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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

When the first volume of the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* came into the hands of the reviewers, and they found it described as 'first of all a Dictionary for preachers,' one of two things occurred. Either the reviewer doubted if that was a proper description of the book, or else he changed his opinion of what was provision for preachers. For every reviewer saw at a glance that the volume contained no ready-made sermons, and very little, if any, of that 'homiletical material' which used to be provided so abundantly for the pulpit.

It will now be easier than it would have been a year ago to describe the new book which the Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Aberdeen has published as 'a book for preachers.' Its title is *The Stoic Creed* (T. & T. Clark; 4s. 6d. net). Professor Davidson has been a preacher, and for aught we know may be a preacher still, and he at least will not resent our description of his book. For he knows that the difference between one preacher and another is not that the library of the one is furnished with volumes of homiletical material and the library of the other is not, but that the mind of the one is stored with the knowledge which lies beyond the immediate making of the sermon and the mind of the other is not.

Such is the knowledge to be found in *The Stoic Creed*. Professor Davidson, we say, has been a preacher, and perhaps on that account he brings the Creed of the Stoic into constant comparison with the language and thought of the Bible. For example, he says that to the Stoics, as to Aristotle, happiness was something that must be self-sufficient; and at once he recalls the proverb, 'A good man shall be satisfied from himself' (Pr 14^{14}). His exposition then becomes an exegesis of that text. Not an exegesis for the hasty sermon-builder on Saturday night, but for the mind that is making ready. He quotes from Marcus Aurelius (*Med.* vii. 59). 'Dig within,' says Marcus Aurelius. 'Within is the fountain of good; ever dig, and it will ever well forth water.' And he quotes from Epictetus (*Diss.* iv. 4). Says Epictetus, 'There is only one way to happiness—let it be ready to hand in the morning, during the day, and at night—it is to turn away from what is beyond the power of choice, to regard nothing as one's own, to give over all things to the divinity (τῷ δαιμονίῳ), to fortune, making them the superintendents of these things whom Zeus also has made so.'

Is it worth the preacher's while to look into this matter of Self-sufficiency? If he understands his own heart and his hearers', if he desires to make

his message tell upon life and conduct, if his aim is to substitute the righteousness which is by faith for that righteousness which is of the law, it is well worth his while. And we know not where else he will find the matter handled so fruitfully as in this book. For there is a self-sufficiency that is almost Christian, and there is a self-sufficiency that is utterly opposed to Christ. And Dr. Davidson brings out the difference between them.

'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' The soul is the great thing, said the Stoic, and its health the first concern; and he advocates the wisdom, for the soul's sake, of sitting loose to the pleasures of the world, of moderating and suppressing one's desires, of finding the source of happiness and peace in the mind and inward being, not in external circumstances or the so-called good things of life which perish in the using. And then he adds, 'It is the characteristic of the wise man that he is self-sufficient.' And when he says that he is self-sufficient he means that he is independent of everything outside his own soul. He is master of the world by being master of his own desires.

This is the Stoic doctrine of Self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια). Is it not almost Christian? But how easily it can be perverted. How easily the Cynic perverted it. As Antisthenes allowed the rents in his garment to appear, 'Antisthenes,' said Socrates, 'I see your vanity through your cloak.' How was it that the Stoic virtue of self-sufficiency, so like to Christ, could so easily be made anti-Christian? It was because the self-sufficiency of the Stoic was self-sufficiency in himself. It was because he thought himself independent of God as well as of the world. He had not discovered that the secret of self-sufficiency is to have the life hid with Christ in God.

The difference between the Christian and the Stoic conceptions of self-sufficiency has never been better expressed than by Professor Findlay, to whose Fernley Lecture Dr. Davidson directs us. 'The Christian self-sufficiency,' says Professor Findlay, 'is relative; it is an independence of the world through dependence upon God. The Stoic self-sufficiency pretends to be absolute. The one is the contentment of faith, the other of pride. Cato and Paul both stand erect and fearless before a persecuting world: one with a look of rigid and defiant scorn; the other with a face now lighted up with unutterable joy in God, now cast down with sorrow and wet with tears for God's enemies. The Christian martyr and the Stoic suicide are the final examples of these two memorable and contemporaneous protests against the evils of the world.'

On another page Professor Davidson lets us see how near the Stoic came to one of the most fundamental principles of the law of God. The principle is found very plainly in the Epistle of St. James: 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all' (Ja 2^{10}). 'The Stoics also maintain,' says Diogenes Laertius, 'that all sins are equal. For if what is true is not more than true, nor what is false more than false, so also a deceit is not more than deceit, or a sin than sin. For he who is a hundred stadia distant from Canopus and he who is only one, are both equally not in Canopus; and so also he who commits a greater and he who commits a less sin are both equally not in the right path. As a stick must be either straight or crooked, so a man must be either just or unjust, and cannot be more just than just or more unjust than unjust.'

And then in a footnote, Professor Davidson remembers his Shorter Catechism. Between Calvinism and the sterner side of Stoicism there is, he observes, much in common. But there is a difference here. Both in the Larger and in the Shorter Catechism one of the questions is, 'Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?' And the answer is that they are not, but that 'some sins in themselves, and by reason of several

aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.' Why did the Westminster divines lay emphasis on the difference between one sin and another? The Scripture does not demand it, and Calvinism does not need it. The historian of the Creeds can no doubt tell us.

But *The Stoic Creed* is more than an exposition of certain Christian principles. It is more than an exegesis of certain Scripture texts. To the Christian preacher it is more. For it is a sympathetic and masterly account of the most serious unaided effort that man ever made to win his own soul. Where the Stoic failed, who can hope to succeed? And so this book comes to us just at a time when men are widely encouraged to work out their own salvation without Christ. It comes to show that Christ is necessary; that, in short, there is no other name given under Heaven whereby we must be saved.

To a recent number of the *Sunday School Times* of America, Professor Albert T. Clay, of the University of Pennsylvania, has contributed an article on 'The Latest Discoveries in Bible Lands.' He speaks first of all of the tablets which have been found at Boghaz-keui, the probable site of the capital of the great Hittite empire. This discovery has already been referred to in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, and Professor Clay has nothing new to say about it.

He next refers to the discovery in Egypt of eleven rolls of papyri, and of several ostraca or inscribed potsherds. The discovery was made in Syênê, a city on the island of Elephantinê, which is opposite the modern Assuan, at the first cataract of the Nile. Road builders found the rolls of papyri in a wooden box, in the exact shape in which they were left in the fifth century B.C. They were practically in perfect condition, the very tie-strings intact, and the clay seals unbroken.

The documents are dated, the earliest in the closing year of Xerxes, which was also the year of the accession of Artaxerxes I.; the latest in the thirteenth year of Darius II. That is to say, they run from 465 to about 411 B.C. Their interest for us lies in the fact that they were written on behalf of Israelites. There was a colony of Israelites permanently settled at Syênê, and they seem to have preserved their ancestral religion. They are spoken of in the rolls sometimes as Jews, sometimes as Aramæans. When their names are given they are for the most part names which occur in the Old Testament — Azariah, Berechiah, Hosea, Isaiah, Nathan, and the like. And, most significant of all, when they swore they swore by the name of Jahweh.

They swore by the name of Jahweh. But they did not call him Jahweh. They seem to have called him Jâwa. For they do not write His name with the four letters J H W H, but only with the three J H W. And this unexpected fact may compel us to reopen the whole question of the name of the God of Israel.

There are some items for the social reformer in the documents. Most of them are written in the interests of Mibtachyah. Now, Mibtachyah was a Jewess, who married as her second husband an Egyptian of the name of As-Hor. After his marriage (or just before it?), As-Hor became a Jew, and took the good Jewish name of Nathan. But what is more surprising, Mibtachyah, after her second marriage, seems to have become an Egyptian, for she swore by the Egyptian goddess Sati. It is just possible that, remaining a Jewess, she was tolerant enough to recognize the existence of an Egyptian god. In any case, women were persons of influence in the Jewish colony of Syênê in the fifth century B.C. They could own property and dispose of it. They could even divorce their husbands.

This Egyptian discovery has several points of interest. Among the rest, as Dr. Clay is not slow to discover, it recalls the words of Isaiah in his burden of Egypt: 'In that day shall there be five

cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to Jehovah of Hosts; one shall be called The city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt' (Is $19^{18.19}$). The passage, says Professor Clay, has been regarded by certain scholars as an interpolation, and yet Syênê, a city in the land of Egypt, is the ancient name of the place where the documents were written, and Aramaic, the language of Canaan in those days, is the language of the papyri; in their contracts they swore by the name of Jâwa, and they erected their altar to Jâwa in Egypt.

Professor Clay next gives an account of a discovery which was made in the summer of 1905, near Tarsus, by Mr. J. R. Metheny, now a student in Semitics at the University of Pennsylvania. It is an inscription in Aramaic cut in the face of a rock. This is how it has been translated—

Up to this point the district of Ranal.
Whoever thou art who mayest molest it,
him shall curse (?) the Lord (Baal) of heaven and earth, the Moon and the Sun;
And so let him mind his own business!

Now this inscription seems innocent enough of any Biblical reference. But notice the names of the gods that are in it. The Moon and the Sun are there. And the moon comes first; for the moon outranked the sun in the old Semitic religion. But there is a triad of gods, and the third is greater than either the Moon or the Sun. Who is he? He is the 'Lord of heaven and earth.' We remember at once that this is one of the titles by which Melchizedek knew his God (Gn 14^{19}). This 'Lord of heaven and earth,' says Professor Clay, represents the closest approach which polytheistic Semitism made towards monotheism; he is the celestial and supreme overlord, and, as we learn elsewhere, he was endowed with noble spiritual and ethical qualities. But there is more in the name than that.

In that decree which opened the way for the Jews to return to their native land, Cyrus, King of Persia, makes reference to the 'God of heaven' (Ezr 1^{2}). The decree, says Professor Clay, just on account of this epithet, has largely been refused authenticity. But this inscription shows that the Persian King was employing for the highest deity a title with which he must have been quite familiar.

The last thing to which Dr. Clay refers is the name of the god of Nippur.

There is a curious expression in the Old Testament, *'ĕlîl*, or in the plural *'ĕlîlîm*. The etymologists do not know its derivation, and the translators are not quite sure of its translation. In the Authorized Version it is translated 'idol' or 'idols'; and that translation is retained even when the word becomes an adjective, as it does in Zec 11^{17}, 'Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock.' It is the belief of modern philologists that the word comes from a Syriac root meaning 'feeble.' And so in the Revised Version it is sometimes translated 'worthless' or 'worthlessness.' But in certain places it is evident that the reference is to gods. And so, the translation 'idols' is sometimes retained, and the alternative 'things of nought' is given in the margin.

Professor Clay has discovered the origin of this word. It is the name of a Babylonian god. It is the name of the chief deity of the city of Nippur. Hitherto it has been supposed that the great god Bêl was the god of the city of Nippur. But Professor Clay has been the fortunate decipherer of an Aramaic document from which he proves that, for the city of Nippur at least, Bêl has been a misreading. The god of Nippur was never called Bêl, except as a title, *bêl matâti*, 'lord of lands.' Throughout the Sumerian period he was known by the name of Enlil, which in the Babylonian period was changed into Ellil.

How did Professor Clay make his discovery? He was going through a number of business

documents of the Murashû Sons of Nippur of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. These documents contain notes in Aramaic. That is to say, the keeper of the archives in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah scratched upon the clay a note indicating the contents, or the name of the person to whom the document referred, and he used Aramaic, the diplomatic language of his day. This scribe had occasion to write upon one of the documents the name of the god of Nippur. Dr. Clay at once saw from the Aramaic transliteration that the name of the god had been erroneously read Bêl. His name was never Bêl, but Ellil.

And now Professor Clay believes that where the word *'ĕlīlīm* occurs in the Old Testament, it ought, sometimes at least, to be translated 'images.' In Isaiah it may have the general meaning of 'idol,' but in Leviticus a distinction is made. In 19^4, the *'ĕlīlīm* are contrasted with 'molten gods'; and again in 26^1 the command is 'Make not for yourselves *'ĕlīlīm*, and a *pesel* (an idol of wood, stone, or metal), or a *mazzêbah* (a sacred pillar) shall ye not raise up for yourselves, and an *'eben maskith* (perhaps "sculptured stone") shall ye not place in your land to bow to it.' It is therefore not improbable, says Dr. Clay, that the *'ĕlīlīm* were originally terra-cotta images. And if this identification is correct, the clay images of the god *Ellil*, found at Nippur, furnish the name and the form of the idols that became a snare to the Israelites.

It cannot be said that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth occupies a prominent place in the New Theology, whether for affirmation or for denial. The controversy about the Virgin Birth had arisen earlier, and, after much heated discussion, had settled down into a fairly general comprehension of what might be believed about it and what not. Mr. Campbell had presumably followed the discussion and knew how to guard himself against immediate refutation. And so the Rev. W. L. Walker in his new book, to which he has given the title of *What about the New Theology?* (T. & T. Clark; 2s. 6d. net) does not spend much time upon it. But what he says about the Virgin Birth seems to us as well said and as well worth saying as anything else in the book.

Mr. Campbell has said that 'most reputable theologians have now given up the Virgin Birth.' Mr. Walker turns the 'most' into 'many,' and then admits it. He also admits that it is 'still a stumbling-block to many minds.' Now, there are two kinds of mind to whom the Virgin Birth is still a stumbling-block—those who come to it from the side of science, and those who come to it from the side of Scripture. Mr. Walker thinks of both.

The difficulty from Scripture is found in the fact that neither St. Paul nor St. John knows anything of the Virgin Birth; or, if they know, they ignore it. Mr. Walker points out that it may not be accurate to say either that they were ignorant of or ignored it. For they had attained to another, and perhaps higher, conception of Christ than that which the Virgin Birth implies. They had reached the conception of the Incarnation in Christ of a pre-existent Divine Being. But the Gospel narratives of the Virgin Birth do not teach the Incarnation of a pre-existent Divine Being. What they teach is the introduction into this world of an entirely *new being*, an introduction which was brought about, they say, by the direct creative act of God. It was because He came, a new being, through the direct creative act of God, that He was to be called the Son of God. As St. Luke has it, 'Wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God' (1^{35}). To St. Paul and St. John He is the Son of God also. Not, however, because He was born in a miraculous manner into the world. To them the name belongs to Him already in His pre-existence. They do not therefore need to speak about the Virgin Birth. Perhaps they scarcely could speak about it. In any case, it is a mistake to suggest that they were ignorant of or deliberately ignored it. To them Christ was a Divine Being, entering the world in His own power. And they could scarcely, says Mr. Walker,

have thought of Him as doing so in the mode indicated by these primitive narratives.

Mr. Walker also meets the difficulty from science. 'If once,' he says, 'we see that the *complete* Incarnation of God in Christ was not something effected in the birth of the little Child of Bethlehem, but was a gradual work in Him who 'grew in grace' and was 'perfected through suffering,' we can also see that, while the humanity was *prepared* in Mary, a Divine spiritual fecundation of that prepared humanity may not have been impossible, but may even have been necessary in order to provide the organic basis of that life which, while truly human, was to be such a complete manifestation of God—the *uniqueness* of which is so evident, and is generally acknowledged.'

'If there is one passage in the Bible that is commonly, and perhaps generally, misunderstood and perverted, and supposed to teach the very opposite of what it means, that passage is in Paul's letter to the Philippians, where he says, as he is going away from the believers whom he loves, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2^{12}).'

These words are found in a new book which has been published at the office of the *Sunday School Times* in Philadelphia, and of which the title is *Our Misunderstood Bible* ($1 net). The author of the book is the late Dr. H. Clay Trumbull. We think we may recognize in it a collection of articles originally contributed to the *Sunday School Times*, though there is no hint of that in the book itself. In any case, Dr. Trumbull did contribute many such articles during the long period of his editorship of that well-edited periodical, and gave the plain man in America many a useful hint as to the real meaning of the language of the Bible.

Well, what is the 'common and perhaps general' misunderstanding of this text? It is that the sinner has some share in securing his own salvation. As a matter of fact, says Dr. Trumbull, the sinner has no share, and this text does not say he has. Salvation is Christ's work. It is wholly Christ's. It is not a work that is partly Christ's and partly the sinner's. The sinner has no share in it.

And the moment he has said this, and said it so emphatically, Dr. Trumbull stops to think. Has the sinner really no share in his own salvation? Yes, says Dr. Trumbull, he has a share, but it is not in the working out of it. What is the share which the sinner has in his salvation? Dr. Trumbull answers by an incident.

He says that a New England boy was brought before the Church authorities as an applicant for admission.

'Why do you want to join the Church?' asked the pastor.

'Because I want to show that I am a saved sinner.'

'Do you feel that you are saved?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Who saved you?'

'It was the work of Jesus Christ and of myself.'

'Of yourself? What was your share in the work of your salvation?'

'I resisted, and Jesus Christ did the rest.'

This is the part, and the only part, that the sinner takes in the work of his salvation. He does not work it out. He resists the working out of it. And when he can resist no longer he simply accepts the salvation which has been wholly worked out for him by another.

Now it seems that in New England there is a particular and local objection to saying that the sinner has to work out his own salvation. In the popular language of that part of the United States the phrase 'to work out' has a technical meaning attached to it.

The technical meaning is this. In New England the roads are made and repaired by the public.

To meet the cost of making and repairing them, a road-tax is imposed upon every citizen. But a citizen may pay his tax in money or in work. If he pays it in work he is said to 'work out' his share of the road-tax. So when a New Englander is told to work out his own salvation, this technical meaning of the phrase comes first into his mind, and he understands that what he has to do is to pay his share of the penalty due for sin. And thus it comes to pass that in New England, at least, the popular misapprehension of this text makes the cross of Christ of none effect.

But the text is there: What is the meaning of it? The meaning of it, says Dr. Trumbull, will be clear enough to any one who reads the context. In the first place, the command, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,' is not addressed to sinners. It is addressed to saints. It is addressed to the Philippian disciples. It has therefore nothing to do with the work by which the sinner's pardon and reconciliation are accomplished.

In the second place, 'work out' is not the same as 'work at.' Let the emphasis rest on the adverb. What the Apostle recommends to the Philippians is not to be working at that which has been wholly accomplished for them, but to work it out or make it manifest. To emphasize the adverb he would propose to place it first, coining the word 'outwork.'

How does it stand now with the interpretation of the Apocalypse? There has been an immense amount of work upon it lately. And even in English three commentaries of foremost scholarship have appeared. Is there any agreement, at least on the general principles of its interpretation? Can the plain man at last take up the book with any hope of getting some intelligible meaning out of it?

There is an article upon the Apocalypse in the current number of *The Interpreter*. It is written by the Rev. Cyril W. Emmet, M.A., Vicar of West Hendred. Mr. Emmet believes that all responsible students of the Apocalypse have come to an agreement upon two far-reaching principles of its interpretation.

The first is that the Apocalypse cannot be interpreted by itself. It does not stand alone. It is one portion of a class of literature which now goes by the name of Apocalyptic, a class of literature which has well-marked peculiarities, separating it from every other class. 'Its germs are found in Ezekiel and Zechariah; its first representative is the Book of Daniel; it is further developed in such writings as the Book of Enoch, the secrets of Enoch, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and the Fourth Book of Esdras; its influence is seen in a lesser degree in many other Jewish or semi-Christian works of the period, particularly in the Book of Jubilees, the Assumption of Moses, the Psalms of Solomon, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Sibylline Oracles.'

This literature is called Apocalyptic because its main subject is the apocalypse or revelation of the future. Certain great leading ideas run throughout it. These are, the apparent triumph of evil and the oppression of the righteous people of God; the certainty that when wickedness has reached its climax the 'Day of the Lord' will come, in which He will avenge His servants on their oppressors; and the assurance that then the promises of the prophets will be realized and the kingdom of the Messiah will be established, whether on earth or in heaven.

There are also in the Apocalyptic literature certain characteristic ways of presenting these general beliefs. These modes of representation are so characteristic that they seem to Mr. Emmet to have become conventional. The book is attached to the name of some saint of the past. The revelation is made by visions, by angels, with translation to distant scenes. The language is to a large extent peculiar. And there is 'a recognized symbolism of mystic numbers and allegorical

beasts; a constantly recurring materialistic imagery of fire, storm, and earthquake.'

This being so, it has become necessary for the interpreter of the Book of Revelation to make himself familiar with the ideas of Apocalyptic literature generally, and not merely with those of this book itself. And he must do the same with the language and imagery in which these ideas are clothed. It is true that Professor Swete doubts if direct use has been made in the Apocalypse of any of the other books belonging to the Apocalyptic literature. But it is not necessary to prove direct use of these books. It is enough to show that there was in existence a popular mode of thought which contained such ideas as are expressed in the Apocalypse, and which used the same methods of expressing them. These ideas were undoubtedly in the air. They recur continually in the literature of this type. The writer of the Apocalypse shares them. He assumes that they will be intelligible to his readers. He uses the conventional methods of conveying them. So the Book of Revelation is an Apocalypse among Apocalypses. That is the first thing.

The second great principle of interpretation upon which modern scholars are agreed is that the Book of Revelation was written with direct reference to a peculiar historical situation. 'Dr. Swete follows the trend of recent opinion in dating the book in the time of Domitian. If we accept the earlier date of the reign of Nero,' says Mr. Emmet, 'it will not affect our principle. Whatever there is of direct prediction or of definite historical reference has to do with the situation at the time and the view the seer has been led to take of the probable future of the Roman Empire as he knows it.'

The Apocalypse is written for the purpose of meeting this historical situation. The writer's whole object is a practical one. He desires to strengthen the Churches of his day in face of a crisis which he saw to be imminent. 'We see the Roman Empire with its Cæsar-worship and its names of blasphemy, supported by an interested priestcraft, resting on force and pretended miracles. We hear the rumours of Parthian invasion, and of the dreaded return of Nero (perhaps to the seer's mind reincarnate in Domitian). On the other hand, we see the struggles and the temptations of the local Churches of Asia, the dangers from within, from the tendency to compromise with the heathen life around them, the persecution already beginning from without, with its boycotting and its death, to those who will not worship the beast and his image. The terror will run its course, and in the end Rome will fall, attacked by the petty kings of the East or by other of its subject nations.'

But that is not all. The Apocalypse is more than a transcript of contemporary history and the interpretation of events by a political seer. Always in the background of this picture of the present there is to be seen an eschatology or doctrine of the last things. Mr. Emmet finds it inspiring and full of teaching, but vague and inconsistent with itself, directly he attempts to press the details. He asks how the various catastrophes and falls of Satan are to be related to one another. Are they different pictures of the same historical event, or are they successive steps in the victory? What is the place of the millennium? What of the New Jerusalem and the visions of the closing chapters? It is impossible yet, and it may never be possible, to say whether we have here a realistic picture of what the seer expects will be in heaven, or an idealized picture of what he hopes for on earth. Nor do we need to know. These things belong to an idle curiosity to which this book refuses to minister. It has not come either to sketch the course of history upon earth, or to discover how earth will pass into heaven. It has come to give us what we need—the assured promise of the victory of Christ and the eternal blessedness of the faithful with God.