

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

At a time when we are ready to include the exposition of the Bible among the lost arts, there come two expositions of the first rank of excellence. To add to the surprise, both are expositions of the Epistles of St. John. To complete the coincidence, both refer to the literature of their subject in the preface, and both state that Rothe's exposition has never been translated into English, although a fine translation has been in existence for the last fifteen years.

That both volumes consist of lectures is no surprise. But it would be a surprise if the lectures had been delivered from the pulpit. For if the general art of exposition is nearly lost, the special art of expository preaching seems to be altogether a thing of the past. One of the volumes consists of lectures which were delivered to the students of Headingley College, Leeds. It is Professor Findlay's *Fellowship in the Life Eternal* (Hodder & Stoughton; 10s. 6d.). The other contains the Kerr Lectures, delivered to the students in the Glasgow College of the United Free Church of Scotland. Its title is *The Tests of Life* (T. & T. Clark; 7s. 6d. net). The author is the Rev. Robert Law, B.D., Minister of Lauriston Place Church, Edinburgh.

We are not about to compare the volumes. There is no comparison between them. The

one follows the good old method of verse by verse exposition. The other adopts the new method of grouping together the passages which bear upon a common theme. They supplement one another. Dr. Findlay is not superseded by Mr. Law; and Mr. Law is not made dispensable by Dr. Findlay. We propose to consider a difficult passage dealt with by both, and to see how they deal with it.

It is the great central declaration in 1 Jn 4²⁻³. In the familiar words of the Authorized Version it reads: 'Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.'

This is the true 'Apostles' Creed.' And it is as exact in its terms as a creed must be, as exact as any creed that ever was drawn up. 'The statement,' says Mr. Law, 'simple as it is, is of exquisite precision.' He proceeds to show how exquisite. First, 'the verb that is used (*ἔρχεσθαι*) implies the pre-existence of Christ.' Next, 'the tense of that verb (*ἐληλυθότα*) points to His coming not only as a historical event but as an abiding fact. The Word has become flesh for ever.' Then, 'the noun (*σάρξ*) indicates the fulness of His participation in human nature, the *flesh* being that element which is in most obvious contrast with His former state of being.'

Even the preposition (*ἐν*) is of pregnant significance. It is not altogether equivalent to *into* (*εἰς*). The gnostics also believed that Christ came into the flesh. But the assertion is that He has so come into the flesh as to abide therein; the Incarnation is a permanent union of the Divine with human nature. Finally, this union is realized in the self-identity of a Person, Jesus Christ, who is at once Divine and human.'

Professor Findlay sees the precision of St. John's words also, though he does not lay it out so elaborately. He is more occupied with the confession itself, its contents, and the progress that it records from St. Paul's primitive 'Jesus is Lord.' What *is* this Creed or Confession?

According to the Authorized Version it is: 'That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.' But everybody could confess that, and in doing so confess nothing. If there is exquisite precision in the language of the creed, there must be no less exquisite precision in the creed itself. In order to make the meaning clear in English, Professor Findlay and Mr. Law both introduce the little word *as*, though there is nothing corresponding to it in the Greek. Professor Findlay introduces it after Christ: 'Every spirit which confesseth Jesus Christ as come in flesh.' And to bring out his interpretation he demands an emphasis upon each of the words: *Jesus Christ come in flesh*, as he prints them, 'so that the Divine origin and rights of Jesus and His advent in this capacity into human bodily life may be acknowledged.' Mr. Law places the *as* before Christ—'Every spirit that confesseth Jesus as Christ come in the flesh.'

The question, therefore, that is answered by this Apostles' Creed is the question, Who is Jesus? That has been the question always. It will be the question to the end. But the exact emphasis that is put upon it has not always been the same. And the answer must be according to the emphasis.

There was a difference, as Dr. Findlay points out, even by the time St. John wrote. In the earlier days when the question was put, 'Who is Jesus?' the answer made by the unbeliever was 'He is anathema.' For the unbeliever was a Jew, and his countrymen had crucified Jesus. He is anathema, he said. Has He not been crucified, and come under the curse of the law? 'Cursed,' says the Law, 'is every one that hangeth on a tree.' The answer of the believer, the answer of St. Paul, was 'Jesus is Lord.' In one telling phrase (*κύριος Ἰησοῦς*) he removed the anathema and reversed it.

But by St. John's day the emphasis has changed, and the answer must be different. Now the unbeliever is a philosopher, possibly a speculative theologian and born within the borders of the Church itself. He does not dispute the Messiahship of Jesus. What he disputes is His pre-existence, His godhead, His rank in the realm of spiritual beings. He separates Jesus from Christ, not by historical distinction (as in our day), but by metaphysical analysis. St. John's answer, therefore, is fuller than St. Paul's, and every word is chosen carefully. 'Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus as Christ come in the flesh is not of God.'

We have spoken of the expository lecture as now so rarely heard from the pulpits of our land. What has taken its place? It would be a gain if what is called 'the running commentary' should take its place. But where the expository lecture was easy (it was its easiness that brought about its end), the running commentary is difficult exceedingly, and very few are the preachers who have yet had the courage to attempt it.

It is not that there is no time for it. An occasional word, an occasional sentence, is all that it means. And the congregation as they follow the reading, book in hand, need not lift up their

eyes. The reading, let us say, is in the First Epistle of St. John, the fourth chapter. The preacher has reached the sixteenth verse. The words are, 'And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.' He simply says, 'Not merely "We have known and believed," but "We have known, and we have believed."'

He says this because to the ordinary English reader 'we have known and believed' is only a single statement. It is either 'we have known,' or it is 'we have believed.' It even loses its force as a single statement by the use of the two verbs when one would be sufficient.

But the preacher knows that it is two distinct statements. He knows that the second verb is as emphatic as the first, and for that matter a bigger mouthful in the Greek (*ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν*). And by simply inserting 'we have' as he reads, he arrests the attention on the double statement, and makes the congregation ask silently what the two statements are.

What are the two statements? Westcott says that when St. John has stated that we know the love which God has to us, he suddenly recalls himself. He remembers that we do not know it perfectly. As God is greater than our heart, so the love of God is greater than the heart of man can embrace. He accordingly adds, 'but we believe that it is greater than we know.'

Professor Findlay assents. But Mr. Law will have none of it. 'I cannot agree with Westcott,' he says, 'that the addition of "we have believed" is due to the conscious imperfection attaching to the "we have known." For it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that the verb to *know* (*γινώσκειν*) signifies spiritual perception; while the verb to *believe* (*πιστεύειν*) expresses, the resultant intellectual conviction.' He would therefore translate, or paraphrase, the passage: 'We have recognized (in the fact that Jesus is the Son of

God) the love which God hath toward us, and are firmly persuaded of its truth.'

Is the story of the Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues historical?

The question is worth asking. It is a question even for the historian and the man of science. Because, if it is historical, it is central and controlling. Other ideas and theories of the origin of languages and of the peopling of the earth must fall into conformity with it. But the preacher must ask the question more imperatively. His whole attitude to the Old Testament depends upon its answer.

For if the story of the Tower of Babel is not historical, he cannot use it as history, and his first feeling is the pain of loss. If he is determined to deal honestly, he finds himself gradually retreating from great sections of the Bible. This incident never occurred; that patriarch never existed. His next feeling is anger against the critics of the Old Testament, and resentment of all their ways. 'Ye have taken away the materials of my sermons, and what have I more?'

Professor W. G. Jordan, in his new book on *Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought* (T. & T. Clark; 7s. 6d. net), answers the modern Levite. He does not say that the story of the Tower of Babel is historical. He does not deny that those preachers who have lived and worked during the last generation have had the painful experience of having to let go as strictly historical some of the narratives of the Old Testament. But he says that they need not feel resentment. They have lost them for a little, that they may find them again in a richer, more profitable form.

Certainly no preacher will give up any of the Old Testament stories lightly. And there are many incidents and experiences in the Old Testament which may still be taken, as they have

always been taken, literally, and used for immediate edification. Professor Jordan gives an instance. It is the 73rd Psalm.

The 73rd Psalm is not a Psalm of Asaph, as its title tells us. It is a late poem. The title must go. But the psalm is none the worse of that. It is even the better. For now we see more freely how close it comes to the Spirit of Christ. 'Simply to paraphrase the psalm, to tell in clear simple words how its author fought and conquered doubt, this in itself is helpful and inspiring. If we care to follow with close attention the story of this "Pilgrim's Progress through Doubt to a Higher Faith," we are face to face with a spiritual conflict which, both as to substance and as to form, is not unlike the battle which we ourselves sometimes have to meet.'

The difficulty, however, is not so much with the psalms or even with the incidents in the historical books. It is with the stories of world-wide significance contained in the early chapters of Genesis—the most picturesque and impressive of all that the Old Testament contains. Even then the preacher will not lightly surrender. He will not surrender them at any rate until he has consulted the monuments. Do the monuments of Babylon help him to retain the story of the Tower of Babel and to believe in the Confusion of Tongues?

Professor Jordan goes with the preacher to the monuments. First he looks into Professor Orr's *Problem of the Old Testament*. Professor Orr is very reluctant to surrender the historical character of the Tower of Babel. What does he say about it?

He says that 'there is a growing conviction that the plain of Shinar, or Southern Babylonia, was really the centre of distribution of the families of mankind.' The centre of distribution? It is a good phrase. Does it mean that all mankind were once gathered as one nation on the

plains of Babylon and were thence actually dispersed, as the narrative in Genesis seems to say they were? Read the next sentence. 'Babylonian civilization is carried back by the discoveries at Nippur to a period so much earlier than that of any other known civilization, that the inference seems irresistible that it is the source from which these other civilizations are derived.'

Now to say that all other known civilizations are likely to have come from the civilization of Babylonia, even if it is true—and Professor Flinders Petrie is dissipating the probability of it rapidly—is a very different thing from saying that all the languages of the earth have come from one language that once was spoken in the plain of Shinar. Professor Jordan turns to the archaeologist Professor Hommel.

The ninth verse of the story, says Professor Hommel, the verse which gives the name of Babel to the city and the tower, is probably a later addition. For, he adds, Babel was certainly not among the *oldest* sanctuaries of the land of Shinar. And 'by this bit of minute criticism,' says Professor Jordan, 'the archaeologist destroys the point of the story; but in so doing he shows that he realizes the immense age that lies behind the movements and migrations of humanity, and that we do not reach anything primitive when we arrive at Babel.'

But Professor Jordan does not even yet dismiss the story as unhistorical. He turns to Dr. Pinches. And Dr. Pinches is at first highly comforting. He admits that for the confusion of tongues 'there is, of course, no historical evidence,' and that 'the Babylonian inscriptions know nothing of it.' But he adds at once that there were many languages spoken at Babylon, and that a stranger visiting it could not help being struck by their number.

That is scarcely sufficient, however. The question is, Was the whole earth of one language, and was Babylon 'the centre of distribution'? 'There is

great improbability,' says Dr. Pinches, 'that the statement that the whole earth was of one language and of one speech was ever believed by thinking men at the time as an actual historical fact. A better translation would be "the whole land," that is, the whole tract of country from the Mountains of Elam to the Mediterranean Sea.'

This, at last, is clear enough, and it is creditable to the courage of the archaeologist who has made it. For it must be remembered that the book in which it is made, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylon*, was published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. But it seems to destroy our last hope of being able to cling to the historical character of the Tower of Babel.

Suppose, then, that we have to come to the conclusion that the story of the Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues is unhistorical. Is it lost to the preacher? Professor Jordan believes that it is not lost. He believes that there is a better and a richer use to be made of it now than when it was historical.

In the first place we can work a little critical analysis over it, and perhaps discover, as Gunkel has done, that there are two distinct stories in it, one relating to a city, the other to a tower. We may notice also in the course of our criticism that both stories belong to the Yahwist stratum, whence the gracious fact that Yahweh 'interferes' in the affairs of men, and always for their good. Always for their good, whether they see that at the time or not—a most fruitful consideration for the future history of Israel and of the world.

But there is more than that. From the structure of the story let us pass to its origin.

It originated in Babylonia. Of that there cannot be a doubt. Where else is the wide plain and the Temple Tower? But it was not written down by a Babylonian. That is just as unmistakable.

For the whole attitude is that of a foreigner. And the foreigner is a Hebrew. The supreme God is Yahweh. The name 'Babel' is a play upon a Hebrew verb. The surprise of the writer at the great brick buildings rising out of the plain is the surprise of a dweller in Palestine.

And yet this story is no Hebrew writer's invention. Behind the narrative may be detected the signs of an earlier and more heathen conception. It is, in short, a wide-circulating and probably very ancient folk-narrative worked over in the interest of the supremacy of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Is its interest entirely literary, then, and has it no historical value? Professor Jordan does not say so. He sees clearly that it belongs to a pre-scientific age. Yet he says that the questions which it handles are questions which science still has to occupy itself with. And if its handling of them is more poetical than scientific, it is not of less value (not of less value to science) on that account, but probably of more value. For the science of to-day will be superseded by the science of to-morrow. But poetry, out of which science came at first, will always endure, to furnish new stimulus to scientific investigation and to brace scientific minds to face the old problems over again, and at last, above all other discoveries, to find their solution in God.

Professor Jordan quotes from Loofs, and closes: 'What the author of our story, who was quite certainly a pious Israelite and no Babylonian, had heard concerning Babel's old history and its old buildings, that he uses for the purpose of exhibiting Yahweh's power in the history of the first beginnings of human culture. The history of our text teaches us how a pious Israelite of old Israel sets the oldest history of mankind in the light of his faith.'

Jesus 'marvelled' (Mt 8¹⁰).

And we marvel that He should ever have

marvelled. It is no surprise that others marvelled at Him.

The disciples marvelled. He said to the fig tree, 'Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How did the fig tree immediately wither away' (Mt 21^{19, 20}). Pilate marvelled. 'Pilate again asked him, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they accuse thee of. But Jesus no more answered anything; insomuch that Pilate marvelled' (Mk 15^{4, 5}). The whole multitude marvelled. He dispossessed a dumb man. 'And when the devil was cast out, the dumb man spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel' (Mt 9³⁸). Even the Pharisees and Herodians marvelled. 'Is it lawful,' they asked, 'to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?' For they would 'catch him in talk' if they could. 'Jesus said unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. And they marvelled greatly at him' (Mk 12¹⁷). We do not wonder that men marvelled at Him, that they marvelled greatly. The wonder is that He ever found occasion to marvel at men. What did He marvel at?

There are just two things at which He ever marvelled. The one thing was the absence of faith, the other was its presence.

He came into His own country. He entered the synagogue and began to teach. When they heard Him they were astonished. They were astonished at the wisdom of the words which came from His mouth, and they were astonished at the mighty works which were wrought by His hands. But, then, He was one of themselves. They knew His family. They had seen Him at His trade. They did not say, Being so wise and so powerful, He must be the Son of God. They said, Being the son of Mary, how can he be so wise and so powerful? 'And he marvelled because of their unbelief' (Mk 6⁶). That was the one occasion.

The other occasion on which He marvelled was at the faith of a Roman centurion.

Now in the case of the Roman centurion it is not easy to see what He marvelled at. We are told that 'when He heard it' He marvelled, and said to them that followed, 'Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel' (Mt 8¹⁰). What had He heard?

He had heard the centurion say, 'I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.' Was that what He marvelled at? It could not be that. For John the Baptist once said, 'The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.' If the centurion's faith was shown in recognizing the distance between Jesus and himself, John's faith was as great as his. And John belonged to Israel.

But the centurion believed that Jesus could heal with a word. Jesus heard him say, 'Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.' That also showed great faith. Yet there was once a woman who believed that Jesus could heal without a word, without ever seeing or knowing anything about the patient. And she was healed. She came in the crowd behind, and touched His garment. For she said, 'If I touch but his garments, I shall be made whole.' And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her plague (Mk 5^{28, 29}). And she also belonged to Israel.

But, again, the centurion recognized that Jesus had authority over the powers that heal. The commentators with one consent say that the greatness of his faith consisted in that. The centurion recognized that Jesus was like himself. He himself can say to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh. Jesus is able to order and to be obeyed. And they who obey Him are not soldiers or slaves. They are the unseen angels, principalities or powers, that have the health of the body in their keeping.

It was a very great act of faith. But had Jesus never met with such an act of faith in Israel? The very chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel in which the narrative occurs opens with a similar act of faith, although it is expressed more briefly. 'And when he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And behold, there came to him a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean' (Mt 8¹⁻²). The leper may have doubted the will, and he may not; at any rate he recognized the power. And the leper was no doubt an Israelite. We have still to ask what the centurion said or did to call forth Christ's emphatic commendation.

Now, it is a curious circumstance that in all the interpretations of this passage which one can turn to, the emphasis is laid upon the fact that the centurion was a man with authority. The comparison is made between his ability to command his servants and Christ's ability to command the unseen powers that heal. But the centurion says, not that he is a man *with* authority, but that he is a man under authority. And what relation his being *under* authority to a superior bears to his having authority over inferiors, no one seems able to make out; except, of course, the general commonplace which all the commentaries repeat, that he only can command who has first learned to obey.

But the centurion says more than that he himself is under authority. He says that Jesus is under authority. There is a word in the Greek which the translators of the Authorized Version seem to have looked upon as superfluous. The Revisers fortunately counted no words superfluous; and whether they understood it or not they took this little word in. It is the word 'also'—'for I also (*καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ*) am a man under authority.' 'I also,' he says. Clearly he looked upon Jesus as a man under authority like himself. Was Jesus a man under authority?

The Rev. W. H. Carnegie, M.A., Canon of

Birmingham, has published a book on *Churchmanship and Character* (Murray; 3s. 6d. net). It must be a volume of sermons. For it is further described as 'Three Years' Teaching in Birmingham Cathedral.' But it is divided into chapters, not into sermons. And the teaching goes steadily forward until, 'in the fifth chapter,' it reaches the question, What was the secret of Jesus? What was the principle which will explain His personal power and impressiveness? Canon Carnegie's answer is, He was 'a man under authority.'

The centurion had said that he was not worthy that Jesus should come to him, or even that he himself should stand in Jesus' presence. He had said that Jesus did not need to come, He could heal with a word and at a distance. He had said that Jesus could control the powers that heal, as he himself can say to his servant or slave, Do this, and he doeth it. All this was the evidence of faith, the evidence of great faith, though we may doubt that it surpassed anything that Jesus had seen in Israel. But when the centurion recognized that Jesus, like himself, was a man under authority, Jesus saw that he had penetrated to the secret of His life, and turning to them that followed Him said, 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.'

For this *was* the secret of Jesus' life. He expressed it so, says Canon Carnegie, at the beginning: 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' He expressed it so in the middle: 'For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.' He expressed it so at the end: 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.'

This, says Canon Carnegie, is the meaning of His presence here upon earth. He came to do the Father's will. He is under authority as a soldier. You may find the soldier enjoying the company of his messmates at table; you may find him following the funeral of a comrade to the grave. But

his business is not to provide mirth for his fellows, or mingle his tears with those of the bereaved. These things come in the course of the campaign, but his business is to obey his commanding officer. And in his obedience he accepts pain and privation as they come; even death itself; not welcoming them, but not overwhelmed by them. The one impression that is present with him throughout is that he is a man under authority.

Jesus was such a soldier. He had piped, and some of them had danced. He had mourned, and some of them had lamented with Him. But only one of them had penetrated to the secret of His life, and had recognized that whatever He did, He did it not by His own will but at the will of His commanding officer. And that man was a Gentile.

'I also,' he said, 'am a man under authority.' Therefore—not because he is a man *in* authority, but because he is a man *under* authority—he can say to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh. For the soldier to whom the command is issued knows that it is not the

command of this centurion merely; it is the command of the Roman Emperor. If the centurion were at the moment in rebellion against the Emperor, his command would not have the force of an Imperial command. He is not in rebellion. In every order he gives he seeks loyally to carry out the Emperor's will. Therefore—because he is a man under authority, he says to his servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

Did the centurion recognize that Jesus Himself was Emperor? He could scarcely do that. We are told that at the cross another centurion said, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' Did *he* mean that Jesus was Emperor, the highest authority in the spiritual realm? Perhaps scarcely even he. Certainly this centurion did not. But he recognized that Jesus was in entire sympathy with that supreme Spiritual Authority who at a word will send more than twelve legions of angels to execute His desires. Thou also, he said, art a man under authority. Thy word is the word of the Highest. Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed.

The New Philosophy.

BY THE REV. J. G. JAMES, D.LIT., M.A., CHRIST CHURCH, ENFIELD.

At the present day we have in our midst a new gospel in philosophy, which is designated a philosophical method, if it cannot yet be called a system.¹ It is a reactionary movement from the long-prevailing and dominant Idealism or Absolutism. Like all movements of thought it effects the completion of the cycle; or it may be, the spiral line of progress, as future judgment may determine. In most respects it has an interesting parallel in the movement from Plato to Aristotle; the Idealism and the abstractions of the one giving place to the Realism and the concreteness of the other.²

¹ Vide W. James, *The Will to Believe and Pragmatism*; and Schiller, *Humanism*, etc.

² The parallel is still more complete by the *New Realism* which is coming into prominence.

The emergence of this new method or system claims to be akin to the advance of thought in these masters of ancient philosophy.

No very high degree of prophetic insight is required to detect signs of considerable popularity that may attach to this new philosophic creed. For one thing, it is intensely interesting for its own sake, in that a man should be supposed to have the power to create, or affect in any sense the truth that he desires or wishes to believe; or, at least, that he should have his share in determining that truth,—such a doctrine cannot fail to have its attractions. Further, it promises to provide a bridge to which men of science would not hesitate to commit their footsteps, in order to reach the realm of truth hitherto regarded as