THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'THE Christian Faith has had to justify itself to different ages in different ways.'

The Bishop of Southwark has made this discovery. He has made it as a preacher, not as a professional apologist. He has set it down at the beginning of the Preface to a small volume of sermons, of which the title is *The Fulness of Christ* (Macmillan; 1s. 6d. net). For if the Christian faith has had to justify itself to different ages in different ways, it has to justify itself in some particular way to the present age, and the justification is the business of the ordinary preacher of the gospel.

The Christian faith justified itself to the early centuries, says Dr. Talbot, 'by the evidence of its response to the hopes and intimations of the Jewish Scriptures, and by the joy and constancy in suffering which it was able to create.' In the days of the decline and fall of the Empire, it justified itself by its power to curb and to civilize. In the eighteenth century it justified itself by its abstract moral and religious value. The demand to justify itself to our time is greater, says Bishop Talbot, than any demand that ever was made upon it. It is vital that we should know how to make it meet that demand.

Dr. Talbot sees a strong resemblance between the condition of things in the Imperial period when the Faith first made its way and the condition of things in that period in which we are now living. Rome had demolished the local centres of force and tradition. It had attracted men of many sorts, religions, and habits to a focus in the City. And it had produced a fusion and mixture in which what was peculiar tended to vanish, and what was universal to emerge. This compelled men to grasp at ideas of what was natural and universally human. The Stoics personified Nature, and almost deified it. And lawyers as well as philosophers tried to find expression for their new conceptions of a cosmic commonwealth of gods and men.

Then Christianity came. It came in entire independence and along a road that was all its own. But it came as a universal religion. And it was found to be congenial—Dr. Talbot says providentially congenial—to the temper of its time, as it would not have been congenial if it had appeared in the time of the Roman Republic or of the Greek autonomies.

The situation in our day is kindred in character. It is kindred in character but far wider in range. In place of the Mediterranean area, we have (approximately) the whole face of the globe. For the Pax Romana we have a period of general

peace. For the network of Roman roads we have steam and electricity and universal travel. 'In the world of action and in the world of thought everything touches everything, and all become aware of the things of each other. Religious systems and national customs are each other's critics. What is peculiar, local, and partial attracts indeed any amount of curious interest and study; but it tends to disappear, or at least we see what is universal undermining and transforming it. The tendencies of the time point to and require that which is of universal scope, and especially that which is simply, broadly, and comprehensively human.'

That is the demand. Is the Christian religion, is the gospel of Jesus Christ, fit to meet it? In its origin it belongs to a particular period of the history of the world, and a period that is long past. It had to clothe itself in the languages of Greece and Rome. Though it sprang from a Semitic people, and from a land more Oriental than Western, it has been the religion mainly of Europe and the West. Is it then really a local and ephemeral thing? And is it to be swallowed up along with other ephemeral things in that fusion of cults which is to bring about the universal religion of the future?

The Bishop of Southwark does not think so. Of course he does not. But he sees very clearly that it is the duty of the believer in Christ not only to be ready to give an account to every man of the hope that is in him, but to see to it that the account which he gives is one that will meet the necessities of this very time.

In the history of God's dealings with the people of Israel it is a strange place that is occupied by the Gibeonites. The story of how they 'did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors,' completely outwitting the princes of the congregation of Israel, is told with almost humorous simplicity in the Book of Joshua (9^{3-27}). And on the whole our sympathy is with them. But when they are mentioned again, the situation is changed. The narrative is not so simple. The incident is at the furthest remove from humour. And our sympathy is divided very perplexingly.

They are mentioned again in the lifetime of David. 'There was a famine in the days of David, three years, year after year. And David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites' (2 S 21^{1}). There is no record of this slaughter in the history of Saul. We know nothing about the occasion of it, and its motive is difficult to understand. It is simply stated that 'Saul sought to slay them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah' (2 S 21^{2}). But the perplexity is greatly deepened when we read that, to avenge their wrong, the Gibeonites demanded, and David granted them, seven men of Saul's family that they might 'hang them up unto the Lord' (21^{6}).

Our sympathy begins at once to depart from the Gibeonites when we read this. They may have been cruelly and even treacherously dealt with by Saul. But they are taking a cruel revenge. If Saul did them wrong, they seem to be returning wrong to the sons of Saul. Our sympathy passes to the seven young men and their mothers. And when the historian proceeds to tell the story of Rizpah, we can scarcely abstain from emphatic denunciation of the whole proceeding.

But we cannot help seeing that our righteous indignation has no encouragement in the narrative of the Bible. It is there distinctly stated that the seven men were hung up 'unto the Lord,' and that after their bleached bones were gathered and buried, 'God was entreated for the land.'

Here therefore is a portion of the Word of God which it is very difficult to use for edification. It has its fascination. Tennyson's 'Rizpah' is the literary artist's response to the universal appeal it

makes. But we cannot preach about it. Professor W. G. Jordan tells us that one day recently in a Conference of ministers he endeavoured to discover how often the story of Rizpah was taken as a text. There were young preachers at the Conference, and there were preachers who had had long and varied experience. But none of them had ever preached on Rizpah.

It was not always so. There was a time when this narrative, like every other narrative in the Bible, could be used for homiletical purposes without a quiver. Being in the Bible, it must be meant for edification. And if the edification was not evident on the face of it, a little ingenuity could always adapt it. Professor Jordan takes Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, as it was published in 1863, as representative of what 'the old-fashioned apologetic could do with such awkward material.'

The article is on the Books of Samuel. First of all the story is admitted to be a 'horrible' one. For this Dictionary was a little before its time, and even then inclined to yield something to the demands of human nature. But the author is convinced that 'God did not command this,' though he has no explanation to offer of words like 'the Lord answered,' 'and God was entreated for the land.' Finally, it is suggested that the whole transaction was due to political motives. David availed himself of this religious pretext in order to remove from his path those dangerous 'sons' of Saul.

No such article could be written now. How different is the article which Professor W. G. Jordan contributes to the *Biblical World* for January 1909. He does not call the story horrible. It has a sad pathos, he says, a tragic interest; but to call it horrible is to obliterate time. It is futile also to say that God did not command the deed to be done. And that David was moved by a mere political motive is to save the situation at the expense of David's character. 'We can no longer regard David as the kind of saint that he was pictured to be by the later ages. He was not a saint of the Jewish and mediæval type. He did not spend all his time in composing psalms and conducting Church festivals. But we have too much admiration for the real David to believe him capable of anything so devilish as this.'

Is there, then, nothing that can be done with the story of Rizpah? These things were written aforetime for our edification; is this incident, almost thrust into the artist's hand, beyond the possibility of treatment by the preacher? Professor Jordan has written his article for the very purpose of recapturing it for the pulpit.

The story stands by itself. It is a separate fragment, preserved among the records of the life of David, but without any place in their chronological order. If that is not evident on the face of it, the application of the rules of criticism will bring it out. These rules and their application do not belong to the pulpit. They belong to the study. The pulpit enjoys the result of them. And the result of them is that the story has its place in the early days of the history of Israel. Its exact date does not need to be mentioned or even ascertained. Its authenticity is of no account. For modern homiletical use the attention may therefore be given wholly to the ideas which the narrative contains. It is certainly of the utmost importance that its ideas should be regarded in their setting. Without that regard the older exegesis went astray. That is the secret of all the success which the newer method obtains. But it is enough that the story belongs to the time of David. A more exact determination of date or circumstance is unnecessary in order that its theology may be understood and applied. And the theology is the thing. It is for the sake of its theology that the Bible was written.

Now the first thing which comes clearly out of this narrative of the Gibeonites' vengeance is a

certain theological conception of nature. There is a famine in the land. It is the cause of great distress. In accordance with the view of nature which prevailed, the famine is traced to the direct action of God. He has sent it as a punishment for some definite offence that has been committed.

Professor Jordan calls this theology primitive. He admits that it still exists, and that it is still preached from some of our pulpits. For it is a portion of that rigid system of theology in which some of the preachers of to-day were trained. But it is a mistake to preach it to-day.

In the middle of last century Christian teachers and men of science proclaimed that such visitations as cholera and typhoid were tokens of the anger of God. They did well. But why was God angry? Because of the neglect of those laws of cleanliness which He has impressed upon His world. They did well to propitiate God by prayer and sacrifice. They did well also to attend to their drains.

That is the first thing. It is a lesson most suitable for pulpit use, most edifying. In the universe of God, God Himself does all things decently and in order, and we must do all things decently and in order. And commonplace as it may seem to be, when it is apprehended and applied it records a complete revolution in the thoughts of men concerning the ways of God. Should famine or earthquake befall a nation now, we are to believe that it is due to the hand of God, as our fathers did, but not that it is sent as punishment for a sin with which it has no connexion. The massacre of the Gibeonites will find its own reward. The famine is due perhaps to the selfish neglect of forethought for the poor; the earthquake perhaps to criminal carelessness in the choice of a place to live in or the use of materials to build with.

This is not to contradict the Bible. It is to interpret it. For we have been enabled to see that the truths of the Bible are true for all time, but that they need interpretation. To interpret David's idea of natural events to our time is to strip it of those imperfections which necessarily cling to every attempt at explaining phenomena in a pre-scientific age. To David, and probably even to Rizpah, there was no degradation of God in associating Him with an act of atonement like this. The appearance of degradation is due to our notions of the 'timelessness' of Scripture, about which, as Dr. Jordan says, we occasionally hear much brilliant nonsense.

But there is another great truth in this story. It is the truth that God is a God of justice. Separate the idea again from the form in which it happens to appear, and you see that this idea of justice is a lofty one. It is the idea that God, the God of Israel, demands the fulfilment of a promise made by Israel to an alien. A vow is binding always, and not merely so long as it is politically expedient to observe it. Faithfulness is universal; it is not limited by sect or nation. It is one of those great prophetic truths, says Dr. Jordan, for which we are indebted to the Hebrew race. The circumstances may seem unfamiliar to us. But however uncouth the frame, this story of revenge for Saul's disregard of the promise made to the Gibeonites is in pictorial form the great thought, so clearly taught by Amos, that the God of Israel values righteousness more than He values Israel's political life.

And there is yet another truth. It is the truth, true for all time, that a mother's love is quenchless. We feel for Rizpah. Probably we feel for her most where she herself felt the cross she carried least. We lament the cruel injustice that took her sons from her to avenge another's wrong. She probably acquiesced in that. She was a secondary wife, a piece of Saul's property; she had few rights and few possessions. She could not call her sons her own, though she could consume in grief for the loss of them. What she did feel probably was that

they had not been buried. And when David heard of her long sad vigil, and came and buried the bodies, Rizpah went home in peace.

It has been suggested (chiefly, we think, by Dr. Schechter, formerly Professor of Hebrew in University College, London, now President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America) that the picture of the Pharisees in the Gospels is an exaggeration, and that even our Lord is represented as a little unfair to them.

It may be so. That is to say, it may be that the impression which the behaviour of the Pharisees in the Gospels makes upon us now, is more unfavourable than it should be. For the Gospels give no complete history of any of the sects mentioned in them. They are made up of selected incidents. More than that, when we have once obtained our unfavourable estimate of the Pharisees, we are apt to forget their better examples, and let our minds rest upon the worse. Nevertheless, it is not a matter of very great consequence. It is not denied that there is much that is unlovely in the Pharisaic character as it is presented in Judaism itself. The Christian spirit is a spirit of fairness. And it will be satisfied by receiving the hint to keep in mind in the future the fact that the rich young ruler, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Gamaliel were Pharisees.

But when the charge is made that St. Paul deliberately misrepresented the Jewish feeling for the Law, that is a different matter. Should the Pharisees be made to recover a little of their lost estimation, there is no good Christian but will rejoice. But the burden of the Law is the opportunity of the Gospel. If the average pious Israelite could keep the Law; if he did keep it, and even took great delight in keeping it, where is the opportunity for the grace of God in Christ Jesus? St. Paul says that Christ came to redeem us from the curse of the Law. How could that be if the Law was not a curse?

It is, again, Dr. Schechter who says that the Law was not a curse. It is he who says that the keeping of it was a perpetual joy. He has published another volume of essays on Judaism, calling it *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (A. & C. Black; 7s. 6d. net). Much of the material he works with belongs to the New Testament times, some of it, as he believes, to the lifetime of St. Paul. And from first to last he has it in his mind to show that St. Paul, for his own purposes, made out the Law to be a burden when it was the very opposite of that, a daily satisfaction and delight.

Dr. Schechter would not admit that he has any difficulty in proving this. But he is honest enough to begin with a statement which it takes him some time to get over. It is a statement of Rabbi Simlai, that 'six hundred and thirteen commandments were delivered unto Moses on Mount Sinai, three hundred and sixty-five of which are prohibitive laws, corresponding to the number of days of the solar year, whilst the remaining two hundred and forty-eight are affirmative injunctions, being as numerous as the limbs constituting the human body.'

This, he says, is one of the statements that have been used to show the burden under which the scrupulous Jew must have laboured. But Dr. Schechter does not believe that the numbers were meant to be taken seriously. Rabbi Simlai was writing for edification. He wished to make his congregation feel the force of two important lessons. The first was the fact that each new day brings its new temptations, which can be resisted only by a firm 'Do not.' The second was the fact that to the service of God man must give his whole being, each limb or member of his body being entrusted with the execution of its own particular office.

In proof that Rabbi Simlai did not himself take the numbers seriously, Dr. Schechter quotes the end of the sermon. It runs thus: 'David came

(after Moses), and reduced them (the six hundred and thirteen commandments) to eleven, as it is said: Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?' 'Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly,' etc. (Ps 15^{2-5}). Then Isaiah came, and reduced them to six, as it is said: 'He that walketh righteously,' etc. (Is 33^{15}). Then Micah came, and reduced them to three: 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly,' etc. (Mic 6^{8}). Then Isaiah came again, and reduced them to two, as it is said: 'Thus saith the Lord, Keep my judgments, and do justice' (Is 56^{1}). Then Amos came, and reduced them to one, as it is said: 'Seek the Lord, and live' (Am 5^{6}). Whilst Habbakuk (also) reduced them to one, as it is said: 'But the just shall live by his faith' (Hab 2^{4}).

But it is not to be forgotten that even so great an authority as Maimonides understood the number literally. Still Dr. Schechter is not to be disturbed. This proves nothing, he says, for the 'burden' theory. For by the time of Rabbi Simlai and even earlier, many of the commandments were already obsolete. They were originally addressed to local and immediate circumstances which had passed away, such as those that have to do with the furnishings of the tabernacle or the conquest of Canaan; or to particular classes and individuals, as the Nazirites, the Judges, the King, and the High Priest. And in any case, Dr. Schechter does not believe that the ancient Israelite was troubled about the keeping of the separate commandments in the Law. In his mind he distinguished the Law from the commandments which compose it, just as a Christian will separate the Church from its members. He might not keep all the commandments, but that did not prevent him from finding his delight in the Law.

But then, on the other hand, when the Israelite took delight in the Law, he took delight also in keeping such of the commandments as he could. There is a story which comes down perhaps from the very time in which St. Paul was writing of the Law as the strength of sin. It relates to a law, which is found in Dt 24^{19}, that a sheaf forgotten in the harvest field belonged to the poor, the owner being forbidden to go again and fetch it. This law was called 'the commandment of forgetfulness.' It was the one and only law that a man fulfilled by forgetting. For if he remembered it, he would also remember the sheaf.

This then is the story. It is found in the Tosephta. 'There was a Chasid or saint who forgot a sheaf in his field, and was thus enabled to fulfil the commandment of forgetfulness. Whereupon he bade his son go to the temple and offer for him a burnt-offering and a peace-offering, whilst he also gave a great banquet to his friends in honour of the event. Thereupon his son said to him: Father, why dost thou rejoice in this commandment more than in any other law prescribed in the Torah? He answered, that it was the occurrence of the rare opportunity of accomplishing the will of God, even as the result of some oversight, which caused him so much delight.'

And Dr. Schechter will not let us answer and say that this story is an ancient matter. He has seen the same joy in our own day. 'I myself,' he says, 'had once the good fortune to observe one of those old-type Jews, who, as the first morning of the Feast of Tabernacles drew near, used to wake and rise soon after the middle of the night. There he sat, with trembling joy, awaiting impatiently the break of dawn, when he would be able to fulfil the law of the palm branches and the willows.'

There is no man that we know of, not even Professor Sanday himself, who seems to have a more appropriate message for our day, or seems able to deliver it better, than Professor W. G. Jordan of Queen's University, Canada. Already this month we have noticed one article of his. Now let us notice another.

It is found in the *Methodist Review*, a quarterly which belongs to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and is ably edited by Dr. Gross Alexander. The title of the article is 'Israel's Second Exodus.' But its subject is the Exodus from Houndsditch.

For Professor Jordan has no mere scholar's interest in the history of the past, not even in the past history of Israel. He is a critical student of the Old Testament, and he has come to the conclusion that 'the fact of the Exile cannot be questioned.' But much as the relief will be which that statement will bring to trembling Uzziahs, Dr. Jordan is not overwhelmed with its significance. It is to him of far more consequence that we should share with him the Exodus from Houndsditch than that we should believe Israel enjoyed an Exodus from Mesopotamia.

What is the significance of the Exodus from Mesopotamia? The Exodus from Mesopotamia turned the Jewish nation into a Jewish Church. And then it came out that the Exile had done three things for the Jew which had never been done before.

It made him a man of letters. There was writing before the Babylonian Exile, but the return from the Captivity called the Scribes into being and gave them a perpetual occupation. Since that time the Jew has taken his share in the literary and philosophical movements of the world. And his contribution to literature has worked for the general good.

It made him a missionary. Greece furnished a language that was more fitted than Hebrew to be an instrument of missionary effort, and then the synagogues of the dispersion, in spite of their narrowness and grim legalism, became centres of light for reverent God-seeking men of many nations; and in the natural order the gospel knocked first at the door of the synagogue.

It made him a trader. After the Exile the Jew became a merchant, and Dr. Jordan has no doubt that some cynic anticipated the remark which has been made of the Scotchman, that 'he kept the ten commandments and everything else he could lay his hands upon.' But those who have denounced the Jew have often first driven him to this line of life, and then denounced him from envy of his success in it. Even on the commercial side of his life the Jew has been a servant of humanity, a minister of civilization and culture.

Thus the Exodus from the land of the willow trees was a blessing to Israel and to mankind. But how much greater would the blessing be if the Exodus could take place from Houndsditch. It is Carlyle that speaks of the Exodus from Houndsditch. Why did he not become its leader?

The time was not ripe. First there had to come the scientific study of the ancient religion and of the Old Testament, 'in so far as such study is the servant of devout, reverent faith.' For in the new Exodus men must be one with the past in its faith, its hope, its love; but separate from it in respect of its local form and colour. The new Exodus must be separate in respect of the things that can be shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain with it.

The time was not ripe. That was one thing. And Carlyle was not ready. That was another. He had not faith enough. He was still in the captivity. He looked up to the silent stars and said, 'He does nothing.' And he despised the present in the light which his imagination threw on the past. The past was peopled with heroes; the present was occupied by creatures whose misery well matched their meanness.

Carlyle could not lead the Exodus out of Houndsditch, much as he longed that the Exodus would take place. 'If we were well out of Houndsditch,' he said, 'bringing our own with us.' What a pathos there is in the words.

'Bringing our own with us'? Surely. Let us leave nothing behind that is our own. If our heart goes out, let our head go also. And the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—He also is ours. But let Him go out with us not exactly and only as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for that would be no Exodus from Houndsditch, but as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Religious-Historical Movement in German Theology.

By the Rev. J. M. Shaw, M.A., Edinburgh.

I.

For the understanding of the present religious-historical movement in Germany we must start with Albrecht Ritschl, the pivotal figure of later nineteenth-century theology. In his early days an enthusiastic disciple of Hegel and Baur, he yet came to feel that the speculative construction of Christianity offered by the method of the Hegelian dialectic failed to do justice to the facts of Christian faith and history. The Hegelian interpretation of the significance of Jesus Christ in particular offended his feeling for historical reality; and so, guided by a new theological method, Ritschl made a determined attempt to re-establish for faith the absolute value of the personality of the historic Jesus. Of this new method the two essential principles were—(1) that religious knowledge is to be distinguished from scientific and philosophical knowledge as practical from theoretical—as knowledge, that is to say, essentially relative to faith, consisting in 'judgments of value' or 'worth' (*Werturteile*), which are not so much to be theoretically proved as practically experienced; and (2) that the source and norm of this practical or faith-knowledge is to be found in the Divine Revelation given in the fact of the historic Jesus, as this fact is represented and interpreted in the believing witness of the New Testament.

In the working out of a system, however, on the basis of these principles, Ritschl, and, after him, his followers of the Right—especially Kaftan—betrayed the weakness that is apt to attend on all reactions. In the tendency, on the one hand, to isolate the revelation of God given in Jesus Christ as a fact *sui egneris*, altogether different from anything that might be called revelation elsewhere; and, on the other, to insulate the Christian faith based on this revelation, so making it less or more independent of, or indifferent to, the results of scientific, historical, or philosophical criticism,—Ritschlianism, in the enthusiasm of its opposition to the Hegelian construction, was in danger of losing sight of the great truth for which Hegelianism with all its one-sidedness stood; and in so far it set itself against the main trend of the thinking of the time. This was the thoroughgoing application to every department of knowledge of the category of evolution which bids us see everywhere not sudden inbreaks of creative power, but continuous progressive change from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher, by means of an immanent power working according to certain observable laws. Fruitful in the world of nature this scientific conception became increasingly applied to the sphere of history, converting an atomistic into an organic view of things; until in the latter half of the nineteenth century, largely through the influence of Hegel and his school, its thoroughgoing application in the sphere of religion gave rise to the Comparative Science of Religion and the new understanding of religious history which his has brought about. Marred in the case of the Hegelians by a too *à priori* speculative method of procedure, the comparative evolutionary study of religions received new impetus through subsequent investigations carried out in a more purely scientific spirit—investigations alike in the fields of philology, archæology, ethnology, and anthropology.