

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

MUCH interest had already been aroused by the intimation from the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press that they intended to publish a new translation of the Bible in 'Basic English.' The first instalment of the publication has now appeared, and will be welcomed by many. It is *The New Testament in Basic English* (Library edition 8s. 6d., Pocket edition 3s. net).

What is 'Basic English'? It is a simplified form of English developed by Mr. C. K. OGDEN of the Orthological Institute of Cambridge. By means of a vocabulary of 850 words, used in accordance with a few simple rules, it can express—as is claimed for it—the sense of anything that can be said in English; and it has two great advantages. On the one hand, it provides a quick and easy way of teaching English to foreigners; which, as we must allow, is a point to be specially appreciated in these times. On the other hand, it offers for English-speaking people a corrective to loose or inflated phraseology; which is a point to be appreciated at all times.

But Mr. OGDEN'S 850 words have been found hardly sufficient in the translation into English of so special a book as the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Accordingly, the vocabulary has in this instance been extended to a thousand words.

As for the quality of the translation, it is enough to say that it has been prepared in the last ten

years by a Committee working in collaboration with the Orthological Institute and directed by the Rev. S. H. Hooke, Professor of Old Testament Studies in the University of London, who has seen to it that the results of the most recent work in Biblical translation have been incorporated. But, further, the text so prepared has been revised by a Committee of Cambridge scholars appointed by the Syndics of the University Press.

While the translation is scholarly it does not pretend to possess the literary quality of the Authorized Version. Its self-imposed limitations would in any case preclude that. But it seeks to conserve wherever possible the familiar cadences of the Authorized Version. Which is all to the good. For it will be an evil day when the beauty and richness of the Authorized Version cease to inspire English speech and style.

Readers of this magazine welcome every effort to make the Bible intelligible to the English reader. They are grateful to the Revisers for the work they did upon the English Version, but they realize the expository value of modern and less severe translations, such as those of Weymouth of the New Testament and Moffatt of the whole Bible; and even the expository value of a severe modern translation such as the American translation of Goodspeed. They will realize too, when they consult the 'Basic Bible,' that here is a translation which by its very directness and simplicity also serves the purpose of exposition. It is not unjustly

claimed for it that it will refresh with its clearness those to whom tradition has endeared the Authorized Version, but from whom the rich and musical speech of the Authorized Version sometimes conceals the plain meaning of the text.

If we should encourage modern translations for the sake of the fuller understanding of the Bible, and also—as in the instance before us—for their evangelizing value, we should be all the more jealous for the Authorized Version. We sympathize with the plea, so eloquently urged by the late Mr. Quiller-Couch, that the Authorized Version should be represented among the ‘prescribed books’ in our literary schools of English. And we view with a certain complacency the multiplying of modern translations of the Bible, as likely to arrest any tendency to dethrone the Authorized Version in public use in favour of any one modern translation. This would be more than a literary mistake; it would be a spiritual loss.

Professor A. M. RAMSEY, of the Chair of Divinity in Durham University, and Canon of Durham Cathedral, has published his Inaugural Lecture on *Jesus Christ in Faith and History* (S.P.C.K.; 6d.). It is a suggestive and fruitful contribution to the study of the New Testament, and concerns not only scholars but the ordinary minister as well. The Professor begins with a survey of the movements of thought in New Testament scholarship during the last hundred years.

The rise of critical research overthrew the presuppositions of dogma and tradition, but it was not free from its own presuppositions and prejudices. Among these was the dogma that miracle was to be rejected, and ‘scientific procedure’ eliminated miracle even in Mark, picking out the human, ethical, and this-worldly elements as alone credible. Thus we got a picture of a human Jesus, teacher and prophet, to which were added by the devotion of the primitive Church miraculous happenings, and a kind of progressive theologizing through the influence of Paul and others. And, in addition, ‘scientific’ criticism discovered a sure and definite

residuum of history concerning the man Jesus from the very narrative whose truth it had decisively rejected!

This ‘liberal’ Jesus of History has disappeared. That is one of the main results of New Testament research. The causes of His disappearance are these. First the investigations of the ‘eschatological’ school, particularly Weiss and Schweitzer. They proved that the mysterious, other-worldly elements in our Lord’s teaching cannot be eliminated by any method that is genuinely scientific. And this clearly showed that, whatever Jesus was, He was not a mild moralistic figure who fits easily into modern idealism. The story of His life and death quivers with catastrophe, judgment, and the powers of another world.

Further, a more scientific criticism has shown that the picture of a primitive human Jesus and a progressive supernaturalizing by the Apostolic Church is false. When the Gospel material is sorted out into its ascertainable sources it is found that every one of these sources contains supernatural elements. This factor is embedded in every stratum known to literary criticism. In short, when we dig into the primitive Christian documents we find not an original humanitarianism but an original proclaiming of a divine gospel by One who embodies it in His own actions and claims.

Finally, the ‘liberal’ picture of Jesus has been banished by the study of Jesus Christ more closely in connexion with the Old Testament. Our documents all record claims of Jesus to fulfil the purpose of God in the older history, that is, Messianic claims. But this was very different from the Messiah desired by the first Apostles. It is a *suffering* Messiah, an unwanted Messiah. The ancient world could imagine and invent many theophanies, but it never produced a theophany in which a shameful death was the focus of the power of God.

These are some of the forces that have banished the notion of a human Jesus *in vacuo* and have enabled us, while remaining scientific students, to be sure that there was only one Jesus, who fulfilled

the Old Testament revelation of God, proclaimed God's Kingdom as a new and decisive intervention of God in history, embodied the Kingdom in His own life and death and resurrection, and wrought deliverance in such a way that those who followed Him could not in reason and conscience refrain from worshipping Him.

Now, where does our concern lie to-day? Briefly the trend of Biblical scholarship has changed, away from the search for the historical Jesus and towards the study of the theology which the history contains. Preoccupation with history was in its first stage the supreme contribution of English scholarship. This has entailed sad loss from attention being concentrated on language and critical detail with too little attention to the substance of the documents, the great themes which give the New Testament its unity and meaning.

But to-day New Testament theology is coming back. We are beginning to see that the history can never be understood apart from the theology which it involves, and that our chief concern is not to try to reconstruct the history in detail, but to study its impact upon the thought of the Apostles and upon the questions of belief with which they wrestled, and so to make the New Testament the focus of our own thinking about life and death, man and God. Here lies the work of the New Testament theologian and of our New Testament teaching. Every aspect of New Testament scholarship must be rich in suggestion of truth to be absorbed and used not only by professional scholars but by those who are going to be the Church's priests and preachers.

We can learn much, for example, from Form Criticism, with all its defects and exaggerations. It does help us to read the Gospels as pieces of the Apostolic preaching. We are enabled to study the Gospels against the background of the uttered gospel that was before them, and is found within them. Then, literary criticism becomes something new with this new purpose in it. We can make a practical and theological use of its conclusions. We may, for example, compare the narratives of the

Passion in order to see the different theological presentations of the Passion. Mark's austerity, Luke's tenderness, Matthew's sense of tragedy, John's emphasis on victory and glory, all have their message.

Even the study of language has its theological contribution. Through the discovery of the papyri we have got a new insight into the words of the New Testament. These appear in a new setting and have a new significance owing to the impact of the gospel on them. 'Gospel,' 'Peace,' 'Truth,' 'Freedom,' 'Glory'—such words meant in the Christian use something they never meant before, and in tracing these words in the New Testament we can study the distinctive flavour of the Christian revelation. This is a study not only for experts but for all who have to use the New Testament. In a world where great words are used vaguely and wistfully to express the longings of men the Christian teacher will learn to expound the Christian meaning of these words.

Above all, our concern is not with the single books of the New Testament but with the latter itself as one single divine 'drama.' There are, of course, differences in the thinking of the Apostles. We may properly contrast the theology of the first Christians, of St. Paul and St. John, but when St. Paul writes to the Romans, whom he has never seen, he expects them to understand him, because the Christian experience is one. There is one Christian life behind all the varieties of theological expression. Even when we contrast the Synoptic picture and that of the Fourth Gospel, the higher Christology of the Synoptists is seen to make the contrast less sharp. Thus we gain a fresh insight into the meaning of the whole, and the New Testament in its freshly discovered unity becomes the creative centre of our thinking about life and death, God and the world.

Marxism, as has often been pointed out, has for its followers all the qualities and inspiration of a religion. While professing to be supremely scientific it is profoundly passionate and rigidly dogmatic.

In place of a divine plan and the coming of a kingdom of heaven it offers its devotees a materialistic evolution issuing in a vaguely conceived and really unimaginable utopia.

A trenchant criticism of Marxism coming from an unusual quarter is given in *Marxism is it Science?* by Mr. MAX EASTMAN (Allen and Unwin; 8s. 6d. net). The writer has for years been acknowledged as an authority on Marxism and has held a prominent place in Communist circles. He translated Trotsky's 'History of the Revolution' into English and was in close touch with that great revolutionary. It must not be supposed that he has lost sympathy with Communism or has become a convert to a more spiritual faith. Quite the contrary. His criticisms of Marxism are on that account all the more interesting.

He claims to be, first and last, a scientist whose sole endeavour is to ascertain the facts, and he writes from this point of view. Reality is for him material and he has no room in his system for anything spiritual or idealistic. Science is the study of the material world; all that goes beyond that is designated as 'animism' and rudely dismissed as 'hocus-pocus.'

He has many acute criticisms to offer in regard to the looseness of Communist reasoning. For example, Communists continually argue that as the mode of production 'conditions' social life it therefore 'determines' it. 'A theory which ignores the difference between the verbs *condition* and *determine* cannot be called scientific, because it has not sufficient exactitude to be verified.' But the main weight of the attack is directed against the Marxian dialectic.

Karl Marx, as is well known, began his intellectual life as a disciple of Hegel and remained under the dominance of his system of thought. Now Hegel conceived the world as an evolutionary process according to which the idea progressively realizes itself by uniting with its opposite to form a higher synthesis. This dialectic movement is wholly determinate and uncontrollable. This system

Marx adopted as his philosophy of history, but he gave it a new interpretation, 'turned it upside down,' as he said. To him the material is the only real. Things, and not ideas, dominate the scene, but they dominate it in a Hegelian way. Every stage in the world process completes itself by passing through its opposite to a higher synthesis. This doctrine applied to the economic system of to-day means that Capitalism must inevitably give way to a Communistic system, which in turn will lead to a classless society.

To MAX EASTMAN all this theorizing is anathema. It is not the fruit of an impartial study of the material facts but is due to the imposing on the facts of a philosophic theory. It cannot be established by any logical process but must be received in faith. To those who believe it there doubtless comes the inspiration of feeling that they are bound to win because they are on the side of the invincible cosmic movement. But this is essentially a religious feeling and is akin to all those airy dreams and fond hopes with which men delude and sustain themselves. When the cold light of science is turned on them they fade away.

Two questions in particular may be put to the dialectic materialist which it is difficult to answer. If this world process is deterministic, if it is moving irresistibly to its destined end, then what place is left for human effort? Does it not follow that man is carried helplessly along the stream and would fight in vain against it? And the second question is why should this evolutionary process be supposed to come to an end with the achievement of the classless society? Be it remembered that this evolutionary process *is* the world; if it should come to an end the world would simply cease to be. By all the laws of Hegelian logic the synthesis of the classless society should in its turn at once become the thesis which would bring to birth its antithesis and lead on to some still higher synthesis. But the Communist is content to bring the dialectic process to an end at the entrance to a nebulous utopia which is really a Nirvana. 'Scientific socialism, then, in its intellectual form, is anything but scientific. It is philosophy of the very kind that

Marx himself contemptuously denounced. A revolutionary science would study the material world with a view to changing it according to some practical plan. Marx studied the world with a view to making himself believe that it is a process of change according to his plan.'

Lenin's presentation of Communism is far more practical and strictly 'scientific' than Marx's. Marx dreamed of revolution, Lenin organized revolution. While giving lip-service to dialectic materialism Lenin never allowed it to dominate his policy. 'A dialectic materialist is bound to conceive the revolution as automatically produced by the contradictions in capitalism, and the Marxian leader as "bringing consciousness" to the process, or "serving as its theoretical expression." At the most, he may permit this Marxian leader to accidentally accelerate the movement. There is not a word in Lenin's book which is even a concession to this metaphysical ideology. The book tells you "what to do," if you want to produce with the material at hand a socialist revolution. It is a textbook of practical engineering on the basis of the Marxian analysis of history.' But Lenin's practical genius and flexibility have given place to the rigidity of Bolshevism where authority is infallible and the dogmas of the faith are above criticism.

Max EASTMAN is all for revolution, but he would have the revolutionary renounce all feelings and desires, all dogmas, all philosophies and religions, all that belongs to the 'hocus-pocus' world of the ideal, and study the material facts with the precision of a thinking machine. His revolutionary would be like the hero of a detective story who always has a 'brain packed in ice.' His task would be to strip the facts bare of all illusion, endlessly to question and criticise, with no veneration for the past nor bright hope for the future. Without for a moment disparaging the scientific attitude of mind, or depreciating the results which have been achieved by the scientific method, we may yet feel that this deification of materialistic science would have frightful issues for all that is highest in human life.

Scepticism, however scientific, is fortunately

never an inspiring creed. It can never capture the heart of humanity. The man who could wholly live and work in the spirit of this creed, judging all things without emotion and never suffering himself to be influenced by his affections, would be an inhuman monster. Wordsworth passionately exclaims that rather than be out of tune with Nature he would be

A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
if so he might

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

And, constituted as human nature is, most men would sooner be red Bolsheviks than freeze in a scientific icehouse.

But is this materialism as scientific as it professes to be? Is it based purely on ascertained facts? Has it no assumptions which go beyond the facts? It is defined as 'an intellectual attitude which denies the validity of philosophy, while affirming the validity of the science which understands it.' In other words, man, having systematized his thoughts about the world and called the result philosophy, goes on to frame a second system of thought which he calls science and in the name of which he denies the validity of his first system of thought! What guarantee has he that his second system of thought is valid? None that materialism can offer. EASTMAN is ready to affirm with practically all scientists that the world is rational, but this can never be proved. It goes far beyond the facts of experience. It implies a fundamental act of faith without which science would be brought to confusion. Why then cavil at religious faith? According to EASTMAN, to say that the Universe is indifferent to man is science, to say that the Universe is friendly is superstition; to say that there is reason at the heart of things is a necessary postulate of science, to say that there is love at the heart of things is sentimental hocus-pocus! Selective dogmatism of this kind leaves us unmoved. If science can hold the faith that the cosmos is a coherent system in which 'all things work together' in an orderly way, we may well have courage to go further and hold the faith that 'all things work together *for good.*'