

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

IN his new book, *With Open Face* (Hodder & Stoughton. Crown 8vo. 6s.), Professor Bruce has given a new interpretation of the saying of Jesus (Matt. viii. 20): 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.' Professor Bruce says that he has always 'felt a certain measure of dissatisfaction with the current conception of our Lord's meaning.' His dissatisfaction was of double edge. First, the current conception deprived the saying of any special aptitude to the person addressed; and secondly, it gave the saying 'a certain tone of exaggerated sentiment, according ill with the known character of Jesus.'

The current interpretation is, of course, the literal one. Professor Bruce does not now believe that the literal interpretation is true. For there does not seem, he says, to have been any great hardship in the physical aspect of the life of our Lord and His disciples, such as might scare away any one the least inclined to disciple-life. Moreover, the man who offered to follow Jesus whithersoever He went was a scribe. As a scribe he was a comparatively wealthy man. As soon as he was admitted to the ranks of discipleship he would be 'one more added to the number of followers possessing means sufficient to make the daily life of the Jesus-circle not without a due measure of comfort.'

So the literal interpretation, Professor Bruce thinks, cannot be true, and he suggests a metaphorical. He confesses that the new suggestion only recently came to his mind. But it came to his mind as a distinct relief. Looked at in the new parabolical light, the old saying 'is seen to be at once very true and very apposite.'

For how thoroughly true it is that Jesus was *spiritually* an alien, without a home in the *religion* of the time. Professor Bruce recalls all that had quite probably happened before this incident took place: the charge of blasphemy in connexion with the healing of the palsied man; the offence taken at the festive meeting with the publicans, and the scandalous charges that grew out of that event; the numerous conflicts respecting Sabbath-keeping, fasting, ritual ablutions, and the like; the infamous suggestion that the cure of demoniacs was wrought by the aid of Beelzebub, and so on. 'If the whole, or even a part of these experiences, lay behind Him when He uttered this word, with what truth and pathos Jesus might say, the foxes and the birds of the air are better off than I am, so far as a home for the *soul* is concerned.'

And with what point and pungency He might say this to a *scribe*. For was it not the class this aspirant belonged to that made Him homeless? Professor Bruce will not decide whether the saying

is to be viewed as an excuse for reluctance to receive him as a disciple, or as a summons to deliberate consideration of what was involved in the step he was proposing to take. In either case the word was altogether seasonable. In the one case it meant: You need not wonder if I give not a prompt warm welcome to *you*, remembering all that has passed between Me and the class you belong to. In the other case it means: Are you ready to break with your class in opinion, feeling, and interest, and to bear the obloquy and ill-will that will inevitably come upon you as My disciple?

America has just discovered a new theology in its midst. The new theology is not entirely American. Its first beginnings are English, and its greatest names appear to be English too. But America claims the larger proportion of its adherents, and it is America that has made the discovery.

The discovery is simultaneously announced in *The New World* for September and in *The Bibliotheca Sacra* for October. The two writers are as far apart in theological position as the two quarterlies would lead us to expect. They could not well be further apart. Yet they both begin by distinctly describing it as a New Theology, and they both proceed to name its foremost adherents.

Who are these prominent adherents? The list in *The New World* is the shorter, and we may give it first. It contains but a single Englishman, with whom it commences however, Principal Fairbairn, of Mansfield College. The rest are Americans all, and well-known Americans most of them: Dr. Lyman Abbott, Dr. Gordon of the Old South Church in Boston, Dr. A. H. Bradford; the Rev. John H. Denison, Professor Harris of Andover, Dr. Donald of Trinity Church in Boston, the Rev. Frederic Palmer of Christ Church in Andover, and Dr. J. H. Ecob, 'lately pastor of a large Presbyterian Church in Albany.' The list in *The New World* ends with the statement, that of this New Theology, Bishop Brooks was the ablest preacher.

The writer in *The Bibliotheca Sacra* goes very much further back. The theology is new, he seems to think, only because its adherents have multiplied and come to the light of late. It is really as old as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and his *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*. It is as old as the sermons of Robertson and Maurice. Nevertheless its adherents and their books are mostly of the present quarter of a century, and again they are mostly American: Bushnell's *Forgiveness and Law* (the final form of the 'Vicarious Sacrifice'); Beecher's *Life of Jesus the Christ*; Swing's *Truths for To-day*; Newman Smyth's *Old Faiths in New Light*; Munger's *The Freedom of Faith*; Fisher's *Faith and Rationalism*; Abbott's *Evolution of Religion*; Briggs' *Whither*; Phillips Brooks' *Toleration*; *Progressive Orthodoxy*, by the editors of the *Andover Review*; Drummond's *Ascent of Man*; Fairbairn's *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*; and Gordon's *The Christ of To-day*. The lists differ considerably. But the difference is not altogether due to the crowd that the writers had to gather from. It is due to the fact that the *Bibliotheca* writer deliberately names the *popular* literature of the New Theology; the writer in *The New World* as deliberately confines himself to its *scholars* and their work.

Those are the men: what is their theology? The works and the men that have been named differ from one another in innumerable respects, but the writer in *The Bibliotheca Sacra* finds four great characteristics which they all possess in common.

First, all the teachers of the New Theology agree in holding that 'the time has come when, for increasing multitudes of the most thoughtful and spiritually-minded men and women, belief in certain leading dogmas of the old theology is no longer possible.' What are these dogmas? Three are mentioned here. Take the third first. It is a quotation from Dr. Gordon's *The Christ of To-day*: 'The old argument against the higher criticism, from the fact that Jesus used the Old Testament, and which assumes that if Moses had not written

the Pentateuch, and David the Psalms, and Solomon Ecclesiastes, Christ would have told His disciples so, is self-evidently worthless. The principle of the incarnation involves an accommodation of the eternal to the temporal conditions, and it was clearly beyond the power of divinity in three short years to sweep the Jewish mind clean of all its errors and superstitions. He had a whole world of mistakes and superstitions and lies against which to go on record, and He had no time for one so comparatively insignificant.

That is one dogma the New Theology rejects. The next is more important. Take it again in the words of Dr. Gordon: 'The idea that confines salvation to a remnant, whether that be the remnant of the Hebrew prophet, or of the mediæval saint, or of the Puritan, is to-day incredible.' That is to say, as the writer of this article puts it, 'God will not condemn any man finally until he shall have had revealed to him for his acceptance or rejection the redeeming love of God in Christ.'

The last of the dogmas here named that are no longer credible is named in the recollection of an incident. In June 1888 a certain ministerial association met at Newton Highlands. The sermon was preached by the Rev. William Barrows, D.D., of blessed memory. 'We who had long known him as one of the most progressive, as well as one of the most Christian of men, sat amazed as he went on to unfold and set forth and "prove," after the strictest method of the Westminster Catechism, by ample and indiscriminate citation of texts from the Old Testament and the New, from biblical history, prophecy, poetry, and prose—marshalling, as of equal authority, Job's three friends and the four evangelists—that God, from before the foundation of the world, selected certain individuals who were yet to be born, and predestinated them, some to everlasting happiness and others to everlasting torment; not at all out of consideration as to their choice of character or conduct of life, but solely for His own praise and glory. You remember that when we, each in

turn, were called upon by name, as was our custom then, to criticise the sermon, there was not one of all our number, not one—not he who was most strenuously opposed to the new theology, or supposed himself to be—who did not strongly, even indignantly, dissent from the doctrines of that sermon, and condemn them as frightful and God-dishonouring. And you remember that when the doctor answered his critics, he quietly informed us that the sermon was delivered to us word for word as it had been written by him fifty years before, in all sincerity and love of truth, as God had given him to see the truth; that it was his trial sermon, pronounced sound and orthodox and eminently satisfactory by the presbytery before which he appeared as candidate for ordination directly after graduating from the theological seminary.'

The new theologians agree in rejecting certain leading dogmas, and those are three of the dogmas. Second, the New Theology is constructive as well as destructive. This does not mean that there are some dogmas it will not let go. That is true enough. It is true, for example, that it will not let go the divinity, that is to say, the proper deity of Jesus Christ. 'Without one exception known to me,' says this well-informed writer, 'the leaders and exponents of the modern thought of Christ are firm believers in the doctrine of his divinity.' And there are other dogmas besides. But that is not the meaning. The New Theology is constructive in that it reckons its earliest duty to lie in the filling up of the gap which the loss of the old dogma has created, by a new belief more fitted to the needs of the present hour. In other words, its mission is to teach a continual process of construction and reconstruction. New needs demand new truths; new truths create new needs. The staging is never down from the cathedral of theology for any length of time. Into the dialect of every new day the meaning of the divine wonder must be poured.

Third, the method of construction and reconstruction is not deductive but inductive. This is

a great distinction. Seeking the new doctrines, the New Theology does not seek them by abstract reasoning on the nature and attributes of the God-head. It studies the life and teachings of the Son of God, and takes them as it actually finds them there. 'The loudest call,' says Dr. Gordon again, 'is not for the venturesome spirit who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down, or descend into the depths to bring Christ up, but for the man who shall fathom the significance of the word that is nigh our humanity.' This is Phillips Brooks' great idea; it runs through all his sermons.

But the grand distinction of all these writers remains. Agreeing in all the three that have been named, they agree as heartily in the fourth, and it is most outstanding and momentous. They make the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ the source and centre of their religious thinking. In a way, and to an extent absolutely new in the history of theology, they start their thinking from Christ. They use no other words, not even the words of St. Paul or St. John, to explain the words of the Master; they explain the words of the disciples by His. As absolutely as the Lamb that was slain is the centre of adoration in the visions of the Apocalypse, Christ is the centre of the New Theology. 'Christocentric' is the chosen name it is known by.

The short sermon appears to have won. We still occasionally hear of a sermon which occupied more than half an hour in delivery; but it is mentioned as exceptional, and the probable sign of eccentricity or decrepitude. The short sermon has won all round. The next demand will be for a short text. And the preachers whose ambition it is to be always 'up to date' are already rushing through the Bible for it. Let us recommend a text that is both short and full of meaning. It is the single word 'Amen.'

'Amen' is the subject of the first article in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* for October. The article, which is written by the Rev. H. W. Hogg, M.A., is

a good example of the painstaking and permanent work which the present generation of Oxford men have been trained to do. It is also a good example of the material which is being furnished for the modern preacher's use. For nearly two generations our preachers have been encouraged to purchase 'Homiletical Helps' and 'Illustrative Gems.' For nearly two generations they have lent a greedy ear to the encouragement. And yet the Bible stands, and preaching is still a calling, and there are congregations that will gather to listen to it. But the old order changeth. In the near future all that the preacher will seek to rest upon will be the work of the special scholar and expositor,—such work as this article by Mr. H. W. Hogg on 'Amen.'

The linguistic root which lies at the base of the word 'Amen' is found in North and South Semitic alike, and wherever it is found it signifies stability, steadfastness, reliability. In Hebrew it is an indeclinable particle. Other indeclinable particles come from the same root, one of which will be found in Isa. xliii. 9: 'Let them hear and say "Truth!"' (אמת). But the particle 'Amen' differs from all the rest in this, that it expresses a decision of the will, even more than a mere acquiescence of the judgment.

In the use of 'Amen' in the Old Testament, what strikes us first and most forcibly is the fact that it is practically confined to the literature which modern criticism pronounces exilic or even post-exilic. There are only three examples earlier—1 Kings i. 36; Jer. xxviii. 6, and xi. 5. And these three are peculiar and separable from all the rest. They begin the sentence; they do not end it, as all the others do. They are, in short, the only instances in the Old Testament of the *Introductory Amen*, the first of the four different kinds of 'Amen' which Mr. Hogg discovers there.

Mr. Hogg discovers four kinds of 'Amen' in the Old Testament. The first is the *Introductory Amen*. Its three examples have been given. It is used to introduce an answer to a previous

speaker, as when Benaiah answers the demand of the dying David, with 'Amen: Jehovah, the God of my lord the king, say so too.' But it is easy to see that the word 'Amen' alone might serve the purpose well. Indeed, in such an answer the sentence, 'Jehovah the God of my lord the king, say so too,' sounds but a paraphrase of the word 'Amen,' and well-nigh weakens its emphasis. So the answer would speedily be suppressed and the 'Amen' stand alone. This is the second or *Detached Amen*. In its simple form it is found in Deut. xxvii. 15 ff.; Neh. v. 3; 1 Chron. xvi. 36 (= Ps. cvi. 4, 8); Tobit viii. 8, and ix. 12; but passing easily into a liturgical use, it is sometimes doubled in the later literature. So it is found as the response of the woman in the ritual of the 'Law of Jealousy,' Num. v. 22: 'And the woman shall say Amen, Amen'; so when Ezra 'blessed Jehovah the great God' (Neh. viii. 61), 'all the people answered Amen, Amen'; and so finally when Ozias ended his prayer for Judith, 'all the people said, Amen, Amen.'

But the 'Amen' that is most familiar to us is none of these. Both of these 'Amens' are spoken in response to another's words. The 'Amen' we know best is uttered in confirmation of our own. It is a great change from the 'so be it, so be it' (as our English versions render the 'Amen, Amen' at the end of Ozias' prayer), confirming *another's* words, to the 'Amen' establishing our own. It is a change, moreover, for which we have little warrant in Scripture. Three times we find the expression 'Amen and Amen' in the Psalter, closing its first three divisions; and then in the very late Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees. But nowhere else in the Old Testament, and scarcely ever in the New, is this third or *Final Amen* found. We use it at the end of all our prayers; but the authority for its use is neither the Old Testament nor the New, but only the Latin Vulgate. Twice the Vulgate concludes a prayer with Amen, in Neh. xiii. 31, and Tobit xiii. 18; and these, with a possible occurrence in the prayer of Manasses, are all the instances we know. The

last of Mr. Hogg's Old Testament 'Amens' is the *Subscriptional Amen*. And it is not found in the Old Testament, but only in the end of Tobit.

Of deeper interest is the New Testament usage. Of the 119 occurrences which the Received Text contains, the Revised Version has dropped nineteen, including all the examples of the Subscriptional Amen. Of the rest, the Introductory Amen is found, outside the Gospels, only in the Apocalypse, and these only in the distinctly apocalyptic portions (vii. 12, xix. 4, xxii. 20). The Detached Amen occurs twice; once in the same part of the Apocalypse (v. 14), and once in St. Paul (1 Cor. xiv. 16). Of the Final Amen, there are thirty-four examples, all but one in the Epistles, that one being again in the Apocalypse (i. 17). While of the Subscriptional, there is no example in the best texts of the New Testament, though there is a growing attachment to it in the later manuscripts.

In the Gospels, 'Amen' is more numerous than in all the other books of the Bible put together. And it is the Gospels that give the word its great significance.

For 'Amen' is found seventy-seven times in the Gospels,—fifty-two times in the Synoptics, and twenty-five times in St. John,—and yet they are all of one kind and all in the sayings of Jesus. They are all of one kind, and it is the earliest kind of all, the *Introductory Amen*. But the Introductory Amen of our Lord differs from the Introductory Amen of the Old Testament. There it is used to confirm the word of a previous speaker: He uses it to establish His own. Without an exception, 'Amen' in the Gospels precedes the sentence, 'I say unto you,' or else 'I say unto thee.' And it is one of the unaccountable differences between St. John and the Synoptics that he always gives the 'Amen' double; they as invariably give it single.

Two instances remain. Twice in the New Testament 'Amen' is not a particle but a noun (2 Cor. i. 20, and Rev. iii. 14). And of these;

one, falling into the hands of a very lord of language, becomes a proper name. It is the author of the Apocalypse, who has been foolishly denied to be St. John on the ground that he does not know the Greek language like the author of the Fourth Gospel—it is the author of the Apocalypse who sweeps the timid melody of the Greek tongue into the service of the God of Abraham, and dares to write: ‘These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.’

Now it may be admitted that is not so easy to make an ordinary sermon out of that as out of a homiletical outline. But are not the sermons which the homiletical outlines make too easy and too ordinary?

Professor A. B. Bruce has contributed an article to the *Biblical World* for October on Professor A. B. Davidson of Edinburgh. No one but Professor Bruce could have contributed it. For no one but Professor Bruce could have gone so often astray by the way and come so happily to the right conclusion.

Professor Bruce has often gone astray by the way. We make no matter of the opening statement that Professor Davidson was educated at the Academy of Aberdeen, though no such institution has ever existed there, except for the higher instruction of women. Nor need we scatter the crowd of adjectives—raw, shrill, keen, flinty, cold, reserved, repressive, undemonstrative—gathered around the long-suffering name of ‘Aberdonian.’ It may even be possible and allowed to pass that Professor Davidson’s first book ‘was in some important respects his best,’ though ‘most will agree in thinking’ that that is far more true of Professor Bruce’s own. But when Professor Bruce reaches *The Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, and describes it as ‘a most disappointing book,’ it is time to bring him back.

It is true that Professor Bruce here fortifies his judgment by the opinion of Professor Cheyne.

But we know not where he would have found another. For in all the range of commenting and commentaries there is no book on which we have heard so many express their opinion, and we cannot recall a single instance of an unfavourable or less than enthusiastic judgment. ‘And so,’ says Professor Bruce, ‘the book remains *dead*, and the *soul* of the writer unrevealed, while his *words* are skilfully expounded.’ Yes, his words are skilfully expounded, even to the length of Dr. Bruce’s italics; but what a trifle is that, and how incredible is it that that is all, to the men who have been led by this very exposition, past all the writer’s words, into the heart and strength of the Epistle. But there are greater errors to come. One woe is past; there come two woes more hereafter.

Dr. Davidson has rather disappointed his admirers even in the region of criticism. He has not kept his place in the van of the movement which he created. He has rather lagged behind or stood on one side, while the company of the prophets marched past, wondering what had possessed them.’ That is Professor Bruce’s second charge, and its words are sufficiently forcible. But the whole matter is contained in the word ‘Prophets.’ *Are* they prophets that march past? Again Dr. Bruce fortifies his judgment by the opinion of Professor Cheyne. But is it not possible that there are those whom Professor Cheyne would call prophets of Old Testament criticism, while Professor Davidson would not; and is it not possible that Professor Davidson would be right? There was an Old Testament critic whom Professor Davidson was once reviewing, and this is what he said: ‘Arndt has already written a tract called *The Place of Ezekiel in Old Testament Prophecy*, which is perhaps the most prejudiced and ill-informed thing ever written even on Ezekiel. At the time of writing it, however, he appears to have read only Smend’s Commentary; when he comes to read the prophet’s own writings he will do better. And, no doubt, the editor will take care that notes of startling originality, like one in the tract, “The Ethical Dative, an Aramaism,” shall

occur only in moderate quantity, in conformity with the idea of a Handcommentar.' That is Professor Davidson's opinion of Arndt. It is possible that both Professor Bruce and Professor Cheyne have placed him among the prophets. Is their judgment better than his? For is it not, after all, a matter of position? Again and again has Dr. Cheyne publicly declared himself in advance of his colleague Dr. Driver. He may also be in advance of Dr. Davidson, and Professor Bruce may be forward at his side. Whereupon it were just as easy and just as reasonable for Dr. Davidson and Dr. Driver to say that *they* were in the midst of the prophets, and that their distinguished colleagues had moved somewhere out of the line.

But the last charge is the only really serious one. And how Professor Bruce could have gone so far astray as to blame Professor Davidson for want of earnestness in his work, it is extremely hard to say. Having given a quotation from an article which Professor Davidson contributed to THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for January of the present year, 'this,' says Professor Bruce, 'is excellent fooling, and one does not grudge an occasional outburst of this kind to a man with a deep vein of humour in him. And it must be acknowledged that the Germans, with their "vigour and rigour," lay themselves very open to the sport of the wit.

Yet we look for more than banter from the acknowledged head of the critical school in Scotland. It is not for him to select the rôle of jester while the critical drama goes on.'

Is it possible, then, that Professor Bruce, who is himself a Scotsman, though not an Aberdonian, has not recognised the union of 'excellent fooling' with deepest earnestness in nearly all the greatest Scotsmen of our day? In a previous paragraph we quoted an example of Dr. Davidson's 'excellent fooling.' Did it seem to anyone a jester's commonplace? Did it seem a piece of excellent fooling for the fooling's sake? If Professor Davidson had *not* had the 'deep vein of humour in him,' does Dr. Bruce or anyone else imagine that he would have expressed a different judgment of that commentator on Ezekiel?

Nevertheless Professor Bruce has happily come to the right conclusion. His last words are these: 'Scotland must look elsewhere for its Luther; in Davidson it has at least an Erasmus.' But it is not in the last paragraph as it is not in the first. It is in the admiration and the love which even the paragraphs reveal that are most astray, and cannot help themselves—the admiration and the love of him who may yet be Scotland's Luther, for him who is more than Scotland's Erasmus.

## The Oldest History of the Semites.

BY PROFESSOR F. HOMMEL, PH.D., LL.D., MUNICH.

THE motive for this article has been supplied by the recently published work of Professor Hilprecht, which contains the magnificent results of the excavations at Niffer (properly Nuffer, called in antiquity Nibur or Nippur). The discoveries thus made, under the auspices of the American University of Pennsylvania, throw into the shade all that has been accomplished hitherto, whether we take into account the age and historical importance of many of the texts recovered, the systematic procedure followed in using the spade, or—last but not least—the beauty, distinctness, and extreme

accuracy with which the inscriptions have been reproduced. Since the excavations of the French consul de Sarzec at Telloh, since the discovery of the Tel el-Amarna tablets and the Pyramid texts,—all within the last decade,—we have become accustomed to surprises. But unquestionably the greatest surprise is the appearance of Hilprecht's volume, whose disclosures well deserve to be called sensational.

The South Babylonian ruin-mound at Telloh revealed to us the very ancient *Sumerian (non-Semitic)* civilisation of Babylonia; the discoveries