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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

WHAT is it that keeps us back from the practice of prayer for the dead? We can enter, says Dean Plumptre, without much effort of imagination, into the workings of the heart of the man who first considered that the prayers which he had offered for friend or brother during his life need not cease, and ought not to cease, at his death. Yet it is only one man here and one man there in all the Reformed Church that has followed the practice. What is it that keeps us back? It is mainly this, that for the Reformed Church the Bible is still the authority for religious practice, and the Bible does not encourage prayer for the dead.

Dean Plumptre thinks that the Bible does encourage it. He quotes from the Apocrypha, which we need not mind. He also says that the prayer of St. Paul for Onesiphorus, as distinct from his household, that 'he may find mercy of the Lord in that day' (2 Ti 1^{16-18}), is probably an example of prayer for the dead. He even refers to a certain 'scholarly and thoughtful article' in the *Church of England Quarterly Review* for April 1880, which finds an instance of prayer for the dead in Ps 132^{1}, 'Lord, remember to David all his anxious care'—assuming of course the post-Davidic date of the Psalm. And he rests his scriptural case on that. So it is evident that the Bible does not encourage it, and the Church will not have it.

Here and there, however, we find an unsuspected Protestant believe in it. The latest and most surprising is Bishop Welldon. In his book on *The Hope of Immortality*, already noticed here, Bishop Welldon suddenly lays down the precept that we may and must pray for the dead. He does not rest the doctrine on Scripture. At least he does not rest it upon 'isolated passages' of Scripture. He rests it upon the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

Without prayer for the dead the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, he thinks, has nothing in it. It is prayer for the dead that creates and energizes the assurance that the dead are still the living. If we do not pray for them, we do not believe that they are, far less have communion with them. The practice of prayer for the dead does not rest on isolated passages of Scripture, but it does rest, he argues, on the whole conception of immortality there. It was not taught by Christ, but the doctrine of the Communion of Saints was taught by Christ, 'and from that doctrine flows the spiritual sympathy of which

intercessory prayer is the expression, between the living and the dead.'

The last word of the Old Testament is an old offence. In his little book with the curious title, elsewhere noticed, Mr. G. Campbell Morgan seeks to remove it.

The last sentence of the Old Testament is 'Lest I smite the earth with a curse.' The last sentence of the New is 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the saints'—as the Revised Version has accurately restored it. Now 'curse' and 'saints' have one idea underlying both. It is the idea of separation or devotion to God. The city of Jericho was devoted, separated to God. When Achan took of the devoted thing, he himself was devoted. The people of God as 'saints' are set apart to God. Achan was devoted to God for judgment; the saints are devoted for glory. But the one idea lies under both. It is the absolute sovereignty of God. When God's sovereignty was wearied under the Old Covenant, it was realized under the New. The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

When we go back as far as we can go, we come to what the Bible calls 'the beginning,' and 'in the beginning' we find God. But God is not alone. 'In the beginning was the Word,' adds the evangelist. And this Word, he afterwards tells us, is Jesus Christ. For he says (1 Jn 1^{2}) 'the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.' It is Jesus Christ. He says he has seen this Word, which was in the beginning with God and was God, he has seen and heard, and his hands have handled Him. It is Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the life of Jesus Christ begins before the birth in Bethlehem. Most of our 'Lives of Christ' begin with that, and are in error. Mr. Alexander Patterson, who recently wrote a volume on *The Greater Life and Work of Christ* (which was published by the Fleming H. Revell Company of Chicago), begins with 'Christ in the Eternal Past.'

But is there anything that we know of Christ in the eternal past beyond the fact of His existence? Yes, we know what He was doing. Says the evangelist again, 'He was in the bosom of the Father' (Jn 1^{18}), and that is the evangelist's Hebrew way of saying that he was in enjoyment of the Father's love. John himself leaned on Jesus' breast at supper, and Lazarus was received into Abraham's bosom. Both are the ancient Eastern figure for the enjoyment of sheltering love. But yet more plainly Jesus tells us what He was doing in the eternal past. He says, 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me.' And what is this glory that He would have them see? It is the glory of being loved of the Father. 'For,' He adds, 'Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.' His life in the eternal past was a life of glory, and that was where the glory lay—He was loved of the Father.

But more than that, we can tell how the thoughts of the Father and the Son were occupied. Their thoughts were of man. They were not exclusively of man, but they were of man. First, they were bent upon the creation of man, 'Let us make man.' The plural is explained in many ways. There is no way that is less objectionable, even less historically objectionable, than this. There is no way that gives us so much theological meaning. But their thoughts were also bent upon the redemption of man. 'Ye were redeemed,' says the Apostle Peter (1^{18-20}), 'not with corruptible things, with silver and gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of

Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through Him are believers in God.' And finally, their thoughts were intent upon man's sanctification, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love' (Eph $1^{3.4}$).

Now in all this the interest of the Son was great. For He was chosen to be the minister of the creation of man, of his redemption, and of his sanctification. And He knew what it would cost Him. We read in the Apocalypse (Rev 13^{8}) of 'the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' In spite of its surprise, expositors take the expression in this meaning. He foresaw Himself as the Lamb. He was slain from the foundation of the world. His interest in the work that lay before Him in time was surely very great.

In the new volume of sermons by the late Professor Hort, which Messrs. Macmillan have published (*Cambridge and other Sermons*), there are two which go together. One of them is headed 'The Church and its Members,' the other 'Baptism and Confirmation.' The first defines the Church. And the definition of the Church of which Professor Hort approves, he finds in 'a form of prayer ordered to be used, and still sometimes used, before sermons.' The form is 'Ye shall pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church, that is, for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the world.'

Professor Hort knows no other use of the name Church than that. His own 'little congregation' is a part of that whole, 'an image of the universal Church.' But he calls it a congregation. 'The Church,' he repeats in the second sermon, 'is the whole number of Christian people who ever lived at any time, and who are now living in any place.'

If, then, that is the meaning, and the only meaning, of the word Church, what does Professor Hort understand by Baptism? He says that we cannot tell what Baptism is until we have seen what the Church is. He has stated the meaning of the Church in his first sermon; in his second he states the meaning of Baptism.

The first thing to notice about Baptism, says Professor Hort, is that 'it is the way of becoming a member of the Church.' He says there is more in Baptism than that. He afterwards says that that is only half the truth about Baptism. What the other half is, we shall see in a moment. In explaining this first half, he divides it into two aspects. He quotes the words, 'We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock,' and he says that in one aspect it concerns us, in another it concerns the child.

It concerns us, because we are a congregation of Christ's flock, because we represent the Holy Church throughout the world. We take the child into our number simply because our number is a fragment of the great number of the redeemed. The act reminds us that we are not separate, that we are not complete; it reminds us of the large meaning of 'membership'; it recalls the sacred duties which we owe to the other members.

And it concerns the child. For the child is then and there taken from the outer darkness and loneliness of the stormy world. As it grows up, all Christian influences surround it, 'not by accident, as might happen to a child not baptized, but as its proper right.' It has not to win its way by special trials, so as to be counted as one of the worshippers of Christ. We treat it as one whose true home is in the Church. We treat it as from its earliest youth a Christian. And so the years pass by. The child grows up to youth. It was accepted as a Christian by its baptism in infancy,

though it was too young to know or understand anything about Christ, much less believe in Him. But those who believe in Christ must confess Him. Therefore, it is but right that the same profession should be openly made by those who were too young to make it for themselves before. They make it now, says Professor Hort, before the bishop, as representing the great Catholic Church, and we call it Confirmation.

The first half of Baptism, then, is entrance into the Church. It is the act of the members of the Church. The other half is the act of God alone. 'By Baptism God declares us to be His children.' God 'has ordained a certain pledge by which each man may assure himself that he has a right to say, "I am a child of God," and that pledge is Baptism.'

Yet Baptism is not to Professor Hort 'a conjuring trick, by which something starts into being within the child which was not there before. The water can do no more than common water. The words can do no more than common words. But the whole Baptism, water and words together, is what Christ Himself appointed as the way of entrance into the kingdom of God. God by it formally acknowledges the child as His own, gives him by it a right and title to enter on all the benefits which belong to His children. Henceforth the child, as he grows up, may look back to his baptism, and take comfort from it in knowing that he is no stranger to the Almighty God in heaven above.'

That is Professor Hort's theory and practice of Baptism. Speaking to his village congregation he does not once mention the word adult.

The writers in *The New World* (Gay and Bird) are prepared to be called 'advanced,' and they generally take pains to deserve it. Still there are exceptions. In the current number, the number for the quarter beginning with September, there is an article by Dr. Orello Cone of Boston which contains this as one of its first sentences: 'The Old Testament prophecy that the Messiah should come out of Judah, or that He would be a lineal descendant of David in the natural order, their age could not let stand in its original sense, and accordingly produced the legend of the miraculous conception of the mother of Jesus.' There is also a review by Professor Howison of California, which speaks of 'the deep and real grounds, psychological and epistemological, of the ever-growing human distrust of the miraculous.' But between these two papers there lies an article by Dr. J. H. Denison of Williamstown, which seeks to show the belief in the miraculous to be as reasonable as ever it was, undisturbed by science, untouched by philosophy.

Miracles, says Dr. Denison, are undisturbed by science. It is true that there is a widespread notion that the miracles of Scripture have been discredited by science. But it is a delusion. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is not science but philosophy that has cast the miraculous in a dubious light, and that is a different matter. Science has to do with physical phenomena and their cause. Within that region it reaches results which are practically exact. But miracles, if there are miracles, lie outside that region. To get at them science must call in the aid of philosophy. And philosophy never reaches perfectly exact results. Philosophy, therefore, may cast miracles in a dubious light, has so cast them for the moment in many minds, but it never can disprove them.

This does not mean that men of science are no longer found who disbelieve the miraculous. They are not so numerous as they used to be, but they are still there. Only they are never men of science pure and simple. When they disbelieve the miracles of the Bible, they are partly also philosophers. Their method is to lay down a general thesis. The latest form of this thesis is a modification of Hume's famous postulate. It is laid down in this form: 'A

miracle is contrary to a law of nature; therefore an overweighing amount of evidence is required to prove it.' Now this position is not scientific. It is partly scientific and partly philosophical. Science has investigated part of nature and discovered its laws. It has not covered the whole breadth of nature. In order to exclude miracle from nature altogether, it must summon philosophy to its aid. Philosophy penetrates into the regions where physical science cannot go, and it makes discoveries there. But even if it comes back to tell us that in all its search it has not found the miraculous, we have not reached the postulate that miracles do not occur. For philosophy has to do with theories, it can never determine facts.

One of the ways in which science is used to discredit miracle is the way of accumulation. A vast stock of marvellous stories is gathered from all the nations upon the face of the earth. These stories are mythical. They bear some outward resemblance to the miraculous stories of Scripture. The conclusion is drawn that all stories of a like nature are mythical, and the miracles of Scripture are mythical also. To not a few this conclusion is irresistible and final. But it goes beyond its rights. In the first place, careful observation reveals more and more clearly the fact that there is a large class of apparently supernatural phenomena which cannot possibly be explained by it. And in the second place, the myths that have been accumulated are actually of a different order from the miraculous narratives of Scripture. They are simply marvellous; the miracles of Scripture move in an atmosphere that is moral and spiritual.

Take an illustration. When the first accounts of falling meteors came to hand, men of science rejected them. Scientific observation had established certain facts about the atmosphere. These facts were not contradicted by the falling of meteors. But where science stopped, philosophy began. Philosophy speculated that the atmosphere extended only a few miles, and that was accepted as a law of nature. But if the atmosphere extended only a few miles, falling meteors were impossible. So then they contradicted a law of nature, and, therefore, they required a supreme weight of evidence to prove them. The evidence that came to hand at first came from men who were untrained in scientific methods. Their stories were accounted for by the general love of the miraculous and by the ignorance of the common mind.

In order, then, to free the miracles of Scripture from oppositions of science, we have but to claim that they belong to a sphere that is beyond its ken. Science must then hand over their investigation to philosophy. Philosophy may be hostile or friendly. But being philosophy and not science, it can never decide the question. Its results are never complete and final.

Now the claim which Dr. Denison makes for the miracles of Scripture, and especially for the miracles of the New Testament, is that they do move in a sphere that is beyond the reach of science. It is the sphere of intense spiritual exaltation. St. Paul's expression for it is, 'the baptism of the Holy Ghost.' This 'baptism' is an ethical fact. Its fruits are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance. And even when its fruits were insufficiently realized, the fact of its existence was unquestioned. There were unseemly divisions among the early Corinthian Christians, but the baptism of the Spirit still made them Christians. That was their one hall-mark. And everyone who had it recognized the obligation which lay upon him to realize its ethical fruits. Now it is to this ethical exaltation that St. Paul attributes the miracles. They are all results of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Denison does not say that science has nothing whatever to do with these miracles. The exaltation from which they come is partly physical.

It expresses itself in trances which come partly within the physical range, as well as in specific operations on the body, which come largely within that range. To that extent they belong to the field of scientific investigation. And they meet the demands of science. As phenomena, as facts, they are as fully and as credibly attested as science can reasonably demand. The letters of St. Paul to the Galatians and Corinthians have been sifted by the most thorough criticism, and pronounced authentic. Their date has been fixed at not more than thirty years after the crucifixion. St. Paul, as an eye-witness of what he relates, is just as trustworthy as Pliny. His account of the extraordinary things which occurred under his own observation are as much entitled to credence as Pliny's account of the eruption of Vesuvius. In fact, St. Paul's evidence is the more valuable, because it is so incidental. His letters are not written on the subject of miracles, or to prove them. They are written to people who, like himself, experienced such things, and his allusion to them grows out of the necessary discussion of Church affairs. In short, the miracles to which St. Paul bears witness carry all the credibility to science that past events can ever carry. If science rejects that evidence, it is not because it is insufficient for that part of the miraculous which comes within the range of scientific search; it is because science has ceased to be science, and, becoming philosophy falsely so called, has pronounced that miracles do not occur.

The Greek of the Early Church and the Pagan Ritual.

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III. Thanking the God.

The first class of votive inscriptions takes the simple form, 'I, so-and-so, thank the goddess.' This is one of the most widespread votive formulæ. At Hierapolis, in the Lycos Valley, Φλαβιανὸς εὐχαριστῶ τῇ θεῷ (*C.B.*,[1] No. 17); at Ephesus, εὐχαριστῶ τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι, Στέφανος, and εὐχαριστῶ σοι, Κύρία Ἄρτεμι, Γ. Σκάπτιος (*C.B.*, p. 90; Inscr. Brit. Mus., 578, 579); in the Katakekaumene, δυνατῇ θεῷ εὐχαριστῶ Λητῷ (*C.B.*, p. 90); at Dionysopolis, εὐχαριστῶ Μητρὶ Λητῷ (*C.B.*, No. 53).

No phrase is more characteristic of Pauline expression and thought than 'I thank God' (or 'my God'), εὐχαριστῶ τῷ Θεῷ (μου)—the same words rise to the mouth of Paul in addressing the Colossians, for example, that must have been familiar to them in their pagan days.

The word εὐχαριστῶ is not confined to inscriptions of this simple form. Sometimes, in those of the third class, the participle takes the place of the finite tense, εὐχαριστοῦσα ἀνέστησεν (*Smyrn. Mouseion*, No. φο'), which is really equivalent to εὐχαρίστησε καὶ ἀνέστησε. Sometimes the dedicatory inscription is called a 'thanksgiving,' εὐχαριστήριον: this word is not used in the New Testament.

In Christian inscriptions of Syria a similar formula occurs. Compare le Bas-Waddington, No. 1917, Ἰωάννης Σεουήρου χαρτουλάριος εὐχαριστῶν τῷ Θεῷ μου ἐκ θεμελίων ἔκτισα, and No. 2459, εὐχαρίστου αἰὲν οὖν τῷ παντοκράτορι Θεῷ.

IV. Blessing the God.

A rare class of votive inscription is found in the Katakekaumene. 'We bless (the god) on behalf of Hermophilus,' εὐλογοῦμεν ὑπὲρ Ἑρμοφίλου (*Smyrn. Mous.*, No. φοβ'). This inscription might at the first glance be taken for Christian; it expresses the same thought as Luke in the last words of his Gospel (24^{53}): 'They were continually in the temple blessing God,' εὐλογοῦντες τὸν Θεόν, or 1^{64}, 'He spake, blessing God,' ἐλάλει εὐλογῶν τὸν Θεόν. The word is common and characteristic in the Synoptic Gospels. James (3^{9}) has εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν Κύριον καὶ πατέρα. Paul, on the other hand, tends to use

[1] As I shall frequently have to refer to the text of inscriptions published in my *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, I use the abbreviation *C.B.* to denote it.