

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

Has the Gospel of the Reformation become antiquated? That is the question which Professor Loofs of Halle asks in the *American Journal of Theology* for the current quarter. The form of the question will not appeal to English readers universally. There are those amongst us for whom the Reformation has lost its interest. There are those for whom any interest it retains is one of repugnance. But the importance of the question does not lie in its form. The question is whether the gospel which saved men in the sixteenth century is able to save men still. The expression which the Reformers gave to the gospel is chosen because it is easily got at, and because it was to them an undeniable reality—something for which, as one of them put it, they were willing to die a thousand deaths.

Has the Gospel of the Reformation become antiquated then? Those English Christians who at once answer Yes, because all that the word Reformation denotes has become antiquated to them, misunderstand. Let them wait a little. But there are others who answer Yes. There are those who say that the intellectual world of to-day is so different from the intellectual world of Luther's day that it is not possible for the things which appealed to Luther to appeal to us. Luther's intellectual world was the pre-Copernican

mediaeval world. It was peopled with devils. It was, contracted by a puerile view of the age of the earth and of the very meaning of history. It was fettered by a temporary conception of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. It is impossible to go back to the Reformation. The spirit of modern times finds nothing congenial earlier than the beginning of the eighteenth century.

That objection is largely valid. Our world is not Luther's world. We cannot think ourselves into Luther's intellectual inheritance. We may believe in a personal Spirit of evil,—Professor Loofs does so,—but we cannot throw our ink-bottle at him. And the very fact that we see the necessity of judging men in the light of their surroundings, shows that we have completely emerged from the Reformer's conception of history.

But the question has to be asked: Was the gospel which the Reformers preached, and by which they spiritually lived, so tied to their intellectual world that they stand or fall together? Professor Loofs answers No. There is a gospel for every age. It is the same gospel. Every age apprehends it according to its own intellectual possessions. When the age passes, its intel-

lectual peculiarities pass with it. But the gospel remains. In the next age it is again the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

Professor Loofs finds an illustration in Luther's language. Luther's language differs, at least in orthography, in about every third word from the German of to-day. One might reprint a sermon of Luther's and offer it to a modern German reader. He does not understand it. He may say it is not German. But it is the pedantry of a Chinese scholar that has insisted on reproducing every variety in spelling. Luther spoke the German tongue.

What, then, is the Gospel of the Reformation? Take Melancthon's definition: 'The gospel is essentially the offer of forgiveness and of justification through Christ' (*Evangelium est proprie promissio remissionis et justificationis propter Christum—Apol. Aug. lxvii. 43*). It is Melancthon's definition; it is quoted with almost immeasurable frequency by Luther. It is accepted by all the Reformers. It is the Gospel of the Reformation. Is it the gospel for to-day?

Modern thought has three objections to this gospel. The first is that it implies a moral relation between God and man which is not now generally admitted. It is denied that there is a God. Much more frequently it is denied that there is a God with whom we have to do. If not theoretically, at least practically, men live and move and have their being outside God. The picture which Professor Loofs paints of the practical disregard of God's claims by the middle classes in cities applies more accurately to Germany and America than to England or Scotland yet. But perhaps even of our own middle classes it is not untrue to say that 'here there are to be found thousands of men who seldom enter the doors of a church, perhaps never except on a great holiday. In their homes the last remnants of Christian family customs have disappeared; grace at meat, or family worship, are things un-

known; reading matter is supplied by the daily newspaper.'

Now there is no doubt that the Gospel of the Reformation starts with the belief that there is a God with whom we have to do. It says that we have wronged God, that we are sinners in His sight. What point of contact has modern thought with that? The answer is that this attitude is not peculiar to modern thought. It may be more general to deny the claims of God to-day than it was in Luther's day. But the frequency of the denial does not alter the fact. In every Christian generation there have been many who lived with no fear of God before their eyes. Yet in every generation, as soon as men have come into contact with the gospel, they have cried, What must I do to be saved? Unless the gospel itself has lost its ancient power, there is nothing in the evidence that men do not now acknowledge God.

But the second objection is that in the modern world, even where God is acknowledged, it is not the forgiveness of sins that is desired but a higher moral life. The present age is not without its ideals, but they are ethical. The Gospel of the Reformers was religious. It insisted upon a relation to God, upon a right relation to God being established before an ethical life could begin. In short, its first doctrine was the forgiveness of sins. What contact can modern thought have with that?

Perhaps the shortest answer is that when men listen to the gospel they themselves discover still that the first thing is the forgiveness of sins. It has been true always, it is true still, that the knowledge of sin comes through the offer of forgiveness. 'I had not known sin,' said St. Paul, 'but by the Law.' Men who do not recognise the Law come to the knowledge of sin now by means of the gospel.

But there is more than that. The Reformers did not preach the forgiveness of sins *simpliciter*. In their mind it was associated with a life of

righteousness. It is true, and it is not surprising, that in that age of intellectual ferment, an age moreover in which the intellect gave itself so largely to the study of theology, a Flacius was found to express the opinion that the majority of men are converted upon their deathbeds. But the Reformation doctrine of the forgiveness of sins was unto newness of life. There then lies a point of contact with the modern spirit. Professor Loofs thinks we may lay more stress on the ethical result of forgiveness than Luther did. He would even be willing to reverse the order of presentation, and show that essentially the gospel is deliverance from sin, letting the forgiveness of past transgressions follow after. For he thinks that in this respect forgiveness of sins and newness of life are as faith and repentance—nothing is gained by standing upon the order of their going. If the modern thinker, creeping after an ethical ideal, finds it in Christ, he will come in time to the forgiveness of sins.

And this leads to the last part of the Reformers' Gospel and the last objection. The forgiveness of sins is 'through Christ' (*propter Christum*). Now there is no possibility of misunderstanding what the Reformers meant by the words 'through Christ.' They meant through the death and resurrection of Christ. Modern thought objects to that. It objects on two grounds. Forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Christ implies some kind of substitution, that in some sense Christ's work is taken for ours. And it involves a miraculous Christ.

The death of Christ, says the modern spirit, is not needed for forgiveness and justification, and it is not contained in the earliest documents. In the Old Testament the highest type of piety found forgiveness without any sacrifice. The prophets and even the Psalmists see no virtue in the blood of bulls and of goats. And this simplest belief is the earliest belief in the New Testament. The sacrificial creed, the creed that makes forgiveness rest on the finished work of Christ, is of later

development, and owes its existence to the Apostle Paul. Go back to the Lord's Prayer—'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors'—and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. There is no sacrifice and no substitution there.

Professor Loofs goes back to the earliest documents. And he finds that it is just they that do insist on sacrifice and substitution. To say that the simplest ideas are the earliest is plausible, but the facts are against it. The earliest documents, so far as the science of biblical research can discern, are those that link the sinner's pardon to the death of Christ. 'Paul and the celebration of the Lord's Supper in primitive Christian churches,' says Professor Loofs, 'furnish us with chronologically the oldest testimony to the valuation of the death of Jesus in ancient Christianity.' It is true that to the prophets and Psalmists 'the sacrifices of the Lord are a broken spirit.' But it is not in accordance with modern thought to deny a development beyond that simple creed, or to refuse to see its explanation and justification in the sacrifice on Calvary. Professor Loofs would not press the old solution of 'faith in a Christ that is to come.' He even calls that an untenable assumption. But the whole necessity is met by the simple formula that the Old Testament is laid open in the New (*vetus testamentum in novo patet*). Again, it is true that the Parable of the Prodigal Son makes no mention of the death of Christ. But that parable has another office to perform than to develop a complete 'theology of the cross.' And it is not to be forgotten that the simple words of Jesus, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' brought consolation, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son carried a positive teaching, to His hearers *only on condition that they trusted in Him who spoke these things*.

But no doubt the great difficulty which the modern mind experiences in resting salvation on the cross of Christ arises from the fact that His death involves His resurrection, or, in other words, a miraculous Christ.

This difficulty never occurred to Luther. 'From the days of their childhood,' says Professor Loofs, 'the whole field of biblical story was to the Reformers a well-authenticated wonderland. Its central figure was the Lord, the eternal Son of God made man, whom angels accompanied to earth, whom angels waited upon as He ascended to heaven, a Lord over sickness, pain, and death, who revealed His glory in ministering to others; a Lord over death and the grave, even in His victorious resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God's majesty.' But that is all altered now. Men find that the laws of nature reign supreme in the physical world. They posit analogous laws for psychic life. Outside and above nature there may be an Existence—the best modern thought finds no occasion to deny that or to affirm it. But history is written and God is left out. The old religious view of history, which regarded the living God as in active exercise of His sovereignty in this world, has ceased to be.

Now Professor Loofs is willing to surrender the Reformers' view of history, if necessary, and even their conception of the Saviour. He believes that it is necessary to surrender something of both. For he says 'it is beyond all doubt, beyond all need of proof: (1) that many of Luther's representations of the life, the person and the work of Christ, have their origin entirely in the fact that Luther accepted as indisputable everything that is narrated by the Holy Scripture; and, furthermore, that he interpreted the Scriptures according to the standard of mediæval traditions which he had retained; and (2) that this valuation of the Scriptures as the *verbaliter* inspired Word of God, and certainly his acceptance of erroneous mediæval traditions concerning Scripture interpretation, do not stand in any constant inner connexion with his central thought.'

Consequently Professor Loofs regards as the temporary garb of the Gospel of the Reformation, everything which originates solely in the Reformers' valuation of Scripture. But after these things have

been taken away, he finds five elements remaining. These are: (1) that in the Holy Scripture we have the Word of God addressed to man; (2) that the Holy Spirit of God generates faith in us through the Word; (3) that Christ's death is the act performed for our salvation; (4) that Christ rose from the dead; and (5) that Christ is the revelation of the Father. These five stand in such inner and constant connexion with Luther's 'offer of pardon' that each becomes a distinguishing mark of the gospel. And these five abide. Whereupon Professor Loofs offers a new definition of the Gospel of the Reformation. It is a definition that he says he can advance with a clear conscience, in the face of all criticisms to which it may be subjected in the name of the modern science of history. This is his definition: 'The Gospel of the Reformation is the message of God to our humanity, offering us justification only through faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour, in whom the eternal God has revealed Himself to the world in the life of a human person, by whose death and resurrection He has redeemed us from sin and death.'

Now in that definition there are more things lacking than some of us care to see. Professor Loofs admits that. And he proceeds to justify the omissions first of all. There are those, he says, who desire to see all the details of the Apostles' Creed, and of its explanation by Luther, incorporated into the conception of the Gospel of the Reformation. In particular they demand that there be included in the definition of the gospel these three things: that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary; that the Ascension was a distinct event, separated from the resurrection by a period of forty days; and that our redemption is out of the power of the devil.

Professor Loofs cannot admit these three. They were taught by Luther, but they are not essential to his gospel. They are believed by most Christian teachers still, but they are not essential to the gospel for to-day. The objection

to including the virgin-birth and the Ascension on the fortieth day is that the textual evidence is so weak. 'Anyone,' says Professor Loofs, 'who understands anything about historical criticism must concede that the virgin-birth and the ascension on the fortieth day belong to the least credible of New Testament traditions.' We ought not, therefore, he contends, to weight our gospel with them. It is the special time of the Ascension that is the difficulty, 'that the resurrection is inconceivable without a subsequent ascension I concede.' And that the virgin-birth does not belong to the gospel in the restricted sense is evident, for 'otherwise we should have to consider the salvation of a Christian maiden seriously jeopardized by her failure to understand the *natus ex virgine*.'

The rescue from the power of the devil is a more serious difficulty. For Professor Loofs admits that as a conception it is not peculiar to Luther and Luther's interpretation of the world, but that it is part of the early Christian conception, and is found in the earliest and best attested Christian sources. But it is not essential to the gospel. And inasmuch as it is to-day a serious impediment in the way of the reception of the gospel, Professor Loofs believes that the Lord, who reproached the scribes because they laid unbearable burdens on the shoulders of their disciples, will honour the fidelity which, for the sake of seekers after salvation, declares it to be a duty not to include in the gospel, as an inseparable part of it, things which are not only by their nature separable from it and uncertain, but which are, moreover, liable to become a cause of offence.

And then the way lies open for the acceptance of a miraculous Christ—the way lies open to everybody. There are three arguments in its favour which appeal to the modern mind. The reports which we possess of His deeds and experience, particularly of His resurrection, are so consistent and reliable; the belief in this Christ has, since the days of the apostles, proved its supramundane power in many thousands of men; and, above

all, there is Christ's own self-consciousness. And Professor Loofs, after quoting the relevant and irrefragable passages, says that, in the face of Christ's own claims, we must now more than ever conclude either that Jesus was a self-deluded fanatic, or that He is more than a link in the chain of naturally conditioned human history.

In Eph 4⁸ and elsewhere, St. Paul introduces a quotation by the phrase, 'Wherefore he (or it) saith' (διὸ λέγει). Some commentators supply the subject 'God,' and some the subject 'Scripture.' Dr. T. K. Abbott, in the International Commentary on Ephesians, sees no need for either subject. To introduce such a subject is, he says, to force upon the apostle a form of expression consistent only with the extreme view of verbal inspiration. He takes the phrase as impersonal and indefinite. The translation ought to be simply, 'Wherefore it is said.'

Dr. Abbott is afraid of the extreme view of verbal inspiration. Dr. Warfield of Princeton is not. That sentence of Dr. Abbott's has led Dr. Warfield to write a long article to the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, which appears in its issue for July. The purpose of Dr. Warfield's article is plainly to show that St. Paul's method of quoting the Old Testament is consistent only with the view of inspiration which Dr. Abbott fears. He carries out his purpose by investigating the meaning of the phrases which introduce a quotation wherever they are found.

There are three such phrases of introduction. Sometimes, says Dr. Warfield, we find 'God says,' sometimes 'Scripture says,' and sometimes simply 'it (or he) says.' Now Dr. Warfield has no difficulty in showing that the first two phrases are absolutely identical. We sometimes read 'God says,' when, on turning to the passage in the Old Testament, we find that God is not the speaker. Again, we sometimes read 'the Scripture says,' when we find that in the original passage the

words come directly from the mouth of God Himself. Take, on the one side, Ro 9¹⁷, 'The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up.' And, on the other side, take He 1⁶, 'And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.'

Dr. Warfield gives several examples on both sides. And then he expresses the conclusion that the two sets of passages, together, show an absolute identification, in the minds of these writers, of 'Scripture' with the speaking God. In the minds of these writers what God says Scripture says, and what Scripture says God says.

Then Dr. Warfield proceeds to examine the use of the phrase, 'It (or he) says.' He believes that in every case of its occurrence a subject should be supplied. Either it should be 'God,' or it should be 'Scripture.' And since in his belief these subjects are identical, he does not care which. But he will not have it that in any instance the phrase is impersonal, and ought to be translated, 'it is said.'

There is just one passage which presents a real difficulty. It is Eph 5¹⁴, 'Wherefore he saith (ὁὐ λέγει), Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' That quotation is not easily found in the Old Testament. Dr. Warfield thinks he finds it in Is 60¹. But we are bound to say that he does not make that out. The resemblance between Is 60¹ and Eph 5¹⁴ is too slight. Most commentators of authority take it to be a quotation from some early Christian hymn.

But if Eph 5¹⁴ is not a quotation from the Old Testament, Dr. Warfield's position is swept away. For there seem to be but two alternatives. Either St. Paul knew that it was not a quotation from the Old Testament, and yet used the phrase in question as he introduced it. In that case the phrase must be translated impersonally, 'It is said.' Or else St. Paul unconsciously quoted as

from the Old Testament Scriptures what is actually not contained in them. And that is still more fatal to Dr. Warfield's theory of verbal inspiration.

There was a time when, in our alarm at the ravages of the Higher Criticism, we looked for succour to Archæology. We were encouraged so to do. There were archæological authorities of the first rank who held out the hope that before the guns of archæology the Higher Criticism would fall to pieces. But when Professor Sayce wrote his *Higher Criticism and the Monuments* and Professor Hommel his *Ancient Hebrew Tradition* we saw that there was a mistake. We were not concerned that this result or that of the higher critical processes should be pronounced permature or precarious. It was our theory of the inspiration of Scripture that we wanted to preserve. In their books which they wrote against the Higher Criticism, Sayce and Hommel shook that, and (if we were bound to believe them) riddled it, as no process or result of the Higher Criticism had ever done.

We deserved the disappointment. It was our duty to deal with all study of the Bible on its merits. It was wrong to clutch at such monuments as favoured our traditional exegesis. It was doubly wrong to set one monument against the Higher Critics, and shut our eyes to another. We were trying to make a base use of Archæology, and once more Egypt proved a broken reed that pierced the hand.

We are now learning that Archæology has a true and noble service to fulfil. And it has come, as all things do, just at the time to fulfil it. There is a certain degree of interest in the discovery (if it is a discovery) of the names, Jacob, Joseph, Chedorlaomer, and the like upon the monuments of Babylon. But these things are only the mint, anise, and cummin of history. We do not believe that the monuments will ever tell us more than we already know from the Bible of the

weightier matters of the life we have to live. We do not believe they will ever speak to us of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come until we tremble. That is not to be the service which Archæology has been sent to fulfil. But the time has come when the Bible is to be placed beside other literature. We have discovered that it was not dictated to any man or men by a voice from heaven. We have learned that it grew up slowly as great books always do, the noblest minds putting their noblest thought into it from generation to generation. And we have to answer the question: Wherein then does the Bible differ from the great religious writings of the world? Archæology has been sent to answer that.

At first the answer of Archæology seems to be that there is no difference. A book has just been published by Mr. John Murray of London entitled *Authority and Archæology*. It covers a wide field. Its field is the whole relation of the monuments to Biblical and Classical Literature. Various writers handle various parts. But we have chiefly to do at present with the part that comes first, of which the title is 'Hebrew Authority' and the writer Professor Driver of Oxford. Within the compass of a hundred and fifty pages Dr. Driver tells us all that the monuments have yielded yet touching the literature that is in the Bible. In quantity it is considerable, and in meaning it is unmistakable. It says quite plainly to us that wherever the uniqueness of our Bible lies, it is not in the literature it contains. The great fundamental narratives that underlie and gave the start to all the literature that the Bible contains are the common property of those Semitic nations of which the children of Israel were one.

At first, we say, the answer of Archæology seems to be that there is no difference. The story of the Creation is found in Babylonian tablets as well as in the Book of Genesis. It is found in unmistakable identity, sometimes the very words, sometimes the most important words, being one and the same in both. We look to find the story of

Paradise on the monuments also. Already we see that the significant elements in it are best explained on the theory of Babylonian origin. In the great Babylonian Epic which narrates the exploits of Gilgamesh, the hero of Uruk, we find an episode which runs on parallel lines with our narrative of the Flood. So we are compelled to say that wherever the uniqueness of the Bible lies, it does not lie in this, that its contents were supernaturally conveyed to the writers thereof. Their place in the Bible is subsequent to their place on the monuments. We have even to acknowledge that our early Scripture narratives were derived from Babylon, that in so far as originality is concerned the worshippers of Bel and Merodach have the advantage over the worshippers of Jehovah.

Archæology has come to tell us that. And observe, it is just at the time when we had made the discovery that the old idea of dictation would not do. Without the monuments what theory of the composition of the Bible should we then have fallen back upon? Perhaps so crude and offensive a theory as that the earliest writers or reciters were the inventors of the narratives that have come down to us. We might have said that some early Biblical Homer sang the romance of the Creation from place to place, and each subsequent scribe wrote it down as best he could, whence we have the double narrative from two different pens. Archæology says No. These stories are older far than that, and greater. They pierce an antiquity that no crude theory of their origin can comprehend. They carry us back so far and across so many generations of men that we feel God's hand in them. At least we say that their slow development is after God's ways of working. We cannot tell when they were first conceived, we cannot tell by whom. But at least we are saved the misery of a Hebrew fiction and a huge imposture.

But that is not the service that Archæology has come to fulfil. It has come not to tell us that the Bible is at one with other Bibles, but that the Bible is alone. We find the story of Creation in

Babylonian. Good. We compare the two. The resemblances are unmistakable. The source of both is alike. But the difference is immeasurable. Take the narrative of the making of the gods. *Tiamat* is the Hebrew *tēhōm*, the 'deep' of Gn 1². So we read—

When the heaven above was not yet named,
And the land beneath yet bare no name,—
(While) the abyss, the primeval, their begetter,
Mummu-tiamat, the mother of them all,
Streamed with their waters commingled together,
When no field had yet been formed, no marsh-reed was yet
to be seen,—

When of the gods still none had come forth,
No name had yet been named, no destiny yet fixed,
Then were born the gods [altogether?],
Lachmu and Lachamu came forth,
Long ages passed,
Anshar and Kishar were born;
Long were the days,
The gods Anu, [Inil (*i.e.* Bel), and Ea were born].

That is the Babylonian; this is the Hebrew—

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

As mere literature, you say, the Hebrew is the better. It is terser, grander. But what is it as righteousness? You may demand millenniums before 'Then were born the gods altogether' became 'In the beginning God.' You are probably right to demand millenniums. For that is the way God works. But it is God—that is the point. In the Hebrew narrative of the Creation there is that divine spark which we call life, and we know that in God is life. The Babylonian narratives never would have formed the sentence 'In the beginning God created.' For they had not the vital spark. The uniqueness of the Bible lies in that. And Archæology has come just at the right moment to show us that.

Henry Barclay Swete.

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THE subject of the present sketch occupies the chair of the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Cambridge. Dr. Swete is a biblical scholar and theologian of whom any university might well be proud. The extensive range of his biblical and patristic studies, his careful and exact scholarship, and the variety of his work have given him an eminent place among the scholars of to-day, and have secured for him the attention and respect of his fellow-labourers in the same fields of study.

It is not the purpose, however, of the writer of this sketch to attempt to appraise the merits of Dr. Swete. That is beyond his powers. To estimate the value of the work of any living man must always be a difficult and delicate task. Nor is it the writer's intention, however much personal indebtedness might induce him, to attempt anything in the way of a public eulogy, knowing how distasteful to the subject of this sketch anything of the kind would be. Accordingly, the present article will be confined as far as possible to illustrating

the services which Dr. Swete has rendered to biblical and theological learning, by some account of his work, together with such personal details of his life as are likely to interest the reader.

Born in 1835, Henry Barclay Swete was educated at King's College, London, and Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, of which latter foundation he was a scholar. Among his university distinctions may be mentioned the Carus Prize in 1855 and the Members' Prize in 1857. In 1858 he graduated with First Class Honours in the Classical Tripos, and shortly afterwards was elected a Fellow of his College. For some years he was engaged in pastoral work, holding successively the curacies of Blagdon and All Saints', Cambridge. From 1869-77 he was occupied with College work as dean, tutor, and theological lecturer at his own college. It was during this period that his first great piece of theological work was done. This consisted of two essays on the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, published in 1873 and