

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

DR. CHARLES CUTLER TORREY, Professor of the Semitic Languages in Yale University, has published a pamphlet on *The Composition and Date of Acts* (Milford). It is the first of a series of 'Harvard Theological Studies' to be issued as extra numbers of the *Harvard Theological Review*.

Dr. TORREY believes that the first fifteen chapters of the Book of Acts were translated from an Aramaic original. He believes that they were translated by the same man who wrote the rest of the book, that man being Paul's beloved physician, Luke. In the beginning of his Gospel, Luke tells us that he was careful to trace the course of all things accurately from the first. That is good reason for the belief, says Dr. TORREY, that he made special search for Semitic documents, as the primitive and authentic sources, in order to render them into Greek. And the hypothesis of translation from Aramaic will account for the markedly Semitic colouring of those fifteen chapters, while their vocabulary and phraseology are so similar to the language of the rest of the book.

Dr. TORREY is not the first to discover an Aramaic original behind the Greek of those chapters of the Book of Acts. But he is the first to work out the idea systematically by means of examples. His first example is the most impres-

sive. It is Ac 2<sup>47</sup>, 'And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.'

Now the translation of that text is not easy. Its great difficulty was felt very soon. To relieve it a little, some early copyist inserted the words 'to the Church.' This was accepted for the Received Text, and appears in what we call the Authorized Version: That addition must go. But it is a small matter. The real difficulty of the verse lies in the words translated in the Revised Version 'to them' (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό). The Revisers' rendering is, 'And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved.'

'To them' is no translation. It is just an attempt, similar to that of the early copyist, to make the sentence intelligible. The words so translated really mean 'together.' The Revisers have said so in their margin. No doubt they would gladly have placed 'together' in their text, if it could have been understood. But so difficult is it to insert 'together' into this verse that some commentators and copyists left it out altogether, and inserted it in the next verse instead. That is to say, they made the three Greek words (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό) translated 'together' begin the first verse of the third chapter instead of ending the last verse of the second. This is done in the Authorized Version: 'Now Peter and John went

up *together* into the temple.' But again it will not do.

Professor TORREY turned the Greek words back into Aramaic. He easily found an Aramaic word which would be translated by these Greek words and which means 'together.' And then came the discovery. That Aramaic word has two meanings. It means 'together,' but it also means 'greatly.' Suppose that the translator of the original Aramaic of the Acts did not know that the same word meant both 'together' and 'greatly'? Suppose that he knew it only as meaning 'together'? Then he would translate it 'together,' and miss the meaning of the passage. That is what Dr. TORREY believes was done by Luke.

But why should not Luke know that the word had both meanings? Because it is only in the Judean dialect of Aramaic that it has the meaning of 'greatly.' If Luke made his translation at a distance from Judea, if he made it in Northern Syria, or even in Galilee, he might know only one meaning of the word, the meaning 'together.' It is Dr. TORREY's belief that Luke, being possibly a native of Antioch, did not know the Judean dialect.

Let us translate according to this dialect. The translation is as simple as it is satisfactory: 'And the Lord added greatly day by day to the saved.'

Letter writing, it is said, is a forgotten art. Perhaps in this so scientific an age we have turned it into a science. Canon SANDAY and the Rev. N. P. WILLIAMS, M.A., Chaplain-Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, have been writing letters to one another. The letters are long. There are six of them in all, and, when issued as a book, they cover one hundred and sixty-seven octavo pages. They are occupied with the difficult matters of authority and inspiration. If it were not that Canon SANDAY cannot write a sentence without giving it the charm of art as well as the accuracy of science,

we should say that here at least, in this volume with the very scientific title of *Form and Content in the Christian Tradition* (Longmans; 6s. net), we have something to go by when we suggest that perhaps the art of letter-writing has become a science.

*Form and Content in the Christian Tradition*—that is Dr. SANDAY's title. What does he mean by it? He means that 'there are the great truths about God and Christ; there are the great broad fundamental experiences of the Christian life. These are permanent and unchangeable. And yet, the forms under which we conceive of them must of necessity change, with the changing apparatus of thought through which they find expression.'

It is Dr. SANDAY's title. Mr. WILLIAMS does not believe in it. He does not deny that there is a difference between the meaning of a doctrine and the words in which that doctrine is expressed. But Dr. SANDAY claims much more than that. He claims that the form in which a doctrine or even a fact has been expressed may strike us quite differently after a long lapse of time. So differently may it appeal to us that the doctrine itself will no longer seem true, or the fact no longer credible. Mr. WILLIAMS does not believe that.

We have stated Dr. SANDAY's contention in the barest possible words. Let us see what it comes to. There was a time in the history of the Church when it was possible to believe that, during the three days in which the body of our Lord lay in the tomb, His spirit went and sojourned in the place of the departed, and then, when the three days were ended, it returned and reanimated the body. Mr. WILLIAMS believes that still. Dr. SANDAY holds that it is not possible to believe it now. Wrapped up in that outward form there may be a doctrine or teaching of the Church, or a fact in the experience of the Redeemer, which is true, which has always been and always will be true. But the outward form in which that doctrine or fact was conveyed to the Christian world in the

Creed, acceptable as it was to that age, and to all subsequent ages till the birth of modern science, is unacceptable now, and so entirely unacceptable that we ought no longer to be asked to believe in the doctrine called the 'Descent into Hell.'

Now it is just possible that some of us will say here that we are not concerned about the Descent into Hell. We may not be. It is only one example. In reality it is but little referred to in this book. But what if Dr. SANDAY and Mr. WILLIAMS, the one rejecting and the other accepting the doctrine of the Descent into Hell, are working by methods which are irreconcilable with one another? And we? What if we have to choose between them?

That is so. As we read the book we see that it is so, though the writers themselves do not see it. They have conducted their correspondence with so much Christian courtesy that they do not recognize how wide apart they are. Dr. SANDAY is almost persuaded that he has convinced Mr. WILLIAMS, and Mr. WILLIAMS is almost convinced that he has persuaded Dr. SANDAY. They have not really moved a step nearer one another.

Dr. SANDAY accepts as truth that which verifies itself to his own mind. 'For me,' he says, 'the ultimate standard of judgement is what I conceive to be truth. Authority has its weight; but I could not accept a thing purely upon authority, if I did not also believe it to be true.' He does not think that he has attained to the highest truth or the highest sincerity until he can speak from personal conviction. He may recognize degrees short of this, and acquiesce in them provisionally; but he always feels that his acquiescence is provisional; he has not yet attained to 'the *vérité vraie*, which is the crowning stage of all.'

Mr. WILLIAMS accepts as truth that which the Church has declared to be truth. Has the Church declared that Christ descended into Hell? Mr. WILLIAMS believes that Christ descended into

Hell. If the Church had said that Christ did not descend into Hell, Mr. WILLIAMS would have believed that He did not descend.

Of course Dr. SANDAY does not cut himself off from the stream of history. As he says, he gives Authority its weight. Nor does Mr. WILLIAMS on his side accept that as true which he believes to be false simply because the Church has declared it to be true. But that does not bring the one correspondent closer to the other. Dr. SANDAY believes that the Church may err, has erred indeed in declaring as purely historical truth, not only the Descent into Hell, but also the Virgin Birth and the physical Ascension. Mr. WILLIAMS believes that these are historical truths, not because he has investigated their truth (though doubtless he has done so), but because it is to his mind impossible that the Church could err in setting them forth.

There are men now growing old who read in their youth books written by Dr. Newman SMYTH, and were strengthened for the journey of life before them. These men may read another book by the same author and be strengthened for the way that they have still to go. It is a remarkable experience. Books like *Old Faiths in New Light* seemed then, and seem still, to be mature in thought. The new book *The Meaning of Personal Life* (Hodder & Stoughton; 10s. 6d. net) has not a sign upon it of the dimness of eye or the abatement of natural force that are expected with old age.

The new book is a study of Personality. But the truth is that Dr. Newman SMYTH is thoroughly interested in one personality only. His own? Not at all. There was a time, no doubt, when, with him as with other men, the absorbing personality was his own. But he has learned Christ. Now to him to live is Christ. When he lives it is not he that lives, but Christ that lives in him. The only personality in which he is thoroughly interested is the personality of Jesus Christ.

But he does not introduce Christ at once. He discusses Personality first. He takes in physical science and psychology. He brings nature into relation with man, and mind into relation with body. Nevertheless, with all his science and system, he is not half through the book when he entitles a chapter 'The Fulfilment of Personal Life in Jesus Christ.' And from that moment to the end Christ is all in all.

Dr. Newman SMYTH discourses on Death. But not as one who is losing his interest in life. This is the most distinctive thing about the book, that the entrance of Christ gives new value to the life that now is. He does not write as one who feels that the time of his departure is at hand, and that the good fight has already been fought. His interest in this life is not behind but before. He is one with the generations that are to follow. He sees the entrance of Christ working steadily and for good in the days that are to come more manifestly than in the days that are past. And so confident is he that all are one in Christ Jesus that he does not consider himself apart. If there is to be a clearer revelation he will be there to enjoy it. If there is to be a fuller consecration to the will of God he will be there to share in it.

Does that mean that Dr. Newman SMYTH has made progress in the knowledge of God beyond the Apostle Paul? It does. This is the very creed by which he lives. Christ promised progress both in knowledge and in service, and He has been there all the while to make sure of it. The idea of a 'deposit' of truth, apostolic or other, beyond which no man's thought may pass, is abhorrent to him. For it is abhorrent to the mind of Christ.

Christianity, whether expressed in the writings of the New Testament or in the creeds of the Church, is not a deposit but a development. He has no quarrel with the Church for setting forth the truth as it is in Jesus in systems of theology. His complaint is that the systems and creeds are so

complete and final. They are as houses built under the terror of a drastic window tax. 'As one must have a house to live in, so reason must needs build for itself a system of ideas in which to dwell comfortably. But the habitual dwelling-place of one's thoughts should be open-windowed and hospitable to all truths that may knock at its door.'

Dr. Newman SMYTH believes that we know more of God than did Athanasius or Origen. And he believes that men shall yet know more of God than we do. He even sees lines of approach to the fuller and better knowledge of God in the future. One line of approach is Physical Science. 'Men may know more of God as the sciences shall discover more and more the ruling ideas in the order of nature.' 'Recent science has carried verifiable knowledge down into the elements of the creation further than Hebrew prophet could possibly have seen.' 'The alphabet of the language in which the heavens declare the glory of God has been deciphered in the lines of the spectroscope. Space, empty to the eye, has become to scientific intelligence filled with pulsations and powers from all infinitude. We are handling in our factories forces of which our fathers had not heard, and commanding powers of the air to carry even the voices of men across the seas as we ourselves but recently never dreamed. So in the world's work, too unconsciously it may be, we are using thoughts of God in things. Some day in all this wondrous knowledge man may awake to find himself nearer the living One.'

Another line of approach to God is History. Dr. Newman SMYTH believes in the creation of the world at the hand of God, but he does not believe that it was finished in six days. He does not believe that it is finished yet. All events in the history of mankind, the unseen as well as the seen, are steps in the creation of the world, and as we understand them we approach the better understanding of God. Such an event is the European war. And already it is evident to most of us that

of all the gains which the war will bring the greatest is to be a better knowledge of God—a greater regard for His greatness, a finer appreciation of His gentleness.

But the most manifest sign that the creation is not complete is man himself. What physical powers man may develop we can barely guess. In strength as in stature he has already increased even within the record of written history. In length of days he has increased almost within the experience of a single generation. But Dr. Newman SMYTH is more concerned with the spiritual than the physical. He believes that man will become more spiritually receptive. This is true, he says, 'of the individual; his mind may gain more capacity of spiritual discernment; as his heart becomes more pure he may more clearly see God. To believe as immortals we must live as immortals. What is thus true of the increase of the individual's know-

ledge of God holds good likewise of the social growth in spiritual wisdom. There may be new social knowledge of God; there *will* be, as Christianity purifies and enlarges the social consciousness. Through such higher Christian development humanity shall gain happier sense of divinity and ampler understanding of the breadth and the height of the love of God for the world.'

Last of all there will be a new approach to God through the raising up again of the Prophet. This has always been God's way of working. He works still, as He has ever worked, by election. Dr. Newman SMYTH firmly believes that when the Son came and ended the old order of the prophets, He came with no purpose of changing the method of God's revelation to the world. The time is coming when the prophet, chosen of God from among men for no merit of his or of the society to which he belongs, will be looked for and made welcome.

## The Attitude of the Historical Student towards Miraculous Records.

BY THE REV. R. L. MARSHALL, M.A., LL.D., MAGHERA, CO. DERRY.

HISTORICAL facts are, generally speaking, facts established by the use of documents. In some way or other their occurrence was recorded, and the record either in its original shape or in some derivative form has survived. Now all results depending on such documents are inevitably open to considerable criticism. For apart altogether from the possibility of fraud or delusion they are often few in number. And yet, the individual differences in our faculties and senses entail the consequence that none of us sees the same thing or perceives it exactly as another observer. Consequently it is only from many accounts that one can confidently reconstruct reality. Then again, the events happen only once. They are so complex, so interwoven with antecedent and concurrent circumstances, that one observer sees only a tiny piece of the whole. And the results and consequences left behind them are often difficult of disentanglement, and frequently very obscure.

Because of these considerations, all historical facts can only be established as probable. And this probability of their having occurred as recorded, ranges from little more than bare possibility to approximate certainty.

Now in the case of the physical sciences 'we can eliminate and control human differences by repeated experiment, by observing the same process or object, time and again, and through the eyes of different observers.' And thus we may attain more often to what is warrantably assumed to be certain knowledge. Compared with this, historical investigation, with probability the ultimate goal of its closest research, is often compelled to speak less confidently.

What, then, is to be our position when some of these historically established facts appear to clash with certain results claimed to be established by the methods of physical science? For this is the form which the question usually takes. Langlois