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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THERE is no outstanding event in the life of our Lord so disappointing as the Transfiguration. It seems so great: we get so little out of it. It is not that we do not fathom it. We may not fathom the Temptation. But we get a great deal of meaning out of the Temptation, and we think we understand the purpose of it. Out of the Transfiguration we get very little either for science or edification. Even as to its purpose there is no assurance though there are many theories.

Two theories regarding the purpose of the Transfiguration have recently been published. Dr. H. A. A. Kennedy is the author of the first. He published it in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for January. Dr. Kennedy's theory is that the Transfiguration was chiefly for the sake of the disciples. It was intended to prepare them for the Resurrection. If the Resurrection was the great event that lay before them, in the Resurrection itself the fact of greatest moment would be the identity of the risen Christ. The disciples were to be witnesses of the Resurrection. But how could they be witnesses if they did not know Him when He rose? He would rise in a glorified body. It would be very different from the body of His humiliation. What if they did not recognize Him at all? We are told that when He appeared to the five hundred upon the mountain in Galilee, 'some doubted.' What if they were all to doubt, and when the day of witness came, they could only say that they thought He might have risen from the dead?

So the Transfiguration was given. Three of the disciples were taken up with Him into the Mount, and saw His glory. They saw Him in the glorified form in which He would afterwards appear to them when He rose from the dead. The Transfiguration took place in order that Peter and James and John might recognize their Lord when He appeared to them after His Resurrection, and so be able to bear witness that He had risen indeed.

Dr. Kennedy finds three arguments to support his theory. The first argument is the word used to describe the Transfiguration. It is the word we translate, 'He was transfigured before them' (*μετεμορφώθη*). That word, says Dr. Kennedy, 'reminds us vividly of the hints afforded by the Gospel records regarding His post-resurrection appearances.' He says, further, that it recalls most strikingly the verb which St. Paul uses when describing the change which the power of Christ will effect in the bodies of believers. The reference is to Phil 3^{21}. Our translation is, 'Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory' (*σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*).

The second argument is in the word 'glory' itself. This is the word used to describe the general effect of Christ's appearance when He was transfigured. St. Luke (9^{31}) says, 'They saw His glory.' Of Moses and Elijah also is it said, that they 'appeared in glory.' Now, says Dr. Kennedy, 'we know that *glory* was the term used in the apostolic age to denote the appearance of the risen life, whether of Christ Himself or of His followers.'

The third argument lies in the silence which was imposed upon the disciples. They were commanded to tell no one what they had seen 'until the Son of man be raised from the dead' (Mt 17^{9}). To this St. Mark adds, and Dr. Kennedy finds much significance in the addition, that 'they kept the saying (that is, the command), questioning among themselves what the rising from the dead should mean.'

The author of the other theory is the Rev. R. Holmes, M.A. Mr. Holmes writes in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for July. He does not believe in Dr. Kennedy's theory. He thinks Dr. Kennedy's arguments are too slender to be convincing. And he holds that the facts are inconsistent with it.

Dr. Kennedy's theory, we are reminded, is that the Transfiguration was granted to Peter, James, and John, in order that they might know the Lord when He rose again from the dead. But, says Mr. Holmes, when the Lord rose again from the dead, He did not appear to Peter, James, and John. His first appearance was to Mary Magdalene; His second was most probably to the company of women returning from the sepulchre; and His third to the two on the way to Emmaus. None of these persons were present at the Transfiguration, yet they recognized the Lord. It is only at the fourth appearance that a witness of the Transfiguration comes upon the scene. And even then, says Mr. Holmes, no stress is laid on the appearance to St. Peter; it is recorded merely in a report of some words of the apostles given by St. Luke, and it is mentioned again by St. Paul.

It is true that those to whom Jesus appeared after His Resurrection did not always recognize Him at first. But there is no evidence that they were assisted by any recollection of the Transfiguration. Such a recollection indeed seems to be quite unnecessary, since Jesus apparently had the power of making Himself known at will. The only occasion which seems to Mr. Holmes to favour Dr. Kennedy's theory is the appearance on the shore of the lake (Jn $21^{1ff.}$). On that occasion Peter and James and John were all present. Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. John was the first to recognize Him. But how? Not by any recollection of the Transfiguration, but rather, says Mr. Holmes, quoting the words of Westcott, 'by a certain sympathy with Him.'

So Mr. Holmes sets aside Dr. Kennedy's theory, and then advances his own. His own theory is that the Transfiguration was intended to prepare the disciples for the Cross and to assure them of the Crown. These are two different things. It was the setting of the Transfiguration that taught the first; the Transfiguration itself taught the second. Mr. Holmes points out what the setting of the Transfiguration is. It was preceded by the prophecy of His sufferings; it was followed by the incident of the demoniac, and a repetition of the suffering prophecy. Thus by the setting of the Transfiguration, the disciples were taught to surrender their expectations of worldly success, and to enter the kingdom by way of the Cross. But the Transfiguration itself was given to assure them of the Crown. If they had to enter the kingdom by way of the Cross, it was at least a real kingdom that they entered.

The things that affect the Society of Friends are of interest to us all. One thing is affecting Quakerism just now at its very heart. It is the

problem of a paid and professional ministry. The *British Friend* (a well-managed and most enjoyable magazine) has much to say about it from month to month. In the number for August the question is definitely raised whether there is any authority for a paid ministry in the New Testament.

The writer, Mr. John W. Graham, concludes that there is not. He knows that in the New Testament occur the words, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire.' But the hire, he says, is hospitality and nothing more, and sends those who doubt his interpretation to examine the context. He knows that the words, 'Even so did the Lord ordain that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel,' are also found in the New Testament. But now he says—and his interpretation is now startling enough—that these words are not based on the canonical Gospels, that they represent a tradition of less weight; and that in any case they do not refer to ministers at home but to missionaries abroad.

Professor Samuel M. Smith, who is one of the editors of the *Bible Student*, has been writing in that magazine on Sin. What he means by Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the Law of God; and he does not think it necessary to mark his words as a quotation.

Professor Smith thinks that there is too much sin in our day and too little sense of it. He does not mean that we break the commandments more than our fathers did. He thinks we break them less. He thinks there never was a time when more was done to avoid sin and to prevent it in others. Still he holds that sin is far more prevalent than it used to be, and that for some years the sense of it has been steadily growing less.

For men are forgetting that there are two Tables of the Law. To the Second Table there never was more attention paid. But the Second Table has to do with our duty to our fellow-men. The First Table, which has to do with our duty to God, is greater. The transgression of the First Table is the only proper meaning of sin. And Professor Smith believes that we are losing sight of the very existence of the First Table of the Law.

The First Table contains four commandments. Professor Smith holds that every one of them is ignored or even denied in our day. For the first charge he brings against our age is its worldliness, its absorption in material as opposed to spiritual things, in short, its rejection of the first commandment, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' Curiously enough he almost omits the second commandment. Perhaps its transgression is less flagrant in America than here. But on the third and fourth he is emphatic. The third commandment is, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' Profanity, says Professor Smith, is painfully prevalent; its prevalence is symptomatic of a broader irreverence which has been growing before our eyes, till scarcely anything is now counted sacred—God's Name, God's Word, God's Church. The fourth commandment is, 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.' Dr. Smith thinks it is too long since many of us kept it holy for us to remember anything about it.

We have lost the sense of sin, says Professor Smith, and we are like to lose the word. It does not enter into literature now. It is rarely used in the pulpit. For inasmuch as it is the Second Table of the Law we give our attention to, we feel that when we wish to express the transgression of the Law, a better word than sin is vice or crime. Moreover, it is an ethical, untheological age. Vice and crime are ethical, untheological words. And finally, we may as well confess that we do not like to obtrude the thought of God so nakedly as sin does—the thought of a God with whom we have to do. We may have to do with Him and may have to think of that, but at present we have enough to do with our neighbour.

In the pulpit, it has been said, manner is more

than matter. For the matter of preaching is the Bible, and if the preacher cannot make the Bible more impressive by his manner of presenting it than the hearer finds the reading of it, the reason for preaching disappears. It is the same with the teaching of the Bible to the young. We are much exercised at present about the kind of religious instruction our young people receive. The more important consideration is not what they are taught, but how they are taught it.

Dr. David Beaton of Lincoln Park Congregational Church, Chicago, contributes an article to the July number of the *Biblical World* on the manner of teaching the Bible. He says that the teacher of the Bible is exposed to two kinds of danger. The one kind he describes as the danger of naturalism, the other of supernaturalism. It is the life-story of some saint, some patriot, or some hero of the Bible that happens to form the lesson. How is the teacher to teach it? He has to teach it in such a way that the hand of God will be seen working in and through the man; otherwise it is not religious teaching. Yet at the same time the man must be a man, human, interesting. If the teacher shows his hero to be a hero only, he has fallen into the danger of naturalism. If he shows God's hand working independently of the hero, he has fallen into the danger of supernaturalism. That is what Dr. Beaton means. 'Naturalism,' he says, 'lays emphasis on the natural ability, the genius, the courage of the man described in the Bible; supernaturalism lays emphasis on the power of God, the working of the Holy Spirit: in each case a distorted image of the fact is presented to the pupil.'

Why should the teacher not dwell exclusively if he chooses upon the courage, the self-sacrifice, of the man or woman he is describing? Are those not excellent qualities to inculcate? They are. But this teacher is a religious teacher. That is to say, he has not only to encourage the pupil to be courageous and self-sacrificing, he has to lay these virtues with binding power upon his heart and conscience. Why should I endure the trials that make a hero, asks the pupil, or the discipline that makes a saint, because this man was a hero or that woman a saint? And the teacher of naturalism has no answer to give. For saints and heroes have no authority in themselves to constrain the conscience, whether they are in the Bible or out of it.

But the other danger is greater. It is not so common as once it was, and its danger is steadily diminishing; but in the teaching of the young it is the greater danger still. Why should the teacher not dwell exclusively on the supernatural, that is to say, upon the hand of God in the Bible? Because he robs the Bible of its human interest and reality, and he is no longer entitled to the name of teacher. The heroes of the Bible must touch the heroic in ourselves, its saints must kindle the flame of saintliness; they do not come near enough to touch us if they live in a world in which the laws of nature do not operate. James Gilmour, reading the Psalms of David in a filthy Mongol tent, without a sympathetic hand to cool the fever of fatigue and disappointment upon his brow, cries out, 'How *one* the soul of man is!' for the Psalmist's heart and his have met, the Psalmist's struggles and disappointments are real and human as his own.

So, if we are to teach the Bible aright, we must be neither natural nor supernatural, but we must be both. And now the teacher himself, untrained and ill-encouraged, turns round and says, 'But what must I do if I cannot be both?' To which Dr. Beaton answers, 'Then it is better to be natural than supernatural.' For, if the teacher is supernatural only, it may be easy for him to say, 'God did it,' or 'The Holy Spirit taught him,' or 'God was with him and he could not fail'; it may seem to honour God and the Bible, says Dr. Beaton, thus to 'laugh at impossibilities and go smashing through the facts of life'; but it is a sign of intellectual shallowness and moral weak-

ness; it is an evidence of unbelief in the divine unity of the universe; and it comes home in retribution by making the victim of such teaching either a fanatic or a sceptic.

If we cannot be both natural and supernatural then, says Dr. Beaton, let us at least be natural. For he thinks that not only does it do the less harm, but that it is nearer the mind of God. For 'God has given His revelation, not by the lives of angels but of men, and in the most normal relations of humanity, the family and the state, in the experiences of love, of fatherhood and motherhood, of king and subject, of peasant and prince, of poet and mechanic, of hero and saint. And above all, to crown and consummate this revelation, the Son of God was made flesh, so that He might continue the record of revelation to us as a man, that the holiest and noblest of all lives might also be the most natural and most closely connected with our own.'

But why should not the teacher be trained and encouraged to be both natural and supernatural in his teaching? Why should he not learn and be able to teach that the lives in the Bible are genuine lives, that the men and women had to solve their own problems and work out their own salvation by the ordinary gifts and graces of a virtuous nature and a loving heart, that the hero was victorious through the exercise of a strong will and a self-sacrificing disposition; and yet that the daily task was undertaken and life's victories won in the presence of a Divine Spirit who lived in them and ruled over them? Then will the pupil feel that his own sufferings, his own temptations, and his own work are filled with the same divine life and ruled by the same authority as the saints and heroes of the Bible story. 'As these men and women loved and served their country, and built up a civilization so different from the civilization of any other part of the world, he will strive to make the life of *his* nation holy, *its* history too shall be a Bible, and the footsteps of God shall be traced in the deeds of *its* heroes and the thoughts of *its* saints. He becomes the conscious and willing instrument of God, learning the final lesson of all revelation—the purpose of God in the life of the individual and the race.'

'There was a man sent from God, whose name was John' (Jn 1^6). The words have the ring of the Bible, the ring of authority, the royal ring in them. They are both natural and supernatural. He was a man, his name was John, that is natural; but he was sent from God, that is supernatural. The supernatural predominates, as it does all through the chapter. But it never runs away with the natural. Jesus saw Nathanael under the fig tree before Philip called him, but Philip had to call him. John was sent from God, but that does less to remove him away from us than do the leathern girdle and the wild honey, and yet these are human enough.

For we are all sent from God. No doubt John was sent for a special purpose. So also was Jesus: 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' So also were the disciples: 'As the Father hath sent Me into the world, even so send I you into the world.' But so also are we. So also is every man. There was a man sent from God whose name was ——: let every man insert his own name and the words are true.

John was sent to be a Forerunner. That was *his* special purpose in life. We too are sent for some special purpose. And the greatest difference between John and us may lie, not in that he was sent for a special purpose, nor in that his special purpose in life was to be the Forerunner of the Christ, but in that he recognized what his purpose in life was and we do not.

How did he come to recognize it? That question leads us into the whole history of John the Baptist, and we had better take it in three parts: 1. John in Private; 2. John in Public; 3. John in Prison.

1. First, let us think of John in Private. His introduction is startling enough. 'He was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.' In the deserts—what had sent John there? Was his nature so untamable that he shunned the haunts of men? It was not so. He was sent into the deserts, as Jesus was driven into the wilderness, by the Spirit of God. John was the son of a priest; his home was a godly home, and we may believe that the Spirit used the Word of God, so diligently read in that home, to drive John into the deserts.

We may suppose that he had been reading the Old Testament. Now the Old Testament has but two words to say to any man who reads it: 'God' and 'Sin.' In the Old Testament John learns that there is a God with whom he has to do, and that his relation to that God is Sin. He is in the condition of the Psalmist, and he sees nothing in the Old Testament but the Psalmist's cry, ''Gainst thee only have I sinned.' The Spirit of God has made the reading of the Old Testament effective in sending John into the deserts.

When John was sent into the deserts, if we read his story aright, he was at enmity with God. He remained in the deserts till he found peace. He found peace in repentance. Then when repentance came, there came the fruits that showed repentance real, and John became a Forerunner. He found his special purpose in life along the lines of his experience. He did not know, we may be sure that he did not know, how he was to fulfil his purpose and be a Forerunner, till he found himself preaching what he had felt. John came saying, 'Repent,' not because he would be a Forerunner, but because he had himself found peace in repenting. And as he cried, 'Repent,' preaching his own experience, he found himself fulfilling the ancient prophecy, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face.'

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2. John in Public. When John appeared in public he made a sensation: 'Then went out unto him Jerusalem and all Judæa.' He made such a sensation that they remembered him long afterwards. Secular persons like Josephus remembered him better than they remembered Jesus. What was it in John that touched them? His leathern girdle and camel's-hair coat? The question is not an idle one, for Jesus asked it; but that is not the answer. There was nothing so unusual in a camel's-hair coat and a leathern girdle. But John's reality was unusual. When Jesus began preaching this was His power also and the joy of the people in Him. He spake not as the Scribes. Neither did John speak as the Scribes. He spoke out of his own vivid experience. This voice which cried in the wilderness was a voice carrying a Burden as surely as ever Elijah or any other prophet carried a Burden.

His reality gave him boldness. And this also became an element in his popularity. When the soldiers asked him, half in jest perhaps, 'And what shall we do?' he told them to be content with their wages. The laugh was turned against them and the brave Baptist was more popular than ever. But his boldness cost him his liberty at last.

Herod Antipas heard of him, and then went to hear him. There was a religiousness in all the Herods. They would not have succeeded with the Jews so well as they did if they had not had an interest in religion. Herod heard John, heard him gladly, and did many things which John bade him do. And that is the test of a man's earnestness in religion and in hearing sermons. But one day John's boldness carried him very far. He reproved Herod for living in adultery with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. And Herod sent John to prison.

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3. John in Prison. He won it by his courage. If the rebuke was in public, as is altogether likely, we can imagine Herod's surprise; we can imagine how Herodias, sitting by him, bit her lip in

anger. 'It is not lawful for thee to have her:' and John was sent to prison. Had he left his proper purpose and calling in life then? Not so. This was part of the Forerunner's business. And it will not do for you or me to say it is none of our business. If we dread the prison extremely, we may perhaps escape it by judicious and very private admonishing. But whether it be adultery or strong drink, it *is* our business. And if we win our prison we shall win it well. John won his prison well, and it was worth the winning.

But not for a time. At first, and for a time it seemed as if he had won his prison to lose everything else. It was when he was in prison that John sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask, 'Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?'

This is the most significant event in John the Baptist's life—most significant both for him and for us. This event tells us that his work as Forerunner was not ended when he was cast into prison. It was ended so far as Jerusalem and all Judæa was concerned. It was not ended for himself, for his disciples, or for us.

This event tells us also that a man may be even a Forerunner and not understand Christ. He may be sent from God, may find out that for which he is sent, and may do it, and yet be himself a castaway. It is a great step in life to recognize the purpose for which life and a place in the world is given. It is not the greatest step. It often makes a man great. It does not make him the greatest. Great as he is, and great as is the step he has taken, if he takes no other step, he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

John's disappointment in Christ was due to his being before Christ. It was due to his being the Forerunner. As the Forerunner he had to prepare men's hearts for Christ by repentance. And as he understood Christ, he understood that if men repented (and proved the sincerity of it by good works) they would be safe from the judgment that threatened them. If they did not repent—why, Jesus was at hand with the axe of judgment already lifted up. He was at hand with the fan and the fire. John misunderstood Jesus. He thought the Father had sent the Son into the world to condemn the world, and not that the world through Him might be saved.

Surely we misunderstand the greatness of John the Baptist when we attribute his message from the prison to weakness or disappointment. Surely we misunderstand his mission as the Forerunner. What sign did ever John give either of weakness or of vanity? It was not himself, it was God and the world that John was thinking about. 'Art thou he; or do we—all of us—look for another?' The two disciples came to Jesus. He was busy doing the work that the Father had sent Him into the world to do. He was busy doing the work that had disappointed John. He was not taking vengeance. He was seeking and saving. 'John Baptist hath sent us: Art thou he?'

Jesus went on with His work. The blind came and were healed. The lepers came and were cleansed. The dead were carried in and went away with their friends. Jesus encouraged them to come. He welcomed them. He went and sought them out. And when those who were least considered in Israel then, those from whom least was expected, and for whom only a certain fearful looking for of judgment was supposed to be in store, when the poor (what a word it was and is) came near enough, good news was preached to them also, and never a word of the fire and the axe. Then He turned to the disciples of John: 'Go, tell him what you have seen and heard.'

Have you ever considered John receiving the message there in the prison, and thinking? All that they brought was in keeping with what he had heard. It was just on this account that he had sent the two disciples to ask. Was it meant as

insult then? John heard the message, and he had time in the prison to think?

He understood. How can we doubt that he understood? What else was the prison won for? What else was the message sent for? He understood that he had been sent, not before the strong wind and the earthquake, as he had supposed, but before the still small voice; not before the axe and the fire, but before the gospel to the poor. He had preached repentance and judgment to come. Jesus also preached repentance, but his long-suffering was not weary yet. John preached repentance and the axe; Jesus preached repentance and the Kingdom. And yet John understood now that Jesus demanded more than he.

For John demanded repentance and amendment of life: Jesus demanded repentance and a change of heart. John demanded reformation; Jesus demanded regeneration. It was plain to see that the life must be amended, that the tax-gatherers must no longer extort, that the soldiers must no longer do violence. And if the axe was already at the root of the tree, the amendment could not be too speedy. Jesus began at the heart, touched the affections, drew forth the inalienable capacity of man to love, brought the human heart in contact with His own. The amendment will come. It may be longer in showing itself; but it will last longer; and He can wait. 'If thou art he that should come, where is the axe? said John.' The axe is become a hand to touch the leper, a voice to preach the gospel to the poor.

John understood. He had won his prison nobly, and now he saw that it was worth the winning.

The Secret of the Triumph of Christianity over the Ancient World.

By Professor G. Grützmacher, Ph.D., Heidelberg.

All attempts of the Imperial power of Rome to destroy Christianity by fire and sword had come to nought. Hundreds of victims had been sacrificed, but the Christian faith could not be slain. Phœnix-like it ever rose from the ashes. But a similar failure attended also the efforts to ally it with heathen cults—efforts fraught with greater peril to Christianity—which preceded or showed themselves simultaneously with the persecutions. In vain had that religious libertine on the throne of the Cæsars, Heliogabalus (218–222), invited the Christians to worship Christ as their God in the temple of his Syrian god, from whom he derived his name. In vain had the noble emperor Alexander Severus (222–235) sought to introduce a peculiar mixed religion, in which he also assigned a place to Christ. This was the first emperor who showed not merely toleration but a real sympathy for the Christians. His mother, Julia Mammæa, had caused the great Christian theologian, Origen, to come to Antioch, that she might discuss with him the immortality of the soul; and Alexander Severus set up in his palace two oratories, in which he practised the cult of the saints of paganism. In the first a place was given to divine men of a less perfect type, such as Cicero and Virgil; in the second were set up the images of his ancestors, the best of the deified emperors and of holy souls, among whom, side by side with Apollonius of Tyana, Orpheus, and Alexander the Great, admittance was accorded to Abraham and Christ. Thither the emperor betook himself every morning before commencing the business of state, to find edification in presence of all that humanity had produced of what was noble, great, and holy. Possessed of a soul mystically inclined, with high culture and fine feeling, he found there religious enjoyment in spiritual communion with all the great souls of the past whom he could love and reverence. But noble as were the intentions