

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

WE are ready for the introduction of a new method in the interpretation of the Bible.

The present method was made popular by the famous Cambridge three—LIGHTFOOT, WESTCOTT, and HORT. Before their time the method in use was theological. The Bible was read for the purpose of forming, or supporting, a system of theology. And it was then that the Shakespearian saying had its point—'The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.' It was quite possible to obtain from its pages unanswerable proof of Arminianism, and equally unanswerable proof of Calvinism. At last it was felt that such a method of interpreting Scripture is unreliable, and the door was opened for the Cambridge three.

LIGHTFOOT, WESTCOTT, and HORT introduced the grammatical method of interpretation. They studied the Bible as, in the great public schools, they had been taught to study the classics. They built deliberately upon a criticism of the text. The criticism of the New Testament text had once for all settled the question of verbal inspiration, and had left them free to apply the rules of grammar. And they obtained the meaning of a disputed passage in precisely the same way as they were accustomed to find it in Sophocles or in Cicero.

The three great Cambridge scholars were not entirely alike. LIGHTFOOT was never free from the suspicion, however faint, of 'apologizing.' WESTCOTT was accused of a kind of mysticism for which impatient readers preferred the shorter name of 'mist.' HORT alone was the grammatical scholar, pure and simple. But they were taken together. Their scholarship was superlative; their personal influence was irresistible; and they gave the grammatical method of interpretation an impetus which has carried it down to this day.

But now it seems to have spent its force. The discovery that the New Testament was not written in any kind of literary Greek, and that its language could not safely be determined or even illustrated from the classics, was an irrecoverable blow. Then came the study of origins. The centre of interest was shifted. It is now felt rather widely that the grammatical method of interpretation must give place to a new method.

The new method will be religious. For we have found out something. The Bible is not concerned about theology, and it is not concerned about grammar, its only concern is religion. The new method will find theology and grammar in the Bible. It will absorb all the gains of both methods of interpretation that have gone before it; and the gains are very great. But it will be a new

method, and it will produce its own far-reaching results.

As the theological method depended upon a knowledge of systematic theology, and as the grammatical method rested upon a thorough understanding of the Greek language, so the religious method will demand an acquaintance with the science of religion. That will be difficult to gain. But it will not be more difficult than the studies which the other methods demanded. And it seems to us that it will be found of deeper interest and mightier influence.

It will capture the interest of a far larger proportion of the readers of the Bible. A far larger proportion of the readers of the Bible will be able to become religious students than ever became theological or grammatical students. For the entrance may be made by means of books that are quite popular and quite pleasant to read, and that nevertheless are quite reliable so far as they go. We might name as an example Professor Gilbert MURRAY's *Four Stages of Greek Religion* just issued from the Oxford University Press (6s. net).

Professor MURRAY is not at all prejudiced in favour of Christianity. If he has a prejudice it is the other way. At the end of his book he has passed a page of printing which reminds us of GIBBON. It is written with as fine a literary detachment, and it offers as incredible an explanation of the success of early Christianity. But that does not matter. For our purpose it may even be all the better. For now at last what we want, as we approach the religious study of the Bible, is not what the Bible ought to contain or what the Bible ought to be, but where it actually came from and what it actually is.

We have spoken of the Cambridge three. These interpreters did not ignore religion any more than they ignored theology. LIGHTFOOT made some elaborate and impressive comparisons between the

religion of St. Paul and the religion of pagan Greece. But that has not prevented his method from passing. Rather has it hastened the passing of it. For there is no more surprising gain in all the range of the study of religion than this, that the Greek religion which we call classical was only a temporary and limited form of the religion of Greece, and was probably not at all the Greek religion with which St. Paul was acquainted.

'The situation,' says Professor MURRAY, 'has changed.' 'Greek religion is being studied right and left, and has revealed itself as a surprisingly rich and attractive, though somewhat controversial, subject. It used to be a deserted territory; now it is at least a battle-ground. If ever the present differences resolved themselves into a simple fight with shillelachs between the scholars and the anthropologists, I should without doubt wield my reluctant weapon on the side of the scholars. Scholarship is the rarer, harder, less popular and perhaps the more permanently valuable work, and it certainly stands more in need of defence at the moment. But in the meantime I can hardly understand how the purest of "pure scholars" can fail to feel his knowledge enriched by the savants who have compelled us to dig below the surface of our classical tradition and to realize the imaginative and historical problems which so often lie concealed beneath the smooth security of a verbal "construe."' "

Now St. Paul was supposed to be on the side of the 'pure scholar.' On that supposition all Bishop LIGHTFOOT's work was done. He is now known to have belonged to that class whose religious beliefs are being recovered rather by the spade than the grammar. At any rate that was the class with whom he came in contact as he passed from city to city.

But let us get closer. In the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians there is a metaphor from the world of vegetation which is applied to the rising again from the dead. The

metaphor is expressed in the words, 'Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.' Do we understand that metaphor?

We see, as well perhaps as we shall ever see, what the metaphor stands for. It is used to make vivid the teaching about the resurrection of the body. It is not the identical body laid in the grave that shall return from it. It is a new body. And the metaphor of the corn is used to make the meaning clear. We understand the meaning: do we understand the metaphor?

In the time of St. Paul, and among his neighbours and friends, a belief was current that every spring, at a certain festival, the earth arises afresh from her dead seeds, and the people arise afresh from their dead ancestors. 'The renovation ceremonies,' says Professor MURRAY, 'were accompanied by a casting off of the old year, the old garments, and everything that is polluted by the infection of death. And not only of death; but clearly I think, in spite of the protests of some Hellenists, of guilt or sin also. For the life of the Year-Dæmon, as it seems to be reflected in Tragedy, is generally a story of Pride and Punishment. Each Year arrives, waxes great, commits the sin of Hubris, and then is slain. The death is deserved; but the slaying is a sin: hence comes the next Year as Avenger, or as the Wronged One re-risen: "they all pay retribution for their injustice one to another according to the ordinance of time."'

The meaning is not all evident. One has to read more of the book. But enough is evident for the moment. The religious life was permeated with a sense of dying and rising again—the old dying (through imperfection, perhaps sin), the new rising, and rising out of the old, though (and that is the very point) not identical with it. In the midst of that range of ideas St. Paul lived and worked. To him, and perhaps still more to his readers, the metaphor would carry a force and an authority which it fails to carry to us.

Now let us go to the Old Testament and find an example there. 'When the Ark of Israel was being brought back from the Philistines, the cattle slipped by the threshing-floor of Nachon, and the holy object was in danger of falling. A certain Uzzah, as we all know, sprang forward to save it and was struck dead for his pains.' Thus Professor MURRAY repeats the story. What does it signify?

To the theological interpreter it probably signified a conception of God which would have degraded him to the savage state, if he had not counteracted it by another conception derived from his study of the Gospels. To the grammatical interpreter it was simply a puzzle. Its true meaning is left for the student of religion.

Now it has recently been discovered that there are four stages in the history of religion in Greece. The earliest stage, which has been rescued mostly from the bowels of the earth, is spoken of as a nature-religion. Its chief features were *mana* and *tabu*. That is to say, there was believed to be virtue in certain objects—strength, swiftness, endurance, or the like—and it was particularly desirable to have that virtue or *mana* transferred to the worshipper. The transference was frequently done by eating the object, especially if it were an animal. Other objects were *tabu*, that is, they were to be avoided, not to be touched, often not even to be looked upon. God was especially *tabu*. And here we may ask if perhaps St. John had this thought in his mind when, speaking of God manifest in the flesh, he said so emphatically, 'Whom we have heard, whom we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled.' There was no *tabu* with Him.

The worshipper's God was *tabu*, and all that pertained to the God. But when this stage of religion was overlaid with that later stage, the Homeric stage of the gods of Olympus, men became ashamed of the practice of *tabu*. The gods were sensible, practically human beings, and

things did not happen by magic; the gods themselves sent life and death and all things.

The result was not always acceptable. 'To make the elements of a nature-religion human is inevitably to make them vicious. There is no great moral harm in worshipping a thunderstorm, even though the lightning strikes the good and evil quite recklessly. There is no need to pretend that the Lightning is exercising a wise and righteous choice. But when once you worship an imaginary quasi-human being who throws the lightning, you are in a dilemma. Either you have to admit that you are worshipping and flattering a being with no moral sense, because he happens to be dangerous, or else you have to invent reasons for his wrath against the people who happen to be struck. And they are pretty sure to be bad reasons. The god, if personal, becomes capricious and cruel.'

'Now,' says Professor MURRAY, 'if Uzzah was struck dead by the mere holiness of the tabu object, the holiness stored inside it like so much electricity, his death was a misfortune, an interesting accident, and no more. But when it is made into the deliberate act of an anthropomorphic god, who strikes a well-intentioned man dead in explosive rage for a very pardonable mistake, a dangerous element has been introduced into the ethics of that religion. A being who is the moral equal of man must not behave like a charge of dynamite.'

The title which Dr. BOSANQUET has given to the second series of his Gifford Lectures delivered at Edinburgh University is *The Value and Destiny of the Individual* (Macmillan; 10s. net).

What Lord GIFFORD meant by saying that the Gifford lecturers must confine themselves to Natural Theology, Dr. BOSANQUET knows no better than any other man. He is, however, by profession a philosopher. He is not a theologian. In all that he says he is rather careful to

dissociate himself from theology. He sets out to explain the individual, and he finds it necessary to begin with a Maker, as all philosophers and men of science now do. But he has no commandment to justify the ways of God to men. In his own words, 'Our business here is truth, and not a *théodicée*.'

So, when he reaches the difficult subject of pleasure and pain, which he does in his sixth lecture, we are not to expect the usual argument that pain is a necessary evil in a universe that demands discipline. The argument may be just, but Dr. BOSANQUET does not repeat it. He says, it is true, that our troubles and our value have one and the same root. No pain, no perfection. And he quotes both T. E. Brown and Dante approvingly.

He quotes T. E. Brown. The poem is entitled 'Pain':

The man that hath great griefs I pity not;
'Tis something to be great
In any wise, and hint the larger state
Though but in shadow of a shade, God wot!

But tenfold one is he, who feels all pains
Not partial, knowing them
As ripples parted from the gold-beaked stem
Wherewith God's galley onward ever strains.

To him the sorrows are the tension-thrills
Of that serene endeavour,
Which yields to God for ever and for ever
The joy that is more ancient than the hills.

He quotes Dante also. 'We remember,' he says, 'how Dante's souls in purgatory passionately desired the pains which assured them of their place in the eternal love.' And in a footnote he explains: 'They took care not, in the interest of seeing and addressing Dante, to extend any part of their persons beyond the flames.'

But it is not, in Dr. BOSANQUET's judgment,

because pain is necessary to our character that it is here in God's universe. It is because the universe is infinite and the individual finite, and it is inevitable that a finite individual should find himself running up against things in an infinite universe. That obstruction, that contradiction to his desires and endeavours, it is that causes him pain.

If that is so, then sorrow and suffering have nothing to do with sin, and all our fault with Eve goes by the board at once. 'In a self-directing system of life, adapting itself to a universe which is its environment, there must be pain and death.'

And again, if that is so, pleasure and pain are not opposite the one to the other. They spring both of them from the same root and continue to grow on the same stem. They are both inherent in a finite being. They are both necessary to his final state of perfection. And Dr. BOSANQUET is not the man to find fault with us if we choose the primrose path in preference to the strait gate. Yet, on the whole, he thinks the latter way is the safer. He ends his argument by quoting 'an often-cited passage which can hardly be bettered.' It is the epilogue to *Romola*: 'We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as for ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good.'

That we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son we believe. We do not know how we are reconciled. And we are sometimes advised not to try to know. But the advice has not been taken through all the history of Christianity. Perhaps it cannot be taken. That a fact opens the door to a mystery seems to be an invitation to the human mind not to shut the door, but to endeavour to penetrate the mystery.

And the endeavour has not been all in vain. Says Mr. Stewart McDOWALL, the latest writer on the Atonement, 'The thought of nearly two thousand years has made clear and intelligible much that was too difficult for our forefathers.' He adds, moreover, that 'as the years go on, and new discoveries open up new vistas to new generations, the mind of man perceives new wonders in the great Mystery. We are always proving its breadth, length, depth, and height; for, in whatever direction human thought is moving, fresh light comes as the Atonement is examined in connexion with the new knowledge.'

Mr. McDOWALL has written a book on *Evolution and the Need of Atonement* (Cambridge University Press; 3s. net). The particular new light which he has in mind is therefore that which is thrown by the study of evolution. Now that study has led some men to deny the need of Atonement, and even the possibility of it, no room being left for any 'outsider' to enter in.

Mr. McDOWALL has studied the doctrine of Evolution carefully. He does not admit that Evolution has made the Atonement needless. On the contrary it has emphasized its need. It has made an Atonement in some form a necessity. Without an Atonement evolution is arrested just when it has reached its highest and most promising attainment. But he does admit that the doctrine of Evolution leaves no room for an outsider to enter in.

If, therefore, there is any theory of the Atonement, a theory of substitution, for example, which demands the entrance of an outsider, Mr. McDOWALL says to such a theory and to such an outsider, Hands off! And not Mr. McDOWALL only. In the survey which he has offered of theories of the Atonement, when he comes to 'modern days,' he finds that 'the main characteristic on the theological side is the attempt to escape from the Substitution Theory which characterised the thought of the Reformers.'

He does not say that there are no writers in our own day who cling to Substitution as the Reformers held it. Dr. DENNEY still courageously does, for one. What he says is that this is the main characteristic of the theology of our time. And in enumerating the leading writers on the Atonement, from WILBERFORCE to LOFTHOUSE, he does not step aside even to name Dr. DENNEY.

If it is true, then, that human thought is moving aright on the doctrine of the Atonement, our hope is in the direction, not of simple substitution, but of some kind of identification. Such identification may undoubtedly—perhaps we can say, will certainly—involve some form or degree of substitution. But the essential thing, that which makes the reconciliation, so far as we are

being led at present to understand it, will be, not the substitution of one individual for other individuals or for a race, but the acceptance of the race in one who is already identified with it.

This is the position of men like MOBERLY and LOFTHOUSE; and according to Mr. MCDOWALL, 'the best approach to understanding the Atonement which man has yet reached is to be found in such works as those of Moberly and Lofthouse.' Of LOFTHOUSE he says: 'He utterly denies all forms of the doctrine of substitution. Christ suffered on our behalf. He did not exempt us from suffering, but He took away the sting of death and pain when He made re-union with God possible to us by changing our whole attitude towards sin.'

Apollinaris of Laodicea.

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I.

To every thoughtful Christian man, for whom his religious experience has any real significance, the fact of Christ, the meaning of Christ, is a question of permanent and fundamental importance. At the present time it has a peculiar degree of interest. Our own age is very much devoted to the investigation of origins. We cannot now be satisfied with the consideration of a person or a thing. We must go behind them to the sources from which they spring. Christianity has been approached and scrutinized in this way. Some searchers seem to have found it hard to decide whether Christ or St. Paul was really the founder of the Faith. Some have reached the sapient conclusion that there was no such person as Jesus Christ. More reasonable inquirers have agreed to find in Jesus Christ the author of our Faith, and are devoting themselves to a close, critical, sometimes reverent, consideration of His personality as revealed in the pages of the New Testament. The question, 'What think ye of Christ?' is a perpetual challenge

to our intellect and to our faith. It is for us no mere speculative problem of abstract interest. It is the question of questions, the mystery of mysteries.

It is perhaps well, as we concentrate our attention for a few moments on the problem of Christ, to remind ourselves of two things. In the first place, we should recollect how vast it is and how manifold are the issues of it. There are, of course, the two familiar divisions, the Person of Christ and the Work of Christ. And it is well known that while the more speculative and metaphysical East has always been attracted to consideration of the mystery of Christ's Person, the more active and practical West has been more interested in His work for mankind. At the very same time that the Fathers of the Eastern Church were straining all their intellectual powers to express the mode in which the divine and the human co-exist in our Lord,—in other words, how God can exist in the likeness of men,—the Western Church,