are pledged to serve.

And these devout people, it must be confessed, have sometimes been supplied with an excuse for their suspicion. It has lately been suggested, says Professor PEABODY—his reference is to the *Spectator* of January 19, 1907—that religion might be defined as 'philanthropy, touched and warmed by reverence for Jesus Christ.' And such a definition is likely enough to seem to many Christians 'not only grotesquely insufficient, but also completely unhistorical.' They might easily be apprehensive lest philanthropy might become so touching and warm as to take the place of reverence for Jesus Christ.

For this is just the danger, and this is the only excuse for the antipathy, that deeds which ought to be the product of Religion, are made to appear as if they owed nothing to Religion. They appear to be made a substitute for faith, rather than its expression; and when the flower bears another name, the very beauty of it becomes an affront to Religion. In short, the religion of deed looks as if it were determined to supplant the religion of creed, and the love of man were likely to appropriate those emotions which once were dedicated to the love of God.

On the other hand, those who are most concerned with the Social Question often regard Religion with indifference or even with contempt.

At the hour when religious people meet for worship, unions of hand-workers meet to deliberate on industrial problems and programmes, and do not hesitate to claim that these debates are quite as instructive and uplifting as sermons. 'My associates,' the President of the American Federation of Labour has announced, 'have come to look upon the Church and the ministry as the apologists and defenders of the wrong committed against the interests of the people. They use their exalted positions to discourage and discountenance all practical efforts of the toilers to lift themselves out of the slough of despondency and despair.'

Professor PEABODY is firmly convinced that the Church has no just reason for looking coldly on the Social worker, and the Social worker has no just reason for standing aloof from the Church. Both are guilty of provincialism. Both take too narrow a view of that which moves them to their deepest interest. If Religion represented nothing but ecclesiastical machinery and dogmatic opinions, and if the Social Question represented nothing but a programme for the distribution of industrial profits, then they would certainly occupy regions so remote from each other that loyalty to one might mean betrayal of the other. There is little in common, says Professor PEABODY, between debates on the orders of the clergy or the condition of sinners after death and discussions of a wage-scale or an eight-hour day.

But if both Religion and the Social Question are primarily concerned with life, conduct, duty, feeling, hope; if both are interpretations of experience in the world that now is,—then it is not only needless, it is impossible, to hold them asunder.

What the Church has to see is that Religion and the Social Question are falsely set in opposition, or even compared together. Religion is the tree, Social Service is its fruit. Those religious ideals and aspirations which expressed themselves

otherwise in other generations, are in this generation reappearing in forms of the Social Question. Emotions which once uttered themselves in prayer, conversion, and oral pledges, are now uttering themselves in philanthropy, social service, and industrial reform. But life is still found in losing it. The test of discipleship, 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' is still the same. The cardinal sin of religion is still the sin of Cain, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The most precious words of self-dedication to human service are still the words of Jesus, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself.'

'For lo, the kingdom of God is within you' (Lk 17²¹). So the Authorized Version, with the margin, 'or, among you'; and so the Revised Version, with the margin, 'or, in the midst of you.'

Professor VON DOBSCHÜTZ of Strassburg (whose article on the BIBLE IN THE CHURCH in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* has brought him much into notice lately) discusses the phrase in *The Expositor* for April. He believes that the Greek words (ἐντός ὑμῶν) 'will go through the whole history of interpretation, and will perhaps never come to a final decision.' Yet he himself decides firmly enough for 'within you.'

For it seems to him that the only doubt which really exists is whether or not St. Luke translates the original Aramaic correctly. That doubt will never be resolved. But granting that he does, then the phrase itself is enough to fix the meaning to 'within you.' For if the Evangelist had intended to say 'in the midst of you,' he would have used another word. He would have used the word (ἐν μέσῳ) which he uses elsewhere more than a dozen times in the sense of 'in the midst'; and not a word which he never uses in that sense again.

And the language, Professor VON DOBSCHÜTZ believes, is supported by the sense. For the inwardness of the Kingdom, if not stated expressly

in other sayings of Jesus, is quite in the line of what He says about clean and unclean: 'There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man'; 'for from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed . . . and defile the man' (Mk 7¹⁵⁻²¹).

There is no passage in the New Testament, and there cannot be many in the Old, that have been the occasion of more perplexity than the passage which describes the cursing of the barren fig-tree. Those who have little time to gather together for themselves the efforts at interpretation which have been made, from St. Augustine onward, will find them conveniently arranged in the entertaining pages of Dr. James MORISON'S *Commentary on St. Mark*. And they will be none the less entertained that Dr. MORISON himself also, just for once, goes altogether astray.

There is, indeed (to begin with Dr. MORISON), no explanation that we find less acceptable in these days than the suggestion that Christ knew all the time that there were no figs on that fig-tree, so that the coming and the cursing were simply symbolical actions on His part. It will always be easier to believe in Christ's ignorance than in His pretence. At the present time there is no room for comparison.

But this is not the only, or even the greatest, difficulty. When we admit Christ's ignorance, we have still to account for the apparent absurdity of His looking for figs when, as St. Mark says, it was not yet the season of figs. And then we have to explain the apparent petulance of His 'answer' when He was disappointed. For we are told that He answered and said to the fig-tree, 'No man eat fruit from thee henceforward for ever.'

We need not resent the use of words like ignorance, absurdity, petulance. Scholars who retain some reverence use them freely here. If these

words express the facts, let us ascertain the facts, and then use the words that express them. If they do not, let us use the words temporarily that we may get rid of them once for all.

Now there is no greater remissness that the interpreters of this passage, reverent and irreverent, have shown than the remissness to ascertain the facts. There are two sets of facts to be ascertained. First, the facts about fig-trees generally, and then the facts about this particular fig-tree.

What are the facts about fig-trees in general? One is that they bear two (not three) crops of figs in a season. In the early spring small green knobs or 'buttons' appear at the ends of the twigs. These buttons are called *paggim*. They are referred to in Canticles 2¹³—'the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs.' The *paggim* gradually increase in size, and are ripe about the beginning of June or even the end of May.

That is one fact. Another is that these early figs appear on the old wood, the wood of the previous year's growth. Now, in the *Nation* for April 2, there is a fine rhythmical translation of that beautiful passage in Canticles. But it is marred by a very small slip, due to ignorance of this fact.

The translation is as follows:

Arise, my love, my beloved, and come away;
The winter is past, and the rain is over and done
In the land, and the time of the singing of birds is begun;
The flowers that appear on the earth have made it their stay;
The fig putteth forth new green figs on the tender spray.

It is in the last line that the mistake is made. The new green figs of the spring are not found

on the 'tender spray.' They are found on the old wood of the previous summer.

Another fact is that simultaneously with these early spring 'buttons,' or a little behind them, there appear the leaf buds. These leaf buds and the small green figs develop together, so that, if all is well with it, when the tree is clothed with leaves it should also be laden with figs. Many of these figs never ripen. They are the 'unripe figs' which the fig-tree casteth, when she is shaken of a great wind (Rev 6¹³).

Yet another fact is this. The 'unripe figs' at the time when they fall from the tree, although only as large as a cherry, may be, and are, eaten. They are eaten by the fellahin as they fall, and it is surprising how well a few of them will stay one's hunger. They may sometimes even be seen exposed for sale in the market in Jerusalem.

The rest is easy. As the first green figs are developing and the leaves developing with them, the buds of the second crop begin to form on the new wood which the season has produced. These buds grow into the figs which form the larger and better crop of the year. They reach their maturity in August or September.

Now if these are the facts about fig-trees in general, what are the facts about this particular fig-tree? The one important fact is that it was in leaf. The season was early. It was not the time for figs. But where there are leaves there ought to be figs. Jesus was hungry, and seeing a fig-tree 'afar off'—it was conspicuous by its early leafage—He came to it 'if haply,' if by any possibility, notwithstanding the season of the year, He might find figs on it.

He expected that season's figs. He did not expect to find figs of last season still hanging upon the tree. There is no proof that the figs of last season do hang on a fig-tree throughout the winter. During thirty-three years' residence in Syria, Pro-

fessor Post searched and inquired for them in vain. But even if some one else were to come and declare that he had found them, that is not the point. The point is that this tree had leaves. That is why Christ saw it and came up to it: Last season's fruit, if there were such a thing, would more easily be seen on a leafless tree. This tree had leaves. And a tree that had new leaves, however early, ought also to have new figs.

But it had no figs. It had leaves only. What then? Then He might have passed on, disappointed and hungry. But He had a deeper disappointment in His heart already, and a deeper hunger. He was on the way going up to Jerusalem. He had longed exceedingly to gather fruit of *that* tree, but he had been bitterly disappointed. The fig-tree suddenly stood for the City. And as He pronounced the curse of perpetual sterility, He pronounced it on the tree as a visible sign of that religious barrenness to which Jerusalem had resigned herself.

It was all quite natural. Nothing has to be read into the story. No perplexity is found in it. The perplexity arises when we find men standing in astonishment before the cursing of an innocent, senseless fig-tree, unable to see that what they call the disappointed petulance of Jesus was the great sorrow of heart He felt for that city over which He cried the exceeding bitter cry, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not!'

'And his disciples heard it.' St. Mark notes the fact. Yes, they heard and remembered it. They remembered and recorded it; not for the sake of the fig-tree, but for Jerusalem's sake. But how different is this from the suggestion that the whole scene was an acted parable. To save what is called Christ's ignorance, it is suggested that He knew, as soon as He saw the tree afar off, that it had nothing but leaves, and yet solemnly walked up to it with the disciples as if He expected figs. To save His ignorance,—as if we had anything to

do with His ignorance. If there is one thing on earth we are ignorant of, it is just this ignorance of Jesus on earth. 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee,'—we call that omniscience. 'He came, if haply he might find anything thereon,'—we call that ignorance. But they both belong to Jesus. And we have simply to accept them both.

In the issue of the *Nation* for April 2 there is an article on 'Faith.'

Mr. James Parsons was a watchmaker in Cornhill. His watches were known all over the world for their accuracy. When the time came for him to retire, he refused to let his name go with the business to another. 'No watch,' he said, 'shall bear my name which has not passed through my hands.' He retired to Axhaven, a little town on the coast.

One day in August, Parsons set out for a walk to a village five miles distant. The shortest road lay across the shallow basin of the outlet to the river, which was so twisted at that point that often it was quite calm inside when outside it was rough. Within three hours of high water the river was fordable. The middle of the estuary, in consequence of a rise in the river-bed, was dry for some time after low water, and was surmounted by a huge stone or smooth rock, the top of which at neap tide was never quite submerged. At a distance of about twenty feet on each side ran a fairly deep channel. Supported by the rock was a tide gauge, with feet and inches marked on it.

When Parsons came to the river on his way home, it was about half-past three in the afternoon, and the neap tide had just begun to flow. It was intensely hot. He crossed the first channel and lay down to rest for a moment on the sand, close to the gauge and under the rock. He fell asleep. When he awoke it was dusk, and the sun had just

set. The water had risen till it almost reached his knees when he stood up. He waded to the edge of each channel. They were both out of his depth, and he could not swim.

Parsons knew by his almanac that it was high water at the gauge at 8.57 p.m. that day. His watch showed 7.30 p.m. If it was really 7.30, the tide would continue to rise for an hour and twenty-seven minutes only, and would not touch his lips. If the watch had gained; if, say, it was actually only 7.20, the tide would flow for ten minutes longer, and he might be drowned. He could trust a watch of his own making. He could trust this perfect little instrument unhesitatingly. Up to eight o'clock he was at peace.

Suddenly he was assaulted with horrible fears. He had not tested the watch for some time. He had not used it much lately. That was a fact. But what kind of fact was it? It was worthless. The watch had often gone for months together, and had not lost or won to the extent of a minute. He reasoned with himself. He went over the same reasons again and again. But his nerves shook. A ghastly dread paralyzed him. He pictured himself lying on the sand down there. He saw himself carried home in a cart tomorrow.

Then he looked again at his watch. It was 8.30. He looked at the gauge. The water was exactly the height that it ought to be. Still the struggle continued. With all his might he fought; he stiffened himself, and drew his arms rigidly down by his side. Lo! in an instant his faith was restored; the flutter of his heart ceased; the adversary spread his wings and was seen no more.

Parsons, when he told the story, used to say that the adventure was a trial of his faith. He believed in his watch. He must believe it. How could he mistrust hundreds of tests? Nevertheless, his belief was impotent. Faith was wanting.

Faith is not belief in fact, demonstration, or promise. It is sensibility to the due influence of the fact, something which enables us to act upon it—the susceptibility to all the strength there is in the fact, so that we are controlled by it. Nobody can precisely define it. All we can say about it

is that it comes by the grace of God, and that failure to see the truth is not so lamentable as failure to be moved by it.

The article is signed by the name of MARK RUTHERFORD.

The Traditions of the Masai.¹

BY FRITZ HOMMEL, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH.

I.

THE statements of the late Captain Merker, which caused such a sensation at the time, about the legends of the Masai, which are so remarkably similar to the early history of the Hebrews, are capable of arousing the most widespread interest even at the present day. The question has not yet been settled whether these legends are really traditions preserved for thousands of years from the original Arabian home of the Masai, or whether Christian (or even Jewish) influence must be admitted. It is well known that Merker himself was firmly convinced of the absolute impossibility of the latter hypothesis; and if such an influence did take place—which is extremely unlikely, for the reasons which I shall point out below—it must have happened at any rate in earlier times, when the Masai still dwelt in the north in the neighbourhood of Abyssinia; but this, again, is open to grave doubts.

In the first place, it is quite out of the question that Merker, whose trustworthiness is beyond all doubt, had been imposed upon. As a matter of fact, it was only after long acquaintance with the Masai of his province that he won the confidence of those old Masai men who at last communicated to him the traditions, as a rule, anxiously guarded from strangers. Our Bavarian fellow-countryman, Deeg, who is a distinguished authority on the Masai, and authorities on Africa like Schillings and Dr. Ludwig Sander, are also perfectly con-

vinced that Christian influence through the missionaries is clearly impossible, since these worked there for only a comparatively short time, and the proud and warlike Masai were still very unresponsive to their exertions. When the English missionary to the Masai, Albert R. Steggall, who was active among them from 1889 to 1905, says (THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, June 1906, xvii. p. 429) that Mr. A. C. Hollis, the eminent authority on the Masai of English East Africa, told him of a Masai boy in his employ, 'that the Masai from whom Captain Merker got much of his information was for some years, during the Masai Famine, connected with a Roman Catholic Mission in the neighbourhood, as indeed were many others, besides those who came under instruction in the Church Missionary Society's station in Taveta,' I can apply that, as Merker himself told me, only to a Masai man from whom he got other information; for naturally he had quite different informants for the many inquiries on which his ethnological work is founded (morals, customs, names, etc.). And Hollis's protest,² that, as he (Hollis) had also associated for years with the Masai of his district, he should also have come on the track of such traditions, is only an *argumentum e silentio*. Either the Southern Masai (in German East Africa), among whom Merker worked, are more faithful

¹ In connexion with the 2nd ed. of Moritz Merker, *Die Masai*, which has just appeared (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1910). The present article is taken from pp. xiii–xxii of the preface (with a few additions made specially for THE EXPOSITORY TIMES).

² In a personal communication from the investigator, for whom I have a great respect, and whose acquaintance I had the pleasure of making at Oxford in 1908 (at the Congress for the History of Religions). In the year 1907, I also had the opportunity of meeting the late Captain Merker personally, after having previously corresponded with him—which was of extremely great value to me in connexion with the much-disputed Masai question.