

ence is diffused on *each*. The catholic hymns of the whole body are contributed by members of every denomination.'

That is what the word 'catholic' means, is it not? But before leaving Professor Cowell and Dr. Moulton, let us add this additional paragraph: 'Your letter interested me very much, but I shall write no "great book" now. Our life is shaped for us, and one must trust in the guiding hand. I have not the originality which makes a man produce "great books": my work is influencing others and setting them to work. Besides, there

is another point which I must not forget. A happy married life does not help one in literary success. You will remember Bacon's phrase (from Cicero) about Ulysses: "Qui vetulam suam prae-tulit immortalitati." I am quite content that that line should be the verdict of my life, so long as one can honestly feel that "he has served his generation by the will of God" before he "falls on sleep." It seems to me, as I survey the past, that only men of great original genius, and especially *poets*, have any chance of achieving immortality. All other writers only become "*peat*," as Carlyle says—sooner or later.'

The Method of the Christ.

BY THE REV. CANON T. H. BINDLEY, D.D., PRINCIPAL OF CODRINGTON COLLEGE, BARBADOS.

THE modern traveller who visits the Eastern side of the Dead Sea, on the borders of Moab, is shown a waste of ruins standing starkly bold and clear against the sky, high on four thousand feet above the Dead Sea level. The neighbourhood is gloomy, with black basaltic rocks, and seems smitten with that curse which has ever hung like some dark and oppressive pall over the region of the Cities of the Plain.

Here, in the time of our Lord, Herod Antipas occupied a strong fortress castle known to the Greeks as Machaerus, and into one of the dungeons beneath it he had thrust the Baptist, whose unfaltering denunciation of the tetrarch's sins is commemorated in the words of that collect which was composed for his Festival by the English Prayer Book revisers in 1549—he 'constantly spoke the truth and boldly rebuked vice.'

We may picture to ourselves the hitherto dauntless hero, in the weariness of his cell brooding and pondering over certain splendid passages in his all too short career. It had been his to point out to his followers 'the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world'; his to utter burning words of scathing rebuke to the Pharisees who flocked to the Jordan's bank to see the new Prophet; his to give practical advice to various groups of startled inquirers, who propounded the ever new and ever old query, 'What, then, shall we do?'; his to

receive, on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, the MESSIAH Himself, and with Him descend into the flowing stream, while the heavens opened above, and the FATHER'S voice pealed forth designating the Baptized One as His own beloved SON. These and other incidents John must have continually thought over; and from time to time tidings reached him, brought by disciples who occasionally broke the monotony of his days, tidings of wondrous miracles and cures wrought by Him whom he had baptized; and he would begin to wonder and ponder still more deeply on the past. He would feel very keenly that time was slipping by. Had not the message committed to himself been the proclamation of a Kingdom nigh at hand? Was there not a general expectation that the Kingdom of God would immediately appear? Was not the whole nation groaning for a speedy Deliverer? Had not the Great Teacher Himself taken up the Baptist's own cry, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'? Was there not something unreasonable in this long delay of month after month before the definite setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth was brought about? Where were the loud advance and majestic mustering of adherents such as must surely herald the Advent of the Ransomer of Israel? Surely THE CHRIST should take more definite steps to assert His claim and to

compel the loyal allegiance of His people, the Jews. . . .

Without pursuing this line of thought further, and without claiming that it is the only or the necessarily correct interpretation of the question sent by John to the Christ, we may, I think, at any rate see a profound knowledge of human nature in those commentators who have so understood it. The distress, not necessarily of a faith eclipsed, but of an intolerable impatience, will ever make havoc of the boldest courage. The iron enters into the soul, and life's work seems a complete failure. We are reminded of the Baptist's great prototype, Elijah, whose courage was also once swept back to a despairing ebb when he fled from Jezebel and prayed that he might die. And the answer which came to him was not such as he, like all others, would have expected,—not the revelation of the LORD of Hosts in storm or earthquake or fire, but in the sound of gentle stillness, and in a command to fulfil three plain matter-of-fact behests.

And so with the Baptist. If not to put an end for ever to his own uncertainty, at least to suggest to our Lord a different method, he sends two of his disciples with the direct inquiry, 'Art Thou the Coming One, or are we to expect another?' And the answer came, clothed in the language of that great evangelical prophet, in whose spirit John himself was so peculiarly steeped, 'Go and show John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.' 'Here is your answer,' our Lord would say, 'to your impatience. In the cure of these physical ills, in the removal from amongst men of terrible scourges,—both of them types and results of spiritual sickness,—above all, in the preaching of the glad tidings of release from sin to the poorest classes, whom the Jewish Rabbis have ever scorned and neglected, you may see the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy of the works which the Messiah would do; and you may rest assured that herein is to be found the calm and noiseless advance of that Kingdom which you yearn for.' And the quietly-worded rebuke follows, 'Happy is the one who does not stumble at this method of Mine, so contrary as it is to man's impatience and hurry.'

Now this lesson which our Lord taught by His answer to John's disciples, is one which in these days we need seriously to take to heart. 'Men are impatient and for precipitating things; but the Author of Nature appears deliberate throughout His operations, accomplishing His ends by slow successive steps.' So wrote the great philosopher and divine, Bishop Butler, a century and a half ago. Amid the rush of religious excitement, and the noise and self-assurance of many religious teachers of the day, it is well to recall to our recollection that the divine method is not one of outward proclamation, but of slow noiseless and almost imperceptible growth. We are tempted, as we view our almost futile efforts to regenerate the masses of men, to wonder sometimes, after peculiarly trying failures have fallen in our way, whether after all we have got the secret. May it not be that others, who seem to have better success in retaining their hold upon souls, are in the right and we in the wrong, when we insist on quiet orderly methods,—these Baptisms and Confirmations and Communions,—which work smoothly and easily as some vast piece of machinery, and when we fight shy of new and cheaper and self-advertising means of leading men into the Kingdom of God? Are we on the right track? Ought we not to close at once with offers which promise quick returns and obvious results, instead of patiently and unobtrusively pursuing our path, laying ourselves open to damaging criticism and still more annoying comparison, or rather contrast? Can it be right? Does not the Kingdom of God come with observation? Ought there not to be open signs, and pomp, and dazzling success, and majestic belief-compelling proof about our method and its work? No! A few poor people here are cured of their moral diseases, a few whom the devil has possessed these many years are healed, a few spiritually blind recover their sight, some dead in trespasses and sins regain their true life, the gospel is preached to the outcast and forgotten; and without noise, or pomp, or outburst of fanatical fervour, or terrific gathering of the clans of Jehovah, the Kingdom of God is spreading, winning its way, silently, secretly, like the leaven hid in the meal, exerting its influence, permeating and penetrating the lump till the whole be leavened. Doubt? No! But impatience, and a half-yielding to the temptation to allow Christianity to be taken by

force, to use worldly weapons to advance the spiritual Kingdom? Yes, sometimes! And the calm patient voice of the Christ comes down upon it all with soothing reassuring effect. 'The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence'; and the violent would take it by force if they could. But it is the wrong method. From John the Baptist until now the prevailing idea has been that of a Kingdom of Heaven which should place itself in harmony with the expectations of mankind, which should assert its authority with a power that the world could appreciate; but John the Baptist's impatience and man's false notions of My Kingdom's growth and real life, must be totally eradicated and reversed; and—'blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.'

'Christianity is a scheme imperfectly comprehended,' if I may quote Bishop Butler once again. How can a finite brain appreciate or successfully criticise an infinite idea? It is ours to do our duty according to the method and example of Christ Himself; and to trust that, while we

Who are but parts,

and can therefore only

See but part, now this, now that,

He who gives us our duty to do sees and knows the value of each attempt of ours, and will give it its due place and recognition in the great scheme of God's Kingdom. God forbid that, in place of the quiet orderly methods which Christ Himself approved and used, we should be tempted to avail ourselves of others, more showy, no doubt, more captivating and more popular, but thereby condemned as opposed to the methods of our Divine Lord and Master Himself. 'He shall not strive nor cry aloud, neither shall anyone hear His voice in the streets.'

'The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence (*βιάζεται*),¹ and violent ones (*βιασταί*) take it by force.' I am aware that the usual interpretation of these difficult words is other than that which I have ventured to put upon them. The majority of commentators, ancient and modern, interpret them as inculcating intense effort and ardour in the heavenly race and calling. But it does seem from the context in which our Lord used them that He meant to rebuke a wrong method and not to

¹ 'Is violated.' *βιάζω* is not, I believe, anywhere used, absolutely, in a good sense.

commend a right one. Let us examine the sequence of thought more closely.

It was during a busy day of beneficent deeds that John's disciples arrived and put their master's question (Lk 7^{10f.}). Christ proceeded with His active works of mercy, and then gave a report of His method as an all-sufficient response to the Baptist; adding, too, a veiled reproof in the form of a eulogy of such patience and faith as would not find this method a stumbling-block. Then, as the messengers departed, lest the multitudes (*οἱ ὄχλοι*) should fall into the mistake of undervaluing the Baptist and his work, Christ proceeded to extol John as the ideal fulfiller of the work which he had to perform as the Forerunner, and to enlarge upon the unique position which he occupied as the noblest and last of the prophets under the Old Dispensation. Yet the Baptist's position had its limitations, and the least member of the new Kingdom was more highly graced than John. John's work was that of awakening and startling by bold and violent measures; and this had the tendency of leading unthoughtful men to look for the same methods in the work of the Christ, and to imagine that the Kingdom of Heaven could be taken by force. But here comes the contrast. The method of the Baptist was not the method of the Christ. The startling asceticism of the one, which was necessary for its purpose, is set over against the sociability of the Other; and the Jews are likened to petulant children refusing to join their fellows in corresponding play. And yet the two contrasted methods will eventually be seen to be justified by their results.

A like passage in Lk 16¹⁶ brings out the same thought in another context. The era of the Law and the Prophets closed with John. Then came the preaching of the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God; and, misled by its free invitations, everyone was inclined to force an entrance into it, or to use violence against it (*πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται*). But, as a matter of fact, the same orderly methods were to obtain in the Kingdom as under the Law; so much so, that the Law itself might be said to be maintained in every detail. The Gospel was not a release from, but a deepening and widening and spiritualizing of, the Law's requirements.

Taking our Lord's words, then, as a reproof, and not as a commendation, can we say that the rebuke was unwarranted? In every age, and not least in our own, men are found who, in their

masterful dictation to the ways of Providence and in their self-constituted methods of saving souls, seem to take the Kingdom of God by violence, instead of by the quiet divinely appointed channels of grace which Christ has ordained. All those violent emotion-stirring appeals to the uncultured affections, what are they but an attempt to storm the citadel of salvation by assault, and by one gigantic effort of the will to seize upon a position of assurance which nothing can touch or assail? Surely this is to ignore the lessons of Christ's own teaching and example. He taught that the seed would grow secretly and noiselessly; that the leaven would work silently and quietly. He also repudiated the wild enthusiasm which so far misunderstood His mission as to lead the excited multitudes to try to take Him by force and make Him a King.

The same principle is truly applicable both to the individual soul and to the collective community of Christians, the Church. The teaching of many popular sermons and popular hymns demands from the individual some loud outbursts of experiential testimony as the only legitimate signs of grace; and such an unwarranted demand has done, and is doing, much to paralyse the life of many earnest souls.

And similarly, the impatient ones, both in the Church and in the world, often clamour for more outward and convincing proofs of the extension of Christ's Kingdom, some tremendous signs that His servants are up and doing, and portentously busy about their Master's work, some manifestations that will indeed proclaim their mission in a way that cannot be gainsaid, and that will put to shame the busy mockers.

But once again, No. The Church's wisdom is to find her strength 'in quietness and confidence'; the help of Egypt with its horses and swift riders is not for God's Israel; the blessing is for those who 'wait' for Him; the command is that we possess our souls in patience. 'God is her King of old: the work that is done upon earth, He doeth it Himself.'

And once more. It is not only the method of the Church—that is, the method of Christ—that is pitted against other modes and ways of extending God's Kingdom by the unthoughtful and shortsighted, it is Christianity itself that has to run the gauntlet of comparison with modern speculative theories, and even with ancient Oriental beliefs.

The religion of Humanity and the creed of the Positivist are sometimes pointed to as powers that will in the future do more for the amelioration of mankind than Christianity could ever accomplish. The question of John the Baptist thus recurs under another form, not addressed now to Christ personally, but to His followers and members of the Kingdom which He founded. 'Is your teaching and your creed the best and final message for humanity as you claim that it is; or are we not to look for something better in those great evolutionary forces which are leading the human race to some unknown but elevated goal?'

Or the question may be re-echoed in another form by the so-called Theosophists who devote their faculties to the acquisition of some transcendental mysticism, and to the classification of spiritualistic phenomena. They first isolate Christianity from its position as a developing factor in the world's history from the dawn of time, and then ask, 'Is your religion, which, by its own style of dating itself, can only boast of nineteenth centuries of life, to be placed before those beliefs of hoary antiquity whose adepts command even now the elemental forces of Nature in a manner which shames the Gospel miracles into insignificance?' The answer to both these questions is the same. The mere fact of their being asked at all shows that the method and the object of Christianity are alike misunderstood. The primary object of Christianity is not the physical amelioration of man, nor the providing the human race with a greater number of creature comforts, but the application of a spiritual remedy to sin-stricken souls. It is the proclamation of the Incarnation, and the Atonement, and the Risen Life. The method of Christianity is not the method of modern advertisement, but of the therapeutic adaptation of spiritual truth to the needs of individual souls, simply, unostentatiously, quietly, noiselessly, taking them one by one as they come under its gracious and beneficent influence and reach.

It is a terribly harassing thing to have your motives misunderstood; it is still worse when your method and goal are alike misrepresented, and in consequence condemned. Such was our Lord's case; and such has been the misfortune of His Church in almost every age. The temptation which assails us, and against which we are bound to fight, is the temptation to alter our method and readjust our goal so as to bring them into harmony

with what the world or our impatient companions expect. We have to recall ourselves from these alluring excursions into worldly methods and aims, and to realize that, in our Lord's own mind, the greatest glory and the final climax of His method

lay in the great spiritual miracle, which far transcended those of the physical sphere, that the 'poor,'—and we must give the word its most extended meaning,—the poor had the gospel preached to them.

Recent Johannine Literature.

By J. VERNON BARTLET, M.A., D.D., MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD.

I. Ramsay on the Apocalypse.¹

ONCE more Professor Ramsay has laid students of the Apostolic Age under a deep debt. He never touches a subject without giving its study a fresh and vital impulse. He is pre-eminently a pioneer. Indeed, his chief defects are those natural to a pioneer: he tends to push his new line of progress too far, and to overlook other though less fresh lines of explanation. So is it here in his treatment of the Apocalypse in terms of the archæology of the Roman province of Asia. He views its writer as if quite naturalized to his new environment. He forgets far too readily how intensely Jewish, as distinct from Greek, John was and remained; and he does so largely because he approaches him after such long and intense preoccupation with Paul, the born provincial. But how fruitful are his suggestions! There is more to learn from his slips than from another's formal correctitude within narrow limits of thought and feeling. Ramsay has a larger outlook, a profounder humanity than any other writer in his field; and the perusal of his pages gives one the feeling of passing from a close study into the open air, where the actual full-blooded life of men has its being. It is, moreover, a book which can be read with equal pleasure and profit by the general reader and the specialist.

Take the opening sentences of his Preface. 'In the contact of East and West originates the movement of history. The historical position of Christianity cannot be rightly understood except in its relation to that immemorial meeting and conflict.' How much food for thought do these words supply? Later we read: 'Only a divine

¹ *The Letters to the Seven Churches.* By Professor W. M. Ramsay. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904. Pp. xx, 446. Price 12s.

origin is competent to explain the perfect union of Eastern and Western thought in this religion. . . . The adaptation of Christianity to the double nationality can be best seen in the Apocalypse, because there the two elements which unite in Christianity are less perfectly reconciled than in any other book of the New Testament. The Judaic element in the Apocalypse has been hitherto studied to the entire neglect of the Greek element in it. Hence it has been the most misunderstood book in the New Testament.' In these last two sentences we have some of the exaggeration which has helped to make certain scholars, particularly abroad, so blind to Ramsay's high services. Especially is it misleading to attribute the misunderstanding of the book to study of the Judaic element therein. That is what has recently helped to bring it out of the twilight in which it has lain for nearly eighteen hundred years; and more light has yet to break forth from that quarter. Still though the inmost structure of its writer's mind was determined by Jewish feeling and training, many allusions in the Apocalypse, especially in the Messages (not 'Letters,' for here Ramsay goes off largely on a wrong tack) in chaps. ii. iii., are only to be understood in their true historical sense when placed in a setting furnished by the actual conditions of life in the province of Asia. But Ramsay makes a serious mistake when he says: 'It was written to be understood by the Græco-Asiatic public; and the Figures [given in his text to illustrate Asiatic ideas and usages, religious in the main] prove that it was natural and easy for those readers to understand the symbolism.' On the contrary, it was written, not for 'the public,' but for special esoteric circles in Græco-Asiatic society, whose chief chance of understanding much of the form and symbolism of such a special literary phenomenon