

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE first article in *The Biblical World*, the new name of *The Old and New Testament Student*, has for its title: "What is Biblical Theology?" The writer is Professor George B. Stevens, D.D., of Yale, whose recent volume on *The Pauline Theology*, published in this country by Mr. Dickenson, was most favourably received wherever it came. What is Biblical theology? It is the question which many are asking here. What is it, and how does it differ from the old systematic theology which we know; and what right has it to a separate name at all?

Professor Stevens shows clearly enough that Biblical theology is different from systematic theology, and has a right to a different name. For now we have all come to acknowledge that in Holy Scripture there is a diversity in unity, and it is the distinction of Biblical theology that it recognises that diversity. We have come to see that the theology of St. Paul may be distinguished from the theology of St. John, though the one is neither inferior nor contradictory to the other. We even see that in St. Paul's theology itself, periods of time and stages of progress may be recognised, and that the study of these separate periods is far more profitable than we expected, and less dangerous than we dreaded.

The "Biblical" theologian insists that this is the only true method of theological study. He

does not deny the place of systematic theology, but he holds that its place is later. He does not deny that there is a unity in the midst of the diversity, but he maintains that you cannot discover or systematise that unity, till first you have a clear apprehension of the diversity. The Biblical theologian supplies the systematic theologian with his materials. And the great benefit to the systematic theologian from the new method is that he no longer rests his system upon the citation of "proof-texts," gathered indiscriminately from every corner of the Word, and, perhaps, separated from their original intent, but now forms a just estimate of each Biblical writer's standpoint, purpose, and mode of thought, and uses his materials accordingly.

Thus Professor Stevens shows that there is a place for Biblical theology, and that it has the right to a name. But it becomes easily apparent that it has no right to the special name which has unfortunately been given to it. "Biblical theology—do you mean, then, that systematic theology is *not* Biblical?" So the old-fashioned theologian inevitably demands, and your unfortunate title compels him to conquer a needless suspicion before he can profit by an admirable distinction. No; it is not that the old theology was not Biblical, nor is it that the new is not systematic. Neither name is now quite appropriate. But it is not the first time, even in these matters, that an

unreal title has become inseparably attached to a real thing, and has ever after caused needless irritation and opposition.

In a short article in *The Expositor* for March, Professor W. M. Ramsay touches an old harmonistic difficulty in the Gospels, the hour of our Lord's crucifixion. The difficulty, we may be reminded, is this: St. John says (xix. 14) that "it was about the sixth hour" when Pilate sat down in the judgment-seat to pronounce sentence; while St. Mark (xv. 25) says, "And it was the third hour; and they crucified Him." That is, St. Mark tells us plainly that Jesus was *crucified* at nine o'clock in the forenoon, while St. John seems to say that at twelve o'clock (noon) Pilate was only at the stage of pronouncing sentence upon Him.

It is one of the most obvious of all the "discrepancies," and it is a very long time since its discovery was first made. Thus there has been time for a plentiful crop of harmonistic theories to spring up, and they have sprung up plentifully. They may be found in most admirable order in Andrews' *Life of Our Lord* (new edition: T. & T. Clark)—the book to which every one goes for all that it is necessary to know on subjects such as this. Mr. Andrews' judgment is for the most part as reliable as his information is accurate, but here he tentatively adopts a theory which Professor Ramsay cannot away with.

There are indeed just two possible ways of removing the discrepancy. Mr. Andrews doubtfully adopts the one, Professor Ramsay confidently holds by the other. Mr. Andrews' theory is that there were two methods of reckoning the hours, the one from sunrise (say six o'clock in the morning), the other from midnight. There is no doubt that St. John generally follows the method of counting from sunrise; but here it is possible that he counts from midnight. Then the sixth hour would be six o'clock in the morning; and if at that early hour Pilate sat down to pronounce judgment, the crucifixion would rightly take place

at the third hour (counting from sunrise this time). viz. at nine o'clock A.M., as St. Mark says it did.

So the two statements would be found in harmony. But the expedient has always seemed questionable, and in the judgment of Professor Ramsay it is altogether inadmissible. For, he says, there were *not* two methods of reckoning the hours. There were two days certainly, just as there are with us. There was the day as distinguished from the night, and there was the day of twenty-four hours as distinguished from the week or the month, and which he would always spell with a capital D for the sake of distinction. But though there were two days there were not two methods of dividing into hours. The civil Day as distinguished from the week was not divided into hours at all. And the ordinary day as distinguished from the night was divided into twelve hours, *always commencing at sunrise*. So the hours varied in length, of course. In midsummer they would be about seventy-five minutes long, at the equinoxes about sixty minutes, and in midwinter about forty-five minutes. But there were always twelve of them, and they always began at sunrise: and so the third hour would always be, roughly speaking, nine o'clock A.M., and the sixth hour, roughly speaking, twelve o'clock noon.

"Roughly speaking"—the whole matter lies in that. "Godet's remark, that the apostles had no watches, has been called flippant; but it touches the crucial point," says Professor Ramsay. "They divided their day into twelve parts, but the parts were of varying length, according to the season of the year; and it was impossible to be very precise in designating a particular hour, unless they took far more trouble about it than the Oriental mind even yet thinks necessary. Therefore 'the sixth hour' in common usage indicated in a vague way the time when the sun is near the zenith. Still more elastic, of course, was the expression, '*about the sixth hour*,' which, except where the circumstances of the speaker imply he had the opportunity for precise reckoning, cannot be interpreted more

accurately than somewhere between 11 A.M. and 1 P.M. In this rough, popular language, little attempt was made to reckon any other hour except the 'third' and the 'ninth' hour, which meant a time when the sun was fairly well up in the heavens. This may seem to us intolerably loose, but it serves very well in practice in a country where there are no trains to catch. To the Oriental mind, the question between the third hour and the sixth is not more important than the doubt between 12.5 and 12.10 P.M. is to us."

That is Professor Ramsay's theory, then. The readings are all right; and the method of reckoning time was the same for St. John as for St. Mark. But they both reckon their hours in a loose, easy way, and to an Oriental mind there is no discrepancy between them.

It may be so; one must be an Oriental to feel it. At present it is scarcely possible for us to feel perfectly satisfied that all is well with it. But our uneasiness does not prove it false. And there is one thing about it worthy of careful attention. Professor Ramsay is very decided that there were not two methods of reckoning the hours. And if that is so, then the number of possible theories is reduced, and that is a clear gain. He is quite positive about it. There is no evidence that any other reckoning but the reckoning from sunrise was in use. And he takes pains to examine at some length the only apparent example of it that seems to him to demand examination.

This is the well-known difficulty of the hour at which Polycarp suffered martyrdom. Professor Ramsay's conclusion is, that there was delay from various insignificant causes, so that the martyrdom really took place at 2 P.M.; that is to say, at the eighth hour, reckoning in the usual way.

A volume of Jewish sermons has just been published by Mr. David Nutt in the Strand. Its title is *The Ideal in Judaism* (crown 8vo, pp. 207, 5s.). The author is the Rev. Morris Joseph, and

he preached the sermons to a congregation of Jews in London in the course of the last three years.

The volume has many claims upon our attention. For, first of all, it is a rare thing in English literature. Certainly, volumes of sermons are sufficiently with us always. But a volume of sermons by a Jew visits our shores so rarely, that we give it a ready welcome from our mere Athenian love of some new thing.

It has a claim upon our attention, in the next place, because it is written in a living and nervous English style. It is delightful to read. There are parts certainly where the reader's enjoyment—if he is a *Christian* reader—is dashed with twitches of pain, where it is even utterly quenched in a reasonable resentment; but these are never due to obscurity of thought or infelicity of language.

Nay, where the author has a theme that is pleasing to us as it is to him, he touches us to the very finest issues. He touches us so when, for example, he speaks of the purity and love of the Jewish home: "Reverence for the home, the most fruitful of Jewish ideals, is the secret of half the virtues of our toiling class. It clothes the poor garret with unspeakable charm in the eyes of its indwellers, so that for them there is literally no place like home, and the public-house cannot compete with it for their favour. It imparts a sanctity to family life, turning the hearts of the parents to the children, and the hearts of the children to the parents, binding the members of the household to each other in an enduring bond of loyalty and love."

But there is a distinctly higher claim the book has upon us than either its novelty or its grace can give it. Though written in the interests of the Jewish religion, written in direct and purposed defence of Judaism against Christianity, and that, too, under the close pressure of a great crisis in their relation, the references to Christianity are

nevertheless remarkably free from misrepresentation. And that is particularly true of its references to our Lord. It neither ignores Jesus in its despair, nor vilifies Him in its desperation. The beauty of the human life, that knew not where to lay its head till it laid it on the tree, is felt and freely acknowledged. Here and there some glimpse is even caught of the sublime generosity that said to Jewish murderers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—caught and courageously, however dimly, reflected.

This is the more remarkable, because the closeness of the pressure with which Christianity is bearing down upon Judaism to-day is keenly felt by Mr. Joseph. "I know," he says, "from cases that have come within my own personal experience that, now and then, Jews—or to be more accurate, Jewesses—of an impressionable age are caught by the glitter of the Church, and think, with a sigh, how beautiful it would be if the rites of the synagogue were not characterised by so severe a simplicity. They are attracted by the Christian Service, with its impressive ritual, its stirring and tuneful hymns; or they are captivated by the winning character of the hero of the Gospels, and they reflect with regret that their own form of worship is æsthetically less satisfying, and the history of their religion less instinct with personal charm. Occasionally regret manifests itself in action of a more pronounced kind, and the homely religion is abjured for the more romantic one."

And the sting of it is found in this, that it is Mr. Joseph and his friends that have given these Jewesses of impressionable age the new eyes with which they look upon "the Hero of the Gospels." For they have taught them to doubt if the law were ever given by Moses; and what are they to do but seek the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ?

Mr. Joseph says it does not follow. Though the law was not given by Moses, it does not follow that you must betake yourself to the

religion of Jesus Christ. He admits the outward beauty of it; he freely allows the supreme attractiveness of "that central figure whose sufferings and charm of character move our neighbours to alternate sympathy and emulation." But he holds persistently to the belief that Judaism is Judaism still; that it has a truth and beauty of its own; that, above all things, it has a unique and undying mission in the world; and he will not allow that Jews or Jewesses, of any age, are to be forgiven if they abjure their homely religion for the more romantic one.

This, then, is the greatest of all the claims that Mr. Joseph's book makes upon us. Modern Judaism—modern Judaism as represented by an energetic and ever-widening circle of influential Jewish teachers—has lost its great lawgiver. It has given up its faith in the Divine origin of the Law, in all its parts and in all its precepts. It has even denied the inspiration of the prophets. And now we wonder what is left. If Judaism is Judaism still, what makes it so? Mr. Joseph answers that question. He answers it frankly, clearly, and without fear. And his answer claims our attention.

And, first of all, his answer is negative. Judaism must remain Judaism and not become Christianity, because it is not a religion of mystery, as Christianity is. And here we come at once upon one of the very few things in the book that pain and startle us. We may waive the point whether you can have *any* religion without mystery in it. For Mr. Joseph himself seems to admit you cannot. In one place he even seems to forget the supreme claim he has made for Judaism, and speaks of the veneration for life as "one of the holiest of God's mysteries." We may even waive the point which Mr. Joseph endeavours to make against modern Christianity, by saying that it has passed from its primitive simplicity through contact with pagan philosophy. But it is necessary to protest against the representation which Mr. Joseph gives of what Christianity is, what it demands of every one who

would seek to embrace it. "It is easy enough," he says, "to join in a melodious hymn, or to admire the nobility of the central figure in a religious story. But Christianity is far from being so simple an affair. It requires its adherents to accept every word of the Gospel narrative as absolutely true, as divinely inspired—nay, to subscribe to doctrines saturated with mysticism,—doctrines which are in almost perpetual conflict with reason, and which strain belief to breaking-point. Surely all of us who wish to preserve a character for sobriety of thought must hesitate long before complying with so exacting a demand."

But now let us pass swiftly on to notice that the first claim which Mr. Joseph makes for Judaism as an abiding religion with a mission that never ends, is this negative one, that it contains no mystery and no dogma. "Here we have the fundamental difference between Judaism and Christianity. Dogma is to the Church the very breath of life. It is the web and the woof of its system; to unravel a single thread is to endanger the whole fabric. Beyond the few simple postulates which are essential to allegiance to the religious idea, and to belief in Israel as its custodian, the Jew is not bound to believe anything."

That is what Judaism is not. What, then, is it? Mr. Joseph has just told us. It is "allegiance to the religious idea" and "belief in Israel as its custodian."

If this sounds somewhat vague and unintelligible, the fault is ours, not Mr. Joseph's. Mr. Joseph is always clear, precise, and perfectly intelligible. And the present difficulty arises from the fact that he has already explained what these things mean. One of the earliest sermons goes by the title, "Why am I a Jew?" and there we find these frank and luminous sentences: "Renan has characterised Judaism by calling it a minimum of religion. And so it is, seeing how few and how simple are the articles of belief which form its necessary constituents. God, duty, Israel's mission—these are

its chief ideas. Where is the Jew whose intelligence they stir into rebellion? There is no mystery here; no truth that needs a philosophy to expound it; no creed for which room has to be made in the mind by expelling reason from it; no lesson that a child could not grasp; no ideal that shall not suffice to lift human life to the highest pinnacle of nobility."

So these are the three "chief ideas" of Judaism,—the only ideas, as you afterwards discover, though one matter of unexpected practice is added to them,—these three: God, duty, Israel's mission. And each of these words has a definite meaning.

By "God" Mr. Joseph means the unity of God. The Christian is a trinitarian,—Mr. Joseph would say a tritheist. The Jew is a unitarian,—Mr. Joseph would prefer the expression a theist. The issue seems clear enough. And one can understand now the abhorrence of Mr. Joseph to mystery. For he knows that the Christian claims to be a theist, a monotheist if you will, a believer in the unity of God, as much as any Jew. But then there is the "mystery" of the trinity; and discarding all mystery, Mr. Joseph sees the trinity as nothing but an unintelligible name for tri-deity, and trinitarianism the worship of three Gods.

The issue raised by the second word "duty" is not quite so clear. For is not duty Christian as much as Jewish? But here Mr. Joseph has in mind the matter of faith, so characteristically Christian. And perhaps this is the weakest part of all his exposition. For he cannot get along without faith, and yet he cannot accept the faith of the Christian, nor the Person upon whom it is centred. He admits the place of faith, its absolute necessity to the noblest life, and he admits that you must have something to fix your faith upon. "The measure of the vitality of a religion is the impossibility, that is, the nobility, of its ideals." So he says, and "at first sight," he adds, "it must be owned that Judaism compares unfavourably, as a source of inspiration, with Christ-

ianity, owing to the lack of that central figure whose sufferings and charm of character move our neighbours to alternate sympathy and emulation. But the Jew has, in truth, a similar ideal." Our thoughts rush at once to Abraham, the father of the faithful, or Moses, the great lawgiver, or David, the sweet singer of Israel. But the modern reading of Hebrew history begins on this side of Abraham. Moses was the author of no legislation that has come down to us. David never wrote a psalm. No, it is to none of these the modern Jewish critic may turn for inspiration. He finds no person indeed at all to fix his faith upon. But he turns to the *nation* of Israel, and he asks, "What can thrill us more powerfully than the spectacle of Israel's devotion and martyrdom? What eloquence can rival that of the appeal which every line of our history, written as it is with the life-blood of our heroes, makes to us to be true to the faith, loyal to duty, staunch champions of religion and righteousness, whatever the cost?"

Well, it is good, so far as it goes. But Mr. Joseph knows that it never has gone very far, and never can go. So, though in moments of fearlessness he acknowledges the supreme place of faith, saying enthusiastically, "Faith, my brethren, faith in the vitality of our creed and our mission—this is what we especially need in these days;" yet he seeks to establish his second distinction between Judaism and Christianity by insisting upon conduct as peculiar to the one, while belief is characteristic of the other. "Judaism, we may rejoice to think, has far more to say about human conduct than about theology; and human conduct, as Matthew Arnold has told us, is three-fourths of life."

But there is no such distinction; or if there is, Christianity has all the best of it. For even Mr. Joseph acknowledges that "a certain amount of belief is necessarily assumed." And he fails utterly to show that Christianity assumes any particle of barren belief. Nay, rather if the faith is more, and its Object nobler, the service will be

more immediate, more heartfelt, and more enduring.

We have reached the last mark of distinction. "Judaism," says Mr. Joseph, "has a mission in the world. She was chosen for a witness, and she has not yet delivered her testimony; a message was put into her mouth, and she has not yet uttered it." What is Israel's mission? At first we can see nothing but the two matters already dealt with—God and duty. And undoubtedly that is all the mission Mr. Joseph finds for Israel till many sermons are past. Her mission is simply to witness for the unity of God and the supremacy of duty.

But it is evident that that is no third mark of distinction, but merely a repetition of the first two. And so you find, after a time, that there is something else. It is simply Israel's separation. And here the reasoning is peculiar. This seems to be the way of it: Israel must have a mission, because she has been separated from the nations of the earth—that separation must itself be the mission. We trust we do not misrepresent this able and clear-headed author. The most careful examination of the book has found no other meaning than that. And there is a passage so emphatic in its declaration, that no other meaning seems possible after it. Having explained that holiness in the Old Testament means simply separation, and has not the modern idea of moral sanctity attached to it; and, indeed, Mr. Joseph never claims a special moral sanctity for the Jew, he quotes: "Ye shall be holy unto Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have separated you from the peoples that ye should be Mine;" and he adds: "Let us write these words on our hearts, for they contain the whole philosophy of Judaism."

That, then, is Judaism—God, Duty, Separation. And as this distinguished Jewish expositor looks at them, he sees how sublime these three are as ideals,—how impotent to touch our life and conduct. God, Duty, Separation—is there any nation on the face of the earth that has not all these three?—all these and something else to make it a religion?

For what is this but theism, pure and simple ; no religion at all, but the most ordinary system of philosophy? Mr. Joseph knows it. "If Judaism is to perform its errand it must live," he says ; "and to live it must be Judaism, and not vague Theism."

Well, there is just one thing that will make Judaism a religion still, lifting it out of all confusion with vague Theism. It is the continued observance of the Mosaic ritual. Moses is gone, no doubt, and all the Mosaic legislation with him—moral and ceremonial. Nevertheless you must act and you must speak as if the Mosaic legislation were as Divine as once you believed it to be, and as eternally binding.

Will our young and influential modern Israelites accept this condition? They cannot say yes ; they dare not say no. They cannot say yes. Conscience rebels against it. The late Professor Graetz said yes boldly enough, and the "party of Breslau" followed him. Stick to the ceremonies, they cried, though all authority has been swept out of them ; abide by them, for our life is there. But our modern Israelites cannot away with the Breslau compromise. They have learned the magnificent lesson that ritual was made for conscience, and not conscience for ritual.

They cannot say yes. And the time has come to test their endurance. The test is simple enough. In the ritual of the synagogue there is a daily prayer for the restoration of sacrifice. Here is the test, Will our modern Israelites pray for the time when the blood of bullocks and of goats may flow again to take away sin?

No ; the advanced Israelite of to-day knows no words energetic enough to express his abhorrence of sacrifice. "Go back to Sacrifice," he cries, "when the Golden Days have come. The idea is its own refutation. For what does it mean? It means that the climax of the world's progress is to be marked by a return to a barbarous worship. A rite, from the mere thought of which the best minds

recoil with a shudder to-day, is, in the still nobler age, to be the chosen instrument for paying homage to the Supreme! Men are to advance in justice, in brotherly love, in wide-reaching pity for suffering, in the power of self-renunciation ; in this one thing only are they to go back, and turn God's house into reeking shambles!" These are Mr. Joseph's words.

They will not return to sacrifice ; for they know that the blood of bullocks and of goats cannot take away sin. And the time has come to test their sincerity and their endurance. A few months ago a London preacher was inhibited by the Chief Rabbi because he refused to offer the customary prayer for the restoration of the sacrificial rite.

And yet how significant and how touching it is, that they dare not say no. They dare not say that they will no longer have anything to do with the ceremonial law. They dare not say that God, Duty, and Separation are Judaism, and there is nothing more. But what are they to do? They have found that circumcision is nothing, and they will suffer inhibition rather than blow artificial breath into the shrivelled corpse of legalism that still stands in the synagogue corner. What will they do?

How great is our surprise to discover that the salvation of Judaism is to be found, after all, in eating and drinking! "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man," said our Lord. For once Mr. Joseph forgets his devotion and almost his manners. "The truth is, that which entereth into the mouth *does* defile, if its entrance is due to a conscious breaking with religious duty." For modern Israel is to be saved by eating and drinking, by the preservation and strict observance of the Mosaic laws concerning dietary. God, Duty, and Separation? no ; but God, Duty, Separation, and abstinence from ham (the word is Mr. Joseph's own), that is Judaism at last. For "Judaism must live ; and to live it must be Judaism, not vague Theism. How it is to be anything without these dietary laws I know not, nor do I believe any one can tell me."