

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It was once possible, by writing a book on the Atonement, to make a reputation. It is not possible now to make even a sensation. We seem to have no stake in a new theory of the Atonement. We seem to have settled into the belief, and we have begun to give it voice, that an invulnerable theory of the Atonement cannot be built.

Coleridge said, and even Coleridge was not the first to say it, that the operative cause of the Atonement is a 'transcendent' cause, and he defined a transcendent cause as 'a cause beyond our comprehension and not within the sphere of sensible experience.' '*Factum est,*' he said, 'and beyond the information contained in the enunciation of the FACT, it can be characterized only by the consequences.' Archbishop Magee, of Dublin, agreed with Coleridge. 'I know not,' he said, 'nor does it concern me to know, *in what manner* the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins: it is enough that this is declared by God to be the medium through which my salvation is effected. I pretend not to dive into the counsels of the Almighty.'

Archbishop Magee represented a very different general line of thought from Coleridge. Dean Church represented a different line of thought from either. Yet Dean Church arrived at the same con-

clusion. 'I see the suffering,' he said; 'I am told; on His authority, what it means and involves. I can if I like, and as has often been done, go on and make a theory *how* He bore our sins, and *how* He gained their forgiveness, and *how* He took away the sins of the world. But I own that the longer I live the more my mind recoils from such efforts. It seems to me so idle, so, in the very nature of our condition, hopeless.' And Mr. Balfour has said that it *must* be too vast for our intellectual comprehension, otherwise it would be too narrow for our spiritual needs.

Thus the theory that no theory of the Atonement is possible has spread. It has recently grown very bold. 'The New Testament,' says Dr. R. F. Horton, 'has no theory about the Atonement.' And then he frankly and sweepingly asserts that 'we are entirely out of our depth in any discussion of the subject.'

Yet a new book has just been written on the Atonement, and it contains a new theory. It is the Fernley Lecture for 1897. Its title is *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement* (Kelly, 8vo, pp. xxiii, 498. 5s.); its author, the Rev. John Scott Lidgett, M.A., Warden of the Bermondsey Settlement.

Through five hundred pages Mr Lidgett has discussed the Atonement, unafraid of Dr. Horton's sweeping statement. He has reached the end of his discussion before he even notices that statement. Then he considers it briefly in a Note. And after tracing the history of this dogma that there is no dogma of the Atonement, as we have traced it after him, he answers Dr. Horton with two short arguments.

First, Mr. Lidgett feels that, whether these statements are right or wrong, the atmosphere in which they live and move is quite unlike the atmosphere which the Bible creates around it. The Bible never says, with Coleridge, that the fact of the Atonement is a 'transcendent' fact, nor even admits, with Magee, that it is an 'expedient.' The death of Christ is regarded in the Bible as a sin-offering, consisting of sufferings and death on the objective side, and of perfected obedience on the subjective; and to this offering correspond propitiation, the putting away of sin, and redemption. And the whole manner of the writers conveys the assumption, that if the connexion of the former with the latter is not explained, it is not because the grounds and nature of it are hidden, but because they are too clear to require explanation. That which from us demands elaborate, and from some of us apparently impossible, explanation, was an everyday perception to them. The absence of a theory of the Atonement is its presence in the form of an intuition.

But secondly, if the Atonement cannot be explained, then the Incarnation is robbed of its most precious jewel. The Incarnation is the manifestation of God to men. No man had seen God at any time. Then the Word was made flesh, and the only-begotten Son revealed Him. But how is that a revelation of God, or of the character of God, which leaves unexplained its most awful demand? How can man pretend to see God in Christ if he is forbidden to look at Him in His most significant relation to Christ? How can we even pretend to

know Christ Himself if He is hidden from us throughout the most solemn moments of His life?

Two volumes of the new season's announcements have reached us at the last moment. The one is Professor McGiffert's *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*; the other, Professor Marvin Vincent's edition of *Philippians and Philemon*.

Professor Vincent's volume shows us that *The International Critical Commentary* is not to be uniform either in thickness or in price. And that is altogether as it ought to be. Few things are more unscientific than the demand that all the volumes of a scientific series should be of a uniform thickness whatever their subject or importance. Both volumes seem to show that the best scholarship of America is not behind the best scholarship of this country. But we can touch on one point only, and we shall find it in McGiffert.

In 1893 Professor Percy Gardner published a pamphlet on *The Origin of the Lord's Supper*. To those who were at ease in their critical Zion the stir that pamphlet made was inscrutable. It is true it was generally condemned. But the wonder was, that starting so revolutionary and incredible an hypothesis, it received any notice at all. For its suggestion was that the Lord's Supper owed its origin entirely to St. Paul.

Professor McGiffert counts that pamphlet worthy of a passing notice yet. He calls it a very suggestive pamphlet. And although he considers its hypothesis impossible, inasmuch as it is inconceivable that the Jewish wing of the Church would have taken to the Lord's Supper if it had originated with St Paul, he nevertheless maintains that it has forced upon us the recognition of one important fact. That fact is, that 'it is not absolutely certain that Jesus Himself

actually instituted such a Supper and directed His disciples to eat and drink in remembrance of Him.'

For the words 'in remembrance of Me' do not occur in the Gospels. In the Received Text of St. Luke they occur, it is true. But the passage is omitted in the oldest MSS., and it is regarded as an interpolation by Westcott and Hort. In St. Matthew and St. Mark they are not found. And even if they belong to the true text of St. Luke, as some affirm, 'they are evidently,' says Dr. McGiffert, 'dependent upon St. Paul, and supply no independent testimony as to the original utterance of Christ.'

Professor McGiffert has no doubt that our Lord ate the Last Supper with His disciples, as recorded in all the Synoptic Gospels. He has no doubt that He said of the bread which He broke and gave to His companions, 'This is My body,' and of the wine which He gave them to drink, 'This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many,' and that He did it with a reference to His approaching death. But he finds no evidence that it was the institution of a memorial feast. And he thinks that to read into its simple and touching act subtle and abstruse doctrines, is to do Jesus a great injustice.

That, almost immediately after His death, Christ's disciples ate the Lord's Supper in memory of Him is, however, wholly beyond dispute. And Dr. McGiffert believes that the origin of the custom was very simple. For when the disciples ate and drank together 'they could not fail to recall the solemn moment in which Jesus had broken bread in their presence, and with a reference to His impending death had pronounced the bread His body and the wine His blood; and remembering that scene, their eating and drinking together must inevitably, whether with or without a command from Him, take on the character of a

memorial feast, in which they looked back to His death, as He had looked forward to it.'

Our fathers sang—

There is a fountain filled with blood
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood
 Lose all their guilty stains,—

and they found it a pleasant song to sing. We hear it called grotesque. We hear it called repulsive. We see it dropped from almost all our hymnals. And now Dr. Monro Gibson comes forward and says that it had no business ever to be sung, for it is very bad theology.

It is in the *Expositor* for September that Dr. Monro Gibson says so. He does not mention the hymn. But he goes to the Scripture on which the hymn is founded, and he says that that is not its meaning. The Scripture is Rev. 7¹⁴, 'They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

There are other passages like this, but this passage is central. Dr. Gibson believes these passages are rarely preached from now. And when they are, they are misinterpreted. He gives an example. He says it is from 'one of the first preachers of the day.' We do not know at this moment who the preacher may be, but if he often expounds his passages as he expounds this one, Dr. Gibson does not flatter the preachers of the day. For he says, 'the blood signifies the suffering of mortal human life; and the whole declaration is, that this glorious fellowship of noble sufferers, the radiant brotherhood of triumphant saints, were exalted to their heavenly glory and perfectness through the natural and earthly steps of sanctified suffering.'

Dr. Monro Gibson does not expound the passage in that way. He finds some reference to the Atonement in it. But it is not the 'most

unnatural and repulsive' reference which 'the ordinary English mind' finds in it. For he thinks that the ordinary English mind regards the blood of the Lamb as literal blood. Perhaps in that he somewhat strains the matter. For if to the ordinary English mind the blood is literal blood, then the robes are literal robes, and the washing is literal washing. Still, it is sure enough that the ordinary English mind does not understand the passage as Dr. Monro Gibson here interprets it.

To the writer of the passage and to its readers, Dr. Monro Gibson believes it would recall the morning and evening sacrifice. In that sacrifice the blood is the central thing. But it is not blood as blood. The blood is the life. And when the animal is slain, its blood is caught and sprinkled on the altar, to signify that the life of the animal is offered to God. Now the animal represents Israel. Every morning, then, and every evening, the devout Israelite surrenders his life symbolically in that animal, and takes it up again that he may present it unto God. Twice a day he dies unto sin and lives unto righteousness.

But that was only a shadow of good things to come. In the fulness of time the Lamb of God gave His life and took it again. Observe the double-sided act. Both sides are necessary to the full atonement. 'I lay down my life that I may take it again.' 'I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' Now *this* death was the death of the race, and *this* return to life was the return of the race. When Christ was crucified, then I was crucified with Him,—not in mere symbol as when the animal was slain, but in spiritual fact; and when He rose from the dead, I rose in Him to newness of life. And, therefore, when our writer says, 'They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,' his readers would understand him to mean that they had died to sin and lived to righteousness in Him.

But the 'in.' Surely the choice of such a preposition is strange if there is no washing and no blood to wash in. Not more strange, says Dr. Monro Gibson, than the choice of the same preposition when redemption is plainly spoken of. Thus, in this very book (Rev 5⁹) we read, 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God *in* Thy blood.' Or when remission of sins is mentioned, Rev 1⁵, 'Unto Him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins *in* His blood.' There is a whole circle of expressions, all gathered round the atonement, which *in the Greek* contains this same phrase 'in His blood,' though it is often lost to view through mistranslation. Take Ro 5⁹, 'Being now justified *in* His blood,' or Eph 2¹³, 'Ye that once were afar off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.' Therefore it is not the washing that is in the blood of the Lamb, says Dr. Monro Gibson, it is the person who is wearing the robes. As the devout Israelite looked upon the morning sacrifice and said, 'I am in that blood of the Lamb, for it represents the life of Israel, and I am one of Israel,' so the redeemed can say of the blood of the Lamb of God, 'I am in that blood which is first poured out in death, and then caught up and carried into the presence of God; I die in His death, making a surrender of the flesh with its affections and lusts, I enter with boldness into the Holiest of all, that henceforth I may live not unto myself, but unto Him that loved me and gave Himself for me. I being in the blood of the Lamb, have washed my robes and made them white.'

Last year Professor Zimmern, of Leipzig, the distinguished archæologist, published a pamphlet under the title of *Vater, Sohn, und Fürsprecher in der Babylonischen Göttersvorstellung*. In calling his pamphlet 'Father, Son, and Intercessor,' he claimed to have discovered in the Babylonian pantheon a trinity of gods that corresponded with the Christian Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. His pamphlet seemed to make good the claim of its title. The originality of even the Christian Trinity was reluctantly given up.

The Babylonian trinity, whom Professor Zimmern found so startlingly like the Christian that he spoke of the latter as only a more developed form, are Ea, Marduk, and Gibil-Nusku. Tortured by disease, or otherwise distressed through the influence of some malignant spirit, the human sufferer appeals to Marduk for relief. Marduk proceeds to the abode of his father Ea. As if to forestall the confessional 'equal in power and glory' of our Christian creeds, Ea disclaims the possession of superior knowledge. 'What can I tell thee that thou dost not already know?' are the words he addresses to his son. Nevertheless, he instructs Marduk in the remedies that are to be applied, and Marduk proceeds to the earth to do his father's will. Yet even Marduk does not, or does not always, apply the remedy directly. Marduk himself is sometimes approached by the human suppliant through Gibil-Nusku, and then Gibil-Nusku is the comforter who takes the things which Marduk obtains, and shows them unto men.

Professor Zimmern's pamphlet is now criticised, in *The American Journal of Theology*, by Professor Morris Jastrow of Philadelphia. Professor Jastrow does not deny the Babylonian trinity. He does not seem to disprove its remarkable similarity to the Christian Trinity. But he almost entirely abolishes its originality, and even its religious significance.

For Professor Jastrow shows that the Babylonian trinity is a deliberate manufacture of the Babylonian priests, and of merely political importance. In the Babylonia of very early days Nippur and Eridu were cities of the first rank. Each city had its patron god. The chief god of Nippur was En-lil, afterwards known as Bel, 'the lord.' The chief god of Eridu was Ea. Then came the Arabian conqueror Khammurabi about 2300 B.C., who made himself master of the country, and Babylon the capital of his empire. With the rise in the fortunes of the city of Babylon came a rise in the position of its patron god. That god was Marduk. Since Babylon is now chief of the

cities of Babylonia, Marduk must be chief of the gods. Accordingly the priests of Babylon set to and altered the ancient theologies. There was the story of the creation of mankind. In it Bel of Nippur was the great god who overcame the primeval chaos, Tiāmat, and prepared the way for the creation of man. But the priests of Babylon now alter that. Bel yields his titles, including the very name of Bel or 'lord,' to Marduk; and, as with the Hebrews, to yield the *name* was to yield all power and prerogative. Ea, the god of Eridu, makes a similar transfer. Other gods follow their example. And now, armed with the combined strength of the pantheon, Marduk goes out against the monster Tiāmat, and gains an easy victory.

The same reshaping takes place in the theology of intercession. In the older texts it is Ea that watches over the welfare of mankind and hears their cry. But under the hand of the priests of Babylon, Marduk is appointed to that popular office. Ea is not dethroned. Marduk is introduced beside him. The younger god becomes the son of the older. But their equality is emphasised, and Marduk hears the human cry. With Gibil-Nusku the process is similar. At first associated with Bel as son or servant, just as Marduk is associated with Ea, Gibil-Nusku is sent one day with a message to Ea. Ea hears the appeal, but sends the answer back by Marduk. And so these three, Ea, Marduk, and Gibil-Nusku, are brought together, and almost by accident, assuredly without knowing what they do, the priests of Babylon devise a trinity of Babylonian gods that stand to one another, and to men, almost as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The Secret of Christian Experience is the title of an Address which Dr. Robertson Nicoll delivered at the close of the session of the Theological College, Bala. Subsequently published in *The British Weekly*, it has now been issued by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton.

The Secret of Christian Experience is an address with a purpose. In that it much resembles a modern popular novel. It is also theological, which the popular novel now must always be. Still, it is not a novel, and it is not intended to be popular. For it lacks the necessary dash of heresy. The multitude runs after the theological novel, not for its theology, but for its heresy. It hopes to win heaven in spite of the theologians, and runs after the novel to discover the way. *The Secret of Christian Experience* is not written for the miscellaneous multitude,—it is written for those who profess the faith as it is in Jesus.

Now, for those who profess the faith as it is in Jesus, one thing is necessary—a secret Christian experience. Dr. Robertson Nicoll uses the word ‘secret’ in the biblical sense. That is secret which is hid with Christ in God. That is secret which is the property of the Holy Ghost, and is given to every individual directly by the Holy Ghost. Every person who would reach the secret of Christian experience must come—through anguish and fear for the most part, and always through anxiety and eagerness—into immediate and living contact with the Holy Spirit of God.

John Henry Newman used to say that so imperatively was the Christian experience a secret that you dare not preach the doctrine of the Atonement to the unconverted. Dr. Robertson Nicoll does not say that. He says, indeed, ‘no book, no earthly teacher can ever impart that hidden wisdom without which your ministry must be a thing of nought.’ But his Address is to those who are preparing for a ministry. In a ministry they must have a message. This is the very message they must have. He does not say they dare not preach the Atonement to the unconverted. He says they dare not preach anything else.

Not only so. Dr. Robertson Nicoll holds that the Christian experience is a normal experience. You may have it as well as I. It is a secret. It is a secret in the exclusive possession of the Holy Ghost.

No teacher can impart it to another. No teacher can do more (though he dare not do less) than bring another into the Presence and leave the other there. Still, it is the same secret that the Holy Ghost imparts to all. This is the very purpose of Dr. Robertson Nicoll’s Address,—to show that the Christian experience ought to be one and the same for every soul of man.

Well, the normal Christian experience, the experience which ought to belong to every soul of man, is a mixed experience. It is a combination of wretchedness unfathomable and joy unspeakable. Dr. Robertson Nicoll goes back to Bunyan for his first account of it. In ‘his most beautiful book,’ *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan speaks as follows: ‘Upon a day the good providence of God did cast me to *Bedford* to work on my Calling, and in one of the Streets of that *Town* I came where there were three or four poor *Women* sitting at a door in the Sun, and talking about the things of God; and being now willing to hear them discourse, I drew near to hear what they said, for I was now a brisk Talker also myself in the matters of Religion. But I may say, *I heard, but I understood not*; for they were far above, out of my reach. Their talk was about a new Birth, the work of God on their hearts, also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature. They talked how God had visited their souls with his love in the *Lord Jesus*, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the Devil. Moreover, they reasoned of the Suggestions and Temptations of Satan in particular, and told to each other by which they had been afflicted, and how they were borne up under his assaults. They also discoursed of their own wretchedness of heart, of their Unbelief; and did contemn, slight, and abhor their own Righteousness, as filthy and insufficient to do them any good. And methought they spake as if Joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture Language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new World, as if they

were *people that dwell alone, and were not to be reckoned amongst their Neighbours.*'

The experience of those three or four poor women became in time, as we know, the experience of Bunyan himself. It is, says Dr. Robertson Nicoll, the normal Christian experience. It ought to be the experience of every one of us. Within the heart of every one of us there ought to be, at one and the same moment, an exuberant joy and a bitter anguish; joy over the finished work of Christ on our behalf, whereby we have received the adoption of sons, anguish over our own evil heart of unbelief.

But Dr. Robertson Nicoll believes that this, which ought to be the experience of all, is not the experience of many. Some want the joy and some the sorrow.

Some want the joy. No one can have the exuberant joy of Bunyan's three or four poor women, who has not a faith, sure and steadfast, in the finished work of Christ. We do Dr. Robertson Nicoll injustice to endeavour to condense his argument. But with that apology we shall venture to say that he finds William Law, and the followers of William Law to-day, guilty of that mistake. Of course he finds others far more guilty than they. But William Law and his followers are evangelicals. So he names them, and passes the others by. And he says with decision, that if Wesley had not broken with William Law and learned from Peter Bohler that 'herein is a mystery: Let Thy blood be a propitiation for me,' the evangelical revival, so far as it depended upon Wesley, would never have existed.

From two opposite sides two different men in our day have been drawn to the writings of Law. The one is Dr. Alexander Whyte, the other Mr. Andrew Murray. Dr. Whyte has been drawn to Law by his teaching about human nature and about the Divine requirements. For Dr. Whyte has a profound consciousness of sin, and Law's

teaching on sin has touched and greatly reinforced a tendency that already existed. Nor does Dr. Robertson Nicoll find fault with Dr. Whyte for that. On the contrary, 'we need such preaching as that,' he says. 'We never needed it more,' he says, 'than at a time when the corruption of human nature is preached not so much by believing men as by great unbelieving teachers like Ibsen.' Many of us, he holds, have fallen into the Roman error of thinking, if we do not dare to say, that the corruption of human nature is monstrously exaggerated, a doctrine from which the idea of supererogation naturally springs. But there is a danger in the truer view. It is the danger of forgetting that he that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet; the danger of thinking that every time the feet need washing the bathing itself has to be done over again. It is the danger of losing all the joy of the justification in the perpetual need of pardon.

The other is Mr. Andrew Murray. It is not Law's teaching about the corruption of human nature that has drawn Mr. Murray to him, it is his call to perfection. Now, as to whether perfection may be attained in this life, Dr. Robertson Nicoll does not dogmatize. It is a question of experience, he says. It may be that we have lived with them, and after years and years of communion we have found that certain human beings have attained perfection. But even if it is so, how, he asks, could those spirits *claim* to be perfect? As to those who claim to be perfect, it is but just to say that they usually make the claim with faltering lips. But if perfect, could they make the claim at all? Is not perfection a perfection in self-forgetfulness that would not know its own perfection?

But Dr. Robertson Nicoll fears that Mr. Andrew Murray and those who agree with him are found in a double blunder. They think too little of *outward* righteousness wherein they might have joy, and too much of *inward* righteousness wherein they ought to have much sorrow. Bunyan's

two or three poor women spake as if joy did make them speak when they talked how God had visited their souls with His love in the Lord Jesus ; but they did not fail to discourse also of their own wretchedness of heart. And yet the impression

that they made upon an onlooker so shrewd as Bunyan was that they were as if they had found a new world, as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned amongst their neighbours.

Apollos: A Study in Pre-Pauline Christianity.

BY THE REV. ARTHUR WRIGHT, M.A., TUTOR OF QUEENS' COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

WHEN St. Paul in his third missionary journey settled down at Ephesus, he found that a Christian Church had long been established there. Possibly it dated from the great day of Pentecost, when 'Jews from Asia,' of which province Ephesus was the capital, had been present at the Feast (Acts ii. 9). His old acquaintances, Aquila and Priscilla, were amongst the members. His future helper, Apollos, had but recently departed. There were twelve other brethren, of whom we shall have something to say presently, and doubtless there were a few more of whom nothing is known. That it was a small and struggling community is indicated by the fact that it had never separated from Judaism. Whatever of special love-feasts, eucharists, and other Christian ordinances were kept, must have been celebrated, as they usually were in those earliest days (Acts ii. 46), in the private houses of the brethren. Public services were supplied by the synagogue. St. Paul, on his first visit, joined himself to that synagogue and preached on the Sabbath (Acts xviii. 19). On his second visit he did so again. It was his rule 'to become a Jew to the Jews, that he might gain the Jews.' And either experience had taught him how to avoid giving offence, or the Jews of that synagogue were unusually docile. Perhaps, having welcomed the Christians from the first, they had incurred the enmity of other synagogues, and did not like to recede. For in a city like Ephesus there must have been several synagogues. Anyhow, three months elapsed before the apostle found it advisable to separate the brethren.

The first thing which struck St. Paul, on his second visit, and has perplexed the interpreters of the Acts of the Apostles ever since, was the existence of the twelve brethren, who 'had been baptized into John's baptism.'

These men were in the same condition in which Apollos had recently been. The two cases are placed together by the historian, and will throw light upon one another.

What, then, was exactly the position of Apollos, when Aquila and Priscilla 'took him unto them, and expounded to him the way of God more accurately'?

He was, we read, 'an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures.' So much might be predicated of many a Jewish Rabbi. But he 'had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and spake and taught accurately the facts concerning Jesus.' He was therefore a Christian, and, indeed, in some sort, a Christian minister. He was 'fervent in spirit,' but he had this defect that 'he knew only the baptism of John.'

Now when we combine this statement with St. Paul's question to the Twelve, 'Unto what then were ye baptized?' and their answer, 'Unto John's baptism,' it becomes evident that the words are not to be taken in any transcendental sense, but as a plain allegation of fact. Apollos and the others had received, not Christian, but pre-Christian baptism.

It is usually assumed that they had all been baptized by one of John's disciples, and not a few have inferred that the twelve had been baptized by Apollos himself. To me it seems almost certain that the rite had in all cases been administered by John the Baptist in person.

For these men were Jews, and every true Israelite recognized the moral obligation of going on pilgrimage to the city of David at least once in his life. A place like Ephesus sent many scores of Jews every Pentecost to keep the Feast. Jews of Jerusalem also migrated to the city of Artemis, and settled down there for the purpose of trade. It is