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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

MANY years ago a book was published with the title of *Letters of a Mystic*. It fell into the hands of one here and one there—we do not know how many—and became to them as a second *Imitatio*. The author was found to be the Rev. R. W. CORBET, M.A.

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Where has Mr. CORBET been since then? What has he been doing? There are no other books. There is no record of any other activity. The answer will be that he is a mystic, and mysticism means meditation, not activity, and takes time. Now he comes again, and he comes with a book which may be to a new generation such a companion on the upward way as his first book was to those who discovered it.

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The title is *The Message of the Gospel to the Twentieth Century* (Elliot Stock; 3s. 6d. net). It is commonplace enough. But it has a meaning. Mr. CORBET believes that there are two interpretations of the Gospel. We have been content with the lower interpretation until now. Now, in this twentieth century, we must attain to the higher. He writes the book with the express purpose of leading us to that higher interpretation.

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Hitherto we have been dependent on creed and symbol: now we shall enter into fellowship with the indwelling Lord and Giver of Life. 'Experi-

ence teaches that there are two distinct stages in Christian discipleship called by the Apostles—Babehood and Adulthood in Christ: in the former we are under the teaching of the letter of ecclesiastical tradition, in the latter we are each one immediately guided by the inspirations of the spirit of our divine sonship. In other words, as "babes in Christ" we are under the tutorship of the Gospel expressed outwardly in symbols; as "adults in Christ" we enter into fellowship with Him who *is* the Gospel, and in heart and mind apprehend the inspirations He imparts, through obedience to their instructions.'

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This inward and immediate apprehension of truth can be secured only by acceptance of the revelation and the grace which came to the world through Jesus Christ. For Mr. CORBET is a Christian mystic, and plainly acknowledges no other form of mysticism. All else is preparatory or disciplinary to that revelation. 'All outward law whether in the concentrated form of the Mosaic words, or in the distributed form of natural experience, stands as an outward pedagogue or tutor to lead us on through preparatory discipline to the one and only Lord, who by His indwelling Presence builds up in every man the sonly character that belongs to his being and is heir of its destiny.'

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In this experience there are two stages. The

first stage is reached when we become conscious of the *solidarity of Humanity*. To reach it each of us has to die to or disown his psychophysical and isolated personality. For this ethical or personal death is necessary in order that we may rise into consciousness of a Christ-life that is in fellowship with our fellow-men.

The second stage is the recovery of our individual personality. This personality, however, is not our old psychological and solitary personality. It is a new spiritual personality, due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who, as the Lord and Giver of all life, enables each of us to *specialize* in the Spirit, ensuring for us that particular opportunity for service which is our peculiar destination, and enabling us to make full proof of our ministry. This is that gift of the white stone with a name engraved on it which no man knows but he that receives it.

'I will conclude my letter'—for this book also is written in the form of letters—'I will conclude my letter with a brief statement of what I feel we have come to see are the fundamental distinctions of the *natural* or psychophysical apprehension and of the *spiritual* apprehension of the Gospel: in other words, of the immature ecclesiastical apprehension and the mature apostolic. In the former we find a metaphysical philosophy based on *dualism*—an interpretation of miracle and sacrament which is *mechanistic*, and a conception of God which is *tritheistic* as expressed in the structure of its symbols of faith; while, on the other hand, in the latter we come across a monistic philosophy—an *ethical* interpretation of miracle and sacrament—and a conception of God that is *One* discerned by man in three modes of relationship and verified in personal experience by an ever-renewed fellowship in Light, Love, and Power with Him, who is the Source, Essence, and indwelling Energy of our being as Children of God. The transition from the natural order of Consciousness to the spiritual lies in and through persistent faith in the faithfulness of the Creator to His dependent Creatures

and in the Record of His faithfulness disclosed to us in the Person and Work of the Incarnate Lord of all.'

Mr. Edmond HOLMES has written a book and called it *The Secret of Happiness* (Constable; 12s. 6d. net). Is there not something odd, almost offensive, in the title? We have now for a long time been preaching against the pursuit of happiness. We have compared it with blessedness, as the earthly with the heavenly. We have contrasted it with joy, as a mere accident of life with an abiding, even an eternal, inheritance. And here is this author writing as if after all happiness were the last accomplishment of noble minds.

Mr. HOLMES is an agnostic. Perhaps that is the explanation. There is no doubt that he is an agnostic. He says, 'God is the Unknowable.' And though he spells both words with capitals, he means all that he says. For he adds, 'God is the Unknowable in the sense that with regard to him every affirmation is a denial, every belief an infidelity, every dogma a blasphemy, every formula an outrage on truth.'

Being an agnostic, may he not be incapable of appreciating the difference between happiness and blessedness? We have just settled comfortably into that contentment when we come upon this passage: 'At the root of all religion lies the idea that self-sacrifice, leading first to self-loss and then to self-realization, is the supreme law of man's higher life. In feeling its way to this idea, religion has divined one of Nature's deepest secrets and discovered one of her paramount laws. For not only is it true that beyond a certain stage in man's development self-sacrifice is the form which growth necessarily takes, but it may even be said that something akin to self-sacrifice—the giving up of the actual in favour of the ideal—is at the heart of all growth. The highest motive to self-sacrifice, and the only genuine motive, is love—love of a person, love of a community, love of a cause, love of an ideal, love of Nature, love of Man, love of

God. The instrument of self-sacrifice is will. The energy of love sets in motion and sustains the energy of will. As religion purifies itself and widens its outlook, the idea of self-sacrifice ascends from man, the worshipper, towards God, the object of his worship, that it may re-descend—with a larger scope and a purer purpose—into the life of man. If man has indeed been made in the image of God, and if the capacity for self-sacrifice is the highest attribute of man, then self-sacrifice—the going out of self in order to find new life—must be of the essence of God. This idea is, I need hardly say, central in Christianity—central both in the teaching and in the life of Christ. His sublime saying, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it," dominates all his other maxims. And his own sublime self-sacrifice is his true title-deed to Divinity.'

There is appreciation enough in that passage, and it is appreciation of the right thing. Clearly, whatever reason Mr. HOLMES has for setting out to seek the secret of true life and calling it happiness, it is not that he does not know a virtue when he sees it. He who can write in that way of Sacrifice is not the man to rest content with a low aim and its easy attainment.

We are at any rate encouraged to follow him a little further. If we follow him to the end this is what we find: 'Spiritual well-being is the summit and perfection of all well-being. The consummation of spiritual well-being is therefore the summit and perfection of happiness. The man who has found his true self in oneness with God has grown to the fulness of his ideal stature. He has carried the process of growing to the last term of its ascending series, and has therefore won the prize of supreme happiness, the prize which he set out to win.'

So this agnostic finds happiness at last to be only another name for oneness with God. And he finds more than that. For no sooner has he

come to the conclusion that happiness is oneness with God than he discovers that the whole search for happiness has been a selfish search. And just when he has found his happiness he casts it remorselessly away.

The search for happiness, he says, has been carried so far that it has at last transcended itself. When a man has lost himself in love of God (that is the phrase he uses now for the oneness with God which he used before), when a man has lost himself in love of God the ideas of well-being and happiness retire of their own accord into the background.

He tells this story. 'More than forty years ago, when Moody and Sankey, the American evangelists, came to this country, a friend of mine who had come under their influence was in great trouble about his soul. He feared lest he should be "lost," and wondered how he was to be "saved." When he had confided his trouble to me, I tried to console him by saying: "What does it matter whether you or I are lost so long as it is well with God?" There our dialogue ended. My protest fell on deaf ears. I cannot tell how I came to utter it. I had no theory of things in those days which countenanced, or came anyway near to countenancing, the complete self-effacement that I advocated. I had never heard of Brother Lawrence, the Carmelite Monk of the seventeenth century, who liberated his soul from the haunting fear of being damned, by saying to himself: "Whatever becomes of me, *whether I be lost or saved*, I will always continue to act purely for the love of God." I can only suppose that my words surged up of their own accord from some occult depth of my subconscious self. But I think there was a deep truth at the heart of them.'

Is there any contribution to the difficult subject of Inspiration here? It is found in Mr. Charles GARDNER'S new book—his new book on *William Blake, the Man* (Dent; 10s. 6d. net). Mr.

GARDNER is the interpreter of Blake to some of those who have come within the sweep of that portent's peculiar power and charm. For he has already published *Vision and Vesture*. The new book is to be taken before rather than after *Vision and Vesture*. It is more occupied with Blake himself. And we must understand Blake himself if we are even to come near an understanding of his work.

Now Blake's work—but no, it is Inspiration we are to speak about.

There are two questions. The first question is: Do we find inspiration outside the Bible? Mr. GARDNER has no hesitation in saying that we do. Then the second question is: How does the inspiration in the Bible differ from the inspiration out of it? That is what Mr. GARDNER has to tell us.

He says: 'We speak of the true poet like Shakespeare, the true mystic like Blake, the true saint like Catherine of Siena, and the true Book like the Bible as all being inspired, yet in each case the inspiration is of a different order. The common element which justifies the one word is originality. Shakespeare's inspiration depends on the great Memory, on his own complex nature, and his consuming spirit of observation; but at the moment of his inspiration, all these things seem in abeyance, and the words well up as if a spirit not himself had given them to him. His originality consists in the unique impression that his rich understanding gives of the elements supplied by the Past and Present, but not in the creation of a new element. The same may be said of Dante, Milton, Shelley.'

There is a phrase here which needs explanation. What does Mr. GARDNER mean by 'the great Memory'?

Start with the recollection that in Greek literature the Muses are the daughters of Memory. For

memory is the record of experience, and what is sung or painted is simply the present memory of past experience put into some artistic fashioning. Now Blake did not believe that. He held that the art which rested on memory was an art without inspiration. It is not the memory, he said, it is imagination that is the parent of true art, and imagination may be independent of experience.

But Blake did not despise memory. On the contrary, he gave it an honourable place in that spiritual city which he described in the astonishing poem called 'Jerusalem.' He gave it an honourable place and an honourable title. 'The Halls of Los,' he called it. And it is Yeats who has thereupon spoken of 'the great Memory.'

Return now to Shakespeare. 'Shakespeare's inspiration depends on the great Memory, on his own complex nature, and his consuming spirit of observation; but at the moment of his inspiration, all these things seem in abeyance, and the words well up as if a spirit not himself had given them to him.' How does the inspiration of the Bible differ from that? 'The inspiration of the Bible contains all these elements, which constitute its purely human side, but there is something else which has given it its supreme power in all ages. The writers of the Bible remember and observe and think, but they also utter themselves as they are moved by the Holy Ghost. It is this last mysterious happening that inspires the creative element. The inspired poet has aided his observation and experience by drawing on the great Memory, the inspired Bible has added to the great Memory something that was not in it before.'

The inspiration of the Bible, then, is unique. That is Mr. GARDNER'S word. But Mr. GARDNER holds that the inspiration of William Blake, though it fell short of the unique inspiration of the Bible, was different in kind from, and higher in quality than, the inspiration of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's inspiration depends on the great

Memory, his own complex nature, and his consuming spirit of observation. Blake's inspiration came direct from above. So he himself claimed; and Mr. GARDNER (most discreet of interpreters) is willing to admit the claim. But it did not come from the Highest of all. It did not come from the Holy Ghost. It came from certain spiritual guides, whose dwelling was above nature—say, in those 'heavenly places' to which St. Paul introduced the Ephesians—but who did not sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The discovery of a manuscript is like the discovery of a star. It is made by the man who is on the outlook for it. Dr. Rendel HARRIS deserves the honour which we pay to Sir William Herschel. He is as highly gifted, as severely trained, as scientific in his method, and as successful. His latest discovery is as useful to the world as the discovery of a distant star. He has discovered a Book of 'Testimonies.

'Testimonies,' or, to give them their full title, 'Testimonies against the Jews,' are the first of all New Testament writings. They are older than the Gospels, older than the Pauline Epistles. By some strange providence, which we in our ignorance call accident, not one of them was included in the Canon of the New Testament, although many Testimonies, or many copies of one original Testimony, were at one time in existence. The result is that they were lost sight of by the Church. A scholar here and there knew them and quoted them, down to the invention of printing. But for many centuries now their very existence has been forgotten. Dr. Rendel HARRIS believes that he has discovered one of them in a manuscript on Mount Athos. He tells the story in a book with the unexpected title of *The Origin of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Longmans; 2s. 6d. net).

The Testimonies were books of extracts from the Old Testament. These extracts were made for the purpose of convincing the Jews of the

truth of Christianity. So long as Christianity was making its way among the Jews it accepted the whole of the inspired Jewish Scriptures, but interpreted them in the light of the new revelation in Christ. It did not appeal to the light of nature, or to the teachings of philosophy. It quoted what Moses says in the Law, or David in the Psalms; it referred to the well-known words of one or other of the prophets. And it did all this for the purpose of convincing the Jews 'that this Jesus is the Christ.' The 'Testimonies against the Jews,' or, as an alternative title appears to have been, the 'Extracts against the Jews,' were the earliest Christian apologetic.

There are traces of the Testimonies in the New Testament itself. 'A comparison of the second chapter of the 1st Epistle of Peter with the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans will show a common argument underlying the two writers. Both of them affirm that Christ is the Stone spoken of by the prophets. Each of them illustrates the statement from Isaiah xxviii. 16 and Isaiah viii. 14. These passages are taken to show that Christ is the Foundation Stone laid in Zion, and at the same time the Stone at which the Jews, those unwise builders, have stumbled. So striking is the coincidence here, in the treatment of the subject, between St. Paul and St. Peter, that it has been taken as a final proof of the dependence of Peter upon Paul, and as a conclusive argument for the reconciliation of the two great early Christian teachers.'

'But we find similar arguments in early Patristic literature in writers who are not dependent upon the Epistle to the Romans; and we also find the fundamental position that "Christ is the Stone," sometimes in the form that "Christ is the Stone and the Rock," in the early collections of Testimonies which are extant. For instance, in the collection of Testimonies made by Cyprian against the Jews, one of the leading sections is devoted to the establishment of the doctrine that "Christ is the Stone," and the Old Testament is ransacked

for possible illustrations of the Christ-Stone or Christ-Rock. It is therefore reasonable to affirm that it was from such a collection that Peter and Paul took their doctrine and the quotations in proof of it, and not that either of them was borrowing from the other.'

The existence of such a collection of extracts from the Old Testament helps us to understand certain mistaken references to the Prophets which are made in the New Testament, and which have caused much perplexity to its interpreters. 'For example, in the opening of the Gospel of Mark, where the mission of John the Baptist is described, we are told in the oldest copies that it is written *in Isaiah* that the Lord will send His messenger before His face, and that there is the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Strictly speaking, it is only the second of these quotations that belongs

to Isaiah, the first of them should have been referred to Malachi. Consequently, later transcribers have judiciously altered the words, "In Isaiah the prophet," to "In the prophets."

In Mt 27<sup>9</sup> the prediction about Judas and the thirty pieces of silver is referred to Jeremiah. It is really a composite quotation, made up out of Zechariah and Jeremiah, and it would have been better, if a single reference was made, to refer it to Zechariah. Dr. Rendel HARRIS believes that Matthew took the quotation out of his Book of Testimonies. Thus a mistake, which has caused much searching of heart and not a little dishonest exegesis, is accounted for. 'It is easy to see that such mistakes in reference were almost inevitable in the use of the primitive Bible text-book, especially if the authorities were marked in the margin instead of in the text.'

## The Christian Community.

BY THE REVEREND JOHN A. HUTTON, D.D., GLASGOW.

THERE is one thing about which the New Testament is decisive and incontrovertible—that Jesus founded a Church. And there is one thing to which the later books of the New Testament bear an equally decisive and incontrovertible testimony; it is that even by the time the canon was closed, there was, here in this world, an organic, self-reliant, sufficiently unanimous body which called itself the Church, which had the presumption, or, as we should say, which had the faith to believe that it held within itself the secret for the safeguarding and salvation of the human race.

Look at those two things in turn. There is one thing which so pervades the Gospels once one's eyes are open to look for traces of it,—it is the fact that Jesus took especial pains to gather round about Him a group of people. Accepting the narratives as they stand, and not trying to go beyond what is written, we cannot say on what principle our Lord selected those who formed the nucleus of the Church. Indeed, it would almost seem as though the selection had been made with the

very purpose of confuting any qualifying test which later on we might erect so that it might become a barrier to those who happened not to be able to answer that test.

You would not call them able men. You would not call them men of great insight; nor were they men of a natural steadfastness who could be trusted to stand fast in trying times. They were not all of one pattern. They were not men who showed any natural control of their own temperaments. They could be passionate upon occasion; they could be vain; they could be petty; they could be stupid. And yet, once more, the fact is that our Lord chose these men and on them He risked the future of His cause. He bore with their misunderstandings, with their unsteadiness. He did not dismiss them from His side even when, as He foresaw, they would leave Him at the last pinch. No; He seemed to be intent upon one thing only with regard to them, and that, as the narrative says, that they should be 'with him.' He never doubted that if they were