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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

A SERMON on Judas Iscariot does not arrest the attention now so easily as once it did. For it is no longer possible to take literally the words of Christ that Judas had a devil. We are not sure now if any one has a devil. We are not quite sure if a devil exists. Nor are we able any longer to say that sheer greed was Judas Iscariot's undoing. We have lifted him up much nearer to the level of ordinary humanity. He is not so bad as he used to be. He is not swayed by so single a motive. As a man, he engages men's attention still, but he does not engage it so surely as he did when a devil.

There is also another and a greater difficulty. It is the difficulty the preacher himself has in reaching a clear conception of the moral character of Judas. It is fifty years since DE QUINCEY'S famous essay on Judas Iscariot was published. It is still longer since Archbishop WHATELY preached and published his startling sermon. And although these sketches of the traitor have often been described as attempts at 'whitewashing,' they have had a mighty influence upon subsequent estimates of his character. No one will contend that Judas differed from Peter only in being a better patriot, but in nearly all the recent literature Judas *is* a patriot. The genius of DE QUINCEY has apparently dismissed the fiend incarnate and left a man with a mixture of motives. The preacher finds it difficult to thread his way among these motives. But he also finds that the study of the career of Judas is now worth the trouble it gives. For it is no longer possible for those who hear to thank God that they are not as this Judas.

The three questions that have to be answered are, how Judas came to be an apostle, why he fell, and what was his end.

To the first question the old answer was as simple as all the rest. Judas took his place among the Twelve 'that the Scripture might be fulfilled.' One of the Scriptures was, 'Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me' (Ps 41^9). Judas had no escape. That was his destiny, and he had to fulfil it. Now we know that it is not so. God is no such respecter of persons. Even LIDDON, with that loyalty to the written word which made him so powerful a preacher, has passed from such a conception. 'If our Lord,' he says, 'looking down upon our life with His Divine Intelligence, speaks of Judas, once and again, as an instrument whereby the Redemption of the world was to be worked out, the Gospel history also supplies us with materials which go to show that Judas had his freedom of choice, his opportunities, his warnings, and that he became the Betrayer because he chose to do so.'

But then begin our difficulties. Why did Jesus call Judas, and why did Judas come? The answer of all the recent writers is that Judas was not at the beginning so bad as we have supposed him to be, and that Jesus called him just because he was not bad. Did Jesus not know, then? Did He not know what Judas would become? That also is one of the difficulties now. It is a long time since any one has been found to say as plainly as Professor BLUNT said, that 'deliberately and of settled purpose Jesus tolerated the presence of this unfaithful follower,' and that 'it made a part of the wise counsel of God that of the number of the twelve one should be a devil.' Some seem to think that Jesus did not know. 'I am not prepared,' says Dr. J. D. JONES, 'to assert that Jesus was omniscient in the common understanding of the word. When He laid His Godhead by "He emptied Himself," Paul says. He placed voluntary limitations upon Himself. He laid aside this and the other Divine prerogative. And amongst other things He laid aside the Divine omniscience.' And some distinguish between foreknowledge and foreordaining. But for the most part men pass the matter by, content, with Dr. John KER, to say that our Lord acted by Judas as He did by all the rest: 'He accepted him on the ground of a profession which was consistent as far as human eye could see.'

It is no doubt more difficult to understand why Christ called or accepted Judas than to understand why Judas came. Yet the latter difficulty has produced a far greater variety of solutions. On the whole the modern solution is that his motives were good. Dr. J. H. MOULTON speaks of him as 'a young and patriotic Jew, his hands busy all the week with honourable toil, his heart full of a fervent and honourable ambition to see Messiah in His glory, and Jerusalem once more a praise in the earth.' And Dr. J. G. STEVENSON says: 'In all probability the personality of Judas was saturated with the Messianic spirit of his people; and, meeting the Christ, by a visitation of spiritual insight he recognized Him as the long-expected Messiah. Religion and patriotism would thereupon unite to impel him to join himself to the followers of Jesus; and when the call came to become a disciple of the Lord, he eagerly embraced the opportunity.'

If we are to accept this opinion we must turn with the more eagerness to see what mischief in the life it was that wrought his ruin. And this brings us to our second question. Why did he fall?

The old answer—and undoubtedly it seems to be the answer of the Gospels—was that Judas was a thief. But the modern mind will have no such simple explanation. In his clever but too independent life of Christ, written in 1901, Dr. W. J. DAWSON flatly contradicts the Gospels. That Judas was a thief, he says, rests only on the evidence of John, and it was natural that John, 'never himself conspicuous for charity,' should speak of Judas in the bitterest terms, for he was deeply penetrated by a horror of his crime. There is, of course, the undenied fact that he accepted money of the high priests. But Dr. SALMON of Dublin, who has a theory of his own, explains that the objection which we have to the acceptance of a bribe is quite a modern feeling. It is not very long, he reminds us, since British statesmen were pensioners of the French King. And it does not seem to him probable that the thirty pieces of silver had any other significance to the evangelists than that they were the fulfilment of prophecy.

Most of the recent writers on Judas, however, accept the love of money as one of his besetting sins. But only one. Another sin was ambition. Another jealousy. And all these evil tendencies, which were present in Judas as they are present in most of us, were fostered by the solitary life he lived. For nearly all the expositors lay emphasis on the fact that Judas Iscariot was the only Judæan among the Twelve. To Canon AINGER this is sufficient to account for the whole tragedy. Judas was probably of a somewhat sullen disposition at the beginning. A company of fellow-Jews might

have taken him out of himself. But all the rest were Galilæans, he alone was a Judæan. He had the southern contempt for the men of the north. That contempt passed into hatred as he saw them enjoy the favour of the Master from which he felt himself excluded. Then the love to Jesus which he really had at first passed into hate. 'The angel in him (and there must have been an angel once, telling him of his needs, his sins, and whispering of the beauty of holiness and the sweetness of reconciliation) had been driven out of him—and now Satan entered into him, and the end was near.'

But to most it seems that his solitariness only aggravated his feeling of disappointment. This sense of disappointment in Jesus is the explanation which almost everybody now offers for the betrayal. Judas had joined the company of the Apostles in the belief that Jesus was about to establish a Jewish kingdom of God on the earth. The rest of the Apostles believed this as well as he. But they allowed themselves to succumb to the spell of the Master. They came to love Jesus Himself. Their love for His person became more to them than the prospect of a place in His Kingdom. And when the disillusionment came they were followers still. Judas held aloof and allowed the love of self to master him. 'It was not long,' says Dr. MOULTON, 'before he began to suspect that this kingdom was very much in the clouds. Suspicion may well have turned into certainty at that memorable Passover time, a year before the end, when the five thousand excited Galilæans tried to force the crown upon the Wonder-worker, and He had to use all His authority to send away followers who would only try to baffle a refusal very unlike that of Julius Cæsar. From that day the great Prophet's popularity markedly declined, and it is noteworthy that St. John, who narrates the discourse which finished the offence given by the refusal of the crown, gives us here the words of Jesus as He declares that one of the Twelve is a devil already. Judas's heart had become more and more fixed on the earthly glories of his ambition, and he now knew himself deceived. The revelation soured the milk of human kindness within him, and he began to be fitted for the devil's hand.'

But the most startling difference between the old and the new estimates of Judas is in respect of his end. Which brings us to our third and last question. What was his end?

Again, how simple the old view was, and how conclusive. 'He went to his own place.' Did any one doubt where that place was? 'In the vision of Hell, the poet Dante, after traversing the circles of the universe of woe, in which each separate kind of wickedness receives its peculiar punishment, arrives at last, in the company of his guide, at the nethermost circle of all, in the very bottom of the pit, where the worst of all sinners and the basest of all sins are undergoing retribution. It is a lake not of fire but of ice, beneath whose transparent surface are visible, fixed in painful postures, the figures of those who have betrayed their benefactors; because this, in Dante's estimation, is the worst of sins. In the midst of them stands out, vast and hideous, "the emperor who sways the realm of woe"—Satan himself; for this was the crime which lost him Paradise. And the next most conspicuous figure is Judas Iscariot. He is in the mouth of Satan, being champed and torn by his teeth as in a ponderous engine.'

And that was the belief of all mankind till recently. Is it the belief of any one now?

Bishop LIGHTFOOT says: 'The veil is drawn over his fate. We dare not, cannot lift it.' But Bishop LIGHTFOOT wrote five-and-twenty years ago. In a volume of sermons by the Rev. J. M. E. Ross there is a study of the word 'waste.' Three texts are taken. 'To what purpose is this waste?' (Mt 26^{8}); 'Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost' (Jn 6^{12}); 'The son of perdition' (Jn 17^{12}). It is the same Greek word that is used in all the phrases.

So Judas is 'the son of waste.' What does

that mean? It means that he has squandered his life. He had his opportunity as the others had. They used theirs, he lost his. And the irony of it is that *he* is called the 'son of waste' who spoke loftily of the waste of the ointment which Mary spent upon her Lord. Jesus who accepted Mary's gift, hated waste. 'Gather up the fragments,' He said, 'that nothing be lost.' Most of all He hated the waste of opportunity, the waste of a human life. It is better for a man who throws away his life that he had never been born.

For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear, . . .
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
Such prize despite the envy of the world,
And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all.

Take up the phrase again, 'The son of waste.' Mr. Ross explains the word 'waste.' Mr. RATTENBURY is attracted by the word 'son.' The son of perdition, he says, is *the lost child*. Jesus used the phrase in a cry to the Father. It was a cry of anguish over a lost child. 'Oh, the heart-break in it! There is a lost child. It is thus he thinks of Judas.' And then Mr. RATTENBURY recalls the passage in St. Matthew where Jesus speaks of lost sheep and little children alike as 'little ones.' 'And the angel of the lost sheep,' he says, 'is the angel of the little child, eternally young and beautiful in the presence of God.'

Of all the places which St. Paul attempted to win for Christ, the place with the most evil reputation was the island of Crete. 'Crete,' says a recent writer, 'took no part in the national struggle with Persia; became proverbial for its internal quarrels; and in Hellenistic times was a dangerous nest of adventurers and pirates, with an important Jewish colony.' Yet St. Paul sent Titus there, Titus, whom he fondly calls 'mine own son after the common faith.' For the grace of God, he explained, hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men. Even the Cretans could be instructed to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. And 'for this purpose' the Apostle sent Titus there.

Would St. Paul have sent Titus 'for this purpose' to the island called Britain? If he might have sent him once, would he send him now? The conversion of Crete did not depend on Titus. It depended on the power of the Gospel he carried. Is the Gospel capable of instructing the inhabitants of Britain to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? The question is constantly being asked. It is constantly being answered with an emphatic No. Dr. F. G. PEABODY asks it in his recent book on *The Christian Life in the Modern World* (Macmillan; 5s. 6d. net). He does not say that the Gospel cannot instruct us to live soberly, righteously, and godly. But he says that it is not instructing us. And the reason is that we do not understand the Gospel.

We do not understand the Gospel, he says, when we take all that the evangelists report as the Gospel. They report a good deal about an early end of the world. Professor PEABODY does not believe that our Lord predicted an early end of the world. 'The habitual attitude of Jesus in the presence of the great problems of experience has a serenity, assurance, and sympathy far removed from the excited anticipations of abrupt and final change.' The evangelists misunderstood. And Matthew ARNOLD'S dictum, 'Jesus above the heads of His reporters,' is to Dr. PEABODY also 'a wise canon of New Testament criticism.'

But not only did His reporters misunderstand him, we too misunderstand Him. We misunderstand Him more seriously than they did. We 'confuse Oriental imagery with universal principles.' We 'single out a teaching of non-resistance as the core of the Gospels.' We 'retreat from social obligations in the name of one who gladly shared them and was called a friend of wine-

bibbers and publicans.' All this, 'however heroic it may be, is not only an impracticable discipleship, but a historical perversion. It mistakes the occasionalism of the Gospels for universalism. It pictures Jesus as posing before the glass of the future, proclaiming in every utterance a universal law, when in fact he is primarily concerned with the individual case immediately before him, and is applying universal laws to the interpretation and redemption of that single life.'

More than all that, we misunderstand Christ when we take the Gospels as they have been handed down to us and try to apply them to our modern life. The Sermon on the Mount and all the rest of the contents of the Gospels as they stand were intended, says Dr. PEABODY, to apply to the Jews, not to us; to Palestine, not to Great Britain; to the first century, not to the twentieth. When we attempt to apply them as they stand to our own modern life we are driven either to the absurdity of Tolstoi dying at a wayside station with twenty reporters looking on, or to the greater absurdity of a Bradley declaring, 'None of us are Christians, and we all know, no matter what we say, that we ought not to be.'

The Gospels *as they stand.* Because the Gospels have been handed down to us with the utmost care, as if everything depended upon our having the very words which Jesus uttered, or at least an exact translation of them. But 'true Christianity'—Professor PEABODY quotes with great approval from Edward CAIRD—'is not something which was published in Palestine and which has been handed down by a dead tradition ever since; it is a living and growing spirit, that learns the lesson of history, and is ever manifesting new powers and leading on to new truths.'

There are two words which express the Gospel as available for us to-day. One belongs to the Synoptists, the other to the Fourth Gospel. The Synoptic word is Power. 'The multitudes glorified God which had given such power unto men'; 'His word was with power'; 'Until ye be endued with power from on high'; 'Till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.' The word of the Fourth Gospel is Life. 'I am the bread of life'; 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men'; 'He that believeth not the Son shall not see life'; 'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life'; 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life'; 'I am come that they might have life.'

Now Power and Life are not words of opinion or definition; they are words of expansion, vitality, momentum, growth. They are symbols, not of a standing, but of a moving faith. Power is generated to be applied. Life is given to be transmitted. And how can power be generated and life transmitted? Not by a theology, but by a person. Not by the acceptance of a creed, but by the acceptance of a Saviour.

Then, the moment we understand that Christianity is love to the Lord Jesus Christ, we know whether we are Christians or not. And if we are not Christians we know why. We see also that such a Christianity is of universal application. That which was good for Palestine in the first century is equally good for Great Britain or America in the twentieth. For love is of no restriction. It laughs at locksmiths. And love to Christ will instruct any man to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

If St. John wrote the Fourth Gospel, the three Epistles which go by his name, and the Apocalypse—the supposition is enough to take some men's breath away, but if it is granted, then we may say that he wrote the Gospel to tell us what Jesus did in the past, the Epistles to tell us what He was doing in the present, in the very time when St. John was writing, and the Apocalypse to tell us what He would do in the ages to come. For St. John, as surely as St. Luke, looked upon the progress of the Kingdom as the direct work of the risen Redeemer.

Now it seems easy for St. John to tell us in his Gospel what Jesus did when He was upon the earth. He had been with Him; he wrote of the things which he had seen and heard. It seems easy for him to tell us what Jesus was doing in St. John's own day, for he saw all round him the manifest tokens of His presence and activity. But how could he tell us what Jesus would accomplish in the ages to come? No one will claim that by the Apostle John the gift of prediction, if it ever existed in Israel, was recovered. He predicted the future because he believed in Christ. He knew what Christ had done, he knew what He was doing, he knew Christ Himself, and he was able to tell us what He would do. He did not know all the details of the coming of the Kingdom, but he knew that the Kingdom would come, and he could foretell some of the manifestations of it.

One of these manifestations was the gift of song. He looked down the centuries; he saw the children of God gathered for worship; he saw them, one here, one there, going about their daily work; he recognized the love of Christ that possessed them; and he heard them singing. Not in one generation only, in every generation, as he listened he heard them singing, 'And they sing as it were a new song' (Rev 14^{3}).

Is there anything that is more characteristic of the congregations of Christian worshippers than this? Is there any way in which the lover of the Lord Jesus Christ gives expression to his love more naturally? It may be song that finds expression in sound, and it may not; it is song that is sung in the heart. Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter. St. John was a very true prophet. Whatever else he saw or heard—and no doubt he has puzzled us a little with some of his visions—this he saw clearly and truly.

Let us consider this matter of singing. Let us notice three things about it. First, that there are songs which we cease to sing. Next, that there are songs which we sing in a new way. And then, that we learn to sing new songs.

There are songs which we cease to sing. 'Jesus loves me; this I know, for the Bible tells me so.' We cease to sing that song. There comes a day when we have had so unmistakable an experience of the love of Christ in our life that external testimony, even the testimony of the Bible, is superseded. As the people of Sychar said to the woman of Samaria, 'Now we believe, not because of thy speaking; for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.'

'Pour out the Rhine wine'—we cease to sing that song. We sang it in our irresponsible youth, and sang it lustily. Then there entered into our home or into our dear friend's home the degradation of a drunken man or the still greater degradation of a drunken woman. Or even if we have been so blest as to escape the pollution closely, we have had our eyes opened to the sin and the danger of the nation. And we cease to sing that song. The pity of it that even in such a time as this, and with such an example as our good king's, there are with us those who name the name of Christ and have not yet ceased to sing that song.

In the next place we sing some songs in a new way. 'I lay my sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God; He bears them all, and frees us from the accursed load.' We sing that song as children and sing it lightly. Then we discover that we have committed sin. We see it in the light of God's holiness; we set it in the wonder of Christ's sacrifice. We recognize the burden of it, and the relief which the cross brings. 'I lay my sins on Jesus'—we sing that song in a new way.

'Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee! even though it be a cross that raiseth me.' There is no song more easily sung than that before the cross comes; there is none that demands more of us

when the cross has to be carried. 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'—surely, but it cannot be but by a cross. He who went forth carrying His cross had to put it upon Simon. He puts it upon every one of us in turn. We are crucified with Christ that we may live. For if we do not die to sin, how can we live unto righteousness? 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'—it is the craving of every man who knows that he has been ransomed with the precious blood; but it is madness to seek fellowship in the glory without fellowship in the sufferings. When the cross comes; when it is felt as a cross; when we recognize that it is to be with us to the end, then we sing this song in a new way.

'Rock of Ages, cleft for me'—
Thoughtlessly the maiden sung;
Fell the words unconsciously
From her girlish, gleeful tongue;
Sang as little children sing,
Sang as sing the birds in June,
Fell the words like light leaves down
On the current of the tune—
'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.'

'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,'—
'Twas a woman sang them now,
Pleadingly and prayerfully—
Every word her heart did know.
Rose the song as storm-tossed bird
Beats with weary wing the air,
Every note with sorrow stirred,
Every syllable a prayer.
'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.'

Then we learn to sing some new songs. Perhaps it is strictly accurate to say that we learn to sing one new song. But in the history of the world there have been three new songs sung, of one or other of which every song, if it is a true song, is only a variation.

First there is the Song of Creation—'when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy' (Job 38^{7}). Next there is the Song of Incarnation—'and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased' (Lk $2^{13.14}$). Finally, there is the Song of Redemption—'and they sing as it were a new song' (Rev 14^{3}).

Now all these songs are songs of triumph. They are sung after victory. Some opposition has been overcome; some great deed has been done; something of worth has been accomplished, something that was not easy to accomplish.

It is so with the Song of Creation. In the Hebrew history of creation the obstacles that had to be overcome, and the fierceness of the struggle, have been allowed to fall away. Nothing could seem easier than creation at the word of God. 'And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.' But the fact that creation was possible only after a struggle is evident in the Babylonian narrative; it forms indeed the whole spirit and motive of it. And it may be that that long process of evolution, which is the form in which creation is presented to the modern mind, evolution with all its struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, is but a return to the first conception of creation, a recovery of the elements of conflict which made the Song of Creation the celebration of victory—the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast.

It is so also with the Song of Incarnation. We cannot tell what opposition had to be overcome before the Son of God could take flesh and dwell among us. We cannot believe that there was any lack of love or pity. But that there were obstacles we must perceive from the fact that sin was allowed to abound and for so long a time before the angel Gabriel was sent on his mission. We may be sure that the freedom of the will of man, that most mysterious of all the facts that lie

between us and God, had something to do with it. The abuse of that freedom made the Incarnation a necessity; was the delay due to the danger of a greater abuse, even the destruction of the freedom of man's will? We cannot tell. We only know that 'in the fulness of the time,' God sent forth His Son, made of a woman; and the song which the heavenly host sang was a song of triumph.

Finally, it is so of the Song of Redemption. And as the act of Redemption was accomplished on earth we have no difficulty in seeing what were the obstacles that had to be removed—what are the obstacles—and how surely the Song of Redemption is a Song of victory. 'And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.'

But while each of the three songs is a song of victory, each of them owes its newness to the triumph of something newly discovered in God. The Song of Creation is the triumph of God's power. The Song of Incarnation is the triumph of God's love. The Song of Redemption is the triumph of that union of power and love in God for which even yet we have not devised a name.

It is the union of power and love. That is why St. John was able to hear the redeemed singing. That is the secret of his foresight. No one can foresee the triumph of power alone, even such power as issues in creation. It may be thwarted at any time by that very will which is part of itself. God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions. Nor can any one foretell the triumph of love, not even though God *so* loved the world as to give His only begotten son. For love unwedded to power is always open to the thorns and the nails. But because St. John saw that this love had by the Resurrection of Christ from the dead been united to the power of God, he had no fear for the future. He bent his ear, and heard the redeemed singing their song of triumph.

This is the new song. Have we realized its newness? Have we seen that there is now no limit to the exercise of the love of God because a way has been found for uniting it to His power? Have we seen that there is no obstacle that can stand in the way of His power because it is one with His loving sacrifice? We may not understand how it is that this divine and irresistible unity is to do its work. We may not know how it will comport itself in the presence of the will of man which is as free as formerly. But we know that every enemy shall be subdued to it.

The subjection is through sacrifice. The will of man must be given the opportunity of yielding itself. What we see in these days is that this sacrifice may be made in a moment. Our men go to the front in apparent indifference. With the most careless of them the indifference may be more apparent than real. We do not know what thoughts lie below the outward show. What we know is that the sacrifice may be made, or at least may express itself, in a moment—in the very bayonet charge perhaps. Then the triumph song is sung—not for a trench taken from the enemy, but for the soul of a British soldier gone home to God.