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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE offence of the Cross does not seem to be felt now half so much as the offence of the First Beatitude. Yet it is now, more than ever in the world's history, that that first beatitude ought to be accepted. For it is the beatitude of democracy.

How does it read in the version of St. Luke? 'Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.' And St. Luke's is usually regarded as the original form of the saying. It is so regarded by the latest commentator on it, an anonymous writer in *The Times* for June 29.

St. Matthew's version is an interpretation. It is an interpretation for Gentiles. So says this anonymous writer. 'Blessed are the poor,' the Gentiles could not understand, and so St. Matthew gave it the interpretation, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

Now, if that is so, it is the interpretation that contains the modern offence. It is not the original beatitude. Interpreting it for the Gentiles, St. Matthew has made it a hard saying, and that just for the Gentiles in whose interest he gave it the interpretation. For it may be said that the only thing in Christianity which makes it unattractive in the eyes of young men to-day is this: it is the religion of poor-spiritedness. This is the conception of Christianity that is caricatured in fiction.

It is a conception that needs no caricature. It is immediately and instinctively rejected as an offence.

Why do we not pass by St. Matthew's interpretation then, and take the original as it is in St. Luke? Because we discover that there is no difference. The poor of St. Luke are the poor, of that there is little doubt. But they are not blessed because they are poor. The poor are blessed when they are poor in spirit.

"The poor," says the writer in *The Times*, 'was a recognised term among the Jews for those who had dedicated themselves to the service of God. For the sake of that service they divested themselves of all pride of place and possessions and power, and refusing to be distracted either by the riches or the pleasures of life gave themselves entirely to the will of God in the humble acknowledgement of His righteousness and mercy. They were, for the most part, literally poor in this world's goods, and even when they possessed its riches they held them cheaply, accounting the prizes of this world to be but tinsel, seen to be mere glitter in the pure light of the Divine Presence. They were the poor, but they possessed God, and having Him they had that which all the world's riches could not secure for men. They had attained blessedness.'

Now it is really this that makes the offence of the first beatitude. And this is not the offence of the first beatitude only. It is the offence of Christianity. It is the offence of the Cross. The 'Gentile' knows very well that the true follower of Christ is no 'poor-spirited creature.' He knows that on all occasions he is as ready to quit himself like a man as any one. It is the veriest pretence that it is the first beatitude that keeps our modern manhood away from Christ. What keeps them away is the demand of Christ for the surrender of the will with the passions and lusts thereof.

And yet every thinking man knows that only in the surrender of the will to a high and righteous ideal, such as Christ is, can happiness be found. Some of our modern translators begin every one of the beatitudes with the word 'Happy' rather than the word 'Blessed.' And they are not wrong. For blessedness is just happiness gained. 'The blessed are the happy, with a happiness which this world cannot confer on its most favoured children, and for which its most precious gifts can offer no compensation.'

'It is not true that happiness consists in freedom from anxiety, for, as Froude declared, freedom from care can be assured by a hard heart and a good digestion. Blessedness is not attained by ignoring the evil in human society, nor by minimizing its awful subtlety and power. Nor is it attained by withdrawing from the world, and refusing to take the risks of life with its turmoil and its dangers. It is not won by our possessions, nor by our powers of mind, nor even by our own skilful use of fortune. Not until we have given up our trust in these and become poor can we secure happiness, for this springs only from complete reliance on One whose will is known to be the will to love infinitely.'

Stevenson made this discovery, though he also very nearly missed it. What he discovered was the necessity of a high and moral ideal in life if

happiness was to be had. 'It was one of the great services that Robert Louis Stevenson rendered to his generation that he so attractively insisted on the ethical value of happiness. One of his friends declared that it touched every part of his experience, from physical pleasures up through the delights of intellectual and moral life to the most exalted spiritual joys; and its proclamation is a distinguishing feature of his life's work. Happiness, he proclaimed, was the spring of all worthy effort. The highest and purest and most abiding happiness man can experience is the recognition of an ideal which he has made his own, whose reality he has tested in experience, and to which he has learned to devote himself with complete conviction.'

Such a man is blessed because his is the Kingdom of Heaven. For the Kingdom of Heaven is such an ideal. 'It satisfies the affections, for it is no mere machinery of government, but a company of men and women in whom God lives, and who can respond to affection and sacrifice, and repay them a hundredfold. It matches the claims of the intellect, for it has many and varied problems which call for the study of the devout mind. It employs all the energies in the prosecution of tasks which ever challenge the devotion of the servants of God and humanity.'

Blessed are ye poor—if ye are poor in spirit. It is not poor-spiritedness; it is true manliness. It is not weakness; it is the fullest, firmest strength. Yet is it out of a sense of humility that the manliness arises; it is out of a sense of weakness that the strength is born. Given the sense of weakness and the realization of a great need, and men will gladly accept that poverty, that happy poverty, which not only leads them to seek the strength that comes from above, but 'enables them to find the fullest happiness in self-effacing service for the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus they may go forth as its citizens, renouncing their own strength but relying on the power of God, content to live and die in its service, and knowing that though the way

may be long it will never be lonely, for in that Kingdom there is fellowship with God and His servants, with work and affection for all. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There is one fact which tells more against belief in the miracles of the New Testament than any other. It is the fact that miracles do not take place now. And it is an undeniable fact.

It is true that since the war began there has been not a little talk about the miraculous interference of God, either in certain outstanding events of it, such as the Battle of the Marne, or else in the experience of some prominent participants in it, such as that great young airman, Captain Albert Ball. But it never passed beyond talk. It is the conviction of this person and the next who is already a believer in modern miracles, or it is the interpretation of a man's marvellous escapes from danger, an interpretation preferred by Captain Ball himself to the rough-and-ready theory of good luck. It never alters the fact that the average man, educated or uneducated, rejects the miracles of the New Testament because miracles do not occur.

And so difficult is it now to meet that objection that the most scholarly writing on the New Testament, even the writing of professional theologians, especially of the younger men, has as its first aim and end to show that Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant may be received in all their power for life and godliness without the necessity of accepting a single New Testament miracle. With some recent writers it is probable that no conscious purpose of denying the miracles is ever present. With others it is evidently the one conscious and deliberate purpose. But in either case the idea is that, as soon as it is perceived that Christianity can get along without miracles, the miracles of the New Testament will cease to be regarded. Then there will be nothing to prevent

scientific men from believing in Christ and Him crucified as the Saviour of their souls.

It is a profound mistake. From the beginning until now an unmiraculous Christianity has had no influence in the world. Men have always asked for a saviour; it has never been any use to offer them a saint. They may not have been concerned for the retention of this miracle or that. They may have been willing to surrender the Descent into Hades on grounds of interpretation, or the Virgin Birth on grounds of attestation; or even the Raising of Lazarus from the Dead on grounds of internal evidence. But they have never called that Christianity which had no room for the actual miracles of the Incarnation and the Resurrection.

Let us however begin with the statement that miracles do not occur. And let us accept it. Professor WARFIELD accepts it. He has one word for all the miracles that have ever been wrought since the days of the Apostles. They are counterfeit. Professor WARFIELD of the Princeton Theological Seminary was invited to deliver a course of lectures at the Columbia Theological Seminary, South Carolina. He delivered them, and now publishes them with this title: *Counterfeit Miracles* (Scribner; \$2 net). For his purpose has been to prove not only that the miracles claimed by the Roman Church, the Church of the Irvingites, the advocates of Faith Healing and Mind Cure, are not true miracles, but also that they could not be true miracles since by their nature all miracles had to cease on the death of the original Twelve Apostles.

That is not the common belief. The common belief, even of those who believe that miracles never occur now, is that they ceased gradually in the early Church, just because the necessity for them came to a gradual end. Ask almost any theologian you meet, ask even the accomplished student of early Church history, and he is pretty certain to tell you that the power to work miracles lasted on to the end of the third

century or thereby. Professor WARFIELD absolutely denies it. Instead of gradually dying out, the power to work miracles ceased at once with the life of the Apostles, and for some time no claim to the working of miracles was made by the Church. 'There is little or no evidence at all for miracle-working during the first fifty years of the post-Apostolic Church; it is slight and unimportant for the next fifty years; it grows more abundant during the next century (the third); and it becomes abundant and precise only in the fourth century, to increase still further in the fifth and beyond.'

Professor WARFIELD believes that the power to work miracles was never recovered by the Church. It was falsely claimed. The miracles which were wrought after the Apostolic age were counterfeit miracles. Miracles do not occur. They never have occurred since the end of the first century. He starts with that.

Here then is the question which we have to answer: Why were there miracles in our Lord's life, and in the lives of His Apostles? Now let it never be forgotten that it is not the impossibility of miracles that troubles the unbeliever. No man of understanding holds that miracles are impossible. As long ago as the polemical days of Professor Huxley it was freely admitted that science had nothing to say against the possibility of a miracle. Science is more ready to admit it now. Miracles do not occur—that is the fact which stands in the way. And what we have to do is to show that there is a good reason why miracles which do not occur now should have occurred then.

It will not do to say that they were necessary in order to arrest people's attention. They did not arrest the attention. They were too common to arrest the attention. 'If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?' For their 'children' were quite accustomed to cast out devils. No doubt there were miracles and

miracles. Just as Moses could beat the magicians of Egypt at their own trade, so Jesus could astonish the simple Galileans with the wonder of the wind and the sea obeying Him. But there are few things more certain in the Gospels than the fact that Jesus did not work miracles in order to arrest the attention.

Nor will it do to say that the miracles were wrought in order to prove the truth of the teaching. The proof of the teaching was the practice of it: 'If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine.' How can one thing be proved by means of another thing that is extraneous to it? Truth is of the mind; miracle is of the body. When Jesus said to the man sick of the palsy, 'Rise up and walk,' He did not do so in order to prove to the man the truth of the forgiveness of sins. He did it in order to make the man every whit whole. The Jews taunted Jesus on the Cross: 'Come down, and we will believe thee.' Would they have believed Him? They would not have believed though one of themselves had returned from the dead.

And yet miracles have a close relation to teaching. They appear, says Professor WARFIELD, when God has some new revelation to make. They do not attest the truth of the revelation. But they are a witness to the authority of him who makes it.

How does revelation come? It comes through personality. The truth revealed is not detachable from the person revealing it. For revelation is by the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God in possession of some personal life, and through the words and acts of that life making known the mind of God.

Now when the Spirit of God takes possession of a human being, His presence makes itself known in all his activities. The foremost result is the new truth spoken. That is the object of the entrance. But along with the truth spoken there is the deed done. The deed does not witness to

the truth, it accompanies it. Both deed and truth are the signs of the indwelling Spirit. Nicodemus was not wrong when he said, 'We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' The miracles were not the evidence for the teaching, they were the credentials of the teacher. The miracles wrought and the doctrine taught were together the sign that God was with Jesus.

When God's time has come to make a new revelation to the world He finds His instrument or instruments. He makes His revelation first to these instruments themselves. He makes it by giving them the gift of the Spirit, or, in other words, by coming to them and making His abode with them. That is the revelation. No other operation—act, word, or thought—is necessary. The simple but exceptional presence is enough. He does not destroy the man's personality. He enlightens it. He enlarges it. He vitalizes it. The man in whom the Spirit of God dwells lives in the power of that Spirit; and it is a matter of indifference whether the power is seen in new word or unaccustomed deed. In either case it is simply a manifestation of the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God manifesting itself according to its own nature. The man is a teacher come from God because he does miracles; he does miracles because he is a teacher come from God.

Are there times, then, when God determines to give the world a new revelation? Everything depends upon the answer to that question. And who can doubt what the answer will be? The occasions may be few. We have at present to do with one occasion only. Who denies that in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being Governor of Judæa, the word of the Lord came into the world in a new and wholly unprecedented fashion? It came, we hold, first of all in the form of an Incarnation. God *sent* the Person in whom His Spirit might dwell, for the indwelling had to

be without measure. That was not the only reason for the special messenger. He had, we believe, to die for the Gospel before He could declare it. But at present all we have to think of is the fact of the revelation. God found, at the beginning of this era of ours, that the fulness of the time had come, and sent forth His Son to make a new revelation to the world.

He received the Spirit without measure. And without measure were the signs of its presence. Never before was the Spirit given without measure. And never before were such miracles wrought. 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?' I will tell you the manner of the man. He is a man in whom the Spirit of God is dwelling and acting without let or hindrance. God is in Christ revealing Himself in word and deed, just as the manner of God is. For all the fulness of God dwells in Him.

And the Spirit will remain until the revelation is made. Now Jesus did not make the whole revelation Himself. Let us say rather that He made it, but did not make it known. The special revelation we are speaking about is usually called the Gospel. And the peculiarity of the revelation called the Gospel is that it had to be made before it could be made known. Jesus made it. He left the task to His Apostles to make it known. He chose twelve men for this very end that they should receive the Gospel as soon as He had made it, and then make it known.

But they could not make it known until they received the gift of the Spirit. The Gospel was there, but they had to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. The power came with the Holy Spirit. As soon as they received the Spirit of God they went forth with power to make the Gospel known.

The first effect of the gift of the Spirit was personal transfiguration. Peter was Peter still,

but better. He was bolder, he was clearer-sighted, he had a better command of himself. This was one of the manifestations of the Spirit's presence. Other manifestations were activity in preaching, and faculty for working miracles. The Apostles could not work miracles as Jesus did, for they had not received the Spirit without measure as He had done. But according to the measure of their gift of the Spirit (which was no doubt according to their receptiveness) they manifested God's presence with them in the way of miracles also, that way being natural to the working of the Spirit of God.

Now if the Spirit of God is a special gift, given for the purpose of making known this wonderful new revelation which we call the Gospel, it will be expected that it will continue until the revelation is fully made. When was it fully made? Professor WARFIELD believes that it was fully made when the last of the disciples died upon whom the Apostles laid their hands.

For it is to be observed that the laying on of hands was the appointed way by which the Spirit was given. Does it seem a strange way? Perhaps there is more in it even as an act than we have been ready to understand. But there is certainly an impressive simplicity about it. And until a better way can be suggested, we may say that it was the best way that could have been adopted. In any case, it was the appointed way. Except at Pentecost, and on the occasion of the entrance of the Gentile Cornelius into the fellowship of the disciples, there is no example of the Spirit of God being given otherwise than by the laying on of hands.

And no laying on of hands conferred this power after the death of the twelve Apostles. On whomsoever they laid their hands, on them came the gift with its usual manifestations. But none of those who received that gift from the laying on of the Apostles' hands seems to have been able to confer it upon others. With the death of those

on whom the Apostles laid their hands, the gift of the Spirit for the revelation of the Gospel passed from the earth. The work was done. The revelation was fully made.

'The same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.'
Does that mean very old or very young?

We say very old. 'We catch a Russian peasant, one of the class that are being held up to us as the really religious people of the world. Hepworth DIXON tells of a conversation he had with such an one: they got into conversation on the other side of convention (a point not easy to reach, least of all with peasants), and the Russian confided to him that "We shan't have God with us much longer: I've seen His picture in the church, and He is a very old man. You may depend upon it, St. Nicholas will have His place!" (St. Nicholas is the popular, rosy-cheeked bishop who boxed the ears of Arius at the Council of Nicæa, and has great honour since as the "man who did.") But what of the picture in the church? Alas! it is the Apocalyptic picture of Daniel and Enoch, and even of St. John, the one whose hair is white, not with "a hundred winters snowed upon his breast," but white with the snows of eternal years, the great Alpine God that never melts.'

We say God is very old. Rendel HARRIS says He is very young. For Jesus is the express image of His Person; Jesus is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever; and Jesus is eternally youthful. In a paper contributed to *Problems of To-Morrow* (already noticed), Dr. Rendel HARRIS announces the discovery of the youthfulness of Jesus Christ, His youthfulness on earth, His youthfulness in eternity.

'Call this, if you like, a discovery,' he says, 'but it would hardly have been a discovery to those who were near enough to His time to remember that He began the doing and the teaching of His public ministry when He was thirty years of age, and that He ended it when He was thirty-three

years of age, or, as some of the earliest traditions say, when He was thirty-one.'

Have we realized this? Have we realized how young He was, is, and must be? 'I recall,' says Dr. Rendel HARRIS, 'an incident from my own college days, which I have told more than once, and the time is come to tell it again; how I was one day talking with an ardent spirit in my own college concerning the character and merits of Jesus, talking with a man who had, from very earnestness, discarded nominal Christianity, and who said to me of our Lord, "And He did all that before He was my age!" If I were now to say that sort of thing I should have put it more strongly: "And He did all that before He was half my age!" Think of it! It is a statement that has evangelical value. What manner of man is this that even the months and the years are subject to Him!'

The early Christians realized it. 'It may be a discovery to us, but it was not a discovery to the early Church, which affirmed in its catacomb pictures of the *Good Shepherd* a youthful form. They even exaggerated His youth, as the manner of artists is; they drew Him beardless, which can hardly have been the case; on the sarcophagi which now adorn the Lateran Museum at Rome we shall see the figure of the second Adam presenting the ears of corn, which make the heavenly bread, to the first Adam, and He will be as young as stone can make Him.'

And it was a discovery of the Evangelical Revival—an incidental discovery, Dr. Rendel HARRIS calls it. For, 'as you know, the Evangelical Revival, like every great spiritual movement, was a movement of song: it was truth set to music—a new creation with the sons of God shouting together and singing for joy. I have often deplored the songlessness of the modern Evangelical and Protestant Churches; but if they have ceased to sing it is because they have ceased to be evangelical. When the next revival comes,

it will come as a nobler, sweeter song, just as heaven itself comes to true believers. It was so in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Every one concedes that, except for one ill-phrased verse, there is hardly a more moving, a more sacramental hymn than the one that begins:

When I survey the wondrous Cross.

Not every one knows of the important change that was made in that first verse, apparently in the second edition and with the author's own revising hand. It stood once:

When I survey the wondrous Cross,
Where the young Prince of Glory died;

and this has been altered to:

On which the Prince of Glory died.'

'The early Moravians had made a similar discovery, and had writ it large over their hymn-book. The first Moravian hymn-book, compiled for the most part by persons who were imperfectly accoutred for the writing of English prose, and certainly altogether unequipped for writing sacred song, is one of the wildest, weirdest books that I know. It is gross in conception, grotesque in expression, and seems altogether to contradict my theory of the morning songs of new spiritual movements. If the morning stars sang this way, the sons of God will certainly never be caught shouting for joy. But stay! Let us beware of rapid judgments: let us turn the pages in search of the Young Prince of Glory and see what we find.'

Dr. Rendel HARRIS finds a magnificent hymn ('magnificent in streaks,' he says) 'addressed to the members of the Moravian brotherhood who are "Ready for land, sea, marriage at command":

Ye who would rather live and fight awhile
Than be dismissed as yet from glorious toil,
Who from the world's bewitching lusts are fled,
And burn t' advance the glory of your Head,
Before the youth divine, come, bow the knee,
Eldest of all the heavenly Family.'

He finds the youthfulness of Christ in other Moravian hymns. He finds it in a hymn addressed to what I suppose we should call the Young People's Guild (*Jünglingsvolk*):

Daily, as soon as thou getst up,
Thou young-men's choir, let thy thoughts be,
On our Lord Jesu's happy troop
Of Witnesses: then say, May He,
Jesus the single Brethren's Head,
In these His Times us keep and lead.

And then, so think, *as if thou wert
Jesus the youth*, not only thou.
In that with Him connected Heart,
So ev'n thy last occasions do;
So pray, so eat, so work, so ply,
So journey, so be sick and die.

There is the young Jesus, the young saint's *alter ego*, and Double, and Indweller.'

Last of all the discovery has been made by Mr. H. G. Wells. Dr. Rendel HARRIS takes note of the fact and gives the discoverer all due credit for it. 'You can read what he says on this theme—and it is the most important part of his theme—in the pages of the book called "The Invisible King." And I see that he returns to the subject in his new book called "The Soul of a Bishop."'

What is the value of it? Much every way. It is the secret, the real secret, of keeping young. 'And if we agree to the eternal youth of Christ, and live our life in Him, the possibility of service and the vision of service is something very different from the traditional habit of good works, the sort of thing described by Mrs. Browning:

The poor club exercised her Christian gifts,
Of knitting stockings, stitching petticoats,
Because we are of one flesh after all
And need one flannel (with a proper sense
Of difference in the quality).'

It is the secret in particular of missionary service. Dr. Rendel HARRIS introduces again for a moment the Moravians, that we may see 'what their Youth Divine did for them and with them. It is well known that they are the real pioneers and forerunners of the missionary movement; that they discovered the negro, the Esquimaux, the Red Indian; that every man and woman among them was a potential missionary. If their hymns on missionary subjects are sometimes grotesque and almost comic, their experience was tragic enough for the first days of a martyr faith. In a few years over a hundred had laid down their lives. They tried to live as the natives and died fast and freely. It was magnificent, but it was not war. Still, they had found the Christian missing link and taught the other Churches their secret. It is easy to laugh at a verse like this:

Can there among you one remain
Ye brethren who the Saviour know,
Who're freed from sin's accursed chain,
Whose very spirit doth not glow
For Surinam and Thomas Isle,
For Pensilvania and Barbies,
The Cape and Greenland's distant soil,
The Calumeks and Cherichees,
Who for the heathen hath not burnt and glowed
To dip them in the stream of Jesus' blood?

If they sung about "Greenland's icy mountains" it was their service that was their song; they actually went there as far back as the year 1733. Do not forget that their missionary field, too, included London, and that it was at their meeting at Aldersgate Street that a certain Oxford man felt a strange warmth in his heart and was persuaded that Christ had forgiven his sins, even his. It is all done with a joyous lilt that is itself the language of youth; they even called themselves the "Babes of Christ, the Lamb of God."