

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

ALTHOUGH no more than nine volumes have been issued of Dr. Maclaren's Sermons, we must now seek them in three different Publishing Houses, and, when we find them, they are in three quite different styles of binding. The new volume is issued by Alexander & Shepherd, the publishers of the *Freeman*. In the matter of printing and binding it is most satisfactory. Indeed, for the first time, Dr. Maclaren's Sermons appear in an exterior befitting their worth.

The new volume takes its title from the opening Sermon—"The Unchanging Christ." It contains twenty-eight sermons, not inferior certainly to any that have before been published. One of them will be found complete on another page. But why should only a selection of these discourses be published in permanent form? Dr. Maclaren's reputation would now ensure the success of a volume every year.

It happens that the sermon which we give is the second which Dr Maclaren has published on the same text. The earlier will be found in the third series of his Sermons published by Macmillan, p. 75. We are inclined to believe that Dr Maclaren had forgotten the fact. In any case such a thing is rare, and it need scarcely be said that it is interesting to read the two together. The difference between them is very great; so great indeed that if Dr Maclaren did remember the existence of the earlier, he has shown some courage in allowing this new one to be published and laid alongside it. To a young

preacher we recommend a study of the two. One point of difference we shall notice.

What is the reference in the "white stone" of Rev. ii. 17, in which the "new name" is written? Dr Maclaren says: "I need not trouble you with any discussion about what may be the significance of the 'white stone,' on which this new name is represented as written. Commentators have indulged in a whirl of varying conjectures about it, and no certainty has, as it seems to me, been attained. The allusion is one to which we have lost the key." "But in his earlier sermon on this same text Dr Maclaren accepted one of these conjectures. "There was," he said, "a precious stone, lustrous and resplendent—for that is the force of the word *white* here, not a dead white, but a brilliant coruscating white—on which there was something written, which no eye but one ever saw—that mysterious seat of revelation and direction known in the Old Testament by the name of Urim and Thummim (that is, lights and perfectnesses), enclosed within the folds of the High Priest's breast-plate, which none but the High Priest ever beheld. We may, perhaps, bring that ancient fact into connection with the promise in my text."

Dr Maclaren has now rejected that view of the white stone. There are certainly grave objections to it. One is that, if this is an allusion to the Urim and Thummim, it is the only allusion which the New Testament contains, so completely has that mysterious symbol fallen out of the circle of New

to use the word "very" for the latter. For example, both words are found in 1 John ii. 8, and this is how he translates the verse :

"Again a fresh commandment I am writing unto you which thing [*as a whole*] is true in Him and in you : because the shadow is drifting by, and the light, the very *light*, is already enlightening."

An interesting note in Trench's *Synonyms* tell the story of this word "very," which is just the adjective *verus* (coming to us through the old French *verai*) used in the Vulgate for the translation of this Greek word. And Wiclif retains it, as, "I am the verri vine." But though, as Trench says, "very" is used a few times as an adjective in the Authorised Version, it is never used, as he seems to think, to translate this word. At Gen. xxvii. 21, 24 ("Art thou my very son Esau?"), there is no word corresponding in the LXX., so that his complaint against the A. V. translators that they did not preserve this word *very* for this important purpose, if they could have done so, has reason in it. Is it *possible* now to restore it for this purpose? We fear it has travelled too far away.

In illustration, says Dr. Alexander, in his *Epistles of St. John*, of the powerful expression, "darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John ii. 11), the present writer quoted a striking passage from Professor Drummond, who adduces a parallel for the Christian's loss of the spiritual faculty, by the atrophy of organs which takes place in moles, and in the fish in dark caverns (*Speaker's Commentary, in loc.*) But as regards the mole, at least, a great observer of Nature entirely denies the alleged atrophy. Mr. Buckland quotes Dr. Lee in a paper, in the proceedings of the Royal Society, where he says : "the eye of the mole presents us with an instance of an organ which is rudimentary, not by arrest of development, but through disuse, aided perhaps by natural selection." But Mr. Buckland asserts that "the same great Wisdom who made the mole's teeth the most beautiful set of insectivorous teeth among animals, also made its eye fit for the work it has to do. The mole has been designed to prey upon earthworms : they will not come up to the surface to him, so he must go down into the earth to them. For this purpose his eyes are fitted."—*Life of F. Buckland, p. 247.*

Professor Cheyne, in a study of Psalm viii., contributed to the *Expositor*, answers the question : In determining the prophetic or Messianic character of a Psalm or other Old Testament scripture, what weight should such an application of it in the New Testament be allowed to carry? He lays down this canon : "We must not approach any old Testament passage from the point of view of Christian applications of it. In our study of the Old Testament we must make but this one theological assumption : that Christ is not only the root of the new Israel but the flower of the old, and that the literature of the Jewish Church contains many a true germ of the truths of the gospel. Beautiful as mystical interpretations may often be, it is not wise to indulge in them, unless they are consistent with the original meaning which the writer himself put upon his words."

On the expression "babes and sucklings" (Ps. viii. 2), Professor Cheyne says : "Need I justify myself for explaining the phrase 'babes and sucklings' of true believers? Who does not remember our Lord's saying, so thoroughly Old Testament-like in its expressions 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes'? The psalmist means that notes of praise in their clear and heavenly purity rise far above the harsh discords of earth, and reach the throne of God."

Incidentally he gives an interpretation of Matt. xviii. 10 : "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in Heaven." "The guardian angels," he says, "are the divine ideals of the children." A further note adds : "The devout faith of the Old Testament writers is, that God has ever at hand a crowd of ideas and ideals, waiting to be realised in the world of humanity. The most important of these the later Jews called 'the seven holy angels which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One' (Job xii. 15; cf. Luke i. 19). But our Lord assures us that the ideal of each child-like soul is as near to His Father as the ideal, say, of a seventh part of the world. It is the glory of Jehovah to delight Himself equally in the greatest and in the seemingly smallest objects."

This calls to mind a powerful sermon by Phillips Brooks, the first in the volume entitled *Sermons preached in English Churches*. The text is Heb. viii. 5: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount;" and the thought which runs through the sermon is expressed thus: As the old Tabernacle, before it was built, existed in the mind of God, so all the unborn things of life, the things which are to make the future, are already living in their perfect ideas in Him, and when the future comes, its task will be to match those divine ideas with their material realities, to translate into the visible and tangible shapes of terrestrial life the facts which already have existence in the perfect mind.

"So take and use Thy work;
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!"

Church Guilds.

PAPERS AND SYLLABUSES.

A PRIZE will be given for the best Paper read at any Church Guild meeting this session. Further particulars next month.

A Prize will be given for the best Syllabus of Guild Religious Work for the session 1889-90. Syllabuses must be received by the 15th November.

Y.M.C. Associations.

PAPERS AND SYLLABUSES.

A PRIZE will be given for the best Paper read at any Y.M.C.A. meeting this session. Further particulars next month.

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The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF FIRST CORINTHIANS.

I COR. i. 22-24.

"Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."—(R.V.)

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Cunningham (W.): *Sermons from 1828-1860*, pp. 120, 134.

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Edgar (J. M.): *The Philosophy of the Cross*, p. 1.

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Lindesie (A.): *The Gospel of Grace*, p. 78.

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Anglican Pulpit of To-day, p. 49 (Stubbs).

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Contemporary Pulpit, vol. ii., p. 144 (Scott).

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Homilist, vol. ii., p. 139; xiii., p. 335; xxvii., p. 288; xxxiv., p. 318; xli., p. 289; li., p. 341.

Pulpit, vol. liv., p. 485; lxii., p. 51.

Studies for the Pulpit, vol. ii., pp. 222, 249.

Sin is the wrong done, suffering and death the sickness. Christ does not remove suffering and death: He adopts them for His portion, lays Himself alongside of them, co-operates with them, that the evil which caused them may be removed.

War may be taken as an example of the special diseases that sin gives birth to; and the special sin is the greedy or ambitious temper, or the spirit quick to take offence. The Gospel does not act directly against, but unites itself to the facts of war. It possesses itself of its deepest secrets: duty, patriotism, self-surrender. Purging, transfiguring these, it brings forth out of the agony and bloodshed a new and lovely vision—the vision of a Christian hero—a soldier saint—

“Who, doomed to go in company with pain,
And fear and bloodshed, miserable train,
Turns these necessities to glorious gain;
Controls them, and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
Of their bad influence, and their good receives;
By objects which might force the soul abate
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate;
As more exposed to suffering and distress,¹
Hence also more alive to tenderness.”

THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

SIGNS AND MIRACLES. — The craving for the marvellous and the miraculous still characterises Oriental nations. It appears in the licence of Arabian invention and credulity; and in the Jewish nation reached its highest pitch in the extravagant fictions of the Rabbinical writers. The proverb “credat Judæus” shows the character which they had obtained amongst the Romans for readiness to accept the wildest absurdities, and this disposition to seek for signs is expressly commended in the Mishna.—*Stanley*.

The Jews scorned and hated Christ for doing those very things which revealed his Divine greatness, and they declared they would believe in Him if He did such things as would surely have shown He had a poor conception of the functions of the Messiah and little competency to discharge them. Again and again they ask Him for a “sign.” To John’s instructed eye Christ’s miracles were “signs,” because they were the outward symbol of a like energy in the unseen world of spirit. But to the Jews a miracle was a “sign” merely as evidence that here was some super-human power, but whether beneficial or destructive, selfish or self-sacrificing, they did not care to inquire.—*Marcus Dods*.

At the root of it, superstition may be said to be this: expecting spiritual results from material means. If you believe, for example, that by certain charms or waving hands you can compel the actions

of a disembodied spirit, or that some meaningless observance, like an amulet round your neck, will secure good luck, or that the glance of a particular person’s eye will do you a mortal injury, you are superstitiously “requiring signs.”—*Oswald Dykes*.

Our duty nowadays in theology is to establish the authority of the *supernatural* in Christianity in the strictest sense of the word, but with the unconditional exclusion of the magical.—*Rothe*, “Still Hours.”

WISDOM.—St. Paul’s language ought to be written over the door of every school: “We worship not Minerva but Christ.” There is in our day a marvellous idolatry of talent. Goodness is one thing, talent is another. The Son of Man came not as a scribe, but as a poor working-man. He was a teacher, but not a Rabbi. When once the idolatry of talent enters the Church, then farewell to spirituality. When men ask their teachers, not for that which will make them more humble and godlike, but for the excitement of an intellectual banquet, then farewell to Christian progress.—*F. W. Robertson*.

The writings of Philo illustrate both characteristics. His genius was Oriental, his education Greek. The result was a strange mixture of mysticism (miracle) and dialectics (wisdom).—*Lewes*, “History of Philosophy.”

The Jew and the Greek were really asking for one and the same thing, an *unspiritual* religion; a religion that should not deal with the heart at all in the way of trial and discipline. What they sought for, in one word, was knowledge without belief.—*W. C. Magee*.

These two—the seeker after a sign and the seeker after wisdom—the man who would rest all religion, all philosophy, all social polity, upon authority alone; and the man who would rest them all upon reason alone—this Jew, with his reverence for power, his love of custom and tradition—which are the power of the past—his tendency to rest always in outward law and form—the power of the present—his distaste for all philosophical speculation; his impatience of novelty, his dread of change—leaning always to the side of despotism in society, and of superstition in religion,—and on the other hand, this Greek, with his subtle and restless intellect, his taste for speculation, his want of reverence for the past, his desire of change, his love of novelty, his leaning towards licence in society and scepticism in religion; what are they—these two—but the representatives of those two opposite types of mind which divide, and always have divided, all mankind?—*W. C. Magee*.

“CHRIST CRUCIFIED.”—Christ crucified involves the two thoughts of our Lord’s *humiliation* upon the Cross, and His *exaltation* to glory. The Christians of the early and middle ages, following the example of Constantine and Helena, ignored

the former; a rationalistic tendency of the present day is to attenuate the latter into something abstract and beyond the grave, losing hold of the ever-present connection between the Church and the Cross.—*Zoeckler*.

Modern thought is strong because it recognises the Incarnation, taken largely, as the grandest of all facts; but it is weak because it fails to see the necessary issue of the Advent in the work of the Cross.—*Dykes*.

Christianity is a plan not of moral teaching, but first of all of redemption and reconciliation; birth before life, and life before work.—*J. Ker*.

We hold up neither a "Bambino" nor a crucifix, neither a Saviour in arms nor a Saviour dead; we preach the living, present Christ, raised to give what He died to procure.—*Dykes*.

A STUMBLING-BLOCK TO JEWS; FOOLISHNESS TO GREEKS.—We can scarcely realise now the stumbling-block which the preaching of a crucified Christ must have been. For us the Cross is illumined with the glories of eighteen centuries of civilisation, and consecrated with the memory of all that is best and noblest in the history of Christendom. To Jew and Gentile it conveyed but one idea, that of a revolting and degrading punishment. What a temptation to keep it in the background, and how sublime the faith of Paul that made it the central fact of his preaching!—*Shore*.

I lately saw a drawing, not unknown to archæologists, which, though it might shock some people as painfully profane, struck me with just the contrary feeling, as being a solemn and touching confirmation from the outside of that internal truth which we call Revelation. It was a copy of a street caricature, found not very long ago, on a newly discovered wall—I think in Rome—where it had been hidden for eighteen hundred years; evidently the work of some young gamin of the ancient world, and depicting a man after the most primitive style of Art, with a round O for his head, an oblong O for his body, two lines for legs and arms, and five rayed fans for hands and feet. This creature stood gazing in adoration upon a similar man, only with an ass's head instead of a human one, who hung suspended upon a cross. Underneath was scrawled in rude Greek letters: "*Alexaminos worships his God*."—*Mrs. Craik*, "Sermons out of Church."

The Crucifixion was and is a "scandal" to the Jewish nation, as a dishonour to the Messiah. Christ has been called by them in derision "Toldi," "the man who was hung;" and Christians, "the servants of Him who was hung." And in the Mohammedan religion, both as now professed and as set forth in the Koran, the supposed ignominy of the Crucifixion is evaded by the story that the Jews, in a judicial blindness, seized and crucified Judas instead of Christ, who ascended from their hands into heaven. "You do not think that those brute Jews nailed the Lord Isa (Jesus) to a cross?"

was the indignant question of an intelligent Mussulman to an English traveller. "Oh, no they never nailed Him, He lives for ever in heaven."—*Stanley*.

POWER AND WISDOM.—Every divine revelation must be replete with miracles and with wisdom. A revelation without miracles cannot be proved to be divine; without consummate wisdom it is proved not to be divine. But we must advance further. The wisdom and the miracle are both of the very essence of the revelation. In regarding miracles as only external buttresses of faith, Paley falls into the same mistake as to rest in the *opus operatum* of a sacrament.—*Edwards*.

[See on the necessity of miracles—*Mozley, Bampton Lectures I.*; Hare, *Mission of the Comforter*, note N.; Bruce, *Chief End of Revelation*, chap. iv., and *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, chap. viii.; Row, *Bampton Lecture for 1887*, p. 255; Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, pp. 312-330; *Expositor, Third Series*, vol. ix., p. 50 (Delitzsch).]

The Gospel describes a Christ neither altogether supernatural, as the Jew required Him to be, nor altogether natural, as the Greek required Him to be; but a Christ who is both.—*W. C. Magee*.

All the miracles of Holy Scripture take place again in our own souls.—*Hamann*.

A North American Indian was asked by a European how his tribe became Christians. His answer was: "A preacher came once, and began to prove there was a God. We answered: 'Well, dost thou think we are ignorant of that? Now go again whence thou camest.' Another preacher appeared, and said, 'Ye must not steal, ye must not kill, ye must not drink too much.' We answered him, 'Teach the people thou camest from not to do those things, and then come to us,' and we sent him away also. Then came Christian Henry, one of the brethren, and he entered into my tent, and sat down by me. 'I come to thee,' he said, 'in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He acquaints thee that He would gladly save thee, and rescue thee from the miserable state in which thou liest. To this end He became a man, and shed His blood for men.' He then lay down in my tent and fell asleep, being weary with his journey. I might have killed him and thrown him out into the forest, and who would have cared for it? *But I could not get rid of his words.* When I waked I thought of them, and when I slept I dreamt of the blood of Jesus. Thus, through the grace of God, the awakening took place amongst us."—*T. R. Stevenson*.

Frederick the Great's saying, "that victory always goes to the strongest battalion," is frequently untrue in the immediate issue, and always in the final result. The victory goes in the end to the strongest moral force.—*J. Ker*.