

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THERE is a short article by Professor G. A. Johnston Ross in a recent number of the *Sunday School Times* on the danger of worshipping the angel.

The reference is, in the first place, to a confession, 'a naïve confession,' Professor Ross calls it, made by the author of the *Apocalypse*. Once, when lost in wonder at the discoveries granted to him of the mysteries of the spiritual world, he was betrayed into offering to the created medium of the discoveries that devotion which he ought to have reserved for God alone. 'I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.'

If we think of it, are we not somewhat shocked? How could the writer of the Book of Revelation appear even momentarily to falter in his monotheism? Professor Johnston Ross does not think it at all astonishing.

For in point of fact, he says, it never has been easy for men to reserve worship for God alone. 'We have come in process of time,' said a thoughtful Zulu, 'to worship spirits, because we knew not what to say about the great God who

is before all others, and so we could not bear to think of Him.' This is corroboration of St. Paul. 'They refused,' says the Apostle, 'to retain God in their knowledge, and so worshipped the creature rather than the Creator.' And even the Old Testament has been described as the story of a prolonged effort 'to keep Jehovah in His true place.'

But the point is, that we are very ready to worship the angel still. 'There is in the heart of men so profound a sense of the fitness to his need of certain words of God, that when they are uttered, the possession of them by the mediary seems so wonderful as to compel an awe of the mediary that may come dangerously near to worship.' Professor Ross thinks that there are good elements in this awe. There is gratitude, there is admiration, there is deep self-distrustful reverence. And who are the objects of this awe that is so closely and so dangerously near to worship? They are ministers of the gospel.

Ministers of the gospel, says Mr. Johnston Ross, who have found themselves the objects of this reverential awe have been compelled to recognize the beautiful elements in it. And precisely this has constituted their problem in dealing with it. For they have seen its deadly danger; how quickly, almost insensibly, the eyes of the

worshipper fall away from God, and fasten only on God's messenger; how the real force of the message is missed when the worshipper's heart finds itself comforted and pleased by the reflex soothing of its own admiration and recognition of the messenger; and, above all, 'what postponements of close grips with controversies of conscience,' may be made through the device of 'worshipping the angel.'

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At the close of the session of the United Free Church College in Aberdeen, Principal IVERACH delivered an address on 'The Christian Message.' Reading the address, as reported in the *Aberdeen Free Press*, one can see that the moment Dr. IVERACH began to think of his immediate topic he had to face the fact that other religions claimed to have a message for men as well as Christianity. He went at once to the heart of the matter. Other religions *have* a message. But here lies the difference. The message of Christianity comes from God; other messages do not. And that difference is fundamental and final.

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Can this claim be established? Is it only a vague claim on behalf of revelation, or the inspiration of the Bible? Is it a mere assertion of boastful superiority which cannot be put to any acknowledged test? No. There is a test; and it is bound to be recognized. It is, moreover, unanswerable. It is the fact that the Founder of Christianity was the Son of God.

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The founder of Muhammadanism was not the Son of God. Nor was the founder of Buddhism. What Jesus said He said in the fulness of the Holy Spirit of God. What Jesus did He did as carrying out the purpose of God from all eternity. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'

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But how can this claim, that what Jesus said and did was what God says and does be upheld? Time will uphold it. Wait and see. Other religions have already been proved unable

to keep step with the progress of knowledge, and the enlightenment of the conscience. Already Muhammadanism has fallen behind. But until now Christianity has led the march of civilization, and to-day holds an ideal of conduct before the face of man of which the complaint is, not that it is too low, but that it is too high to be attainable. That is one way of proving the Sonship of Jesus.

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The other way is to look back. Has not Jesus Christ actually made revelations, and are they not the fundamental things, the very bread and wine of the higher life? Who gave the world the conception of the unity of the human race? You applaud the Roman poet's 'Nihil humanum a me alienum puto,' but what do you say to One who calls Himself by the very title of Son of man? Calls Himself? Here is the difference, that as a sentential exclamation, or even as an adopted name, one might attain to it anywhere, but Jesus lived as the Son of man. For the first and last time in history He was without partiality and without preference.

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And who taught the Fatherhood of God? What a thought it is! The mere fringe of the garment of it is all that we are able to touch yet. Did we receive it from Plato? Did Seneca pass it on to us? As for the great founders of religion, the thought of God's Fatherhood is not once to be entertained in their presence. And again, it was not a thought merely. It was a life. He had a Father, God; He lived and loved as a Son of God.

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And once more, who delivered men from the fear of death? What a tyrant death was in the Greek and Roman world. What a tyrant it is still in the world that is not Christian. And how did Jesus of Nazareth deliver from the fear of death? Most extraordinary surely of all the religious things ever transacted on this earth—by submitting to death.

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Thus the Christian message is Christ—Christ the standard of life, Christ the assurance of love,

Christ the hope of glory. 'Apart from Christianity,' says Principal IVERACH, 'there is something absurd and almost grotesque in man.' The sentence will not soon be forgotten. And it is because Christianity is Christ.

'The eschatological question is, without doubt, the most live issue in New Testament criticism at the present day.' It has come to that through a variety of fortunate circumstances. Abbé LOISY began the interest. Protestants are always ready to regard with indulgence the man whose books are placed on the Index. Father TYRRELL continued and deepened it. 'When we read George Tyrrell,' says Professor MOULTON, 'we make tacit allowance as Protestants for the pessimism which colours the noble utterance of the lonely thinker who was cast out by his own unworthy Church, and yet loved her lost ideal too well to come over to us, his true spiritual brethren.' And it came to an acute stage of excitement when SCHWEITZER issued his book, *From Reimarus to Wrede*, and had it translated into brilliant English by Mr. MONTGOMERY, under the title of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

What is the eschatological question? The best account of it is to be found in a volume of essays which has been issued by Messrs. T. & T. Clark, under the title of *The Eschatological Question in the Gospels* (6s. net). LOISY is here, George TYRRELL also; and SCHWEITZER most of all. And these authors are permitted to speak for themselves so unrestrainedly that we are compelled to see that no injustice is done to them by the fire of criticism through which they pass, though that criticism is keen enough to mark a distinct step forward in the discussion of the subject. The author of the volume is the Rev. Cyril W. EMMET, M.A., Vicar of West Hendred.

But there is also an account of the eschatological question in the *Free Church Year-Book and Who's Who* for 1911 (Meyer: Memorial Hall; 2s. 6d.

net). For it is a question that cannot be ignored by any Council or Congress. And at the meetings of the Sixteenth National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches an afternoon was set apart for its discussion, the subject being introduced by Professor James Hope MOULTON.

Professor MOULTON'S account is short. It is too short for any but the already initiated. Others must go to Mr. EMMET. But surely it was listened to with attention. For not only does Dr. MOULTON, an evangelical of the evangelicals, grant the central demand of SCHWEITZER and the advanced eschatologists, but he even shows how momentous and how urgent are the issues that then wait the consideration of the Church of Christ.

The central demand of the eschatologists is that our Lord expected the end of the world within a very short space of time. And, of course, if He did so, He was mistaken. Dr. MOULTON will admit that He was mistaken. The possibility of mistake, and the fact of it—both were due to His self-limitation. He agreed to a condition in which He might, in which He actually did, make a serious miscalculation regarding the end of the world.

Professor MOULTON is not afraid to say so. He bids us not be afraid. 'Does the indefinite postponement of the Day of the Lord, for the hastening of which Jesus flung His life away, shatter the credit of Him of whom every new age tells more clearly that He has words of eternal life? We need not be afraid. After all, the foreshortening of history which made Him see that vivid future so near was only the inevitable condition of the real humanity which He took upon Him.' And Dr. MOULTON points out that in announcing His own ignorance, our Lord, 'in a saying of uniquely acknowledged authenticity,' claims for Himself, in all His human self-limitation, a dignity higher than men and angels: 'But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father' (Mk 13<sup>32</sup>).

And if it was a mistake, it was a blessed one. Dr. MOULTON wonders if the world would have heard the gospel of the grace of God if Christ and the early disciples of Christ had not believed that the end of all things was at hand. He is not sure if the gospel would not have perished, strangled in its cradle, as it were, by the strong forces of the world that were arrayed against it, if it had not been that the preachers of the gospel believed that within their own generation the world and all the forces it commanded would be destroyed. 'Did not the Church's illusion,' he asks, 'justify by results the providence that allowed it? The tremendous sense of urgency that impressed itself upon the early Church, proved ultimately the one cause of the triumph of the Faith.'

Well, the world did not come to an end in that generation. It has not come to an end yet. And what now? Now, says Professor MOULTON, the danger is that the Church will think the world is not coming to an end at all, and so settle down to the determination to make as good a world out of it as can be made.

The words startle us. Is that not what we have to do? It is certainly what we are doing. Dr. MOULTON knows it is what we are doing. 'We are all of us immensely eager about social reform; and we are convinced that when we have established a more equitable social order, and made sweating and overcrowding, unemployment and drink, things of the past, there will be a good solid foundation on which the New Jerusalem may descend.' But he does not believe that that is what we have to do.

Our Christian vocabulary still proclaims that we are strangers and sojourners in a world that is passing away. Dr. MOULTON believes that our vocabulary is accurate. We make our Sunday-school children sing hymns which express yearning to quit this world for a better land. Dr. MOULTON believes that we ought to join our children in

singing them. If we are no longer trying to pull the heathen out of hell-fire; if we are trying to give them instead the blessings of Christian love for this world—well, Dr. MOULTON thanks God for that. But he warns us all, lest, in the very moment we thank God for that, we accept the Earth as our abiding city and unconsciously assimilate ourselves to the world around us.

Does Professor MOULTON not believe in progress then? Surely. He is certainly a most progressive theologian. What he does not believe in is Progress (with a capital), which is an object and end in itself. He does not believe in that Progress which is a sort of personified worldliness, and of which the driving power is the motto: 'The greatest comfort of the greatest number.' This Progress has its enthusiasms. But there is one enthusiasm wanting to it, and by that want it is condemned. It has no Foreign Missionary enthusiasm.

If the secular reforming enthusiast ever conceives the idea of blessing other nations, it hardly goes further, says Dr. MOULTON, than a conviction that magic powers of millennial bliss reside in the importation of the British Flag, or else in the immediate granting of self-government, 'according to the shade of his politics.' And Dr. MOULTON does not believe that progress, whether in administration abroad or in science and industry at home, will ever accomplish even the end which the secular reformer sets before him, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. 'The denizens of Ancoats and Rotherhithe can now exchange visits by aeroplane, but the interesting possibility makes small difference to the dismal conditions of their lives. Motors are a glorious invention, but the village child gets nothing from them except the ruin of his only playground. Even the beneficent triumphs of medicine and surgery need to be qualified by the remembrance of the suffering and hardship to which the healed toiler returns from the peace and luxury of the hospital. Nor is our question limited to the condition of the

poor. The rich themselves, who can use to the full the new resources of civilization, have gained little in that which makes for their lasting happiness. They may be flying down a country road on a Sunday morning instead of declaring themselves miserable sinners in church, but the improvement is equivocal after all.'

Professor MOULTON believes in progress. But it is progress that is subordinate to a higher law. If progress is to be along the lines of making this world a better place to live in—that and nothing more—he fears that the end of the world will come, as even the astronomers warn us, long before the ape and the tiger have died in man, and Borgias and Leopolds have ceased to flourish. He believes in progress, and he has worked for it, but he cannot acquiesce in the materialistic conviction that this present world only needs mending to make it the ideal home for righteousness to dwell in. He believes that it is our duty to look forward not to mending but to ending.

'I venture to think, therefore, that by the help of a "blasphemous book" (this is the epithet which Dean INGE has applied to SCHWEITZER'S book), by an argument which seems to strike at our most cherished convictions about Him after whose name we dare to call ourselves (he means the

argument based on our Lord's ignorance of 'that day and that hour'), we are being called to a reassertion of the Catholic Christology, and of the Christian hope which has lived before the saints of every age.'

The Catholic Christology is that Jesus of Nazareth (who 'knew not') was Very God; and that His death was not merely the most wonderful and pathetic of martyrdoms, but the climax of an obedience which made atonement for the sin of the whole world. And the Christian hope is to see the King in His beauty and to behold the land of far distances.

'We need to be other-worldly, heavenly-minded, our treasure laid up in the place where no moth or rust doth consume, and no demon of disillusionment breaks in to steal our life's hope.' And we need not fear, he says, that other-worldliness will make us less eager for the mending of this world. 'We fight against fleshly lusts because they "war against the soul." We strive to destroy sweating and swilling, because such environments make it fearfully difficult for a human spirit to be made ready for service in the realm of light. We preach the gospel to the heathen because it will give them a mighty uplift towards that holiness without which none shall see the Lord.'

## The Authorized Version of the Bible.

By THE REV. S. R. DRIVER, D.D., REGIUS PROFESSOR OF HEBREW IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.<sup>1</sup>

'For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'—Is. xi. 9.

OUR country is commemorating this year the 300th anniversary of the publication of the Authorized Version of the Bible. This event was a momentous one in the history of the English people; and I should like this morning to place before you some thoughts suggested by it—to speak of the

<sup>1</sup> A sermon preached in the Cathedral Church of Christ, Oxford, on the Fourth Sunday in Lent (March 26), 1911.

long and sometimes troubled years of preparation and development which preceded it, of the influence which the version has exerted upon our people, and of the position which it holds at the present day. Let me describe to you briefly how the Authorized Version came into being.

In olden days both Bibles and service-books were in Latin; there was a prejudice against change; and it was a long and gradual process to get them translated into the language of the