

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

IN the *Biblical World* for July, the Rev. Arthur Wright of Queens' College, Cambridge, writes on the hour of Christ's crucifixion, a matter which was touched upon in a recent issue of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. The difficulty about the hour, he points out, is only one of four difficult questions which gather round the crucifixion, the other three being—(2) Whether it took place on Thursday or on Friday; (3) whether on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan or on the fifteenth; and (4) whether in the year 29 A.D. or any other year between 27 and 35. But in this paper he confines his attention to the hour.

Our principal authorities, Mr. Wright believes, are ultimately SS. Peter and John. For he holds that it is St. Peter's account we have in St. Mark's Gospel, and that this account is simply followed by SS. Matthew and Luke. St. John's account is found in the Fourth Gospel. The difficulty is an easily appreciated and easily remembered one; but not so easy of solution. St. Mark xv. 25 says, "It was the third hour, and they crucified Him;" while at the close of the trial only, and before sentence was passed, St. John says, "The hour was about the sixth." Taking these statements as they stand, then, and ignoring for a moment St. John's "about," we have a discrepancy of more than three hours. "Here," says Mr. Wright, "is work for the harmonist."

"And that ingenious person's versatility," he proceeds, "does not forsake him. Consult almost any commentary that you please, from the Bishop of Durham's to a Sunday-school treatise, and you will find it stated with more or less of positive assertion that the ancient world had two ways of reckoning the hours; one from sunrise to sunset, which the Synoptists have followed; the other, like our own plan, from midnight to mid-day, which St. John has followed. The latter plan is also called the Roman. It is said to have been in use at Ephesus, where St. John wrote. Martyrologies are quoted to prove this. And so when St. John says, 'The hour was about the sixth,' he means 6 A.M., and all discrepancy vanishes."

But there are objections, and unfortunately they seem to be insurmountable. Mr. Wright mentions three. The first is that such an explanation was unknown to the Fathers. They knew the difficulty well enough, and had their own methods of removing it, "from the symbolical meaning of the number six in Irenæus to the fulfilment of Daniel in Hippolytus," but they knew nothing of so simple and attractive an explanation as this. The second objection is more serious. Before being led to Pilate, Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin. "Common sense as well as St. Matthew's language" forbid us to think of the assembling of the Sanhedrists much

before 6 A.M. At any rate, Christ could not have reached Pilate before that hour. And if so, the trial before Pilate began at 6 A.M. or later, and ended at 6 A.M.! Yet there is abundant evidence that it was a long one. St. John takes a large part of two chapters to describe it. St. Matthew gives many details that would lengthen it. St. Luke adds that it was interrupted by a visit to Herod, which can hardly have taken less than an hour. From two hours and a half to three hours appears to me, says Mr. Wright, to be the *minimum* time required.

That seems fatal. But the more important question, and most serious objection, remains. Is there any evidence that there *was* such a double reckoning of the hours? Professor W. M. Ramsay, it will be remembered, says emphatically that there is not. "It is a mere fiction, constructed as a refuge of despairing harmonisers, and not a jot of evidence for it has ever been given that will bear scrutiny." If that is true,—and no scholar of mark has come forward yet to deny it, while Mr. Wright seems to agree with it,—then it is fatal. For it is incredible that such a double reckoning of the hours should have been practised, and practised so freely that one evangelist can use the one way, knowing that another has used the other, unless the double reckoning had been notorious.

What is the explanation, then? Professor Ramsay cuts the knot and says St. John had no watch. His "about the sixth hour" was any time between eleven and one o'clock. The evangelists use popular language. They reckon the hours in a loose, easy, Oriental way, and St. John makes it easier still by the use of the word "about." But Mr. Wright is doubtful. "I cannot persuade myself that a serious historian, who gives dates by the hour at all, would follow the carelessness of country people. St. John, as a matter of fact, mentions the seventh hour and the tenth, St. Matthew the eleventh. St. Luke speaks of an interval of about an hour, and about three hours;

and St. Mark, 'Could ye not watch with me one hour?'" Therefore Mr. Wright still holds by the old theory of a false reading, either in St. Mark, or more probably in St. John. Eusebius suggests it in the latter, St. Jerome in the former. "In manuscripts, except those of the most expensive kinds, numerals were expressed for brevity's sake by letters of the alphabet, as we express them by figures. 'Third' would be written with a *gamma* (Γ), 'sixth' with a *digamma* (F). And these two letters were so very much alike that they were peculiarly liable to be confused. Perhaps St. John really wrote, or intended to write, 'third' (Γ), but a primitive copyist read 'sixth' (F)."

It is personality that tells upon men. It tells in the professor's chair more than the weight of learning. It tells in the pulpit more than the wisdom of words. And the Rev. Benjamin Jowett, M.A., LL.D., is the most striking personality in the present day who occupies a professor's chair or enters a pulpit. One is not surprised to hear, therefore, that Westminster Abbey was thronged in every part when he preached there on a recent Sunday, and that for three quarters of an hour the dense assembly listened to a closely-read sermon with hushed and intense interest.

Professor Jowett preaches but seldom. Once last year he preached in the Abbey, and once the year before. He has preached once this year, and no one expects to hear him this year again. Perhaps few expect to hear him ever again. For of the variable elements that make up that unique distinction which we call personality, old age is often found to be one and feeble health another, and into *his* personality the Master of Balliol has gathered them both.

A *verbatim* report of the sermon has been published in *The Times*. And one who reads it there is less surprised than ever at the interest it not only excited, but sustained. For, in the first place, Professor Jowett did not disdain to make use of a little rhetorical device, of which

novelists are fonder perhaps than preachers, for the purpose of preventing the interest of his audience from falling. He constructed, in fact, a very mild and harmless plot, and only unravelled it as he pressed towards the end.

He chose as his text, 2 Peter i. 5 : "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge." And as his subject he chose the biographies of two distinguished men. For Professor Jowett has much faith in this use of biography. "The biographies of good men seem to me," he says, "to be the best sermons. They awaken in us the higher thoughts which seem to slumber in our own minds. They fill up what is wanting of the narrative of Christ in the Gospels." So he has chosen the biographies of good men as the subject of his sermons in the Abbey these three years. The year before last he chose Richard Baxter. Last year he chose John Wesley. And this year—but that was his little plot. This year he chose two biographies that he might work them together, and the one upon the other; but you knew not who they were till the sermon was nearly done.

Thus that harmless plot was the first element of interest which the sermon possessed. The other was deeper than that. If there were preachers of the gospel in Professor Jowett's audience that day, and it is probable that there were, the other element must have been to them of so intense and absorbing an interest that the gentle rhetorical device referred to would soon pass out of their consciousness. For they must have felt that as preachers of the gospel, Professor Jowett was carrying off all the gospel they hitherto had preached, and that not in an incidental and removable part of his discourse, but by its very drift and purpose.

For surely the very first word of the gospel is *God*. We cannot advance a step without that. And by God is not meant you or me, or something which has no existence apart from you and

me. The God without Whom we cannot move a step in the preaching of the gospel is a God Who is separate from you and me, as one person is separate from another,—a God Who created and loves you and me, as one person can love and be loved by another. And yet Professor Jowett seeks to show by the drift and purpose of his sermon that such a God is needless.

The good men whose biographies he chose as the subject of his sermon were Bunyan and Spinoza. And, unless we miss the meaning of his words, his purpose in choosing these two and placing them together in one sermon was to show that the one was as good a man as the other, as near to the kingdom of God; that there was as much to avoid in Bunyan as in Spinoza, and as much to imitate in Spinoza as in Bunyan; that, in short, it will be as well with us if we follow Spinoza in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, as if we follow Bunyan out of the City of Destruction to the Celestial City which he reached through faith in Jesus Christ.

Now it seems unnecessary to criticise the method by which Professor Jowett reaches this result, But it would not be hard to show that he takes an unfair advantage of his text. Clearly it was not the intention of the writer of these words, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," to give faith and knowledge an equal place in the life of men. Professor Jowett spares not the man who pursues knowledge to the exclusion of faith, but he is not less severe on him who refuses to let knowledge sit down at the right hand of faith. And yet Professor Jowett is well aware that he who both knew and believed beyond any of his equals, unhesitatingly placed faith far beyond knowledge, and said that knowledge should pass away but faith should abide for ever.

But the method is of less account since the result is as manifestly impossible as it is deplorable. For if Benedict Spinoza, who acknowledged no other God than a pantheistic God, who held

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that God was no more separable from you and me than the ocean is separable from its heaving billows, was as near to the kingdom of God as John Bunyan, then Jesus Christ is by no means Lord of the living and the dead, but did Himself live and die utterly and miserably in vain.

In the current issue of *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Dr. A. Neubauer reviews the late M. Isidore Loeb's posthumous volume, *The Literature of the Poor in the Bible*. He is astonished to find Loeb occupying the same critical position as the late Professor Ernest Havet and Professor Maurice Vernes. For these two, "although knowing scarcely the Hebrew alphabet," came to the conclusion that the literature of the Old Testament was mainly produced round the year 250 B.C., and Loeb, who was an excellent Hebrew scholar, adhered to their ideas, "with the Hebrew text in his hand."

It was not from them, however, but from the late Professor Graetz that the idea came which Loeb worked out so diligently and so remorselessly. First in his *Monatsschrift*, and then in his "genial" commentary on the Psalms, Graetz suggested that many of the Psalms were the composition of a class of persons in Israel, whom he called the Poor; that, in short, the Psalms were the weapons with which the Poor fought their battle against the Rich—a less demonstrative weapon than the modern Strike, but destined to be more immortal.

Loeb caught this idea and enlarged it. He enlarged it till it covered the whole of the Psalms, and even overflowed into the Prophets. The Second Isaiah, he maintained, was the originator of the idea; and there is not a single Psalm but it is simply and solely a Hebrew "Song of the Shirt," the cry of the righteous Poor against their rich and Godless oppressors. Such titles as "the righteous," "the merciful," "they that fear the Lord," are varieties of the one name "Poor"; and the epithets "the wicked," "the scorner," and the like, are well-recognised designations of the Rich.

Dr. Neubauer plainly tells us that he would not notice such criticism as this, if it were not that it is the work of a capable Hebrew scholar. "Criticism is out of the question when a whole literature is judged by translations." The reference is to the extravagant work of Havet and Vernes. But the scarcely less extravagant position of Loeb demands some answer. For Dr. Neubauer has much respect for the author, and even believes that he has made some genuine contribution to this subject. But what evidence is there of the existence of a band of Reform Bill writers, who, working out this one idea, composed not only the whole of the Psalms, but also the second half of Isaiah, the Book of Job, and even the Song of Deborah, all after the Exile, and were writing as late as 167 B.C.? "Neither the Chronicler, nor Daniel, nor Sirach, nor the early Rabbis make any allusion to such a literary society, contemporaneous with the former, and fresh in the minds of the latter." Nor does Josephus, "who likes to speak of everything that happened in the community," once mention their existence. The external evidence is all the other way. And as for the evidence from within, if it is credible that there is not a single historical fact in all the Psalter, it is not credible that this band of writers should have invented seventy different names for themselves and their party, and a hundred and twelve for the other. Yet in order to carry out his theory, Loeb was compelled to admit that incredible variety of nomenclature.

As already mentioned, it is proposed to offer an authoritative exposition in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES of that form of doctrine which is best known as the Keswick teaching. The first article will appear in the issue for October. Meantime it may be of service to refer to an address which was delivered at the Convention just closed by Dr. Elder Cumming of Glasgow.

The address consisted of what Dr. Elder Cumming called "a fresh reading of the twenty-third

Psalm in the light of consecration." And it may be well to understand at once that Dr. Elder Cumming evidently regards the reading "in the light of consecration," not as an additional way of turning the Psalm to spiritual or "Higher Life" uses, but as the only reading of the Psalm that is open to us. For he begins by pointing out objections to the ordinary interpretation of the Psalm, and it is easy to see that he regards these objections as fatal to every interpretation except the one he now brings before us.

The objections are these—First, none of the ordinary interpretations can find an intelligible meaning in the words of the fourth verse: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Whose death, he asks, is this? Is it mine? But I am represented in the next verse as still alive. Is it the valley of bereavement, where I lose my dearest? If so, then the blessing referred to is not given to the chief sufferer who passes through the valley, but to the sufferer's companions. That is one objection. Next there is the double "leading" in verses 2 and 3. It is true that in the original the words are different (which the Revisers have endeavoured to express by translating ver. 3: "He *guideth* me in the paths of righteousness"). But what *is* the difference between these two "leadings," and why should there be two at all? Then, lastly, Dr. Elder Cumming points out that a serious difficulty has always been experienced in managing the tenses of the verbs in this Psalm. They ought to be all rendered alike, either all future or all present. But expositors have been compelled to make them differ, generally translating by the present tense, but giving a future meaning to the fourth and sixth verses.

But "it occurred to me some time ago to look at the Psalm in the light of consecration; and I found to my surprise and thankfulness that the difficulties all vanish; and they seem to fit in in such a way that the meaning is most clear and beautiful." Whereupon Dr. Elder Cumming pro-

ceeds to give his new interpretation, and it cannot well be denied that, after the introduction is past, it proves to be a most interesting and suggestive one. Certainly the introduction is somewhat staggering. For Dr. Elder Cumming finds as little historical fact or reference in the twenty-third Psalm as the late Professor Isidore Loeb. With one great leap he carries the writer of the Psalm across the intervening centuries and places him at the foot of the cross of Christ. "I take it that the Psalm implies that consecration has taken place already. One must read the first verse, 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' as if the writer were remembering the Lord Jesus Christ's own declaration, 'I am the Good Shepherd.' It is as if he knows that the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep, and he says, 'I take as mine own the Good Shepherd who gave His life for me. I have been at His cross, and I know what it is to be forgiven. He is my Saviour.' Shepherd is something more than deliverer from death; and therefore, as I remember the very first words of the Psalm, I find they are the words of the consecrated soul who rejoices both in the Saviour who died, and in the Shepherd who keeps. 'The Lord is my Shepherd'—only the consecrated soul can say that." These are Dr. Elder Cumming's words.

And it is useless to hide it that these words demand more than some of Dr. Elder Cumming's readers will grant. But if they say that he is making the writer of the Psalm overleap not only the centuries that lay between himself and the cross of Jesus Christ, but also the centuries that lie between the cross of Christ and the Keswick Convention—they undoubtedly take an unfair advantage, and count themselves out of the audience to whom he speaks. For we must judge the interpretation of the Psalm on its merits as an interpretation, and not by our opinion of the Keswick teaching.

Accepting the first words then, "The Lord is my Shepherd," as implying, according to Dr. Elder

Cumming's expression, "that consecration has taken place already," what is the meaning of the phrase that immediately follows, "I shall not want"? It ought to be rendered, he says, "I do not want." And the meaning is, that because the Lord is my Shepherd, I am satisfied. "It is the satisfaction of the soul that has found all in Christ. It is the first experience of understanding Christ in a new aspect, saying, "There is nothing that I need or that I desire that is not in Christ. 'All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'" And then the next verse, "He leadeth me into the green pastures"—that is the soul's food; and the food of the consecrated soul is first God's Word, and, secondly, Christ Himself. And though these pastures were there before I knew the Good Shepherd, they were dry and withered then, as the grass after three months' hot summer weather. Now they are fresh and green, for Christ is new, and the Bible that tells of Christ is new also. But what (to pass over a little) is the second leading, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness," of the third verse? "This," says our expositor, "is not the leading beside the waters of rest. There it is simply to lie down. But this is a matter of walking, of progress. And they are to be the paths of righteousness; not what I think righteousness, but what God thinks righteousness. Christ is to lead me now."

And "now we come to the great crisis in the consecrated life. 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil (present tense); for Thou art with me.' What place is this? First of all, it is a place of great darkness. And it is quite unexpected. The soul says, 'I did not look for this. I thought that when I entered the life of consecration it was going to be all sunshine.' So the soul is not prepared for the trial and the difficulty and the darkness. It is a great part of the trial that it is dark. But there are two kinds of darkness—the darkness of distance and the darkness of impedi-

ment. It is the darkness of distance when we cannot see with the eye some stars that are visible to the telescope. It is the darkness of shadow or impediment when something comes between us and the light—but it leaves the light as *near* us as before. The darkness spoken of in the Psalm is the darkness of impediment. Something has come in between us that hides His presence. It is a valley of death. What is death? It is a separation in pangs. Not a joyful separation, or an easy separation, but a separation which, when taking place, seems to sever soul and spirit; and it does indeed sever them. But what does it separate them from? From the world, utterly; from joy for the time, utterly; and still more from self. This crisis in the blessed life is death to self, and it must more or less be passed through, at one time or another, by every soul that knows what the blessed life is. God must sever the souls of His people from sin; there must be the cleansing if there is to be the life of holiness; and that cleansing, I am confident, cannot be without pain, without pangs and darkness, without almost agony; in some cases it is, as it were, a miserable and veritable death. It is worse than physical death this separation from self; but God's purpose is that there shall be something better than self. That I believe to be the meaning of this crisis that the Psalmist speaks of."

And thus the exposition proceeds. Soon, says our interpreter, the image of the Shepherd and His sheep is dropped, and we have the plain reality of the child and his father. "Thou preparest a table before me." And already the song is changed into a prayer. It is no longer "The Lord is my Shepherd," but "Thou art." I stop speaking about God, and begin to speak to God. And this table—Thou preparest it. Thou preparest it Thyself: it is not left to a servant. But I ask not what is placed upon it, I can trust my God for that.