

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER has been a student of Dante for many years. Having been invited to deliver the lectures at Harvard on the William Belden Noble foundation, he resolved to lecture on *The Spiritual Message of Dante*. And under that title he has now published the lectures in a handsome volume which contains illustrations taken partly from Lord Vernon's famous edition of the *Inferno* (Williams & Norgate; 5s. net).

The difficulty which first of all faces the interpreter of Dante is how to deal with his mediævalism. His astronomy, to take but one example, is mediæval astronomy. Bishop BOYD CARPENTER goes straight to the one idea which pervades the *Divina Commedia*. That idea is love; and it is not mediæval only, but universal. All Dante's thought is determined by the place which love holds in God's creation. When that is recognized, the astronomy, and whatever else is local or temporary, presents no more difficulty. It falls into its place as machinery.

One surprising consequence follows. We cannot, says Bishop BOYD CARPENTER, get rid of Hell by saying that Dante's *Inferno* is mere mediævalism. As a matter of fact it is not distinctively mediæval. The conception of Hell, even with elaborate torments, is a commonplace of old-world religious thought. It is found in Christian

treatises written before the *Divina Commedia*. It is found also in the chronicles or picturings of pre-Christian faiths. The notion of a Hell is an instinct of the race. And he holds that the objector who challenges what he supposes to be a mediæval Christian belief, must go further than mediævalism, further than Christianity, and challenge the instinct which has given rise to that belief.

But every belief must have a value. What is the use of a belief in Hell? To Dr. BOYD CARPENTER it seems to be a witness to the great truth of the righteousness on which the Universe is hung. That truth was as present to the mind of Dante, and pervades the *Divina Commedia* as thoroughly, as the belief in love. Not only would love be of little worth that was not based on righteousness, it could not even exist. And the idea of righteousness carries with it the idea of Hell.

In this Bishop BOYD CARPENTER, the modern, is at one with Dante, the mediæval. 'Who can say that it is a base idea, or that there is nothing noble in the fact that men should thus collectively admit that there are doings and dealings seen among themselves which deserve—nay, seem to demand—hell? Who will say that it is not true that evil—strong and long persisted in, and spreading till evil habits prevail among

men—does not produce a state of things which resembles hell? Who will say that there is not in every man a capacity for going into and experiencing in himself a veritable hell? Take this thought of hell: treat it as a phase of human thought: note that it marks the possession of a genuine moral sense, and realize how significant it is that everywhere men should have formed such an idea. It expresses a sense of justice, a conviction of retribution, and a striking power of self-condemnation possessed by the race. Is it not, in this aspect, the voice of the collective conscience of mankind? It is the language of those whose honest wrath has been roused by the sight of wide and wanton injustice done, and the confession of those who have felt the keen hell of self-reproach.'

Mr. A. C. BENSON has published a book about Fear. *Where No Fear Was*—that is the title of it (Smith, Elder & Co.; 6s. net). For his desire is that those who fear may be encouraged to think, in order that they may see how rarely it is that their fear has foundation. He touches its causes also. One of its causes is self-esteem. And in discussing self-esteem as a cause of fear he offers, daringly, the suggestion that Providence has a sense of humour and enjoys somewhat His ways of delivering us from our conceit.

'I am as certain as I can be of anything,' he says, 'that we are humorously treated as well as lovingly regarded.' And he gives two illustrations. 'I was once asked to give a lecture, and it was widely announced. I saw my own name in capital letters upon advertisements displayed in the street. On the evening appointed, I went to the place, and met the chairman of the meeting and some of the officials in a room adjoining the hall where I was to speak. We bowed and smiled, paid mutual compliments, congratulated each other on the importance of the occasion. At last the chairman consulted his watch and said it was time to be beginning. A procession was formed, a door was majestically thrown open by an attendant, and we

walked with infinite solemnity on to the platform of an entirely empty hall, with rows of benches all wholly unfurnished with guests. I think it was one of the most ludicrous incidents I ever remember. The courteous confusion of the chairman, the dismay of the committee, the colossal nature of the fiasco filled me, I am glad to say, not with mortification, but with an overpowering desire to laugh. I may add that there had been a mistake about the announcement of the hour, and ten minutes later a minute audience did arrive, whom I proceeded to address with such spirit as I could muster; but I have always been grateful for the humorous nature of the snub administered to me.'

That is the one illustration. This is the other 'I had to pay a visit of business to a remote house in the country. A good-natured friend descanted upon the excitement it would be to the household to entertain a living author, and how eagerly my utterances would be listened to. I was received not only without respect but with obvious boredom. In the course of the afternoon I discovered that I was supposed to be a solicitor's clerk, but when a little later it transpired what my real occupations were, I was not displeased to find that no member of the party had ever heard of my existence, or was aware that I had ever published a book, and when I was questioned as to what I had written, no one had ever come across anything that I had printed, until at last I soared into some transient distinction by the discovery that my brother was the author of *Dodo*.'

This, then, is Mr. A. C. BENSON'S cure for the fear that we may not obtain the recognition we deserve. It is the humorous reflexion that the stir and hum of one's own particular teetotum is confined to a very small space and range; and that the witty description of the Greek politician who was said to be well known throughout the whole civilized world and at Lampsacus, or of the philosopher who was announced as the author of many epoch-making volumes and as the second

cousin of the Earl of Cork, represents a very real truth—that reputation is not a thing which is worth bothering one's head about; that if it comes, it is apt to be quite as inconvenient as it is pleasant, while if one grows to depend upon it, it is as liable to part with its sparkle as soda-water in an open glass.

Then Mr. BENSON touches Hell. *Where No Fear Was*—that is his title. And if there is any place where Fear has no business to be, it is, he believes, in the prospect of the future.

He does not believe in Dante's Hell. Dante, by his Hell and his Purgatory, expressed plainly that the chief motive of man to practise morality must be his fear of ultimate punishment. His was an attempt to draw away the curtain which hides this world from the next, and to horrify men into living purely and kindly. Whether you can so horrify men he does not know; he knows that you have no right to try.

He does not believe in a Hell of any kind. 'Hell,' he says, 'is a monstrous and insupportable fiction, and the idea of it is simply inconsistent with any belief in the goodness of God. It is easy to quote texts to support it, but we must not allow any text, any record in the world, however sacred, to shatter our belief in the Love and Justice of God. And I say as frankly and directly as I can that until we can get rid of this intolerable terror, we can make no advance at all.'

Is the student of philosophy or of science entitled to ignore religion? No more than any other man. One philosopher has been driven to face the matter of personal religion. It is Professor EUCKEN. When philosophy became Professor EUCKEN's life-work he endeavoured to suppress the religious interest altogether and gave himself assiduously to the study of Aristotle. But 'the old interest' would not die. And at last he resolved to say what his religious convictions were,

and in particular whether he was a Christian or not. He finished the book and signed the preface to it in October 1911. In December 1913 Mrs. Boyce GIBSON finished her translation of it in Melbourne. It is now issued by Messrs. A. & C. Black with the title *Can We Still be Christians?* (3s. 6d. net).

Can we still be Christians? Professor EUCKEN's answer is, Yes, if we are allowed to interpret Christianity in our own way; No, if we have to interpret it according to the Creeds. Let us go to the centre at once. The central doctrine of Christianity is 'the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, and his atoning sacrifice for the redemption of man from the burden of God's wrath.' Does Professor EUCKEN believe that?

He sees something in it. He sees how the desire for one single, all-controlling, fundamental truth—a desire deep-rooted in all well-defined religions—found in this doctrine a magnificent fulfilment. He sees how the union of temporal and supra-temporal history, of human and divine nature, effected by this doctrine, introduced unfathomable depths into human existence and invested them with a spiritual nearness and intimacy. But he also sees that 'every single one' of the ideas discovered by theologians in this doctrine has to be rejected by the modern mind. The union of God and man in one person, the idea of a vicarious sacrifice and generally of the office of mediator, as well as all those doctrines which subserve the development of the main position—doctrines of the only begotten Son, the virgin birth, the descent into hell, the resurrection, and the ascension, the sitting at the right hand of God, and the judgment to come; that is to say, the whole of the second clause of the creed, comprising the doctrines which are really distinctive of Christianity—all this, he says, has now become the subject of doubt, denial, and conflict.

Professor EUCKEN himself denies them. They do not possess moral or spiritual value for him.

They contradict the things which possess that value. For one thing we can no longer limit the connexion between the human nature and the divine to one single instance, allowing it to extend to others only through this intermediate link. Our religious conviction compels us to demand an immediate relationship of divine and human through the whole extent of the spiritual life.

Professor EUCKEN rejects the notion of the wrath of God, 'only to be appeased through the blood of His Son.' It is far too anthropomorphic, and it is irreconcilable with our purer conceptions of the Godhead. More than that, and more fundamentally, he rejects any doctrine that would make Jesus necessary to mankind. He rejects 'the old consistent doctrine of the God-man'; he rejects as emphatically 'the modern half-way position which drops the old doctrine, but nevertheless calls Jesus unconditionally lord and master and must consequently bind our whole religious life indissolubly to him, thus taking away all independence with regard to him, and robbing our own life of its full originative power.'

For the essential thing in Professor EUCKEN'S religion, as in his philosophy, is that every man has to win his soul for himself. The power to do so is within him; it does not come to him from without. 'This alone supplies the standard which enables us to measure how much of the old material has a permanent value for life, and how much of it is bound up with the conditions of a particular age and must perish with them. From such a measurement even the complex structure of traditional Christianity cannot escape; only from this starting-point can its truth-content be clearly elucidated so that it may develop freely and become fully effective.'

Professor Morris JASTROW, Jr., delivered the Haskell Lectures at Oberlin College in 1913, and Mr. Fisher Unwin has published them in this country under the title of *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions* (10s. 6d. net).

Our attitude to the connexion between Babylonian and Hebrew literature, or the Old Testament and the Monuments, as it is usually called, has had a curious history. At first the discoveries in Babylonia and Assyria were accepted with great joy as furnishing confirmation of the accuracy of the Bible. Then Professor SAYCE and others had to point out that there were differences as well as resemblances, and the tablets ceased to be quoted even against the Higher Critics. Now Professor JASTROW makes the differences the sole subject of his lectures, and shows us that in the study of them we discover the uniqueness of the religion of Israel.

There is the Sabbath, for example. Among the cuneiform texts in the British Museum one was discovered which furnished in parallel columns the explanation of certain words in this way: *um nikk libbi* = *shabattum*, which being translated is: Day of rest of the heart = sabbath. For there was no doubt, and there is no doubt to this day, that the Babylonian word *shabattum* is the same as the Hebrew word 'sabbath.' What then? It is evident, is it not, that here we have a proof of the early existence of the Sabbath as a day of rest? In the Old Testament we read that it was instituted at the Creation. That would account for the Babylonians having it as well as the Hebrews.

But the conclusion was premature, as premature as it was unnecessary. When the phrase 'day of rest of the heart' was searched for elsewhere, it was found that it had nothing to do with rest from labour. As more of the religious texts from the great royal library of Nineveh were published, it was seen that the term 'day of rest of the heart' was of frequent occurrence and, curiously enough, appeared, not in connexion with a day of cessation of labour, but in appeals to an angered deity to whom a penitent worshipper, who had felt the severity of the divine wrath, poured out his grief and voiced his hope for a return of divine grace.

The usual formula is, 'May thy heart be at rest;

may thy liver be assuaged.' For the Babylonians and Assyrians, like other ancient peoples, including the Hebrews, placed the seat of intellect in the heart, and the seat of life in the liver. So the day of rest of the heart was simply a technical term for a day of pacification, a day on which it was hoped that the angered deity would cease from manifesting His displeasure.

But what about the word *shabattum*? Ten years ago Dr. T. G. PINCHES published a tablet containing a list of names given to certain days of the month. The fifteenth day of the month was termed *shabattum*. And why the fifteenth? Because that is the middle of the month, or the period of full moon. There were three periods in the month which, to the Babylonian mind, were especially dangerous, and required the most elaborate ritual of divination. They were the new moon, the full moon, and the moon's departure. These were the periods when it was particularly necessary to secure rest for the heart or the pacification of the anger of God. And of these one was the full moon or *shabattum*.

Was there, then, no day of rest in Babylon? No, there was none. And just here we come upon a far-reaching difference between the religion of the Babylonians and the religion of the Hebrews. With the Babylonians *shabattum* remained a merely lucky or unlucky day, a day to be carefully observed ritually that the anger of the gods might be averted. Among the Hebrews the Sabbath became a day of rest for man and for beast.

How the change was wrought is part of a large subject. A change was wrought all along the line. Professor MORRIS JASTROW cannot account for it. His best explanation is that it 'belonged to the genius' of the one people to stay in the stagnant waters of mere ritualism, while it 'belonged to the genius' of the other to go forward to the spiritual and ethical religion of Amos and Isaiah.

Messrs. Watts & Co. are the publishers of the books which issue from the Rationalist Press Association. It was fitting that they should become the publishers of the books which deny the historical existence of our Lord. They publish Mr. J. M. ROBERTSON'S two books, *Pagan Christs* and *Christianity and Mythology*; they publish Mr. W. B. SMITH'S *Ecce Deus*; and they publish the English translation of *Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus*, by Professor ARTHUR DREWS.

It does not seem so fitting that Messrs. Watts should publish a book by Dr. F. C. CONYBEARE. It is true that Dr. CONYBEARE is radical, as radical a critic as it is possible for a scholar to be. But then he *is* a scholar. The other men whose books Messrs. Watts publish are not. When his *Myth, Magic, and Morals* appeared in the same advertisement as the books of Mr. J. M. ROBERTSON and the rest, it was understood that Dr. CONYBEARE, Honorary Fellow of University College, Oxford; Honorary LL.D. of the University of St. Andrews; Honorary Doctor of Theology of Giessen, Member of the British Academy, and Member of the Armenian Academy of Venice, had gone over to the materialists, and for the sake of companionship in his utter radicalism had cast in his lot with the unlearned and ignorant who belong to the Rationalist Press Association.

But Messrs. Watts have just published another book by Dr. CONYBEARE. Its title is *The Historical Christ* (3s. 6d. net). Dr. CONYBEARE is not comfortable in his present company. In this book he turns upon the three men who have obtained some glory by denying the historical existence of Jesus—Mr. J. M. ROBERTSON, Dr. ARTHUR DREWS, and Professor W. B. SMITH—and makes an exposure of their ignorance and incompetence the like of which has not been seen in our day.

Dr. CONYBEARE writes for the readers of the books which are issued by the Rationalist Press Association. He does not credit them with a knowledge of the Gospels. He recommends them

to secure at least a copy of St. Mark, which they may buy for a penny. But he gives a résumé of what that Gospel contains. 'Now,' he says, when he has finished the résumé, 'the three writers I have named—Messrs. Drews, Robertson, and W. B. Smith—enjoy the singular good fortune to be the first to have discovered what the above narratives really mean, and how they originated; and they are urgent that we should sell all we have, and purchase their pearl of wisdom. They assure us that in the Gospels we have not got any 'tradition of a personality.' Jesus, the central figure, never existed at all, but was a purely mythical personage.

This is how they understand the situation. 'Jesus, or Joshua, was the name under which the expected Messiah was honoured in a certain Jewish secret society which had its headquarters in Jerusalem about the beginning of our era. In view of its secret character, Drews warns us not to be too curious, nor to question either his information or that of Messrs. Smith and Robertson. In other words, we are to set aside our copious and almost (in Paul's case) contemporary evidence that Jesus was a real person, in favour of a hypothesis which from the first and as such lacks all direct and documentary evidence, and is not amenable to any of the methods of proof recognized by sober historians. We must take Dr. Drews's word for it, and forego all evidence.'

But who is this Joshua or Jesus? Sometimes he seems to be the hero of the Book of Joshua, sometimes he is a Sun-god, and sometimes he is both. 'Joshua,' says Mr. ROBERTSON, 'is apparently an ancient Ephraimitic god of the Sun and Fruitfulness, who stood in close relation to the Feast of the Pasch and to the custom of circumcision.' But, asks Dr. CONYBEARE, 'does the Book of Joshua, whether history or not, support the hypothesis that Joshua was ever regarded as God of the Sun and of Fruitfulness? Was ever such a god known or worshipped in the tribe of Ephraim or in Israel at large? In this old Hebrew epic or

saga Joshua is a man of flesh and blood. How did these gentlemen get it into their heads that he was a Sun-god? For this statement there is not a shadow of evidence. They have invented it. As he took the Israelites dryshod over the Jordan, why have they not made a River-god of him?'

This Sun-myth hypothesis is out of date. The whole theory on which it rests is discredited. No student of the Comparative History of Religion any longer accepts Max Müller's idea about the origin of religion, the idea that 'the cowering savage was crushed by awe of nature and of her stupendous forces, by the infinite lapses of time, by the yawning abysses of space.' 'As a matter of fact,' says Dr. CONYBEARE, 'savages do not entertain these sentiments of the dignity and majesty of nature. On the contrary, a primitive man thinks that he can impose his paltry will on the elements. The gods and sacred beings of an Australian or North American native are the humble vegetables and animals which surround him, objects with which he is on a footing of equality. His totems are a duck, a hare, a kangaroo, an emu, a lizard, a grub, or a frog. In the same way, the sacred being of an early Semite's devotion was just as likely to be a pig or a hare as the sun in heaven; the cult of an early Egyptian was centred upon a crocodile, or a cat, or a dog. In view of these considerations, our suspicion is aroused at the outset by finding Messrs. Drews and Robertson to be in this discarded and obsolete Sun-myth stage of speculation. They are a back number.'

But Mr. ROBERTSON is utterly unaware that he is out of date. In the 'new, revised, and expanded' edition of both his books he repeats the old questions and gives the old answers. Why was Jesus buried in a rock-tomb? he asks. And his answer is, Because he was Mithras, the rock-born Sun-god. Dr. CONYBEARE would like to know what other sort of burial was possible round Jerusalem, where soil was so scarce that every one was buried in a rock-tomb. Scores of such tombs remain. Are they all Mithraic? Surely a score of

other considerations would equally well explain the choice of a rock-tomb for him in Christian tradition.

Mr. ROBERTSON asks many such questions and gives many similar answers, but one other will be sufficient. Why, he asks, did Jesus ride into Jerusalem before his death on two asses? His answer is, Because Dionysus also rides on an ass and a foal in one of the Greek signs of Cancer (the turning-point in the sun's course). And again, Because Bacchus crossed a marsh on two asses.

He does not tell us how the early Christians, who were Jews, were acquainted with the rare legend of Bacchus crossing a marsh on two asses; still less with the rare representation of the zodiacal sign Cancer as an ass and its foal. But even if he could prove that they had heard of these things, could he prove how they managed to change myths culled from all times and all religions and races into the connected story of Jesus, as it lies before us in the Synoptic Gospels?

But Mr. ROBERTSON is not very well acquainted with the Synoptic Gospels. Says Dr. CONYBEARE, 'He disdains any critical and comparative study of the Gospels, and insists on regarding them as coeval and independent documents. Everything inside the covers of the New Testament is for him, as for the Sunday-school teacher, on one dead level of importance. All textual criticism has passed over his head.' Yet his knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels is just about as reliable as his knowledge of the extra-Biblical authorities whom he quotes so confidently. 'Had he chosen to glance at the *Poeticon Astronomicum* of Hyginus, a late and somewhat worthless Latin author, who is the authority for this particular tale of Bacchus, he would have read (ii. 23) how Liber (*i.e.* Dionysus) was on his way to get an oracle at Dodona which

might restore his lost sanity: "But when he came to a certain spacious marsh, which he thought he could not get across, he is said to have met on the way two young asses, of which he caught one, and he was carried across on it so nicely that he never touched the water at all." Here there is no hint of Bacchus riding on two asses, and Mr. Robertson's entire hypothesis falls to the ground like a house of cards.'

With one more word we recommend the reading of Dr. CONYBEARE'S book. 'It is not enough,' he says, 'for these authors to ransack Lemprière and other dictionaries of mythology in behalf of their paradoxes; but when these collections fail them, they proceed to coin myths of their own, and pretend that they are ancient, that the early Christians believed in them, and that Tacitus fell into the trap; as if these Christians, whom they acknowledge to have been either Jews or the converts of Jews, had not been constitutionally opposed to all pagan myths and cults alike; as if a good half of the earliest Christian literature did not consist of polemics against the pagan myths, which were regarded with the bitterest scorn and abhorrence; as if it were not notorious that it was their repugnance to and ridicule of pagan gods and heroes and religious myths that earned for the Christians, as for the Jews, their teachers, the hatred and loathing of the pagan populations in whose midst they lived. And yet we are asked to believe that the Christian Church, almost before it was separated from the Jewish matrix, fashioned for itself in the form of the Gospels an allegory of a Sun-god Joshua, who, though unknown to serious Semitic scholars, is yet so well known to Mr. Robertson and his friends that he identifies him with Adonis, and Osiris, and Dionysus, and Mithras, and Krishna, and Asclepius, and with any other god or demi-god that comes to hand in Lemprière's dictionary.'