

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'WITH desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer' (Lk 22¹⁵). On these words there are two notes in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for last quarter. The first note is by Professor Burkitt, the second by Mr. A. E. Brooke.

The words have a pathetic sound. Is this due to the words themselves, or to their meaning? Their form is ancient, in the Greek as well as in the English. 'With desire I have desired'—so the ancient Hebrews said when they would express an eager desire. And sometimes we have had it so translated in English, as in Gn 22¹⁷, 'In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed.' But oftener by far we have had the emphasis laid on an adverb. In Gn 16¹⁰ the Hebrew again is 'multiplying I will multiply thy seed,' but the English is 'I will multiply thy seed exceedingly.' Here, however, the quaint Hebrew form of speech happily had to be retained, for it has been retained in the Greek.

Is the pathos in the quaintness of the language? It is usually understood to be. For it is usually understood that our Lord did eat that Passover with His disciples. But Professor Burkitt believes that there is deeper pathos in the meaning than in the words. For he believes that Jesus did not eat that Passover. He believes that, passionate as His

desire had been, His hour came before the Passover could be eaten.

And Mr. Brooke agrees with him. Mr. Brooke has seen Professor Burkitt's paper, and declares that he is altogether in agreement with it, three or four years having passed since he came to the same conclusion. He has therefore little to add beyond the textual evidence. But the textual evidence is of great importance.

For if it is true that Christ did not eat of the Passover; if it is true that the Last Supper was not the Passover Supper, but a separate meal on an evening before the Passover, then the testimony of St. Luke agrees with the testimony of St. John, and one of the greatest controversies in all the history of the Church must be re-opened.

Professor Burkitt and Mr. Brooke both hold firmly (though as yet they confess that they are in a minority of two) that the Last Supper, according to St. Luke's account of it, was not the Passover. And when Mr. Brooke examines the evidence of the text, he comes to the conclusion that St. Luke's original statement was afterwards altered to make it fit into the Synoptic tradition. 'May we not, therefore, add Lk 22^{15, 16} to the indications, considerable in number, that the so-called Synoptic view of the Last Supper is not the view which lies

behind, or is presupposed by, the earliest forms of the tradition which they embody? It may be incorrect to speak of the Fourth Gospel as "correcting" a Synoptic mistake. It has at any rate preserved more clearly the truer tradition.'

We recall a word spoken by Professor Sanday a good many years ago, we cannot tell where, in reference to this very question. His word was in the form of a caution. To those who used St. John's account of the Last Supper to discredit the trustworthiness of the Fourth Gospel, Dr. Sanday said they could not be sure that the tradition embodied in the Fourth Gospel might not yet be proved to be the true tradition.

It is reported that there is in the University of Glasgow in these days a fine flourishing agnosticism. Its origin is subject of dispute. But it is there. It is there in quite vigorous and almost insolent growth.

In the University of Glasgow there is also some Christianity. Now it has ever been the way with Christianity when it found itself menaced by agnosticism to 'apologize' for itself. Not apologetically. The fine old name of 'apology' has been permitted to descend from its high place and join the company of poor relations. When the Christianity of the University of Glasgow discovered that it was regarded as a mere antiquity, it formed itself into the Society of St. Ninian and began to deliver its apology.

The Society of St. Ninian engaged distinguished lecturers, who delivered lectures in the University throughout the winter session. It engaged the Rev. G. A. Johnston Ross of Cambridge, the Rev. Father W. J. Crofton, S.J., of Glasgow, the Rev. Canon Macculloch of Portree, the Rev. P. A. Gordon Clark of Perth, and others. And among the others it engaged Mr. John M. Robertson, M.P., of London.

Now Mr. John M. Robertson is the most successful apologist, not for Christianity but for agnosticism, in the present day. He is successful because he is so unhesitatingly unscrupulous. The word is not used offensively. There are those who have scruples and are defeated. Mr. Robertson has no scruples and he is nearly always victorious. Was the Society of St. Ninian twitted with timidity? Were they told that their lecturers would say what they were expected to say? Or was it simply that for one lecture they determined to hear the other side? We cannot tell, but they invited Mr. John M. Robertson. Mr. Robertson readily accepted the invitation, and lectured on 'Comparative Hierology and the Claims of Revelation.'

What is Comparative Hierology? It is simply Mr. Robertson's name for Comparative Religion. It is a better name. It is better for Mr. Robertson's purpose. Comparative Religion seems to say that there is some reality about Religion. Comparative Hierology says nothing of the kind. Rather does it delicately suggest that all Religion is Hierology, a mere theory and probably a false one.

For Mr. Robertson's purpose was to show that the study of Comparative Religion destroys the claims of Revelation. And without scruple he boldly began by saying that it had done so in the past. He said that in the past whenever a nation came in contact with another religion than its own (the ancient way of studying Comparative Religion) there was a tendency either to variation of belief or else to scepticism. And he quoted examples.

Mr. Robertson always quotes examples. And when he has made a statement and has quoted a certain number of examples in support of it, he passes to another statement. He takes it for granted that you admit the truth of the first statement, and he uses it as the starting-point for the second. It is therefore necessary when you listen

to Mr. Robertson to hold his statement in suspense till you have considered his examples.

Now examples are nothing but statistics. And statistics may be used to prove anything. Here Mr. Robertson's examples are cleverly chosen, as they always are. For he has a good working knowledge of history, and he takes notes as he goes. His examples are cleverly chosen for his purpose. But he gives no hint of the fact that the Jews came in contact with the religion of Babylonia and became more exclusive (Mr. Robertson himself would say more bigoted) than before. He does not mention that afterwards they came in contact with the Persians and were confirmed in their exclusiveness. Nor does he remind us that when the Greeks used every art and every effort to hellenize them, they remained Jews still, earnestly waiting for the Consolation of Israel and nourishing in their bosom a highly exclusive Phariseism.

Why does Mr. Robertson affirm that the study of Comparative Religion will make sceptics of us? To frighten us from it? It may be so. For if we were to become students of Comparative Religion, his present advantage over us would be lost. It is on the supposition that he knows Comparative Religion better than we do that he comes to lecture us. It is because we know so little about it that he is so successful as a lecturer.

The lectures which were delivered before the Glasgow University Society of St. Ninian last winter have been gathered into a volume. The title of the volume is *Religion and the Modern Mind* (Hodder & Stoughton; 5s.). Principal Macalister contributes an introduction. The first lecture in the book is written by the Rev. G. A. Johnston Ross, who calls his lecture 'The Religionist and the Scientist.'

These are ugly words. But Mr. Ross cannot help it. For his purpose is to deal not with things,

but with persons. He is to try, not to reconcile science and religion, but to show what is the attitude of a minister of religion in the present time to a student of science. He conceives of his relation to his 'brother the student and exponent of science' under four aspects.

The first aspect is Independence. He and his 'brother' have both to deal with facts, but their facts are different. 'The scientist's facts are external, mine internal. The scientist's facts are natural, mine moral. He speaks of his facts in the language of mechanism: I of mine in the language of freedom. He deals with courses and sequences of phenomena: I with origins, purpose, and destiny.'

The facts are different, but both are facts. 'If the scientific man says, "This room was swept with a broom," I as religionist am saying as real a thing when I say, "This room was swept with a purpose"; or again, that if a man commits a murder, his guilty conscience is as real as the corpse of the person he has murdered.'

The next aspect is Comradeship. For though the religionist and the scientist are at work in independent spheres of fact, they are both at work. There is Comradeship in that. If they could finish their work they would see that the facts of the one sphere are not really independent of the facts of the other sphere. But they will never see their work finished. And just because they cannot see it finished here, let each of them recognize that the work of the other may be a true portion of the finished whole.

They are also comrades in discipline. For they have both been guilty of mistake and they have both been tried by misfortune. The facts are more, and more unmanageable, in both spheres of work than either worker ever dreamed. But both are sustained by hope. 'For the more we know of the universe, the more numerous become the suggestions of order, and the more excitingly near

do we seem to come to a satisfactory demonstration that the whole system is one rational unity.'

The third aspect is Debtorship. It is debtorship on the side of the religionist. Have there been changes in the presentation of religion, and have they been for the better? We owe it to science far more than to criticism or philosophy. We owe to science three new emphases in theology, to be expressed by the words Unity, Law, Progress.

The word 'Unity' is now heard with frequency on the theologian's lips. He owes that to the frequency with which the scientist insists on the uniformity of nature. The theologian speaks much of the Unity of God now. And here Mr. Ross quotes Professor Gwatkin. 'What we mean,' says Professor Gwatkin, 'by saying that the physical universe is governed by general laws, is that knowledge is impossible unless the whole system is at least a rational unity, whatever else it may be. And this means that if force be its moving power, there must be one force and no more: and if God, there must be one God and no more.' 'It is to that last sentence,' says Mr. Ross, 'that I desire to draw your attention. Science has proclaimed aloud its monodynamism: theology has overheard, and has been startled into a new understanding of its own monotheism.'

And the new emphasis on the unity of God is accompanied by a new sense of the unity and solidarity of the human race—a truth without which, as Mazzini said, there is no religion. The immediate open effect has been 'kindlier international relationships, saner and more intelligent views of the responsibility for Christian missions, wider appreciation of the value and responsibilities of grouped lives, and especially (that which so ministers to-day to hope in the sphere of theology) an expectant and docile observation of developments of thought and life in the Far East.' Is that all? There is also a new systematic theology. For out of our theology have been driven those

ideas of election and reprobation, of distinctions among men and nations, 'distinctions which an over-confident thought in earlier generations traced even up to the eternal councils of God.'

The next debt which the religionist owes to the scientist is the emphasis on Law. At first this emphasis seems to widen the gulf of separation, not to close it. For the emphasis upon law may almost be called the *differentia* of science, while the *differentia* of religion is the emphasis on freedom. Science deals with facts and consequences in the natural sphere and emphasizes retribution. Religion deals with moral acts and their consequences, and has staked, and rightly staked, her whole existence on the possibility of forgiveness.

Mr. Ross does not attempt to reconcile these two voices. He is concerned for the moment with religion only. He is speaking of the debt which religion owes to science, not science to religion. And he says that the emphasis which science puts on Law has made it no longer possible to speak of forgiveness in the way it was formerly spoken of. 'I assert that there were whole vast areas of evangelical religion where a conception of forgiveness was prevalent, which simply would not square with the facts of life, and where, for need of such a corrective as science has furnished, there was the most appalling blindness to these facts, with the inevitable stream of consequences to public morality.'

The third item of debt is Progress. 'We are all evolutionists now.' And being evolutionists now, we have a new view of Holy Scripture, of its history, and of its doctrine, and of its relation to secular history and doctrine. And we have a new view of Christ. 'Confined within human limits,' says Mr. Ross, 'He is the stultification of the calculations of evolutionists; viewed as our moral natures direct us to view Him, He is the goal and crown of the evolutionary process in the history of man.'

But the debt is not all on one side; and so, in the end of his lecture, Mr. Ross discusses the last aspect in which he views his relation as a Christian minister to his brother the exponent of science. That aspect he calls Benefactorship.

Now the benefits which religion has conferred upon science have not been so much considered, and it must be confessed that they are not so easily set forth, as the benefits which science has conferred upon religion. They require to be worked up. Perhaps the best beginning would be made with the confessions of scientists themselves. But the confessions of men like Lord Kelvin need systematizing, perhaps also verification. It is a fruitful field, but not easy to labour in. All that Mr. Ross attempts to do is to show that however the scientist, *qua* scientist, may confine himself to 'natural' facts, as man he has also moral experiences to deal with, experiences which he cannot escape from, and which continually impinge upon questions of origin, purpose, and destiny.

These experiences are not less real, and they are not less important, than the external facts of nature. And it is because the minister of religion has a message for the scientist fitted to meet his spiritual discontent, 'a message to hearten him in the midst of these nameless faintings of *faith in life* which come to the believer and unbeliever alike; to quiet, if not to explain, turbulent moods of the spirit, which, in all, tend to upset the balance of self-poise in the face of life's troubles; to nourish and respond to aspirations, without the uplift of which life were a poor and jejune thing; to fortify and prepare, not so much for death as for judgment, of which last the unbeliever has as definite an instinct as the Christian has; and, finally, to transmute into a glad certainty, through Jesus Christ, his hopeful guesses about immortality'—it is because he has such a message that the minister of religion speaks of benefactorship, and claims that in his intercourse with the scientist he has far more to give than to receive.

'Is it not the very defect of so many sermons that they follow already well-trodden tracks?' The question is asked by a distinguished Swiss scholar, Professor Bertholet of Basel. It is asked in his own delightful English, which has evidently been printed exactly as it was received by the editor of the *Homiletic Review*. It is asked in the course of an article in that preachers' monthly for October.

Professor Bertholet is right. This is the very defect of so many sermons. There is no defect so damaging. And even the preacher of the sermons is sometimes dimly suspicious of it. But what is he to do? Where is the man who will show the preacher how to leave the well-trodden tracks?

Professor Bertholet undertakes to show the way. He has written his article for that very purpose. He is a preacher himself. He is more frequently a hearer than a preacher, and on that account he has felt more crushingly the weariness of the well-trodden track. But he is also a preacher, and he has found that his studies in other religions than Christianity have given unbounded pleasure to himself, and when used in the pulpit, as he has been able to use them, 'have led his hearers in paths which for them have all the charm of novelty.'

But Dr. Bertholet does not reach this matter of the well-trodden track all at once. The title of his article is 'The Value of the History of Religions for Preachers.' He finds other values for the preacher in the study of the religious life of the world besides the charm of novelty that may be introduced into the sermon.

The other religions of the world contain some grains of truth. Let us save the truth whenever we find it, however buried and distorted. And Professor Bertholet thinks that even if we hold the strictest doctrine of revelation, we need not be behind the Swiss Reformer. 'Truth,' said Zwingli,

'wherever found and by whomsoever uttered, takes its origin from the Holy Ghost, the well from which Plato drank and Seneca drew water.'

But this is dangerous ground. We are still sensitive to the exclusiveness of Christianity. Very naively, almost amusingly, Dr. Bertholet shakes his head at Bileam (as he spells the name of the Seer), and says 'his words, that the Israelites shall dwell alone, must be taken *cum grano salis*.' But we have scarcely left Balaam's point of view yet. Not for the sake of Judaism, of course, but of Christianity. Professor Bertholet thinks that Christianity has dwelt alone too long. But it is delicate ground to walk on.

With his second argument he is out of danger. He says that other religions should be studied in order that they may be combated and conquered. Especially by missionaries. And then he quotes Dr. Paul Carus. 'Missionaries,' says Dr. Carus, 'are religious ambassadors. Their duty consists not only in the propagation of their own religion, but also in the acquisition of a perfect comprehension of the religion of those peoples to whom they are sent; and Christians can justly pride themselves on the fact that all their great missionaries, such men as Duff, Judson, Hardy, Beal, Legge, and others, every one in his field, did an enormous amount of work which served to widen our own knowledge of the religious views that prevail in India, Ceylon, Burmah, and China.'

It is time Professor Bertholet had come to the preacher. What can the study of religion do for the preacher who is neither a professional theologian, compelled to adjust his doctrine of revelation, nor a missionary compelled to know the religion he has come to destroy? It can do two things for him.

First, the study of other religions will enable him the better to understand and appreciate his own. And, next, it will show him how his own religion, or at least his own comprehension of it, may be

both strengthened and deepened. For where is the attack upon Christianity made to-day? It is made from the side of Comparative Religion. Christianity, we are told, is a syncretistic religion. It is made up of elements culled from the other religions of the world. Well, we must meet that. An uneasy denial, uneasy on account of our conscious ignorance, is worse than useless, it is treacherous. Now, Christianity came out of Judaism. And what was Judaism?

Whatever it was originally—and on that some astonishing light has been cast by the excavations of Mr. Macalister at Gezer—it is certain that before the inheritance passed to Christianity it had adopted elements from Babylonia from Persia and from Greece, if not from others besides. We cannot at present tell what Judaism was. And the reason why we cannot tell is that we cannot fix the amount or the proportion of its ingredients. Says Professor Sellin: 'The religion of the Old Testament in the framework of the other religions of the Ancient East—that is the problem which now occupies Old Testament science, the problem which has at once put all the others in the background, and to which all comprehensive representations of the Old Testament religion, as well as all detailed investigations, have to be directed if they are to be up to date.'

Did Judaism, then, entertain strangers so hospitably, and did Christianity at once put an end to the entertainment? The claim would not be worth making if it could be made. But it can no longer be made. Professor Bertholet speaks of certain Christian customs as 'survivals.' He can do so now without offence. For we know now that they are survivals, and we can trace their origin and their affinities in Greek or Roman or other pagan religion. More than that, Professor Bertholet says, 'it is quite surprising how much light is to be obtained from the history of Vedic or Muhamadan theology for a full comprehension of Christian ideas about the inspiration of Holy Scripture.'

Again, the study of other religions opens the preacher's eyes to the originality and particular value of his own. For the true nature of anything, says Professor Bertholet, can be recognized only by comparison. Only by setting it beside other precious stones can we see the eminence of the diamond. And then he refers to his own experience. 'I may speak by my own experience. In my *Religionsgeschichtliches Lesebuch* (1908) I have endeavoured to render non-Christian sacred texts accessible to a larger circle of readers. The point of view from which their selection has been made was not, it is true, that of their beauty, but of their fitness for rendering comprehensible the religions which they are destined to illustrate. But the more I plunged into them, the more it struck me how much the Bible—not of course every part of it, but taken as a whole—excels them. And if in some papers I have tried to sketch the superiority of Christianity over them, this was the very result of my closer occupation with Buddhism.'

It is quite true that on the part of certain members of Christian countries there is a movement at present in the direction of embracing

Buddhism. And an active Buddhistic propaganda has begun on European soil. But what does that signify? It signifies that the preacher has neglected to study Buddhism for himself and to tell others what it is. These persons are ignorant of Buddhism. That is why they embrace it. And Professor Bertholet is not afraid to say that they are merely toying with it, and indulging the latest freak of fashion.

It is then that Professor Bertholet comes to the value of the study of Comparative Religion for the pulpit. It is not in the way of illustration merely, though he gives illustrations. It is still more in the new and larger outlook, the new emphasis, the new proportion, and even the new and welcome vocabulary. 'At the Congress of the History of Religions at Basel,' says Professor Bertholet '(the previous gathering to that just held at Oxford), a Parsi high priest from Bombay asked me to recommend him some books of Protestant sermons, as he wished to oppose the traditionalism in the present manner of preaching among the Parsis, and hoped that new life would be given to it by means of non-Parsi homiletical literature.'

The Bearing of Criticism upon the Gospel History.

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I.

[THE papers which follow are the substance of two lectures delivered in the summer of this year; and the lecture form has been retained. The full title of the lectures (which, it may be explained, was not of the writer's choosing) was 'The Bearing of Criticism on (1) the Events of the Gospel History, and (2) the Belief in the Divinity of our Lord.' It might perhaps be expected that the lectures would include the discussion of some burning questions, such as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. But the omission of these subjects was deliberate; partly from a desire to

avoid anything at all sensational, and partly because the lectures were addressed to students, and their purpose was not so much to supply cut-and-dried conclusions as to suggest a method and attitude. When the time comes, I shall be prepared to deal as well as I can with all parts of the Gospel History; but my belief is that the particular questions I have mentioned are best reserved till the last. A somewhat prolonged suspension of judgement is, I conceive, to be encouraged rather than otherwise, in order that when the decision is made it may be made with the total mass of the