

CURRENT ISSUES.

PEOPLE ask and debate, What is the gospel? But they sometimes forget that, in order to answer this question, it is well to determine first of all what the gospel is not. If they made up their minds on this preliminary point, if they eliminated certain misconceptions, they might be more successful than they often are in reaching a positive and satisfactory answer to their query.

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In his recent book, *The Gospel and the Modern Mind*, Dr. W. R. Matthews wisely remembers to distinguish the gospel from some things with which it is commonly associated. We must not, he remarks, identify it with the Christian religion, for the Christian religion has not always been the pure product of the gospel. Nor must we identify it with Christian institutions, for the gospel is the original source of all such institutions, in so far as they are Christian, yet they are not the gospel-message itself. He points out frankly the "uneclesiastical nature of the teaching of Jesus," and reiterates that the gospel lies behind both Church and Bible. "No doubt," he declares, "most people will find it hard to abstract the thought of the essence of their religion from its association with Church and sacraments," but the latter, after all, are merely the expression and instruments of the gospel.

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Then he warns his readers against assuming that the whole gospel is to be found in the four gospels of the New Testament. This is a point made by the late Principal Forsyth, who urged it emphatically, as he pled for the validity of the apostolic interpretation. You, he said to his opponents, you select certain words of Jesus from the first three gospels, and take your stand upon them, as though His words were the final expression

of His personality. But, in doing so, "Are you not in bondage to the bad old idea of revelation, namely, that it consists of a teaching rather than a person, of statement or precept rather than act, of a complete truth rather than a finished deed?" So Dean Matthews argues in his own way. He notes the fallacy of some Liberal Protestants, who too often assume "that the Gospels are the text and the Epistles only comment. The truth is that both text and comment are inextricably intermingled—the person and words of Jesus are mediated through the experience of the first Christian generation." He denies that there is any foundation for the idea that the apostolic teaching is no more than a spoiled version of the simple ethical teaching of Jesus.

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Lord Rowton once asked Beaconsfield what he considered was the most remarkable, the most self-sustained and powerful sentence known to him. The reply was, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." It is a sentence which clinches the teaching of Jesus against worry. "Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

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"Take no thought" means "do not worry," and the Christian religion is meant to deliver us from worry. Yet it is often actually the cause of worry. Dr. Thouless writes in the *Congregational Quarterly* an article on "Religion and Mental Conflict," in which he notices this perversion of the truth. A person disposed to worry, as he says, "may, by accepting the beliefs of religion find relief for his worrying in confidence in an all-powerful and all-wise God." This is the line marked out by Jesus. But, on the other hand, the same person "may simply find in his religion new things to worry about—formal observances, trivial points of doctrine, the various possibilities that he has sinned without knowing it, and so on."

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Worry of this kind is one of the minor disorders of life, and Dr. Thouless defines it happily. "Worry is the painful effect of the persistence in the mind of impulses which can have no useful outlet in behaviour."

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It is a special pleasure to welcome, in this number of THE

EXPOSITOR, a contribution from New Zealand. Dr. Ranston is a Methodist scholar in Auckland, and his paper on "The Orphic Mysteries" will clear up the subject for many readers who are unfamiliar with the origin and aim of these mystery-religions. Dr. Ranston has just published a study of "Ecclesiastes and the Early Greek Wisdom Literature," which strikes out along fresh lines. We hope to review this important monograph before long.

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The article by Mr. Dallas follows up the allusion made by Professor C. A. Scott (p. 28) to Heiler's remarkable volume. We make no apology for printing another article on prayer. Christianity has been called "the religion of prayer," and there is no aspect of it which requires more attention, practically and theoretically, than that of prayer. Our English literature is rich in modern studies, as Dr. Scott has shown. But the Swedish scholar has things to say which are vital, and, as his book is still untranslated, Mr. Dallas has done good service in explaining what are its main contentions.

SINCE WELLHAUSEN.

SYNOPSIS.

Recent criticisms of the documentary hypothesis.

- I. Ex. 6³—a central position.
 1. Part of a passage full of characteristic phrases linking it to other passages.
 2. Five specially important words and phrases.
 3. Conclusion. Ex. 6³⁻¹² is one of a series of related passages.

- II. Attempts to discredit the prima facie meaning of Ex. 6³.
 1. Naville: his incorrect paraphrase; his misunderstanding of the critical position.
 2. Dahse and Wiener; *ἐδηλωσα*; 'Yahweh not used in self revelations'; theory as to self-use of Name.
 3. Dahse rewrites the verse with the help of the LXX; eliminates El Shaddai both from Ex. 6³ and from Genesis (except in 49²⁶); and does the same with Yahweh in Ex. 6⁸.