THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'It is an extraordinary phenomenon of scientific ethics,' say the editors of *The Biblical World* in their issue for August, 'that it should have ignored the significance of Christianity. Historically there has been no more potent moral force in occidental society than the Church, and, whatever may be the value of other religious systems to the orient, the great teachers of right conduct in Europe and America have been the preachers of the gospel. Yet there is almost no treatise on scientific ethics worthy of serious consideration in which Christianity is accorded any weight. Even when a writer like Paulsen is led to notice Christianity as a historical fact, he discusses it as if it were a branch of asceticism or a matter of antiquarian information. Nor does scientific ethics merely ignore Christianity; some of its representatives explicitly declare the ethics of Christianity to be defective.'

This then is the situation. The art of good conduct taught by Jesus is preached by thousands of men to tens of thousands of people every week. The scientific writers on good conduct either silently ignore the teaching of Jesus or openly reject it. It is more than extraordinary; it is a situation of grave peril either to Christianity or to science.

Some reasons are given. The first reason is that scientific ethics is now evolutionary. The present recognition of conscience, it is held, has been reached by continued efforts to find out what is best in the long-run. The very idea of right and wrong, the very birth of conscience, it is sometimes held, is the result of a process of evolution. The teaching of Jesus does not fall in with this position. It reckons upon a sense of right and wrong in every man. It denies to self-interest the honourable role of evolving that sense and giving it authority. Self-interest is one of the works of the devil; the Son of Man was manifest that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Scientific ethics is essentially systematic. That is another reason. Even if it recognizes Christianity, therefore, it does so merely by accepting a precept here and a precept there. Greek ethics it can take over and build on, because Greek ethics included not simply scattered precepts of conduct, but a formal systematization. But of Hebrew or Christian ethics it can at the most find room for only an occasional practical aphorism.

Another reason is that writers on scientific ethics believe that Christianity when it touches on conduct teaches asceticism. It denies life its worth and pleasure; it represents this world as a vale of tears; it describes the body of man as a vile instrument of indulgence, to be buffeted and bruised until it is cast off altogether.

Again, the rewards which the Christian religion offers to those who do right and the pains it promises to those who do wrong are held to be utterly unscientific. In scientific ethics there is no place for heaven or hell; virtue is its own reward, vice its own sufficient punishment.

The last reason is the most conclusive. Christian ethics is understood to rest upon a basis of supernaturalism. Jesus not only taught men to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, but is understood to have risen from the dead. And on the resurrection the kingdom of God is built, from the risen Christ the authority to teach His ethics and the power to do it is understood to come. Science has no room for the resurrection. So far as scientific ethics is concerned miracles do not occur.

Now the editors of *The Biblical World* do not deny that there is force in these objections. But they assert that not one of them presents any fair knowledge of Christianity. And they have come to the deliberate conclusion (and express it in italics) that the reason why writers on scientific ethics neglect or reject the ethics of Christianity is because *they do not know what the ethics of Christianity is.*

But scientific moralists are not alone to blame for that. For Christian preachers themselves do not always seem to know what Christian ethics is. The true inwardness of the ethics of Christ and of St. Paul has been missed. The liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, free from all external authority whatever, has been shunned as antinomianism; and in its place has been established an external ethical authority—an infallible church, an infallible pope, or an infallible creed—often less attractive and less fruitful of good works than the law of Moses or even the tradition of the Pharisees.

So the Church of Christ must herself learn what the ethics of Christ is, and her preachers must preach it, before scientific moralists can be fairly expected to take account of it. And to that end three things are necessary.

First, the history of the words which convey the ethics of the New Testament to us must be accurately and sympathetically traced. Next, there must be a clear understanding as to what is the essential fact in the moral teaching of the New Testament. And then these two must be sharply separated and seen apart. For Christianity has a husk as well as a kernel. The husk is the intellectual forms of speech which came from Judaism and were modified by Greek and Roman thought; the essence was contributed by Christ.

And that essence is *life*. This is Christ's contribution. 'I came that they might have life.' The words which describe the life are of Jewish or Græco-Roman descent, and their provincialism, so to speak, must be discounted; the thing itself is wholly of Christ. How ignorant, then, of the essence of Christianity are the writers on scientific ethics who say that Christianity belittles life; who think that either Jesus Christ or the Apostle Paul was an ascetic; who reckon that the chief obligation imposed by the Christian religion is to despise and destroy the body; who declare that the New Testament knows no higher ethical imperative than escape from hell. It is the ethics of the New Testament that has determined the conduct of thousands of the noblest men and women throughout the Christian era; and the editors of *The Biblical World* suggest that before the next writer on scientific ethics 'finally decides that Christianity should be reduced to a footnote, or even to an archæological chapter, he would do well to understand the New Testament.'

'New Testament Criticism and the Faith' is the title of four articles which have been contributed to *The Pilot* during the month of August by Canon Gore. The articles deal with the most recent criticism of the New Testament, the criticism of

the last ten years or less. They are written for the purpose of showing the direction which the most recent criticism has been taking, and the effect it has had upon 'the Church's faith in Christ.'

Canon Gore does not go back more than ten years, because ten years ago one great critical era, the era of Lightfoot, had come to an end. In Germany the Tübingen school had been routed, and Harnack had begun to lead a 'backward movement towards tradition.' In England, *Supernatural Religion*, 'a book representing, not very worthily, the destructive criticism of Germany,' had been fairly exploded, and the names of Lightfoot, Salmon, and Sanday stood for what on the whole was a decidedly conservative victory. The prospect was hopeful. The way seemed to be open for Canon Gore or anyone else to hold by the Church's faith in Christ, and at the same time recognize the function of a searching criticism as applied to the New Testament documents.

But the criticism of the last ten years has disappointed these hopes. It is true that Dr. Sanday's Bampton Lectures and 'his great article on JESUS CHRIST in Hastings' Dictionary' represent what Canon Gore believes to be the high-water level of sane criticism. But Harnack has shown, by the lectures recently translated into English with the title *What is Christianity?* that the backward movement towards tradition, whatever it may do with dates and authorships, has not carried Harnack himself any nearer the traditional faith. And there are others, in England as well as in Germany—Canon Gore names Professor Percy Gardner, Mr. Burkitt, Mr. Moffatt, Dr. Abbott, and Professor Schmiedel—whose writings have made much stir of late, and seem once more to have brought the question, whether the gospel story is really and substantially historical, into a condition which Canon Gore describes as 'not much less than chaotic.'

The immediate result, especially among younger men, is no little unsettlement. There is, for instance, a somewhat widespread anxiety not to affirm, as a fact resting on adequate evidence, the virgin birth of our Lord. And, beyond that, there is a tendency to eliminate the divine claim from the life of Jesus, and to leave the reality of miracle an open question—a tendency which Canon Gore finds illustrated in A. B. Bruce's last thoughts on JESUS in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Nor is the unrest confined to professional theologians. Canon Gore believes that among the laity there is at present a good deal of suspicion that criticism has proved fatal to orthodoxy, and that the only permanent element of Christianity is the heritage of moral character.

Now it is easy to magnify the importance of this movement, and even to overestimate its men. For it is a critical movement pure and simple. It has no discovery in early Christian literature to start from. The great discoveries of those years have all gone toward the confirmation of the traditional faith. And not only is it purely critical, but its criticism is wholly of the documents themselves. The external evidence still throws back the Synoptic Gospels into the first century. Harnack dates St. Mark probably at 65 to 70 A.D., St. Matthew at 70 to 75 A.D., St. Luke about 78 to 92.

And even on the internal evidence Sanday and Harnack are substantially at one. 'In their essential substance,' says Harnack, 'the Gospels belong to the first, the Jewish epoch of Christianity, that brief epoch which may be denoted as the palæontological.' It is therefore not only upon internal evidence that this recent criticism proceeds, but upon that evidence as it passes through certain minds. These minds are not more 'historical' than Lightfoot's. On the contrary, they are discovered constantly asserting that things *cannot have been* as they are represented in the Gospels, either because they do not square with the writer's own conception of Jesus and His times, or because they contradict some of his philosophical ideas, such as the impossibility of miracle.

Canon Gore thinks that we have dealt too tenderly with such writers. 'Is there not a danger,' he asks, 'that in exhibiting a scrupulous anxiety to give due weight to the yet undeveloped theories of the last rising foreign scholar, and an even blind charity in refusing to notice the manifestly naturalistic bias in his work, some of us should be found dissimulating the real strength of our own reasoned convictions, and refusing to those who are weaker the support which they really need?'

This criticism, then, has no discovery to work upon. Not only so, but all the evidence as yet to hand confirms the statement of St. Luke's preface as to the way in which the Synoptic Gospels came into existence. There was first of all the apostolic witness as to the words and deeds of Jesus: 'They delivered them to us who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.' Then this apostolic delivery or 'tradition' became the matter of common instruction in the first Christian Churches, an instruction which, from the necessity of the case, must have been, at first at least, mainly oral. Theophilus, like all other Christians, 'was instructed' in the contents of this tradition. Then, after a while, 'many took in hand to draw up a (written) narrative' of this gospel story. Now the merit of these written documents depended entirely upon the accuracy and fulness with which they gathered up the apostolic 'tradition.' St. Luke claims no qualifications but those of opportunity and care. 'Having followed along with the whole course of events from the beginning accurately,' he writes his Gospel to give 'security' to the instruction which in common with others his Theophilus has received.

This process occupied a certain number of years. The matter which is common to the three Synoptics and even that which is common to two of them, certainly assumed its form within thirty or forty years of the death of Christ. Now we know a good deal of the life of the Christian society during those first forty years. The Epistles, especially those of St. Paul, together with the Acts of the Apostles, reveal that life, its movements, and its tendencies. And the question which we have to ask is this, Are the Gospels trustworthy records of the actual words and works of Jesus Christ, or are they seriously coloured by later notions of what His words and works ought to have been?

Look at the phraseology of the Gospels first of all. In the Epistles Christians are called 'the brethren' or 'the saints.' These titles describe their relation to the community. In the Gospels, as in the early history of the Acts, they are 'the disciples.' Again, in the Gospels the characteristic title of Jesus is 'the Son of man'; and 'the Christ' is still the Jewish Messiah. In the Epistles 'Christ' has become almost a proper name, and 'the Son of man' is no longer in use. The whole style of our Lord's teaching in the Gospels (to mention but one other matter), whether it is by parables or otherwise, is quite unlike anything in the rest of the New Testament. The phraseology of justification, sanctification, and election, if it appears at all in the Gospels, appears so untechnically that the contrast is only the more impressive.

It thus appears that the ideas and phrases which grew up in the minds of the apostles and the Church throughout those forty years were not allowed to interfere with their memory of what 'Jesus began both to do and teach.'

Look next at the influence upon the Gospels of Old Testament prophecy or type. We know that the early Church was much occupied with finding in Christ the fulfilment of prophecy. Is there reason to believe that they altered the record or their own recollection of events in the life of Christ so as to make these events more evidently the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies? Canon Gore believes that in St. Matthew's Gospel there are three passages which show some trace of this desire. In Mt 21^{2} the 'ass' is added to the 'colt'; in 26^{15}

the *thirty* pieces of silver are specified; and in 27^{34} 'gall' is substituted for 'myrrh.' But the common matter of the Gospels is free from any such suspicion. The Second and Third Gospels contain, indeed, very little reference to the fulfilment of prophecy. And although Canon Gore, for his part, feels compelled to admit modification of details in the three instances mentioned, which are peculiar to St. Matthew, he holds that there is no excuse at all for suggesting that the influence of Old Testament prophecy or type has been allowed to mould any event of importance in the portion of the Gospels which we are now considering.

And this leads to the further and more striking observation that the miraculous element in the Gospels does not grow with their age. It is, indeed, at its highest in that Gospel which critics with singular unanimity regard as the earliest of all—the Petrine memories recorded in St. Mark. It is here also inextricably bound up with scenes and sayings of our Lord the most indisputably authentic. What, for example, can be more certain than that the account of the Temptation is the record of a real spiritual experience of our Lord, communicated by Himself in outward imagery to the disciples? But this experience presupposes throughout on our Lord's own part a consciousness of strictly miraculous powers over nature.

Once more, and it is yet more striking, St. Paul's Epistles presuppose Christ's incarnation and divine sonship as common beliefs of the Church. Now it cannot be said that these beliefs are foreign to the Gospels. They occur there, and it is impossible, says Canon Gore, for the most hardy scepticism to deny the authenticity of the passages in which they occur. Take the assertion of the mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son, a knowledge which is declared to be exclusive; or take the declaration that the day and hour of the End are known neither to men nor to angels nor to the Son, where the divine sonship is asserted to be superangelic in a context that is quite unassailable. Or, again, take the Parable of the Vine-dressers, where, quite incidentally but quite unmistakably, God's Son is contrasted with God's messengers. Yes, the ideas of incarnation and divine sonship are found in the Synoptic Gospels. But they are not the most prominent ideas. There, as in the early speeches of the Acts, it is the Messiahship and heavenly exaltation of Jesus that chiefly occupy the disciples' minds. And when the ideas of incarnation and divine sonship do occur, they occur in such a way as to put interpolation or later colouring out of the question.

Canon Gore gives yet another example. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was, in the early Church, the great subject of apostolic preaching. Being a supernatural event, its impressiveness depended upon the fulness and force of the evidence that could be produced on its behalf. Accordingly, St. Paul tells us that the witness of those who had seen the risen Lord (omitting the women) was tabulated, so that it might be engraved in the faithful memory of all Christians. Now it is surely remarkable that this table is not incorporated in any of the Gospels. The appearances of the risen Christ to His disciples are set down in the Gospels in so casual a way as to become a positive perplexity to the modern harmonist. It is difficult to imagine stronger evidence that the Gospels came into existence in the natural way described by St. Luke in his preface, and that they were left uncoloured by the thoughts and necessities of a later time.

Professor Gwatkin of Cambridge has published the sermon which he preached before the University on the 16th of June 1901, the day known as Commencement Sunday. His text is taken from 2 Co 5^{17}, the Revised Version: 'The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.'

Not 'all things are become new.' That is a false reading, says Professor Gwatkin; and the context shows that St. Paul is not speaking of old things generally but of our old selves, and the things we loved in past time. St. Paul is telling us of changes that are going on now. He is not looking forward like St. John to the time when he that sitteth on the throne shall say, 'Behold, I make all things new.' He is speaking indeed of powers that belong to a future age. But he is speaking of them only in their working here on earth—the ἐπίγεια, 'earthly things,' not the ἐπουράνια, 'heavenly things.'

The old things are passed away. They are passing now. For the age to come in which the apostle's 'powers' are to do their work is this present age, the age in which he and we are living. In its manifest out-working it was mostly future to him, and alas! it is mostly future still to us. But the powers are at work. The old things are passing, or have passed away; behold, they are become new.

They pass often silently. We seem to wake up of a sudden to find that the old hand has lost its cunning, the old custom is turned to wrong, the old teaching emptied of its living force. What are we to do then? The foolish mother would keep the infant an infant always. The stupid politician resists reform. The cowardly Christian looks out for a master upon earth, or hides himself amongst the trees of dogma, that no fresh voice from heaven may unsettle the thing he is pleased to call his faith.

But revelation always comes in change. And change itself, says Professor Gwatkin, is revelation, if we have eyes to see it. It is so in life. When we were children we thought as children; but now we have put away childish things. It is so in history. Only decaying nations and decaying Churches, like the declining empire and the modern Church of Rome, look back to some canonized past, and strive to live by tradition. We are simply unbelieving, says Professor Gwatkin, when we cling like drowning men to the truth of other days, which cannot be God's message to us.

'The old things are passed away.' They were good things in their time — the beauty of our childhood, the proud powers of our manhood, the words that were spirit and life to our fathers. We look wistfully to the culture of Greece, the splendour of Rome, the fervour of the early Christians, the simple faith of the Middle Ages, the strong righteousness of Puritanism. But we can no more recall them than we can wake the dead. They are passed away for ever, and we must face, as best we can, the work of a world which without them seems cheerless and commonplace.

The Victorian age and the nineteenth century are of the old things that have passed away. But behold they are become new. What have they become to us? There are two great guiding ideas —both contained in the Gospel, both made practicable by the Reformation, both prepared for by the clearances of the eighteenth century—which the nineteenth century has at last made ours. They are these. First, the worth and dignity of man as an individual. To some it seems rather that the great gift of the nineteenth century is the worth of society, and they look upon the development of the social idea as a reaction from individualism. To Professor Gwatkin both seem parts of one and the same movement. It is the higher value set on the individual that gave a higher value to the societies of nations and Churches in which he found himself. And the social movement is sound only in so far as it develops the idea of the worth of individual men. For after all, says Dr. Gwatkin, even the Church was made for man, not man for the Church.

The other guiding idea of the nineteenth century was that of evolution, which interpreted first science, then history and theology; and if it has thrown no light on the final mysteries of specula-

tion—first principles cannot be demonstrated—it has marvellously illuminated for us the methods of God's working in the world.

These then, the worth of man as man, and the evolution of life and history, are the new things which the things of the old century have become to us. And Professor Gwatkin claims that they are both intensely Christian. The reddest of red republicans, he says, never claimed for man such dignity as is given him in our old story of the Son of God who gave Himself a ransom for us all. The boldest of levellers, he says, never went such lengths as we go in the Lord's Supper, where rank and race are utterly ignored, and all come up alike to feed by faith on Christ. Nor can the greatest enthusiast of nations—of man gathered into societies—outdo the love of country which lights the pages of his Bible. It flashes up at the outset, when Miriam sings her song of triumph over Pharaoh's host; and it shines out at the end on the gloom of the gathering storm, when the last of the Hebrew prophets, James, the Lord's brother, denounces wrath from the Lord of Hosts on the oppressors of the poor.

And as for evolution, what else, asks Professor Gwatkin, is the majestic development of revelation, from the farthest past which the astronomer can discern, to the farthest future which the prophet can divine? Gradually the ages led up to the coming of their Lord; gradually the centuries are unfolding something of the fulness of His grace and truth.

But if these, the guiding ideas of the nineteenth century, were in the Gospel from the first, they could hardly, Professor Gwatkin believes, have been got out of it without the Reformation. He gives the Latin Church its due. But its doctrines, he says, were all poisoned by one colossal blasphemy. It demanded to be believed without regard to reason, and obeyed without regard to conscience. And that is more than God has ever asked even for Himself. So the yoke of Christian Phariseeism had to be broken, that man might be free to serve God in spirit and truth. The unspiritual unity of Western Europe had to be shattered in pieces that nations might escape the tyranny of an alien and sectarian Church. Above all, the idea of an infallible Church holding plenary powers from an absent King had to be rooted out, before men could begin to see the gradual development which is God's word to successive generations. But, adds this great Church historian, 'an infallible Church is also incorrigible; therefore He cut her in sunder and appointed her portion with the hypocrites.'

The Servant of the Lord.

By the Rev. R. M. Moffat, M.A., Frome.

I.

The High Calling of the Servant (Isa. xlii. 1-7).

The character and work of the Servant of the Lord is in some respects the most important subject with which 2 Isaiah deals. It is not only very important. It is also on the one hand very interesting, and on the other very difficult. It is very interesting, inasmuch as it is largely through the servant that Jehovah brings about the salvation of Israel and of other nations, and the methods of the unchanging God must be fraught with the utmost personal interest for His people of any period. It is very difficult, because the greatest care is needed in order to determine precisely who the servant is; and only a close comparison of different passages where he is