

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

CAN a higher critic save souls?

But first, Is it a fair question? Is it asked for an answer? It may be a legitimate question to ask. The higher critic may have no right to shirk it, and he may have no reason. But is it fair? Is it asked as a mere touch of rhetoric? Is it equivalent to, Can a clean thing come out of an unclean? It is not a fair question then.

Nor is it a fair question if it means, Can a higher critic save souls while he is doing the work of a critic. The question is asked and answered by the editors of the *Biblical World*, in their issue for April. But they protest against it if it means that. They say that if it means, Can a higher critic save souls by means of his higher criticism, it is a foolish question. It is the same as if it were asked, Can a professor of Hebrew save souls?

Certainly he can. 'Rabbi' Duncan, the great professor of Hebrew in the early days of the New College in Edinburgh, saved souls. We believe that there is authentic evidence of cases of soul-saving by the late Professor A. B. Davidson. But who would expect Professor Duncan or Professor Davidson to save souls at the time when they were describing the rules of Hebrew accentuation?¹

¹ These sentences were in type when the following letter was seen in a daily newspaper: 'This morning you correctly

The immediate business of the higher critic is not to save souls. That is the immediate business of the evangelist. The higher critic may become an evangelist, as we shall see. But his immediate business is to discover the exact truth about the historical foundations upon which the evangelist must rely.

We may wish that the work of the higher critic were not necessary. But it is necessary. We are the people of the Book. We carry our claim to save souls back into the past. Though the evangelist relies upon the living Spirit of Jesus to convince and convert the soul, yet the forgiveness which he offers was won on Calvary, and it is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. *Was* it won on Calvary, and *is* it contained in the Scriptures? The evangelist may wish to shirk these questions; but he cannot.

report me as saying that Mr. Rowntree owed his conversion from Agnosticism to Christianity to a perusal of the works of Professor W. Robertson Smith. In connexion with a family so numerous and distinguished, however, it might be well for me to specify that the gentleman in question was John Wilhelm Rowntree, who died recently in New York, where he was visiting. My authority for that interesting statement was the (American) *Congregationalist*, which, in turn, was quoting from the (American) *Friend*. The *Friend* significantly added that his death "removed the person whose life seemed the most important and indispensable for the expansion and reinterpretation of Quakerism."

There is no true alliance between faith and ignorance. The latest evangelist, as well as the earliest, declares that which he has seen and heard, the only difference between them being that the earliest heard the human voice, the latest is dependent upon the written word. And he must assure himself that the written word is true.

So the question, Can a higher critic save souls, is a foolish question, if it means can he save souls while he is a higher critic. He may be preparing the way then for the saving of souls. For when Christ sent us into the world, as the Father had sent Him into the world, He did not send us all to be evangelists. He gave some to be evangelists, but He gave some to be apostles also, and prophets, and teachers. And if the question is, Can a higher critic ever become an evangelist? the answer is, Yes.

America has sent to Britain an evangelist in the person of Dr. Torrey, who is not a higher critic, and he saves souls. Britain has sent to America an evangelist in the person of Mr. Dawson, who is a higher critic, and he saves souls no less successfully than Dr. Torrey. That is the answer of the editors of the *Biblical World*. They do not deny that it is the souls of 'the more intelligent classes' that are saved by Mr. Dawson. They claim that even intelligent people are worth saving.

'And there were also with Him other little ships' (Mk 4³⁶). We did not notice that. Our attention, as we read the story, was given to the ship in which Christ and the disciples were. Until we read a sermon by the Rev. Donald Sage Mackay, which is published in the latest volume of the *Christian World Pulpit*, we did not notice that there were also with Him other little ships.

But it is worth noticing, For if they suffered from the storm, they also got the benefit of the

'great calm.' And they never knew how it came to pass. They were out in the Sea of Galilee, along with the ship in which were Christ and the disciples. When the storm came down so violently, they too were tossed by the waves and in danger of being swamped. And then when He said, 'Peace, be still,' and there was a great calm, they enjoyed the benefit of the calm. How did it come about? How was it so sudden and so complete? It is probable that they never knew.

Tennyson says—

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.

And the wonder of it is that the things which are wrought by prayer, are often wrought on those who have not themselves prayed, and they may never know how their blessings came to them. Have we been rescued out of keen temptations? Have we been able to do some things for God, and to stand? Have we sometimes felt the peace of God which passeth understanding keep our heart and mind? We believe that it was in answer to prayer. But whose prayer? Not our own. A mother's prayer perhaps. We cannot always tell.

In all prayer there is mystery. But the mystery centres in intercessory prayer. That we should be blessed because of some other's prayer of faith; that our prayer of faith should be able to bless others—that is the mystery. But the examples of it are unmistakable.

Four men carried a paralytic into the presence of Jesus, and when Jesus saw *their* faith, He said to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. A woman came out of the Syrophenician country and cried, saying, Lord help me; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. He answered and said unto her, O woman, great is *thy* faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

What is the secret? It is sympathy. The prayer that saves is the prayer that sympathizes.

The boat in which Christ was and the other little boats were all suffering alike from the storm, and to sympathize is to suffer along with. The four friends of the paralytic felt with him as they felt for him. The Syrophœnician woman carried her daughter's illness as if her own. 'Lord save me,' was her cry. Why have we a Saviour who is able to save unto the uttermost? Because 'Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases.'

And the prayer of sympathy, if it is to be entirely successful, must be a prayer of faith. That is the other condition. We must believe that He is able to do this, and that He is willing.

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of; wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me day and night.
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

'If we want to understand the making of the mediæval Church we must go into the byways. We must listen, not to the masters of theology, but to the Campanian farmer complaining to St. Felix of the theft of his oxen, and menacing the saint, if he does not make good the loss caused by his neglect.'

These are the words of a leading ecclesiastical historian of our own day. They are the words of Dr. Charles Bigg, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Oxford. Dr. Bigg delivered four lectures in the Oxford Schools, in the Michaelmas Term of 1904. He has now published the lectures at the Clarendon Press, with the title of *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire* (5s. net).

The book marks a new departure in the study of Church History. That much is clear from the sentence quoted. If we want, says Dr. Bigg, to understand the making of the mediæval Church, we must attend to things which we have never attended to before. We must attend to the Campanian farmer. We must attend to St. Felix. We must attend to the harvest and house-

hold gods whose place was taken by St. Felix when the farmer became a Christian.

But do we want to understand the making of the mediæval Church? Dr. Bigg doubts if we do. We want to show that the mediæval Church was right or we want to show that it was wrong. In other words, we want to prove that our own ecclesiastical organization is the right organization, that our own Church's beliefs and practices are the right beliefs and practices. There is a task before us all, serious as the taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders. But 'while we all fear the infidel,' says Dr. Bigg, 'we fear one another hardly less. Every community likes to have its scholars, and treats them with great respect, but always on the tacit understanding that they score for their side and advertise the principles of their backers. They may be allowed to enter into some temporary coalition with their rivals, but in that case they must take great care who gets credit for planting the flag upon the walls of Messina.'

Dr. Bigg calls this temper in ecclesiastical history the commercial temper. How is it to be conquered? It is to be conquered by the study of the history of the Church in the new way. And the new way is simply to take into account all the facts. When it is perceived that into the making of the mediæval Church there went not only St. Augustine and St. Origen, but much more the Campanian farmer menacing his saint if he does not look after his oxen, not only the theology of the Cross but also the religious craving that made the worship of Isis acceptable and almost universal, then it will be recognized that there is no room for the display of the commercial temper. The facts are too many. The workers are too few. The students of the history of the Church will give up their sectarian strife. They will spread their meagre forces as carefully as possible over the vast field; and they will work together with the single purpose of arriving at the truth.

Church history, says Dr. Bigg, has hitherto been mainly the study of the great. 'It has consisted mainly of the lives and actions of a handful of eminent clergymen.' We must now study the ordinary priest. We must study the ordinary layman. And we must study them, not only, nor even chiefly, after they come under the sway of the Cross of Christ, but in all the experience of their earlier life, in the Grammar School and the School of Rhetoric, and even in the Cave of Mithra.

Dr. Bigg does not wish to discourage the study of the great divines. He recognizes that 'eminent personages' have a place in ecclesiastical as well as in secular history. But institutions are like plants. They grow from the roots, not from the blossom. And there can be no doubt, he says, that the most significant changes in history were not imposed upon the Church by the bishops from above, but forced upon the bishops by the pressure of popular opinion from below.

And even the bishops themselves must be studied in the new way. They too were influenced by their past. Origen has an intense dislike to the homeliness of Scripture. He can never master the feeling that it is unworthy of a sacred book to speak of cakes of bread or wells of water, or to tell such a story as that of Ruth. This striking feature of all his writings has to be explained. It is due to the training of the Roman School of Rhetoric. If we are to understand Origen we must know something more than any of our Church Histories at present tell us of these Schools.

Now if the study of Church History is undertaken in this new spirit, in this single-hearted determination to arrive at the truth, and with this loyal co-operation over all the ground of pagan education and pagan religion, one question will soon force itself to the front. It is the question, What was it that gave Christianity

its victory? There could not be a more timely question. Are we not all discussing it? Are we not all (the example having been set by the masterful mind of Professor Harnack) asking this very question every day? What is the essence of Christianity? What is it that makes the difference between Christianity and every other religion?

And it is not only a timely question. It is very pressing. For into that question every form of modern attack upon Christianity has sent its strength. The unbeliever has been studying other religions. He has got in front of the believer in this study. Long before the believer is ready with his answer, the unbeliever has asked what is the difference between Christianity and other religions; and he has answered the question in his own way. He has brought forward many impressive facts to show that there is no difference.

The student of Church History will soon be face to face with this question. His study of the religions of the Roman Empire will force it upon him. He will have to answer it for himself. And perhaps it is to the student of Church History, from whom so little seems to have come in the past, that the Church will owe the one victorious answer.

For Dr. Bigg is a Church historian and he has found the answer. He has been loyal to the search for truth. He has conquered the commercial temper in Church History. He has studied the great system of Education in Rome, and he has seen that even the greatest of the Christian bishops could not shake off its pernicious influence. He has studied the Roman religions. He has seen (and he is able to acknowledge it) that these religions did actually serve the purpose of religion and deserve the name. But he has also seen that Christianity differs from them and from every other religion on the face of the earth. It differs in one essential and momentous particular. It is the religion of Vicarious Sacrifice. It is the religion of the Cross.

Does Christianity teach the Fatherhood of God? So do other religions. Does it hold by the immortality of the soul? Does it claim a unique revelation? So do other religions in plenty. But there is no other religion on the face of the earth that stands by a Cross. This is what gave Christianity its victory over the religions of ancient Rome. 'The belief that by virtue men become like God, children of God, and attain to communion with their Divine Father is a commonplace of Greek idealism, and is found in many of the better pagan cults. The idea of a Messiah is common to Judaism and Christianity, and something not wholly unlike it meets us in the "inspired men" of Platonism or the "heroes" of Hellenism. But the Cross is the peculiar property of the gospel. What the first Christians adopted as their emblem was not the portrait of Jesus, but simply the Cross, without any portrait at all.'

Between John Knox and the judgment (we mean the judgment of the House of Lords) there lie many things. Among the rest there lies the 'dreary reign of Moderatism.' It is the most humiliating period in the history of the Church in Scotland. When Mr. Henderson published his book on *The Religious Controversies of Scotland* a few persons were observed to hold up holy hands of horror. What a shocking place! What a shocking book! But religious controversy is at least religious life. It may be doubted if on this side of the Coming there can be religious life without controversy. That period in the history of the Church in Scotland which Mr. Henderson's book covers, the period which the Marrow Men had the honour of opening, is of a glory that greatly excelleth, in comparison with the long slumber of death which went before.

It is the most melancholy period in the history of the Church in Scotland. It is also the most unaccountable. From John Knox to James Renwick the people of Scotland recognized that religion was worth suffering for, and suffered for it.

The moment that they ceased, to suffer they seemed to cease to care. It is true that William of Orange urged moderation, and set a laudable example of it. But the people of Scotland had never been notable for slavish submission to their rulers' advice in spiritual things. Why did the Church of Scotland suddenly settle down to a century of pagan orthodoxy?

Dr. William Macgregor of Amoy has found an answer. Dr. Macgregor has been made Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of England this year. To his opening address (of which a full account will be found in the *Presbyterian* for May 4) he gave the title of 'The Evangelization of the World.' The evangelization of the world, he said, is the Church's *duty*, it is the Church's *privilege*, and it is the Church's *destiny*. Those were the three parts of the address. When he came to the third part he explained the cause of Moderatism. It was the result, he said, of the refusal of the Church in Scotland to take its place in the evangelization of the world.

Dr. Macgregor says that Moderatism was the result of that refusal. Our Church historians have always told us that the Church became moderate first; then, after Moderatism had lasted for a century, an overture to the General Assembly to send a missionary to the heathen was contemptuously rejected. Dr. Macgregor says that it was the other way. He says that when God gave Scotland religious liberty at home, He gave her the opportunity of spreading the Gospel abroad. An opportunity is always a call. By refusing that call the Church settled down into Moderatism, and suffered more than she had done in all the years of her persecution.

What did the Moderate ministers of the Church of Scotland preach? What texts did they preach from? Did they always choose Phil 4⁵, 'Let your moderation be known unto all men'? The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. Perhaps he has never found a more convenient Scripture

than this. There are Moderates in the world still, and this is still their text. Even yet we have not been able to make the distinction clear between Moderatism, which is of Satan, and Moderation, which is of Christ.

In the *Methodist Recorder* for March 23, Professor J. G. Tasker, of Birmingham, tries to make the distinction clear. He is clever enough to see that exegesis does not take hold of everybody. So he is not content merely to expound the passage. He gives his paper a paradoxical title. For paradox will take hold. He calls it 'Intense Moderation.' And the title is true. If the moderation is not intense, it is not the moderation of St. Paul. And if the intensity or enthusiasm is not moderate, it is not after the mind of Christ.

But this at once raises the question whether 'moderation' is the best English equivalent for the apostle's word. For Professor Tasker is right in insisting upon it, that whatever the apostle means, he means something active and energetic. With passive virtues, with passivity in any shape or form indeed, the apostle to the Gentiles will have nothing to do. He repudiated the passive virtues when he renounced his Stoicism. Certainly he believes in meekness and long-suffering. He believes in long-suffering, that virtue which does not resent a wrong; and he believes in meekness, that virtue which does not assert a right. But meekness and long-suffering are active and energetic virtues. The Stoic simply suffers. The Christian suffers and loves. And this virtue of moderation is an intensely vigorous virtue, one of the most difficult and one of the most aggressive which the Christian is called upon to practise.

Professor Tasker examines many translations—the 'forbearance' of the Revised Version and the 'gentleness' of its margin; Wyclif's 'pacienc'; Tindale's 'softness' and the 'modestie' of the Version of Rheims; the 'sweet reasonableness'

of Matthew Arnold; and 'considerateness,' which was suggested some time ago in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. He is not quite satisfied with any of them, though he seems to think that the last is nearest the mark. For it is the only translation which brings out the active meaning; and the most essential thing of all now is to bring the active meaning out. Considerateness—the word is a little clumsy: it is a little unfamiliar, for we have so long practised inconsiderateness that we scarcely know what considerateness is.

But it is the spirit of Philip—'Come and see.'

The attack upon Christianity was never more confident than it is to-day. And, so far as the records go, it was never more convincing. For the moment it is probably victorious. The Rationalist Press Association boasts of the millions of copies of infidel literature which it has sold. These copies are not all bought by men who are already convinced that the Church is a fraud and Christianity a failure. The homes into which these cheap and plausible publications have gone, are not all homes that have never heard the voice of prayer. It is simply that we have allowed the unbeliever to get the start of us. In the old meaning of the word, we should have 'prevented' him. We should have been there before him. But our defenders of the faith have either been, as Dr. Bigg so frankly tells us, jealous of one another, or else they have been defending themselves against the wrong men. They have been defending themselves against the men who have discovered the only defence that is of any value to meet the infidel attack of our day.

For the infidel attack of our day is not upon Christ. It is not upon Christianity. It is upon the Church. But how does it fasten itself upon the Church? It obtains its hold, says Professor Bigg of Oxford, whose new book has just been mentioned, because the Church has made the

fatal mistake of taking the Old Testament and placing it beside the New.

The Old Testament, says Professor Bigg, is not fit to be placed beside the New. It was never intended to be placed there. It was written to them of old time. It was spoken unto the fathers by the prophets. The New Testament was written for us. It was spoken unto us by a Son. There is a progress in the revelation of the will of God to man. When that which is better has come, then that which is old and obsolete is meant to pass away. The true defenders of the faith in our day, says Dr. Bigg, are the men who see that the religion and the morality of the Old Testament are not our religion nor our morality, and that we are not called upon to defend them. The Church of to-day has no more call to burden herself with the defence of obsolete morality, than a modern farmer is called upon to practise obsolete agriculture.

There are defenders of the faith who have found that out. They are heartily denounced by other defenders for making the discovery. But what would the Fathers of the Church have given for such a discovery? What would Origen have given for it? We smile at Origen's allegorism. Do we consider why he was driven to so fantastic a method of defending the Old Testament? It was because the infidel attack in his day was precisely the same as it is in ours, and he had no better defence to offer it. He had not discovered the open and irresistible argument of the development of religion and morality.

One of the sermons in Dr. Aked's volume published this month and noticed elsewhere, is on 'The Hands of the Living God.' The text is Heb 10³¹, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' In the course of the sermon, Dr. Aked mentions another text, Lk 23⁴⁶, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' What a difference there is between them. Yet it

is one and the same God. And God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; He changes not. What is the cause of the difference? The difference is in us.

And it is not in our mere thinking. There are theologians who tell us that God has no respect of persons. As He sends His rain on the just and also on the unjust, so He loves all with an equally complacent love. Some say He has done so from the beginning, and will do so to the end. Others say that He does so only since Christ redeemed all and made all without exception sons of God. In either case there is now no difference. There is no difference in fact. The difference is in our thinking.

These theologians are faith-healers in the spiritual sphere. They tell us that if we would only think that we are not sick in soul, we should find that we are not. But theological faith-healing does not minister to a mind diseased. The difference may not be in God. God may never need to be reconciled to us. But the difference is a fact. It means that until we are reconciled to God He is a consuming fire. It is the difference between 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' and 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' And that is a difference of actual relation. In the one case it is the relation of an enemy; in the other it is the relation of a son.

Why is it a fearful thing for one who is in the relation of an enemy to fall into the hands of the living God? You will find an answer to that in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for January. In that number Professor Sanday, of Oxford, has a sermon on 'The Living God.' And his answer is, Because He is living.

Men forget that God is living. Their God is as dead as the gods of wood over which the prophet of Israel wrote his bitter ironical words. They repeat his words, not knowing that they

are ironical. 'Eyes has He,' they say, 'but He sees not.' And they go on their indifferent way, sinning and dying. But He is a living God. He is in every place, beholding the evil and the good. He sees, hears, knows, acts. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God whom we have thought dead.

How do we know that He is living? Nature tells us. We know that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of nature. There is a law in nature against overwork, against over-anxiety; there is also a law against idleness; there is a law against uncleanness of body and uncleanness of soul, against self-indulgence, even against irreligion. We know these laws. We know how fearful a thing it is to fall into their hands. But these laws are the signs that God is a living God. They are God at work. Matthew Arnold, as Dr. Sanday has shown us, made a mistake in not getting beyond these laws. But so far as he went he was right. There is a 'stream of tendency,' and that stream is God. Among the servants sent by the Lord of the vineyard to the husbandmen to tell them that though He may be living in a far country, He certainly is living, is this 'stream of tendency.' As long as it comes it reminds the husbandmen that the Lord of the vineyard is a living God, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands.

But He is not far away. Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet. For He is a person. This, says Dr. Sanday, is the second thing that is contained in the phrase, 'the living

God.' Dr. Sanday does not say that the biblical writers had either the word personality, or our idea of it. He says that they had not. But he believes that they had the substance of what we mean by personality. 'Their whole conception of God,' he says, 'was intensely personal.'

Now, it is a more fearful thing to fall into the hands of a God who is personal than into the hands of a 'stream of tendency.' For a personal God is near, and a personal God can feel. If we break the law of cleanliness, we suffer for it. But if we break the law of love, we suffer more. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, because He is a loving God. That is where the fearfulness lies. If He had not loved us, if He had not given His Son to die for us, it would not have been so fearful a thing to fall into His hands. To have trodden under foot the Son of God, to have done despite unto the Spirit of Grace—that is what makes it so fearful to fall into the hands of the living God. If it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a God of law, it is a more fearful thing to fall into the hands of a God of love.

But the day lasteth. It is still possible to call to mind. The love that it is so fearful a thing to despise, is plenteous in mercy. The living God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. In that Christ there is repentance and the remission of sins, the new relation to the living God, the adoption of sons, and the lying down to sleep with 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'