

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'I AM at present on the Epistle to the Hebrews. The great difference of such a subject from all others is that all the interests of Time and Eternity are wrapped up in it. The scrutiny of a title-deed to £100,000 a year is nothing to it. How should it be? Is there a Christ? Is He the Heir of all things? Was He made flesh? Did He offer the all-perfect sacrifice? Did He supersede the old order of priests? Is He the Mediator of a new and better Covenant? What are the terms of that Covenant? There are no questions like these. They raise, in their very investigation, the whole soul into the Empyrean. All other interests seem low, trivial, petty, momentary. I am astonished, too, at the imperative tone of this Epistle, and the element of holy scorn against those who refused to go into these great questions carefully. The Voice seems to shake the heavens and the earth in order to establish in the hearts of the obedient the kingdom that cannot be moved.'

These words are quoted from the Letters of James SMETHAM. They are quoted, as motto and as motive, at the beginning of a new exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is an exposition which has been made by the Rev. J. Grange RADFORD, B.D., and published with the title of *The Eternal Inheritance* (Kelly; 5s. net). Whether the title came from James SMETHAM or from the

Epistle to the Hebrews, Mr. RADFORD does not tell us, and it does not matter. What does matter is that the Epistle to the Hebrews has made the same impression upon this young scholar as it made upon the well-tried painter. It is as the face which looks out from some of the old pictures. The eyes follow us wherever we go. So however time passes and new questions arise, this wonderful Epistle, untarnished by time, is ready with its sufficient answer.

What are the questions of our day? There is, for one question, the religious finality of the Christian revelation. 'The comparative study of the world's religions has forced this truth into prominence. The discovery, in some of them, of religious ideas of a high order, and of moral precepts of lofty tone, demands that the primacy of the truths that inhere in Christ, and radiate from Him, be exhibited. This is the very nerve of all foreign missionary propaganda. Of all the pressing tasks that lie to the hand of the Church to-day, none is more urgent than to maintain, with reason and persuasion, that Jesus Christ is the supreme and final authority for men in religion. Not the religion of Jesus Christ, *i.e.* the religion which He felt and practised, nor the Christian religion as it has been interpreted and proclaimed in any age of the Church's changeful history, but the religion which has its essence in the death and the claims

of Jesus Christ, must be maintained to be final and absolute.'

This is the very topic of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is the writer's reason for taking his pen in hand. Who the writer was, we do not know. Mr. RADFORD is convinced it was not St. Paul. The careful study of the Epistle undertaken for this exposition has quite convinced him that Pauline authorship, in whole or in part, is impossible. Nor does he think it was the work of any of the others whose names have been associated with it — Silas, Barnabas, Luke, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, or Clement of Rome. But whoever wrote it, this is why he wrote. He anticipated the chief religious interest of the twentieth century, and wrote to prove that Jesus Christ is first and final.

There is also the question of the real humanity of Jesus Christ. Here again the aid of the Epistle to the Hebrews is very timely. Not that we are in danger of denying Christ's humanity. We believe in the humanity only too exclusively. What this Epistle does for us is to help us to interpret that humanity. For 'it has become necessary' (we quote Mr. RADFORD again) 'to attempt, with much caution and reverence, to mark out the limitations of power and of knowledge into which the Eternal Son entered when He took upon Himself the nature of man. For this supremely delicate work this epistle affords much timely aid, in that the writer deals with the life of Jesus on earth as really and morally human. He supplements the presentation of Jesus which is found in the four Gospels, not by giving further biographical details, but by suggesting certain ethical and religious principles by which His experience and vocation were shaped. Reverently to trace his suggestions towards their issues makes the living Saviour, who now works for men beyond the limitations of this earthly sphere, seem not less divine, and much more human, than otherwise He appears.'

Once more, there is the question of the Atonement.

That question is vital always. Nothing gives the unbeliever more astonishment than its persistence. It is the 'short argument' for Christianity. At the present time our chief concern is whether the Atonement offered by Christ affected the attitude of God to sinners or only the attitude of sinners to God. 'Nine-tenths of the modern books on the Atonement,' says Professor STALKER, 'are occupied with its effects on the mind of men, but nine-tenths of the Bible statements are concerned with its effects on the mind of God.' The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is greatly concerned with the effect of Christ's death on the mind of God. 'He labours to show how the sacrifice which Christ offered meets the exacting demands of God's holiness, and enables Him graciously to supply to even the most obdurate of impenitent hearts the influences of grace which may move it to repentance and righteousness.'

Yet again, we are concerned in our day with the life of Christ after He left the earth. The reality of the heavenly life has been denied by the denial of the resurrection from the dead. But it is essential to the Christian faith. And, when forgotten, it has a way of returning and asserting its reality—sometimes, as in the case of Dr. DALE, so as to shake the life to its very foundations. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written by one who never for a moment forgot the ascended Christ. It was written by one who was able by faith and thought to follow Him into the spiritual order and offer us transporting glimpses of His high-priestly work within the veil.

Last of all, Mr. RADFORD finds it necessary to-day, as it seems to have been necessary in the day when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, to affirm 'the immediate holiness of the accepted penitent.' Here there is a difference in language between this Epistle and the Epistles of St. Paul. Both recognize the priority of acceptance over good works. Both assert that it is not for any merit of ours that we are accepted of God, but

solely on account of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Both insist upon betterment of life and conduct following the acceptance. But that new relation into which the returning sinner enters with God through Christ is called by St. Paul 'justification,' while by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews it is called 'sanctification.'

Professor George MILLIGAN of the University of Glasgow, and his fellow-workers among the papyri, have made the language of the New Testament a subject of very great interest. And the interest in the language has been reflected upon all the literary questions which surround the writing and distribution of the New Testament books. The time is ripe therefore for the offering of a popular survey of the whole field, and Professor MILLIGAN is the man to offer it. He took this subject when appointed Croall lecturer for 1911-12, and now the lectures are published under the title of *The New Testament Documents, their Origin and Early History* (Macmillan; 10s. 6d. net).

The lectures are six in number. Their subjects are: (1) The Original Manuscripts of the New Testament; (2) the Language of the New Testament Writings; (3) the Literary Character of the Epistles and Apocalypse; (4) the Literary Character of the Gospels and Acts; (5) the Circulation of the New Testament Writings; and (6) the Collection of the New Testament Writings. All these are topics with which the student of the New Testament is very familiar, but in this book every one of them is approached by a fresh mind and has fresh light thrown upon it from recent discovery and decipherment.

The new interest began with the decipherment of the papyri. Not with their discovery. It is true that GRENFELL and HUNT have added enormously to the pile of papyri available. But the earliest papyrus discoveries in Egypt were made as long ago as 1778, and since the middle of last century quite a number of documents have been

lying in Turin, London, Leyden, and Paris waiting for the patient genius of the decipherer and linguist.

'Full of varied significance,' says Dr. MILLIGAN, 'as many of these documents were, they evoked comparatively little interest even amongst palaeographers and historians, while their bearing upon the Greek of the Biblical writings passed practically unnoticed. The earliest hint in this direction that I have been able to discover is afforded by a passage in Peyron's Introduction to his edition of the Turin Papyri in 1826, in which he states that in order to understand the meaning of some of their unusual words, he had consulted "the contemporary writers, especially the translators of the LXX, the writers of the New Testament, Polybius, and Aristeas." But no one seems to have thought of reversing the process, and of examining the papyri for illustrations of LXX or New Testament Greek.'

'It was left,' he says later, 'to Adolf Deissmann, now Professor of New Testament Exegesis in the University of Berlin, to write as a Privatdocent at Marburg, and to publish as a pastor at Herborn, the *Bibelstudien*, first issued in 1895, and followed by the *Neue Bibelstudien* in 1897, which were virtually to inaugurate a new movement in the linguistic study of our Greek Bible. The two volumes are combined in the English translation by the Rev. A. Grieve under the title *Bible Studies*, contributions chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity, 2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1903.'

The most visible result of this study has been to silence for ever the old controversy between the Purists and the Hebraists—the Purists, who endeavoured to bring all the peculiarities of New Testament Greek under the strict rules of Attic usage; and the Hebraists, who magnified these peculiarities in the interests of a

distinctively 'Biblical Greek,' or even 'language of the Holy Ghost.' It is now a settled matter that the New Testament writers made use of the ordinary Greek of their own time, and that, too, in its more vulgar or colloquial form.

Are there, then, no Hebraisms in the language of the New Testament? Dr. MILLIGAN does not say so. On the contrary, he gently rebukes 'the over-eagerness which many advocates of the new light display in getting rid of the "Hebraisms" or "Semitisms," which have hitherto been regarded as a distinguishing feature of the Greek New Testament.' It is impossible, he says, to remove genuine 'Semitisms' from the New Testament altogether, or to the extent that is sometimes demanded. And he sees no reason for undue anxiety to do so. 'The presence of a few "Semitisms" more or less does not prevent our recognising that the general language of the document in which they occur is Greek, any more than the Scotticisms, into which a North Briton shows himself so ready to fall, exclude the possibility that all the time he is doing his best to talk English.' And it is surely wiser to attribute these Semitic-seeming words and constructions at once to their natural source, more especially when they occur in circumstances which make their presence not only explicable but inevitable.

And not only are there Hebraisms still, there are still some examples of 'Biblical Greek.' For what else does Sir W. M. RAMSAY mean when, in his recent defence of the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, he argues that 'the marked change of language and the number of new words' which these Epistles exhibit is due to the fact that St. Paul had to 'create' a new terminology to correspond with the new ecclesiastical situation with which he found himself confronted? 'Many of his new words,' says RAMSAY, 'are the brief expression of something which in his earlier letters he describes as a process, but which had now become so common a phenomenon in the practical management of a congregation that it demanded a

special name.' And he instances by way of illustration the very first peculiar word that occurs in them, 'to teach a different doctrine' (ἵτις), whose occurrence to describe a danger that had become very pressing in the early Church he regards as 'not only not un-Pauline,' but as 'thoroughly true to Paul's mind and character.'

It has been said that one of the things necessary for a great biography is an abundance of materials. The materials for the Life of Christ before He came into the world are not abundant. Perhaps that is why this biography has so rarely been written. Yet they are sufficient. They come partly from Christ Himself and partly from His disciples.

Christ Himself certainly knew that He had lived before He came into the world. Wordsworth says:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.

But Wordsworth, even as a poet, does not mean that which Christ meant when He spoke of His pre-earthly life. Nor had He forgotten the nature of it. And no doubt He would have said more about it than He did, if it had not been that He was occupied with His life on earth and that it was not possible to say much about the previous life that could have been understood.

He was occupied with His life and work on earth. He had come into the world for a special purpose, with a definite work to do. That work was of a most absorbing nature. What His thoughts were before He began His public ministry we cannot tell. But from that moment His ministry was all His concern. He had come, He said, to seek and to save the lost. That word 'lost' carried a meaning for Him that we only

faintly see afar. That it would cost Him something to save the 'lost,' He knew even from the first. But He never flinched from the task; He never allowed any other interest for one moment to interfere with it.

And not only was He too much occupied with His work on earth to say much about His previous life, but He knew that His followers would not have understood Him had He told them about that life. It was difficult to get them to understand so much as He did tell them. His closest followers were slow of heart to believe what the prophets had spoken even about His earthly life. And when to the people He so much as hinted that He had been before He came into the world, saying, 'Before Abraham was, I am,' they took up stones to stone Him.

But if Christ did not Himself say much about His life before He came into the world, what He said was without dubiety. And His disciples were just as free from doubt. This is a surprising thing. What is said in the Acts of the Apostles, or in any of the Epistles, about the pre-earthly life of Christ is said quite incidentally, not as a matter which required proof, but as a matter which, being itself certain, could be used in proof or illustration of other things. Does St. Paul wish to commend liberality in giving? 'For ye know,' he says, 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.' Does he wish to encourage humility? 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.'

But in truth the amount of material is of less consequence than the quality of it. The great difficulty is to know what to reject, and what to accept. And yet there are two tests. Whatever is said about the life of Christ before He came into the world must commend itself as in harmony with

His life in the world, and it must be accepted by scholars as actually having the meaning and the reference attributed to it.

It must be acknowledged by scholars as having the meaning attributed to it, and as referring to the pre-earthly life of our Lord. Take an example. There is a passage in the Apocalypse (13⁸) which is commonly supposed to have to do with that life, but about the meaning of which there is some dispute, and it may have to be set aside. The words, according to the Revised Version, are: 'And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world.' According to that translation the Lamb of God is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world. And the passage may be used as stating that the purpose of God to redeem the world was formed, not only before sin entered into it, but even from its very creation. But the *margin* of the Revised Version offers a different order of the words. There the translation suggested is 'every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.' And this translation is on the whole preferred by the most careful scholarship of the day.

The other test is that whatever is said of the life of Christ *before* must be consistent with what we know of His life *after* He came into the world. For if there is one thing more axiomatic than another to the writers of the New Testament, it is that the Incarnation did not alter the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. If, therefore, He was ever angry on earth, He must be capable of anger in heaven. If His heart went out to the far country with the prodigal, He is merciful and gracious always. If He reasoned with Nicodemus, He has from the beginning been saying, Come now and let us reason together. He must be found in the pre-earthly life the same as He who on earth

Took the brown little babes in the holy
 White hands of the Saviour of men ;
 Held them close to His heart and caressed them,
 Put His face down to theirs as in prayer,
 Put their hands to His neck, and so blessed
 them,
 With baby hands hid in His hair.

Well, the first thing that we learn about Jesus Christ before He came into the world is that He had a home. He had no home on earth. Mary and Joseph, we may believe, did their best to make a home for Him in His youth. But they did not understand. And after that there was no home possible for Him: 'He went about through all their cities and villages teaching'—you cannot make a home by wandering. And however He might come back from time to time to Capernaum, He came with Judas Iscariot. He could not have a home where Judas lived. If the presence of Judas troubled Him at the Last Supper table, it troubled Him at every meal. But, indeed, He said plainly enough, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' And yet how He would have valued a home on earth if He could have had it. How much it would have meant to Him. When some one said once to a persecuted follower of His that he wondered how he could be so serene in the face of daily misrepresentation, 'Oh, man !' was the answer, 'I am happy at home.'

But He had a home before He came to earth, and there was not one jarring element in it. The phrase He used to describe it is singularly beautiful. 'No man,' He said, 'hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, *which is in the bosom of the Father*, he hath declared him.' We speak of those whom we hold dear on earth as 'going home' when they leave us. Jesus spoke of one as 'carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.' It is the same word that is used when it is said that a certain disciple 'leaned on Jesus' breast.' The home to which they go who fall asleep in Jesus is the bosom of the Father : 'That where I

am, there ye may be also.' The home which Christ had before He came into the world was a home that was made by mutual love.

The inmates of the home were Father and Son. We speak not now of the Holy Spirit. Now we are writing the biography of the Son before He came into the world. Let us keep our thoughts fixed upon the Father and the Son.

The name of Father as applied to God is very familiar to us. We are not so familiar with the name of Son as applied to Christ. And yet it was the Sonship of Christ that gave us the Fatherhood of God. Jesus had much to say of the Father, but the disciples could not understand Him. They did not understand Him until they discovered that He was the Son. Then the Fatherhood fell into its place and obtained its meaning.

The revelation of God's Fatherhood was made by Jesus. How was it made? Not by applying to God that name which on earth carries with it the idea of care and love. That would have been no revelation. Even the Hebrew psalmists were capable of that. 'Like as a father pitieth his children,' sang one of them, 'so Yahweh pitieth them that fear him.' He revealed the Father by revealing Himself as the Son. If there is a Son, there must be a Father. And—this was the mighty inference they drew—if He is the Father of Christ, He is our Father also. So when He told them how to pray, saying, 'When ye pray, say Father,' they said it, and it was a new word to them ; they said it because He said it before them.

And yet the disciples knew very well that they did not say 'Father' in exactly the same sense as Jesus did. They had come to recognize God as Father through Jesus Christ. Because He Himself was Son, they became sons. The relationship was original in Him, it was secondary in them. For Him it had no beginning ; they were begotten again unto this living hope by His resurrection from the dead. And so wherever the records

bring Christ and His disciples into relationship to the Father, they never forget that there is a distinction. They do not represent Christ as saying 'Our Father,' but always 'my Father and your Father.'

In what did that special relationship between Father and Son consist? It consisted in the purity and intensity of their affection. How shall we express it? One of the disciples expresses it by saying, 'God is love.' Not Jesus Himself; it is John that rises to that intensity. 'God is love'—therefore from the beginning the Father loved the Son, and the Son the Father. That is the bush that burns and is not consumed. Christ Himself called it glory. 'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was . . . for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.'

This means that there are persons in God. We are sometimes afraid to speak of persons in the Godhead. We are afraid to say that the Father loves the Son, and the Son the Father. Or we say that the one can stand over against the other thus, loving and being loved, only after the Son has come into the world. Let us not be afraid. 'Father,' He says, 'thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.'

But let us not think that because there are two persons in the Godhead there must be two Gods. 'Hear, O Israel, Yahweh, thy God, Yahweh is one'—one from the very beginning, one to the very end. What makes two persons one? Unity of will. There is nothing else that can do it. And when the unity of will is perfect, is absolute; when it admits no conceivable degree of difference or moment of indecision, then those two persons are one. What did Jesus mean when He said, 'I and the Father are one'? He did not mean that they are not two persons, He meant that they are one God. And it is only so that any intelligible meaning can be found in the words, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'

This home, finally, is a hive of industry. As the Father hath life in Himself, even so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. And so, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' What is the work that they do? They are at work on this Universe. They are at work on man. We have no other revelation than that. But that revelation we have. They are busy with thoughts and deeds of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification.

They are already at work on Creation. That, however, is the subject of the next chapter of this biography. They are also busy with the things of Redemption. 'Ye were redeemed,' says St. Peter, 'not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times.' And they are concerned to accomplish in men that Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. As St. Paul expresses it in one of his benedictions, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love.'

Now these simple things—so simple and yet so profound—which are revealed of the life of Christ before He came into the world, are most momentous. They are the answer to all the problems of philosophy; they are the foundation and verification of all the doctrines of Christian theology.

They are the answer to the problems of philosophy. For all the problems of philosophy are due to the fact which St. Augustine's memorable words declare, 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts shall have no rest apart from Thee.' The heart finds rest when it comes home to that home of love where Christ dwelt with the Father before the foundation of the world.

And all theology is built upon them. First, there is this fundamental fact of love. Love is the source of the Universe and its upholding, for God is love. Next, it is the love of persons. The Father loves the Son and the Son the Father. Yet these persons are one God—in perfect unity of will. ‘I and the Father are one.’ And then, finally, this home, which is a home of rest because of the love and the unity, is also a home of activity. God is love, not only that the Father may love the Son and the Son the Father, but also that God may create man and love him.

And when God creates man and loves him, He creates man free to choose, and loves Him in spite of the evil choice he makes. This is the occupation of Christ with the Father even before the creation of the world, to love man in his sin and by persistent love to win him to holiness. For it is no more unthinkable that God should love sinners before the creation than that Christ should love us who are alive to-day when He gave Himself for us on the Tree.

Its truth is vindicated by the response the sinner makes.

O eyes that strip the souls of men!
There came to me the Magdalen.
Her blue robe with a cord was bound,
Her hair with Lenten lilies crowned.

‘Arise,’ she said, ‘God calls for thee,
Turned to new paths thy feet must be.
Leave the fever and the feast,
Leave the friend thou lovest best:
For thou must walk in barefoot ways,
To give my dear Lord Jesus praise.’

Then answered I—‘Sweet Magdalen,
God’s servant, once beloved of men,
Why didst thou change old ways for new,
That trailing red for corded blue,
Roses for lilies on thy brow,
Rich splendour for a barren vow?’

Gentle of speech she answered me:—
‘Sir, I was sick with revelry.
True, I have scarred the night with sin,
A pale and tawdry heroine;
But once I heard a voice that said,
“Who lives in sin is surely dead,
But whoso turns to follow me
Hath joy and immortality.”’

‘O Mary, not for this,’ I cried,
‘Didst thou renounce thy scented pride.
Not for a taste of endless years
Or barren joy apart from tears
Didst thou desert the courts of men.
Tell me thy truth, sweet Magdalen!’

She trembled, and her eyes grew dim:—
‘For love of Him, for love of Him.’

Psychical Research and its Bearing on some Biblical Problems.

BY THE REV. C. W. EMMET, M.A., WEST HENDRED.

I BELIEVE that the Society of Psychical Research is still by some known as the ‘Spook Society.’ The nickname implies that its main business is the seeking out or even the brewing of ‘ghost stories,’ which, however indigestible they may be to the common sense, are eagerly swallowed by its members and form in fact their main mental and

spiritual nutriment. This view is somewhat inadequate; it mistakes both the purpose and the temper of the S.P.R. Its purpose is to investigate phenomena which do not fall within the purview of Science as ordinarily organized—‘the unclassified residuum.’ These phenomena include telepathy, clairvoyance, second sight, crystal gazing,