

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

ONE of the advantages of such a work as *A Companion to the Bible* (edited by Professor T. W. MANSON, and reviewed elsewhere) is that, when it is written by reliable experts, it tells us just where we are in regard to important critical questions. This is eminently true of the book referred to. In particular, Dr. MANSON himself contributes an informing statement of the way in which the New Testament began and grew to what it is.

The Primitive Church was not engaged in book-production but in preaching. The time had not arrived either for a Christian apologetic or for written records of the ministry of Jesus. The first witnesses were engaged in missionary activity. And the content of this earliest preaching was mainly this: 'Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah ben David, crucified, raised from the dead and exalted as Lord.' It is the story of the Cross put into theological form.

If we set beside this the conclusions reached by recent criticism of the Synoptic Gospels, we find that they confirm and illuminate each other in a striking way. For it is increasingly clear that the kernel of the Gospels is the Passion narrative, and it is precisely the Passion narrative that resists form-critical analysis. Thus we are led to the conclusion that the earliest composition of the Primitive Church, the germ of our New Testament, is the Passion narrative told as a piece of history and preached as a gospel. This is not a written

document; but it may be conjectured that its form and content were fairly firmly fixed.

But, while the Passion narrative is the kernel of the earliest Gospel, it is not the whole of it. The Apostolic preaching sees the Passion as the culmination of the ministry (Ac 2<sup>22</sup> 10<sup>38</sup>). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the early oral tradition prefixed to the Passion narrative an outline of the ministry with stories illustrating its purpose and method.

Further, a large part of the activity of Jesus had been teaching addressed to all kinds of audiences. It was inevitable that this too should be treasured up in the memories of those who heard it, and repeated when believers met together. When new members were added to the community they must be instructed about the kind of life that Jesus had prescribed for those who entered the Kingdom of God as His disciples.

Thus alongside of the oral tradition about the crucified Messiah ben David there would grow up the oral tradition of the teaching of Jesus. This latter first took written form in the document known as Q, which was used by the authors of Matthew and Luke. By comparison of these two Gospels we can reconstruct Q with a fair amount of probability, though we cannot be certain that all of it has been incorporated in Matthew and

Luke, or that the exact wording has been preserved. Study of this document, thus reconstructed, leads to the conclusion that it was compiled primarily as a manual of instruction in the meaning of discipleship for the use of those who were converted by the preaching of the gospel.

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It may be conjectured that the need for such a treatise would be felt most acutely as soon as the Church began to make converts in large numbers, and especially when converts began to be drawn from non-Jewish circles. This happened at Antioch (Ac 11<sup>19-20</sup>), where there arose a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians; and it is permissible to suppose that it was there that Q was written down in Aramaic and first translated into Greek, probably before the middle of the first century.

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The question whether the statement of Papias preserved by Eusebius refers to Q is still in debate. In Professor MANSON'S opinion the question ought to be answered in the affirmative, in which case the possibility emerges that Q was put together by the Matthew whose name appears in the list of the Twelve.

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It is probable that other collections of material concerning the ministry were put together at an early date. There is, for example, the so-called 'Little Apocalypse' embedded in Mk 13; there is the collection of conflict-stories (Mk 2<sup>1-3</sup>, 11<sup>27-12</sup><sup>34</sup>); there is the mass of teaching peculiar to Matthew, which may be derived from a Jerusalem compilation made up on similar lines to Q perhaps about a decade later than that document. And more besides.

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In fact, it becomes increasingly likely that the process by which the oral tradition was reduced to writing and finally presented in the Gospels was a good deal more complicated than we usually think; and that much of the material, which was later incorporated in the Gospels, was in written form at an earlier date than is commonly allowed. If we ask what literature the Church possessed at

the time when Paul and Barnabas set out on the first missionary journey, the answer will be: the Old Testament; an outline of the ministry of Jesus and a detailed account of the Passion, the latter in a fixed form if not written down; a collection of the teachings of Jesus (Q) probably in writing; possibly other collections of material—parables, conflict-stories, proof texts from the Old Testament, either written down or on the way to being written down.

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With regard to the Gospels as we have them, Dr. MANSON accepts the tradition that connects Mark with Rome, St. Peter and John Mark. He also accepts the statement that Mark embodies recollections of the oral teaching of Peter. There is internal evidence for this. The contents of Mark seem to be 'the outcome of genuine historical tradition.' We are dealing with the products of memory, not of imagination.

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Matthew is a revised and enlarged edition of Mark. The enlargement consists mainly in the addition of narrative matter at the beginning and end of the story; the incorporation of five great discourses, and the introduction of proof-texts from the Old Testament. The additional matter is derived partly from a source or sources peculiar to this Gospel (M) and partly from Q. Dr. MANSON concludes from the evidence that Matthew is a Greek document making use of Greek sources, and that the Church tradition that the Gospel was composed by Matthew in the 'Hebrew dialect' (Aramaic) is wrong. The author is unknown. From the internal evidence it may be guessed that he was a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian of Palestine.

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Dr. MANSON is interesting and suggestive about the Third Gospel. He accepts the Lucan authorship, and thinks we have here the first piece of Christian apologetic. The Gospel was not written for ecclesiastical use but for publication, to commend the new religion to the Empire. Its sources are Mark, Q, and a special source peculiar to Luke (L). The first stage was probably the bringing

together of Q and L to form a document about the size of Mark. This may have taken place at Cæsarea during Paul's detention there. Later, material from Mark was added and the Birth and Infancy narratives were prefixed to produce the Gospel as we know it. The date is probably A.D. 75-85.

These are the main conclusions, we may take it, of contemporary criticism. The discerning reader will see how the truth in Form-Criticism is worked into the theory. There is, perhaps, too much of 'probable,' 'may be' and even 'possible' for our complete comfort. But, after all, a high degree of probability is all history can give us. And critics like Dr. MANSON are very honest. And it may be said that his results are in their broad effect very reassuring. They point with a large measure of certainty to the trustworthiness of the Gospel narratives.

It has been justly claimed that Dr. W. B. SELBIE, now Principal Emeritus of Mansfield College, Oxford, made a real contribution in his 'The Psychology of Religion' to the subject of the bearing of the so-called new psychology (that of the schools of Freud, Jung, and Adler) upon the Christian faith. Since he published that work the subject has clarified itself further in his mind, and now his mature judgment on the tenets of the new psychology and their bearing on religion is set forth in a recent volume of 'The Christian Challenge Series' which appears under the title, *Christianity and the New Psychology* (Centenary Press; 3s. 6d. net).

Like the wise householder in the parable, Principal SELBIE brings out of his treasury things both new and old. And he assembles them before his readers in simple, clear, and impressive fashion. There is nothing here to mislead or bewilder.

The burden of the book is that psychology, while useful up to a point, has its limitations. It is not philosophy or theology, and is not to be

confounded with one of these. But there is a place for it in the Christian life, even for the new psychology; psycho-analysis may have valuable uses. Let us illustrate the two points herein contained.

First, the limitations of psychology. There is a tendency among the later psychologists to foist upon their legitimate findings on religious matters illegitimate philosophical or theological theories, chiefly of a negative sort. But this tendency should be resisted. It should be clearly observed that psychology has to do mainly, if not exclusively, with the subjective side of religion, and that questions of objective reality lie beyond its 'universe of discourse.'

Speaking of psychology applied to religion, Principal SELBIE says: 'Its concern is not with doctrines, but with facts, states of consciousness, religious phenomena, rather than religion. It purports to be scientific and to confine itself strictly to classifying, observing, experimenting, and drawing conclusions. It thus provides a great deal of valuable and interesting material for study, which men may use as seems good to them. It all has the effect of helping us to understand that religion is no excrescence or after-thought, but an integral part of man's make-up and of his reaction to the universe. That is all to the good, but, though it bears on the question, it cannot throw any light on the truth or reality of religion. Psychologists mostly recognize this, but their recognition would be more impressive if they did not sometimes assume that their science tends to do the opposite, that is, reduce all religion to illusion. But if they cannot prove the truth of religion, neither can they prove its falsity. They can only provide material which must be taken into consideration by all those who would justify religion either to themselves or to the world at large.'

Secondly, the uses of psychology. Principal SELBIE seeks to show in the course of his discussions that psychology, and in particular the new psychology, can be as powerful a weapon in the hands of those who would defend Christianity as in the

hands of those who would destroy it. He freely allows that psycho-analysis as a means of treating nervous disorders has fairly established itself, though repudiating the assumption or inference that human nature and action are mere automatism, and God a mere projection. But supporting a statement by an American psychotherapist, he writes: 'As a method of diagnosis psycho-analysis is invaluable, but it must be followed by psychosynthesis if it is to effect lasting cures, and in the synthesizing process religion must play a great, if not the leading, part. Many psychotherapists acknowledge this, and willingly admit that faith, prayer, penitence, and confession are most valuable aids in ministering to the mind diseased.'

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This seems to be as far as psychology can take us into the ontological sphere of philosophy or theology. But we should be warned that this merely pragmatic proof of the reality of religion is easily converted into the affirmation that religion is no more than a system of psychotherapy and God a mere convenience to be used only when needed. As against such an affirmation it should be maintained that while spiritual healing is a reality, it is incidental to religion rather than its main business. Wholeness is greater than health. We commend to our readers Principal SELBIE'S wise discussion at this point of the subject of spiritual healing.

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It is inevitable that men's minds should be preoccupied with the war. It raises an almost endless variety of problems, and not least in the moral and religious sphere. It lays on every Christian preacher the obligation to seek, under the guidance of the Word and Spirit of God, to understand the crisis and to interpret it aright to his people.

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A little book which may be found very helpful in this connexion has just been published. Its title is *Why Does God Allow War*, by the Rev. D. Martyn LLOYD-JONES (Hodder & Stoughton ;

2s. 6d. net). The writer, who, as is well known, is the associate minister of Westminster Chapel, preached recently a series of five sermons in which he endeavoured to set forth 'a general justification of the ways of God.' The writing is robust and vigorous in tone, and is packed full of sound Christian teaching. Problems are faced fearlessly and there is a marked aversion to take refuge in merely pious but ill-grounded sentiment. The fourth sermon in the series, which bears the same title as the book and deals especially with the war, is perhaps the best and most timely. A few notes upon it will serve to give some idea of the quality of the book.

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In the attitude of religious minds to the war there are two tendencies manifest. On the one hand, there are many who discuss the whole problem of war solely from the human point of view, as a thing apart from God or related to Him only in a very indirect manner. They seek out the causes of war in the political and economic spheres, and they interest themselves in considering what the Christian man's attitude to war should be. This seems to be the chief concern of Pacifists, who never appear to raise the practical problem of the direct relationship of God to war. Of course, they would say that to them it is a fundamental postulate that 'the very idea of war is abhorrent to God, and of necessity has nothing to do directly with God because it is the result of man's sin and folly.'

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There are others who feel that this does not go deep enough. They are confronted as we all are with the problem of how war affects man, and in particular of how the Christian man should relate himself to war. But beyond and beneath all that they feel themselves faced with the problem of how war is to be fitted into God's governance of this world. 'In a word, what perplexes these people most of all is not the explanation of the origin of war, or their own immediate duty with respect to it ; what they desire to know is, "Why does God allow or permit war ?" That is to them the question of all questions, because on the answer to it depends the whole of their belief in God.'

Why does God allow war? The question may be asked defiantly in unbelief by those who regard war as the complete refutation of the Christian's faith in a God of love. With such people it is obviously useless to discuss the particular point until more central questions of the faith are settled. But there are believing minds to whom the problem of war brings serious perplexity. It is obvious that many Christians of to-day, in their thought of God, have stressed the attribute of divine love almost to the entire exclusion of all else. 'This shows itself in normal times in the view they hold of the subject of forgiveness, their representation being that God as love forgives without any conditions whatsoever, as if His righteousness and holiness were non-existent. The idea that God should under any circumstances punish is altogether foreign to their whole outlook. The one activity they recognize in God is His forgiveness, and His benevolent attitude towards mankind.' Holding this view of God they cannot understand how He can possibly allow war, with all its cruelty and suffering. As their own tenderness of heart would prompt them to stop the war if they had the power, they ask in bewilderment why does not God, who surely has the power, stop the war?

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Now it is sometimes useful to answer one question by asking another, and in answer to the question, 'Why does God permit war?' there are two questions which may be thrown out as a challenge. The first is, Has God ever promised to prohibit war? The second is, Why *should* God stop the war?

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Has God ever promised to prohibit war? Many form their impression of what God is and what He ought to do from the ideas current in their day and not from the teaching of God's own Word. As sin is treated lightly and human prosperity and happiness are regarded as the chief end, they reach the conclusion that this must be, for God also, the supreme interest. But when we allow our thought of God to be guided by His Word, we find that nowhere is a promise given that this sinful world shall be free from strife and war. Our Lord Himself predicted that to the end of the present

age there would be wars and rumours of wars, for 'nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.' The whole teaching of the New Testament is that the battle between good and evil, with all its attendant miseries and horrors, shall continue with bitterness till the final victory. In view of such a prospect our Lord says, 'See that ye be not troubled,' and those whose faith rests upon the Word are not troubled and shaken in soul because they see that so long as sin continues the world must suffer from its fearful ravages.

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The other question is, Why should God stop the war? The answer would no doubt be that it is in the interest of human well-being that we should have peace. But before we are so sure of that we should searchingly ask ourselves the question—Why do we desire peace? What use do we intend to make of it? To glorify God or to gratify our own lusts? To serve His kingdom or to pursue our own selfish pleasures and worldly ends? As a matter of history what use did our people make of the peace which was granted at the end of the last war? Is it not the case that many who carried themselves nobly during the war, broke loose at its close and lived regardless of God's holy law? 'Men and women in this and every other country gave themselves to a life of pleasure-seeking, accompanied by spiritual and mental indolence. This became evident not only in the decline of religion, but still more markedly in the appalling decline in morals; and indeed, finally, even in a decline in a political and social sense.' The question then comes to be, Is there any interest of the Kingdom of God to be served by substituting for the horrors of war the godlessness and sensuality of a rotten peace? When, like the aged Zacharias, we ask God to deliver us out of the hand of our enemies in order that we may 'serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life,' only then have we a right to pray for peace with any confidence that our prayers will be heard.

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Why does God allow war? That question cannot be isolated from the whole Christian view of sin and of God's government of a sinful world.

War is a consequence of sin, doubtless a very dreadful consequence. 'The Bible does not isolate war, as if it were something separate and unique and quite apart, as we tend to do in our thinking. It is but one of the manifestations of sin. On a larger scale, perhaps, and in a more terrible form for that reason, but still, in its essence, precisely the same as all the other effects and consequences of sin.' All sin leads to misery and loss, but because the working out of this particular sin is so manifestly disastrous, men begin to cry out for God to intervene and, by an exercise of His almighty power, save them from the evils that have come upon them. But why do not men ask to be saved from the evils consequent upon other sins? While they pray and expect God to stop war, why do they not also ask God to stop the miseries consequent upon drunkenness and immorality? 'But if any one ventured to suggest that, a protest loud and strong would be registered immediately in the name of freedom. We boast of our free will and resent any suggestion or teaching that God should in any way interfere with it. And yet, when, as the result of the exercise of that very freedom, we find ourselves faced with the horrors and troubles and sufferings of a war, like peevish children we cry out our protests and complain bitterly against God because He has not used His almighty power and forcibly prevented it.'

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It is a fundamental principle of God's moral

government of the world that those who sin must bear the consequences of their sin. 'Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.' If, like Cadmus, we sow dragon's teeth in the furrows we may expect a crop of armed men and murderous strife. And because, for our solace and comfort, we are linked together in families and nations, we must bear one another's burdens and share the bitter fruits of each others' sins. Without this firm moral foundation and without this solidarity, human life as we know it would be impossible.

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This does not mean that God's government is a cast-iron and soulless system. On the contrary, it is animated with a redemptive purpose through and through. Its design is to unmask sin and deliver men from its power. Sin is counted pleasant and dearly loved. But war, above almost anything else, shows its grim and hideous reality. And this, surely, is a lesson which our generation especially needed to learn. Not only did men sin, but they sinned with a light heart. They openly boasted that nobody nowadays worries about sin. Now it would seem that God is teaching in dreadful wise, as even the blindest must see, how terrible a thing sin is and how desperately wicked is the heart of man. By the hammer blows of war this is being beaten into the nations in order that, learning through bitter experience the deadly nature of sin, they may turn in penitence and faith to Him who will have mercy upon them.

