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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THERE are just two unpardonable sins in a preacher. The one is having nothing to say, and the other is saying it.

You come to that conclusion after reading Dr. JOHN A. HUTTON'S book on preaching, *That the Ministry be not Blamed* (Hodder & Stoughton; 6s. net). The book contains five lectures. Three of them deal with the sin of having nothing to say, the remaining two with the sin of saying it. Let us consider the sin of saying it.

Dr. HUTTON gives it a name. He calls it tediousness. And that is a good name for it. The only point to observe is that it does not depend on length. A man may be tedious in ten minutes as surely as in sixty, though not so insufferably.

Other men have called it dulness. And that is a good name for it too. The point to notice here is, that it does not depend on manner. A preacher with a bad delivery may not be dull, while a preacher with a good delivery may. The dullest, the most tedious, the man who in the pulpit most nearly committed this cardinal sin, was a teacher of elocution.

Take an illustration. Dr. John Brown—Bunyan Brown—says this: 'On the matter of literary

form we may note that Bunyan seems carefully to have avoided one sin not easily forgiven—the cardinal sin of dulness. Neither in his character sketches nor in his illustrations does he ever grow tedious. The various people in his allegories step out into the open—they interest you or they amuse you, or they instruct you; there is one thing they never do, they never weary you. They do all they were meant to do and then they disappear. Yet in that brief space they have left a distinct impression of their own individuality upon you.

Many of the illustrations in his sermons, too, are simply exquisite. Take for example this of Christian fellowship: "Christians are like the several flowers in a garden that have upon each of them the dew of heaven, which being shaken with the wind, they let fall their dew at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished and become nourishers of each other." That is an illustration which is a word-picture, a poem in prose. The most refined feel the charm of it, and the plainest man is conscious of its beauty and force. Moreover it is an illustration which is not dragged in for its own sake. It really does illustrate, that is, it throws light on the subject in hand. Moreover it is not overdone. It leaves off at the precise point at which it ought to stop. It is well sometimes to have the moral courage to leave out something. The leaving out may really increase the value of that which remains

in. There are times when the half turns out to be more than the whole.'

Now here we have several things, all pertinent. To begin at the end, we have first of all this: Dulness, or tediousness, or whatever you please to call it, is not due to lack of matter. It may be due or partly due to too much matter. 'It is well sometimes to have the moral courage to leave out something.'

Next, we have this: Tediousness may be due, or again partly due, to inappropriateness. Dr. Brown quotes an illustration from Bunyan. He says, 'it is an illustration which is not dragged in for its own sake.' So, even the most beautiful illustration and the briefest may be tedious if it is not appropriate.

Once more we have this: Tediousness may be due or partly due to unintelligibility, or, what is still more likely, to coldness. Says Dr. Brown of Bunyan's illustration, 'The most refined feel the charm of it, and the plainest man is conscious of its beauty and force.' If the illustration, or whatever else it is that the preacher is offering, does not touch his hearers, he is tedious.

But all these things are accidents and separable. After they have all gone the sin remains. The preacher may be neither lengthy, nor wordy, nor inappropriate, nor obscure, nor unemotional, and yet he may be intolerably dull and tedious. These things will increase the weariness but they are not the cause of it. The cause of it is that he has nothing to say and is trying to say it.

The least tedious or, put it positively, the most interesting, preacher that the last generation of Scottish people listened to was Dr. Marcus Dods. But read his letters. He discovers in himself all the faults that a preacher can have. And he had most of them. But then he never went into the pulpit to say something when he had nothing to say.

Dean Ramsay in his *Pulpit Table Talk* insists on making a difference between dulness and dryness. 'A *dry* sermon,' he says, 'we feel may be very clever and very full of interest and instruction, if only we could exert ourselves to attend. But we feel that, though abounding with learning and cleverness, we find it too severe, too unornamental, and, in fact, too much of a study, and, as an address, too unattractive. A *dull* sermon, on the other hand, we find to be prosy, poor, commonplace, and so pointless, both in matter and in manner, that we cannot attend with any earnestness or life.' Dean Ramsay is right. Dr. Dods was often dry; he was never dull.

What does it all come to? It comes to this.—To preach is to preach a gospel.

The Rev. W. E. ORCHARD, D.D., is interested in evolution.

'There are still,' he says, 'many difficulties against accepting it. If man has evolved from the animal we ought to be able to find not only some creature who can be called in popular phraseology "the missing link," but many missing links bridging what after all is a great gulf. The remains bearing on this issue which have been found are very few, and their significance is hotly disputed by scientists themselves—both their age, and whether they are human or animal, or mere abnormalities. When there are instanced whole races of men such as the cave-dwellers, or neolithic man, who are represented as very low in the scale of progress, because they knew nothing of the use of fire or metal, we come across two disturbing facts, one that they could draw very creditably, with accuracy and lifelike vigour, and secondly that they had quite strong beliefs in the existence of higher beings and in a life beyond the grave; in short, that they compare favourably with many modern men in artistic expression and religious sensibility.'

But these are the words of a theologian. What does he know about the Darwinian hypothesis?

He knows more about it than the majority of the men of science. For the man of science takes it for granted, the theologian has to question and consider it. If he is a preacher he has to consider most seriously and concernedly what is to be done with the doctrine of Creation if the Darwinian hypothesis is true. And what is to be done with the doctrine of the Fall.

The Rev. W. E. ORCHARD is a theological preacher. In his recent book, *The Finality of Christ* (Allen & Unwin; 6s. net), he publishes a sermon on 'Evolution and the Fall.' He is well able to handle a scientific problem. This problem, he finds, he has to handle or give up his business as a preacher.

He finds difficulty in accepting the Darwinian hypothesis. Because it will not square with Genesis? No, but because it will not square with fact. Only last month two large volumes were issued on the descent of man. Both were by great men of science of the day. Yet they did not agree on so essential a matter as the pithecanthropus skull. One says it is the skull of a monkey, the other says it is the skull of a man.

But let the theological preacher go. Take the foremost of all the living men of scientific attainment, and each in his own department. Take the President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Presidents of all the sections. Mr. John Murray has published their addresses in one convenient volume. The title is *The Advancement of Science: 1921* (6s.).

There is nothing in all the addresses, there was nothing at the British Association Meeting in Edinburgh, so significant as the repudiation of the Darwinian hypothesis. Turn to the address by Dr. D. H. SCOTT, the botanist, and suffer a rather long quotation.

'Turning for a moment to Darwin's own theory of the origin of species by means of Natural Selection, the efficacy of the latter, in weeding out the unfit, is, of course, still acknowledged, and some geneticists allow it a considerable rôle. But there is a strong tendency in these days to admit Natural Selection only as a "merely negative force," and as such it has even been dismissed as a "truism." Now Darwin's great book was most certainly not written to enunciate a truism. He regarded Natural Selection as "the most important, but not the exclusive, means of modification" (*Origin of Species*, p. 4). It was the continual selection of the more fit, the "preservation of favoured races," on which he relied, and not the mere obvious elimination of the unfit, and this great idea (so imperfectly understood by many of his contemporaries and successors) he worked out with astonishing power, in the light of the changes which man has produced, with the help of his own artificial selection.

'It may be that the theory of Natural Selection, as Darwin and Wallace understood it, may some day come into its own again; certainly it illuminated, as no other theory has yet done, the great subject of adaptation, which to some of us is, and remains, the chief interest of Biology. But in our present total ignorance of variation and doubt as to other means of change, we can form no clear idea of the material on which Selection has had to work, and we must let the question rest.

'For the moment, at all events, the Darwinian period is past; we can no longer enjoy the comfortable assurance, which once satisfied so many of us, that the main problem has been solved—all is again in the melting-pot. By now, in fact, a new generation has grown up that knows not Darwin.'

But Darwinism is not evolution. Certainly not. Says Dr. SCOTT, and in the very next paragraph: 'Yet Evolution remains—we cannot get away from it.' But why cannot we get away from it? Because, he says, 'there is no alternative.' Is even evolution, then, not a scientifically ascertained

fact? No, says Dr. SCOTT, it is not. We must hold it, he says, 'as an act of faith'—because there is no alternative. But as to the fact of it: 'I have thought it fair to lay stress on the present state of uncertainty in all that concerns the origin of species. On another occasion I even ventured to speak of the return of "pre-Darwinian chaos." But out of this chaos doubtless light will come.'

In the current number of *Theology* (S.P.C.K.; 1s. 6d. net) there is a review of BURTON'S *Galatians* (T. & T. Clark; 3s. net). The writer of the review is Dr. E. H. ASKWITH, whose book on the same Epistle is in the hands of every student of it.

Dr. ASKWITH, ends where other reviewers begin. He refers to the price of the book. But the book is not too dear, it is too cheap. The Publishers have shown that they have issued it at less than the price they have had to pay for it. We speak lightly, or otherwise, of costs being 'three times pre-war.' It is when we handle an article, be it butter or a book, that we see the meaning of it. And books like BURTON'S *Galatians*, with its Greek words, its small type, its numerous contractions, have risen in cost of production far beyond other books. But when a book is essential men will buy it.

Dr. ASKWITH assures us that BURTON'S *Galatians* is essential. Not only does he praise the author's care and scholarship, in almost every particular he shows that he agrees with him. Professor BURTON accepts the South Galatian theory. So does Dr. ASKWITH. Even in the matter of time when and place where the Epistle was written, there is only the slightest of differences between them. Dr. BURTON thinks that the probability is in favour of Ephesus, during Paul's third missionary journey, Dr. ASKWITH prefers Macedonia on the same journey.

One phrase in the Epistle appears to Dr. ASKWITH decisive. It is the phrase 'all the

brethren that are with me' in the opening salutation. That phrase, he holds, can refer only to the apostle's travelling companions. He was on his way to Jerusalem, bringing the offering of the Gentile Christians. He had many companions with him. There is no other time or place in which he had so goodly a company of fellow-travellers that he could speak of them as 'all.'

On the vexed question of the circumcision of Titus these commentators agree. Says Dr. ASKWITH: 'It has always seemed to me the strangest of hypotheses that Titus was in fact circumcised, and that what ii. 3 states is only that his circumcision was not of compulsion. Professor Burton has understood this passage rightly, and his treatment of it is thorough and to the point.'

On only one matter do they differ. It is a matter of reading. The passage is Gal 4²⁶: 'Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia.' So the Revisers. But in their margin: 'For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia,' after 'many ancient authorities.'

The difference between the two readings is slight—τὸ δὲ Ἄγαρ Σινὰ ὄρος, or τὸ γὰρ Σινὰ ὄρος—the omission in the second case of δὲ A. Westcott and Hort prefer the former reading. But in their note on the passage they reveal the fact that Westcott preferred the latter. Lightfoot agreed with Westcott, and probably the majority of the Revisers were of the same opinion, though their rules prevented them from making the change. If the second reading is correct the translation is, 'For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia,' and the disturbing Hagar does not come into the verse at all.

One valuable contribution Dr. ASKWITH makes. He shows that the Codex Sinaiticus is in favour of the second and simpler reading. It is true that that Codex has an extra word, ὄν (τὸ γὰρ Σινὰ ὄρος ἐστὶν ὃν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ), and the presence of that little word has been held to vitiate its evidence.

Dr. ASKWITH believes the word to be a mistaken insertion. But if it is retained, he can translate it. He translates it, 'For Sinai is a mountain *situated* in Arabia.'

In *A Memoir of the Right Honourable Sir Edward Fry, G.C.B.*, by his daughter, Agnes FRY, published by Mr. Humphrey Milford at the Oxford University Press (12s. 6d. net), there is a chapter on the great Judge's religious opinions.

The central matter is Prayer. It is always central. Every theological difficulty runs into it; every religious practice comes out of it. If we do not pray we have no religion. But who can give a reason for his belief in prayer?

Sir Edward Fry prayed because he could not help it. 'The impulse to prayer,' he says, 'has always seemed to me a part of my nature. To turn quickly and often towards the Infinite Being with an aspiration, a hope, a prayer—not in times only of danger or anxiety, but in moments of solitary thought and reflection, in the fields or the lanes, or even in the busy streets—has been, I believe, through all my life a matter of nature and habit; and it seems to me as if the light would fade away from the heavens if I did not believe that I might thus hold some kind of communion with God.'

But he was not content to pray. He had to find out why. For him no prayer was possible if it was not reasonable. His mind was essentially scientific. Had he not been sent to Law by his father he would himself have gone to Science. And who knows what we were losing in the reconciliation of Science with Religion all the while we were admiring the justice of his judgments?

Now the scientific objection to Prayer is the uniformity of nature. It was no objection to Sir Edward Fry. 'I believe in the fixity of law and

the fixed sequence of cause and effect; but so far from this interfering with my belief in the efficacy of prayer I have always felt that it was essential to it. It is because laws are fixed that wills can give effect to their decisions. If a stick were not stiff I could not be sure of beating a dog with it: if the laws of electricity were not fixed I could not be sure of sending a message along the wires: if matter were unstable I could not provide a dinner or a breakfast. But the cohesion of the stick does not prevent my free choice to beat the dog: the fixity of the laws of electricity does not determine the message I shall send, nor do the laws which regulate cooking fix whether I shall dine on mutton or beef.'

It is all quite simple. And it is all quite true. But how far does it carry us? Sir Edward Fry is sure that it carries us all the way. For the very point he makes is this: the better our knowledge of the laws of nature, the greater is the use we can make of them. 'The savage has comparatively few things which he can successfully will: the man who has, or he whose fellows have, a large knowledge of the laws of nature, has a far wider area of effectual volition.' This is the meaning of the aphorism that knowledge is power. 'If then there be a Being who knows all the laws of nature, He can do whatsoever He will in Heaven or on earth.'

It is all in harmony with the laws of nature. Sir Edward Fry insists upon that. 'The outcome of human volitions effected through the laws of nature appear as, and in fact are, natural results—not violations of the laws of nature, but results of those laws: and so, if there be a Divine Being with infinite knowledge of those laws, whatever He wills to do will appear as the results of natural laws, and not as miracles or as violations of these laws.'

'Not as miracles or as violations of these laws.' So Sir Edward Fry understands that a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature. And as a man of science, like almost all other men of science, he

rules out miracles. God can answer prayer—do anything for you that you ask Him in heaven or on earth—but miracles do not occur.

But what right has he to call miracles violations of the laws of nature? A miracle is a surprise—it is that and nothing more. We have taken it through the French from the Latin word *miraculum*, and the Latin word *miraculum* is defined by Lewis and Short as ‘a wonderful, strange, or marvellous thing.’ Sir Edward Fry speaks of savages. Turn to the Life of Dr. Laws of Livingstonia just published. ‘He gave the native labourers lessons in hygiene, showed them how to use European tools, instructed them in gardening, explained natural phenomena, and generally grounded them in the rudimentary principles of civilized life. They knew nothing of the commonest manufactured articles. A watch, the flame from a match, the burst of fire under a burning glass, were all miracles to them, as incomprehensible as the miracles recorded in the New Testament were to the people who saw them.’

No miracle, in the New Testament or out of it, has ever been shown to be a violation of the laws of nature. It is simply the employment of these laws to bring about a result which has not hitherto been wrought by them or is new to the observer. The first person who by uniting oxygen and hydrogen produced water performed a miracle. So did the Man who came along the Sea of Galilee walking on the surface of the waves. In both cases it was a genuine surprise. In the first case to the performer himself, for no man can tell even yet how the union of oxygen and hydrogen forms water, and if it were not so common it would be a miracle still. In the other case to the onlookers, for the Man Himself knew.

Violation of the laws of nature is unthinkable.

For the laws of nature are the expression of the mind of God. We can speak, however, of interference with a law of nature. Sir Edward Fry himself furnishes an example. ‘A man has, we will say, swallowed an acid which by itself must cause death; the administration of an alkali may operate so as to save the man’s life.’ The alkali works in accordance with natural law just as the acid does. But it interferes with the working of the acid. It prevents the acid from issuing, as it naturally would have done, in death.

One day a messenger came to Jesus from a Roman centurion. The centurion’s servant was at the point of death. ‘But speak the word,’ he said, ‘and my servant shall be healed.’ Jesus spoke the word. The servant was healed from that very hour.

It was a miracle. They were all surprised. Was it a violation of the laws of nature? Certainly not. It was interference. The acid was met by an alkali. What that alkali was no one knew but Jesus Himself. And perhaps no one will ever know. Perhaps no one will ever know how it is that oxygen and hydrogen when united form water.

It was due to knowledge of the laws of nature—superior knowledge both of acids and of alkalies. The narrative tells us as much as that. Where is the point of the centurion’s ‘I also am a man under authority’? He could say to his servants ‘Go’ and ‘Come,’ and they obeyed him, because he was the representative of the Emperor. When he said ‘Go,’ it was with the whole power of the Emperor behind him. So was it with Jesus. Behind Him was the whole power of God, the very author and creator of the acid and the alkali, who can do according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.