

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It is not always in the more elaborate articles of the *London Quarterly Review* that one finds the greatest interest. It is often in those informal contributions that are thrown together at the end. In the number for this present quarter there are estimable articles, carrying much weighty information, and written by men of the eminence of Professor FINDLAY, of Headingley College, Leeds. But the life of the *London Quarterly Review* this month lies in four short informal papers modestly hidden away under the general title of 'Notes and Discussions.'

One of these papers is called 'A New Way in Apologetics.' It gives an account of that recent movement in Germany which is known by the name of 'Evenings for Discussions on Religion' (Religiöse Diskussionsabende). Professor TASKER, of Handsworth College, Birmingham, who writes the note, makes no comparison between this movement and our own 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoons.' For the only thing common to them is the confession that the working-man will no longer come to the Church, and therefore the attempt must be made to take the Church to the working-man. But the easy hour in the afternoon, the cheerful solo singing, the short optimistic address, are far removed from those evenings of determined and protracted discussion, sometimes heated with outbursts of long-cherished hatred of

the Church of Christ, and always reaching to the very foundations of life and creed, which are taking place in Germany.

The 'Discussion Evenings,' says Dr. TASKER, were instituted neither as evangelistic agencies nor as aids to sectarian propagandism. They appeal to the artisan's delight in public discussions on topics of interest. Their success proves that religious questions still hold a foremost place among the subjects in which he is keenly interested, although he may be estranged from the Churches. A man of this type refuses invitations to listen to pulpit exhortations, and he is not attracted by æsthetic ceremonial. In short, his attitude of mind is such that he is most likely to be impressed by arguments brought forward in a fair discussion in which difficulties are frankly stated and as frankly faced.

The Discussion Evenings are not confined to working-men. In Berlin a monthly theological 'evening' is attended by the well-educated, and that to an average of six hundred persons. One of the elementary principles of the movement is that local conditions must be carefully considered. And so, in Saxony, where even the artisan will not attend, and no 'Discussion Evenings' can be held, visits are paid to the meetings of the labour societies, the working-men's clubs, and the

like, whenever suitable subjects are found on their programmes.

There is another paper in these Notes and Discussions which deserves attention. It is an encouragement to preachers to consider the science of Psychology.

For 'certainly,' says Professor Frederic PLATT, who writes the paper, 'psychology at present carries the honours among those studies, not distinctly professional, which contribute greatly to the preacher's success.'

'To the modern preacher,' continues Professor PLATT, 'the study of psychology is an imperative duty. The most spiritual member of his order has much to learn from it—and probably almost as much to unlearn. It defines and illuminates the processes of conviction, conversion, and sanctification which he aims to stimulate and guide; and even more, it defends these as essential human experiences for which the economy of mental development is prepared and expectant.'

How is it, then, that this study has suddenly become so imperative to the preacher? Some will answer, because it has been so cleverly and persistently boomed. Professor PLATT answers, because a complete revolution has taken place in the study of the mind. The ideals and methods of the Mental Philosophy of a quarter of a century ago have been forsaken. The study of the mind is no longer merely analytical and descriptive; it is experimental and organic. The fact that the new psychology is physiological, based on the correlation between mind and brain, is itself significant of the importance of the change.

There are certain spheres of inquiry and of knowledge which have already been illuminated with light thrown upon them by the processes and facts of psychology. Anthropology, folk-lore, the rise and growth of myth and magic, comparative ethics—all these and more look upon the results of psychological research as fundamental. Now

these spheres of inquiry or of knowledge form the very borderland of the realm of the preacher. Between them and the region of human life in which the preacher has his being, the partition, says Professor PLATT, is very thin. Psychology has itself broken down the partition. Within the last few years it has found a home where religion dwells. It now claims to be indispensable for the interpretation of religious experience to our generation.

It is a long time since the Gospels were first accused of being 'tendency' writings. And perhaps it is because evil communications corrupt good manners that we no longer resent the accusation. After all, we say, why should they not be written with a tendency? How could they help being written with a tendency? A tendency is just a purpose. And if St. John, for example, wrote his Gospel for the purpose of proving that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, is he to be blamed for selecting his materials to suit his purpose? A writer in *The Biblical World* for May, the Rev. W. P. BRADLEY, Ph.D., believes that all the Gospels have a tendency. They differ in the degree of it. But he is sure that he can prove both the tendency and its variety.

He believes that he can prove it by means of the history of John the Baptist. He takes the Gospels in the order in which everybody takes them now: first, St. Mark; next, St. Matthew or St. Luke (it does not matter which); and then St. John. And he believes he can show that St. Mark relates the history of the Baptist in its most historical form; that St. Matthew and St. Luke 'improve' it for their special purpose; and that St. John 'improves' it most of all.

Mr. BRADLEY takes the statements in the Gospels about the Baptist separately. The first statement is that John the Baptist's ministry secured wide attention. This is altogether as we should have expected. Any one who came with news of the Messiah was sure of at least a hearing. Especially

was he sure of a hearing from the common people. For they had nothing to lose and everything to gain by the coming of the Messiah, who was to 'put down the mighty from their seats, and exalt them of low degree.' And John had, in addition, the ascetic appearance, the desert fare of carob beans and wild honey, the shaggy garments of camel's hide, and the leathern girdle holding them together. His supreme fearlessness was in his favour. His scorching rebuke reminded the people of Elijah, whose return Malachi had promised 'before the great and terrible day of the Lord.' With all these advantages the Baptist was sure to obtain a strong hold of the hearts of the common people.

And the first three Gospels unreservedly say that he did so. Why should they not? The Baptist was the harbinger of the Messiah. But the Fourth Gospel mentions neither multitudes nor preaching in connexion with the Baptist. 'We shall not be surprised at this,' says Mr. BRADLEY, 'after we proceed a little farther.'

The next statement is that the Baptist declared publicly and in strong language his own inferiority to the coming Messiah. And in this all the four Gospels agree. But St. Luke and St. John tell us that his declaration was really a disclaimer. St. Luke says that all men were reasoning in their hearts whether the Baptist was not himself the Messiah. When John heard of their 'reasoning' he uttered an indignant remonstrance.

But the account of the disclaimer is much more elaborate in the Fourth Gospel. It represents the reasoning of the people as greatly disturbing the hierarchy in Jerusalem, and declares that the latter appointed a special ecclesiastical committee and sent it down to take John's denial officially. Not only so. The denial in the Fourth Gospel is far more comprehensive than in the Synoptics. John declared that he was not the *Messiah, nor Elijah, nor that prophet* (like unto Moses), but only a voice, a witness to the Coming One.

Mr. BRADLEY draws particular attention to the Baptist's denial that he was Elijah. The Synoptists, he says, know nothing of it. On the contrary, St. Mark and St. Matthew tell us that John was the Elijah who was to come, and they give Jesus Himself as their authority. Mr. BRADLEY believes that it is all part of a deliberate purpose. The party of John the Baptist had a powerful influence while the Fourth Gospel was being written. It was to lessen that influence that the Evangelist withheld from John all official status other than that of a 'witness' to Jesus.

The third statement is that John did no miracle. Mr. BRADLEY sees no reason to deny it. But only the Fourth Gospel tells us so. That is to say, it is the Gospel which attaches the greatest weight to the 'signs' of Jesus that tells us John the Baptist did no sign.

The fourth statement is that John preached the baptism of repentance 'unto remission of sins.' It is the Synoptists that tell us this. What do they mean?

Do they mean that the ministry of John brought remission of sins independently of Jesus? If they do, Mr. BRADLEY is sure that they said so only under the pressure of an over-mastering force of tradition. But perhaps they mean only that John's preaching prepared the way for the remission of sins by Jesus. Mr. BRADLEY is sceptical. If that is all they mean, they take, he says, a curiously blind and inadequate way of expressing their meaning.

But in this case he sees progress in the tendency of the Gospels, progress in a tendency to push the Baptist into the background. St. Mark says that John preached repentance unto the remission of sins. St. Luke says the same in his Gospel, but refrains from it in the Acts. St. Matthew retains the confession of sins, but is silent as to their forgiveness. Last of all, the Fourth Gospel says nothing about either confession or forgiveness.

The only function which John's ministry retains apart from the witness to Jesus, is the baptism of water.

The next statement is that John recognized Jesus when He appeared, and gave testimony to His Messiahship. But who tells us this? Not St. Mark, and not St. Luke. And the silence of St. Mark and St. Luke is to Mr. BRADLEY astounding. For John was certainly considered the forerunner of Jesus by both these writers, and yet they do not mention that he recognized Jesus or proclaimed Him to be the Messiah. St. Matthew does tell us that John recognized Jesus and was reluctant to baptize Him. But the recognition was only private. It is not until we turn to the Fourth Gospel that we find the Baptist bearing testimony publicly and in unmistakable terms to the official dignity of Jesus. And so far, says Mr. BRADLEY, are the Synoptists from sharing this opinion with the Fourth Gospel, that they tell us that the last thing which John did was to send some of his disciples to Jesus to ask if He was the Messiah, or if the Messiah was yet to come.

The last statement is that John's disciples, some of them if not all, left him and attached themselves to Jesus. Again the statement is found in the Fourth Gospel, and in the Fourth Gospel only. According to the Synoptists, the disciples of John were with him even after Herod had put him in prison. And when he was beheaded they took up his body and buried it. They were quite friendly to Jesus, for they came and told Him of the death of John. But it is not said that even then they attached themselves to Him.

There is evidence, on the contrary, says Mr. BRADLEY, that after the death of the Baptist his disciples remained distinct and independent, and continued to 'look for another.' The evidence is found in the facts regarding Apollos and certain others at Ephesus,

Apollos belonged to Alexandria. Twenty years

after the Crucifixion he was still arguing mightily from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Messiah was coming (Acts 18²⁵). The exact words are: 'He taught accurately the things concerning Jesus.' But the sense of the whole passage makes it clear to Mr. BRADLEY that he taught accurately the things concerning the *Messiah*, and that it was not Apollos yet, but the writer of the Acts, for whom Jesus and the Messiah were synonymous terms. At any rate it is stated distinctly that he knew only the Baptism of John. Coming over to Ephesus to preach there also, he was convinced by Priscilla and Aquila that Jesus was the very Messiah whom he had been expecting and preaching. And from that time there is no abatement of power or eloquence. He crossed over to Corinth, and began truly to preach the things concerning Jesus.

Meantime St. Paul arrived in Ephesus. Here he found about twelve persons who were adherents of the faith of John the Baptist. There is no evidence that they had any connexion with Apollos, and Mr. BRADLEY thinks it is quite improbable. For if they had been converts of his they would certainly have heard from him about Jesus, and about the gifts of the Spirit, before he departed for Corinth. It is therefore evident that so late as the third missionary journey of Paul the followers of John the Baptist continued to form a distinct and widespread party.

Now Mr. BRADLEY does not say that the Fourth Gospel is guilty of deliberate misrepresentation when it states that certain followers of John the Baptist attached themselves to Jesus. But he says that at the time when the Fourth Gospel was written there was evidently a considerable party who knew nothing of John as the forerunner of Jesus, but revered him solely for his own sake; and that it was the interest of the Evangelist to show that even during the lifetime of John some at least of his followers acknowledged Jesus to be the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world.

'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring; and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd' (Jn 10¹⁶).

What is there in this verse that is worth attending to? There is the change of 'fold' into 'flock' made by the Revisers in the end of it. And certainly that change is worth attending to. 'The translation *fold* for *flock*,' says WESTCOTT, 'has been most disastrous in idea and in influence.' But we know that now. All that remains for that is to acknowledge it in practice. Is there anything else in the verse?

There is nothing else. The commentators are unanimous that there is nothing else in this verse worth commenting on. 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold'—these are the Gentiles, they say. The Gentiles are outside the Jewish fold, and will never be brought within it. For the Jewish fold is to be broken down. When the Gentiles 'hear my voice,' they shall be brought, not within the Jewish fold, but into the Christian flock. There shall be one flock, Jews and Gentiles together and indistinguishably composing it, as there shall be one Shepherd. So say the commentators unanimously. Turn the second 'fold' into 'flock,' and they find no other difficulty.

But there are other difficulties. First of all there is the difficulty that our Lord is not accustomed to call any persons His sheep until they have believed on His name. Is there any example elsewhere of this name, or any name like this—believers, disciples, or any other—being applied to persons who have not yet become followers? And not only have these sheep, if they are Gentiles, not yet become followers; they have not yet heard of the existence of Jesus. The vast majority of them have not yet been born.

Then there is the difficulty of the words, 'I must bring.' WESTCOTT prefers 'I must lead,' and argues rather earnestly for it. But he did

not persuade the rest of the Revisers. For the words have a strong personal reference. This is evidently a duty which our Lord felt to be His own and to be urgent. 'I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day'; 'I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following'; 'Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.'

Now, when we appreciate the force of these difficulties, and then consider who these 'other sheep' may be, we remember that there are certain persons of whom our Lord used the very words which He uses here. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when, the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live' (Jn 5²⁵).

The Rev. R. W. HARDEN, B.A., who is not a novice in the art of exposition, has written a small book on *The Gospel in Hades* (Combridge & Co.; 1s. net). The book is occupied chiefly with an interpretation of the famous passage about preaching to the spirits in prison. But this text in the Fourth Gospel is interpreted also. And Mr. HARDEN believes that its proper interpretation is to refer the 'fold' of the beginning of the verse to that Christian fold in which the disciples were safely sheltered as long as Jesus was upon the earth, the 'other sheep' to those who believed in God but passed away before the Incarnation, and then the 'flock' to that great multitude of saints, both of the old dispensation and of the new, who are gathering round the throne of God and of the Lamb.

If the period of the criticism of the Bible has come to an end, what has it done for us? If we have entered on the period of reconstruction, what form is the reconstruction likely to take? The editors of the *Biblical World* believe that they are able to answer that question. They give their answer in the issue for July, under the title of 'A New Type of Christianity.'

Their title is 'A New Type of Christianity.' It is not 'The Reconstructed Bible.' For they consider that the criticism of the Bible has never been an end in itself. Always, when it understood itself, it was a means towards a better knowledge of Christ. If we had a wholly new Bible, we should not necessarily be better Christians. Unless the criticism of the Bible has brought us nearer Christ, it has been in vain. What the editors of the *Biblical World* look forward to is properly and necessarily a new type of Christianity.

They do not mean, however, that the new type of Christianity which they look forward to will be cut off from the Christianity that has gone before. It is Christianity itself that is to become new. As the Apostle says, 'Old things have passed away, behold *they* have become new.' What they mean is that the old Christianity has of late been undergoing changes which are numerous enough and serious enough to entitle them to speak of the outcome as a new type of Christianity.

Accordingly, they proceed to enumerate the characteristics of the new type of Christianity that is at hand. One characteristic is 'its thoroughgoing acceptance of the maxim, "Whatsoever is true."'

But, surely, there is nothing new in that. Has any Christian generation, has any individual Christian, ever admitted that their supreme purpose was *not* the search for truth? The editors of the *Biblical World* are aware of it. And yet they hold to their claim. They believe that in the days that are at hand the truth will be sought with more disinterestedness, and embraced with more genuine affection than it has been—well, since the days of the Apostle Paul.

And they bring their belief to the test. If there is, let us say, a controversy between Geology and Genesis, the New Christianity will follow Geology. It will hold that the record left in the strata of

the earth cannot be impugned by a poet of the pre-scientific age, even though that poet be also a prophet of a higher conception of God than had before his day prevailed. If, again, there is a controversy between the records of history contained in the Books of Chronicles and those discovered on the Assyrian monuments, the statements of the Books of Chronicles will not be preferred to those of the monuments, although the religion of the Chronicler may be far better than that of the Assyrian stone-cutter.

Another characteristic of the new Christianity will be its insistence on character more than upon creed. It will recognize 'the possibility that an honest man may be in great perplexity on many questions of doctrine, and yet be sincerely and wholly devoted to the practice of the principles which Jesus taught and exemplified.' Hence it will welcome to its fellowship men of widely different types of theological belief or doubt, but it will exclude from its fellowship men of widely different moral purpose. Not that it will be without theology; nor that its theology will be a string of negatives. But it will lay the emphasis on those doctrines which make for character and conduct, not on those which offer scope for intellectual discussion.

A third characteristic of the new type of Christianity will be the emphasis it will lay upon *doing*. It will not be particular about agencies. Whatever agency is found most convenient and effective will be made use of, even though a member of the S.P.G. should have to work alongside a member of the L.M.S. Nor will it be careful to save the face of such ancient doctrinal favourites as the inherent depravity of man or the inherent badness of all non-Christian religions. Its aim will be to make Christianity Christian in spirit and in deed, and to cover the earth with it.

These are the leading characteristics of the Christianity that is about to come, these three. There is one thing left to be asked about it,

Will it be Christianity? It will be scientific; it will be ethical; it will be practical. Will it also be religious? If the new Christianity does not teach men to love their God with all their heart, in addition to, or rather in front of, loving their neighbour as themselves, it will not be Christianity.

The editors of the *Biblical World* believe that the struggle will be here. But they believe that the Christianity we are coming to, will insist upon the reality of the spiritual, and upon the necessity of fellowship between man and God.

The Present and the Future Kingdom in the Gospels.

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EVERY student of the problems of the Gospels is aware that of late there has appeared in Germany, France, and England a strong tendency to lay great stress on the eschatological element in the Synoptic writings. For many years past the ordinary view of criticism had been that when Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God, He may in a measure have shared the views of His contemporaries that a mighty convulsion was at hand, but that His teaching in the main had to do with the present, and was ethical rather than apocalyptic; that the Kingdom of which He spoke was in the hearts of men, not waiting to be revealed in the skies. But Johannes Weiss, in his remarkable paper of 1892, asserted that the phrase 'Kingdom of God' was used by Jesus only in the eschatological sense, that for Him the Kingdom was not partly present and partly future, but wholly future and supernatural, a sudden catastrophe. Dr. Schweitzer carries further the view of Weiss. He also thinks that by Jesus the Kingdom of God was expected to come in a great catastrophe. He observes that the ethics of Jesus belong only to a time of expectation, their end is to make men free of the world, and ready to enter unimpeded into the Kingdom. When he uses the term 'Son of Man' he is thinking only of the exalted being spoken of in Daniel, who is to come in the clouds of heaven, and to whom is given dominion over all peoples. Passages in which the 'Kingdom of God' or the 'Son of Man' are spoken of in another sense are to be cleared away.

This rigorous and *a priori* method of criticism seems to Dr. Schweitzer the only criticism worthy of the name. He greatly rejoices over the epoch-making pamphlet of Weiss. 'At last,' he writes,

'there is an end of "qualifying clause" theology, of the "and yet," the "on the other hand," the "notwithstanding."' Weiss 'lays down the newest great alternative which the life of Jesus had to meet, *either* eschatological *or* non-eschatological. Progress always consists in taking one or other of two alternatives, in abandoning the attempt to combine them.'¹

Dr. Sanday, with his usual generous appreciation, has highly praised the treatise of Dr. Schweitzer. Learned it is, no doubt, and valuable as a record of the history of criticism, and clear, and full of up-to-date expressions. And beyond question, the man who consistently and clearly uses an extreme theory as a key to unlock historic problems does clear the air. He illumines men's minds, and makes them see whither arguments tend. On account of this merit we may pardon an extreme theorist a good deal of pedantry.

But, in compensation, systems of such extreme simplicity and logicity have drawbacks. They sometimes make up for the triumph of massacring *buts* and *notwithstandings*, and marching straight to their end, by outraging common sense, and constructing a house of cards, which, however fine to look at, will not resist a breath of wind. If their principle is faulty, their consistency only makes them the easier to refute.

The purely eschatological interpretation of the Synoptic teaching as set forth by Weiss and Schweitzer admits, I think, of a complete refutation. Such refutation one cannot, indeed, extract solely from a study of St. Mark's Gospel, because it is a document which may be interpreted in many ways; and stands at the end of a considerable

¹ *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 237.