THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE *Bibliotheca Sacra* of the current quarter publishes an article by Professor Estes of Hamilton on the Authority of Scripture. The article, like the periodical in which it appears, is conservative. It is also well informed, and follows clearly defined and not unscientific lines.

We have called Professor Estes' article conservative. It is a sign of conservatism now to believe in the Authority of Scripture at all. Even so moderate a journal as the *Biblical World* adopts the attitude that 'not an infallible Church tradition, not an infallible Church office, not an infallible canon of Scripture, only religion has sovereign right in the kingdom of religion.' But it must be admitted, at least in theology, that conservatism is a movable magnitude. Professor Estes takes care to define his Authority. And we see at a glance that it is not the Authority of Scripture which our fathers believed in.

For, according to Professor Estes, the Authority of Scripture is simply the authority of *Weight*. We say that such an one is an authority in agriculture or in chemistry. In the dictionary definition, it is 'the power derived from intellectual or moral superiority, from reputation, or from whatever else commands influence, respect, or esteem.' The Bible is an authority in this sense; it is an authority in religion and morals.

Now this definition of the Authority of Scripture is at least unusual if not new. Professor Estes says it is unusual to define the Authority of Scripture at all; it is certainly unusual to define it in this way. For an authority of this sort belongs rather to a person than to a book. It is at once applicable to certain persons in the Bible—though to them in varying degree. If it is applicable to the parts of the Bible, one part will be held to be more authoritative than another. The New Testament will be more authoritative than the Old, the Psalms than Esther, the 103rd Psalm than the 137th. If such an authority as this is to be attributed to the Bible as a whole, then the Bible has a solidarity which it has not been the tendency of recent criticism to accord to it.

Professor Estes is mindful of that fact. In spite of the tendency of recent criticism, he endeavours to prove that the Bible possesses just such a solidarity as is required. He endeavours to prove it by three distinct arguments.

He shows first of all that to the Bible there is a single centre. That centre is, of course, the Cross of Christ. Next, besides this unity of theme, he finds in Scripture a combined harmony of treatment. Not only do prophet and apostle make the Cross of Christ the subject of all their utterance, but they agree in what they say about the

Cross of Christ. They agree in what they say of its necessity, in what they say of its results. He admits that this is not evident at a glance, but he is convinced that a deeper study will always reveal it. And he quotes this illustration: 'As if one drew water out of a deep well with vessels of different metal, one of brass, another of tin, a third of earth, the water may seem at first to be of a different colour; but when the vessels are brought near the eye, this diversity of colour vanisheth, and the waters tasted of have the same relish. So here, the different style of the historiographers from prophets, of the prophets from evangelists, of the evangelists from apostles, may make the truths of Scripture seem of different complexions, till one look narrowly into them and taste them advisedly, then will the identity both of colour and relish manifest itself.'

Then he finds that Scripture is stamped by purity. 'Beyond and above every other book ever penned, the Bible condemns sin, and exalts rightness, goodness, holiness.' Whether Professor Estes finds this equally in all the Bible he does not say. All he says is that he finds purity characteristic of the Bible, a quality which separates it from other writings of every sort. And so these three—unity, harmony, purity—give the Bible a solidarity, in a sense a personal character. And in virtue of that character the Bible possesses its authority.

But Professor Estes goes further than that. He holds that these three things—unity, harmony, purity—demand a personal presence in the Bible. For these three things are inexplicable in the Bible apart from the presence of God. There is no accounting, he says, for the unity of the Bible, for its harmony, for its purity, without admitting that they are the immediate working of the hand of God. Therefore his conclusion is, that in all matters of religion and morals the Bible, as such, carries the authority of God with it. And that authority is 'absolutely authoritative.'

Thus Professor Estes reaches a high doctrine of the authority of the Bible, and shows himself conservative. But he makes one significant admission. Its authority covers only matters of morals and religion. If he is conservative, it is to-day; that admission separates him from the conservatism of a generation ago. For it means that the science of the Creation-narrative may be false, though its morality and religion are true. It is a momentous admission—from him. And he is perfectively frank in making it. Though he says little altogether on the subject, he says, 'It is not in the sphere of grammar, rhetoric, history, or science that the Bible is an authority.'

Such an admission as Professor Estes has just made would be nothing in any other periodical: in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* it is a great deal. But this is not the only unexpected article that the *Bibliotheca Sacra* has recently given us, nor is it the most unexpected.

In the issues for April and July 1897, there appeared two papers on the Cosmogony of Genesis. They were written by President Henry Morton of the Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, New Jersey, and an 'authority' in the science of optics. These papers have been noticed by Professor Driver in the *Expositor* for June. They have since been reprinted in pamphlet-form with the title of 'The Cosmogony of Genesis and its Reconcilers.' They deal with this very subject of the first chapter of Genesis. They exhibit all the marks of conscience and capability. They deserve fuller acquaintance than we can make with them here.

Dr. Morton is an authority in science, but we do not need to accept his authority. In regard to the scientific origin of the world, there is agreement all round. Many sciences are involved,—astronomy, geology, palæontology, comparative anatomy,—but they all agree that along such and such lines, in such and such an order of

succession, the world as it now is came into existence. Nor is there any longer dispute as to the meaning of the first chapter of Genesis. The Hebrew words translated 'day,' 'earth,' 'water, 'firmament,' and the like, are as fixed and certain as the English words themselves. The whole question is a question of reconciliation. Can the accepted results of science be shown to agree with the undoubted meaning of the Hebrew narrative? The whole matter lies now in that.

There are many who still say they can. And President Morton's undertaking is to give a history of the methods of reconciliation. He is himself distinctly of opinion that they can not. But he is evidently anxious to do the reconcilers justice; or, which comes to the same thing, to leave them no reply. He accordingly chooses the four greatest names—Professor Arnold Guyot, Sir J. W. Dawson, Professor J. D. Dana, and Mr. Gladstone; and he closely examines their schemes of reconciliation, from argument to argument, and even from word to word.

Now, if President Morton is right, the reconciliation of Genesis with science can be effected only in two ways. Either it is done by a defective knowledge of science, which a generation or more ago was the most usual method; or it is done by an imperfect acquaintance with Hebrew, which he considers the only possible method to-day. No doubt both these methods may be employed at once. But the risk of error is greater then, and the results quite as unsatisfactory.

What, then, is the value of the narrative in Genesis? To that question Dr. Morton does not reckon it his business to reply, and he scarcely replies to it. But he manifests himself a firm believer in the inspiration of the writer or writers of these early chapters of Genesis. Only he holds that their inspiration did not touch matters of scientific fact. It touched 'the relations of the Creator to His universe and of God to man, including the picture of a good God, hating every kind of iniquity, and punishing transgression of His moral law, and yet long-suffering and patient with erring man.' President Morton is therefore at one with Professor Estes. And the long-fought dispute as to the reconciliation of Genesis with science ceases to be. In the words of Canon Driver, which he quotes, 'Genesis neither comes into collision with science nor needs reconciliation with it; its office lies on a different plane altogether; it is to present under a form impressive to the imagination, adapted to the needs of all time, and containing no feature unworthy of the dignity of the subject, a truthful representative picture of the relation of the world to God.'

If the first chapter of Genesis is not scientific, what is it? That is the question Professor Driver answers in the words that have just been quoted. But it may be answered much more fully.

When the British Association came to Liverpool in 1896, Professor Herbert Edward Ryle, who is now President of Queens' College, Cambridge, was appointed to preach the sermon in St. Luke's. He preached on 'Physical Science and the First Chapter of Genesis.' The sermon was afterwards published by Messrs. Macmillan (8vo, pp. 19, 1s.).

After a preparation, which we may omit, Professor Ryle approaches the Cosmogony of this first chapter. 'It contradicts, we are told, modern physical science. What then? I turn not for my instruction in astronomy, or geology, or physiology, to this first chapter of Genesis; I turn to that other Bible written on the face of Nature, interpreted, translated, as it has been, for us by the famous teachers of science in our own century, moved, as we believe, by the same Spirit of God that inspired the writers of Holy Writ. And so far from thus doing dishonour to these first pages of Scripture, or desiring to do so, I unhesitatingly

declare that the three first chapters of Genesis contain for me a larger measure of spiritual instruction than whole books that come later on in my Bible. They contain, revealed under the forms of a symbolism for which a phase of rudimentary and erroneous science in Palestine was the chosen vehicle, spiritual truths which belong to the very foundation of our faith.'

Of these spiritual truths Professor Ryle then enumerates four. First of all, it lies at the very root of all Christian religion that our Word of Revelation should open, not with the call of Abraham, or the Covenant of Circumcision, or the Law of Sinai, but with the Creation of the Heaven and the Earth. There is One Lord for the physical world and for the spiritual. True, the salvation through Christ has come to us in history from the people of Israel. But the work of redemption is not a Jewish event. It is the continuance of the work of Creation. The love that was manifested on the Cross is the love that was shown in the framing of the Universe.

In the second place, it lies at the root of our Christian faith that God's dealings with the Universe have ever followed the lines of orderly growth and slow development. The spirit-life of man forms part of the same great design as the stars racing above our heads and the coral insect labouring beneath the waves. And the spirit-life of man, the highest stage in the creative design yet reached, points to a yet higher spiritual type for which man is fitted, and which has already been witnessed in the Coming of the Son of Man. Thus the Coming of the Son of Man is no longer to be called a happy result of man's corruption, by which, as it has been grimly said, sin was a blessing in disguise. The Incarnation is linked, not merely to the Fall, but even to the Creation.

Thirdly, it goes to the very root of our religion than man was made 'in the image of God.' And this 'image' is not to be limited to the conscience, or the freewill, or the reason. The whole of our being—bodily, mental, and spiritual—was made to bear the 'image' of the Divine Nature. We are God's offspring. And so what Christ taught when He came, restoring it to men's consciousness, was the Fatherhood of God. And what He manifested forth by His Cross was the eternal love that embraced the whole family of the human race.

Lastly, it is part of our religion that 'God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.' Death reigned for 'æons' before Adam, yet God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. Death and the agony that makes it welcome have reigned through all the generations since, yet we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. For that word 'good' at the Creation was a promise as well as a verdict. He who had written the word 'good' over the relentless forces of nature, could not leave us unpitied, unredeemed. The work of God in the domain where sin has entered, no less than in the domain where death and suffering prevail, shall have its perfect fulfilment. God, as St. Paul says, will sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. The gospel of Genesis is a gospel of love.

'I am not speaking vain or random words. I verily believe that, standing on the threshold of the new century, we are upon the eve of one of the greatest and most profound religious revivals the world has seen.'

It is much to be desired. Who makes the prophecy, and how is it to be fulfilled? The prophecy is made by Professor McGiffert of Union Theological Seminary, New York, and it is to be fulfilled in the rediscovery of the historical Christ.

Professor McGiffert has just escaped a heretical prosecution. He wrote *The History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*. It was one of the volumes

of 'The International Theological Library.' Yet it seemed to leave no history for Christianity in the Apostolic Age. It seemed to leave no Christ to build the history on. So there was great searchings of heart among the Presbyterian Churches of America, and Professor McGiffert has narrowly made his escape.

He escaped because his friends were able to prove that Professor McGiffert was better than his book—or at least than his book had been taken to be. They invited him to appear before the Presbyterian Ministers' Association of Philadelphia, and give an account of the faith that was in him. He chose as the title of his address the 'somewhat vague and general terms' *History and Theology*. They published the address. It contains such a sentence as this: 'That Jesus was the eternal Son of God—very God of very God—we all believe and confess; and that His apostles were His inspired messengers to the world we are firmly convinced.' It also contains the prophecy of a great religious revival.

Professor McGiffert believes that the way in which the great religious revival will come is by the rediscovery of the historic Christ. For 'it is Christ Himself, the historic Christ who lived and laboured and died, the everliving Christ who came forth from the tomb and is now at the right hand of the Father,—it is the Lord Christ Himself who through the Spirit controls and moves the Church and the world. And there is no doubt that Jesus Christ, the concrete, individual, personal Christ, is more thought about and talked about to-day, and is more widely and more fully understood than ever before since apostolic days. Through all the centuries and until our own day, lives of Christ, books about Christ, tales laid in the time of Christ, were the rarest kind of literature; and as for any interest in the actual occurrences of His daily life and in the real development of His character, except at certain periods, there was none at all. But to-day the press is pouring forth books of all sorts, dealing in one way or another with the life and times of Jesus—good books, bad books, and indifferent books; and the recovery of a mere fragment of papyrus, purporting to contain hitherto unknown utterances of our Lord, and the publication of other even less authentic documents, is sufficient to throw the whole world into a fever of excitement.'

This interest is due to the partial rediscovery of the historic Christ. Let the historic Christ be rediscovered more fully, and the great religious revival will come. For, says Professor McGiffert, 'if Christ but be known, the human heart must ultimately own Him as its Lord.'

Faith and Revelation.

THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF RITSCHLIANISM.

By the Rev. William Morgan, M.A., Tarbolton.

The correlative conceptions of faith and revelation are the two pillars upon which every theological system rests. They represent religion in its two great aspects—as an approach of God to man, and as an energy of the human spirit recognizing and laying hold on God. By the conception it forms of faith and revelation every theology will be found to have its character determined for it. It is true that theologians have not always started from an explicit definition of these spiritual magnitudes; but none the less some definition will be found to underlie their thought, and to control it more than do their acknowledged norms. It is one of the merits of Albrecht Ritschl that he has brought this fact into the foreground, and himself constructed a system which in every part is a