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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

WHAT is it that makes us turn away so decidedly from the perfectionist? There is no doubt that perfection is demanded of us. It is demanded of every Christian man and woman. It is demanded by Christ. Whether the Sermon on the Mount was all spoken on one occasion or not, we recognize the words which close the first great chapter of it as its sum and substance: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

Three elements enter into the antipathy. First, our dislike to a claim which we cannot ourselves make. Next, our inability to see that the claim is made good. And, thirdly, our conviction that 'freedom from known sin' is not the highest expression of the Christian life.

Now it must be evident to one who gives a little candid consideration to the matter that there is nothing in the first two objections. And if there is anything in the last it is due to a mistake which may at any time be rectified. We have no right to resent the claim to perfection which another makes, seeing it is demanded of us all; let us rise to the height of it. We have no right to doubt the validity of that claim, unless the manifest signs of sinfulness are thrust upon us. We have only the right to say to our perfect brother that he must see to it that he is perfect *as his Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

In what respect is the Father in heaven perfect? That question is asked by the anonymous author of a book entitled *How to Live the Victorious Life* (Marshall Brothers; 2s. 6d.). The author is a perfectionist. He writes the book in order to tell us so. And he is most particular to say that the perfection which he has reached is the perfection of the Heavenly Father.

How, then, is our Heavenly Father perfect? He answers, 'Surely in everything. But He is *God* and we are *men*. Jesus does not command us to be perfect as God. The Father is perfect in absolute sinlessness; in majesty, in glory, in power, in wisdom. Such perfection cannot be attained by mortal man. In what, then, are *we* to be perfect? "Be ye *therefore* perfect." That word "therefore" evidently refers to what has been said just before. What is that? Simply a command to be full of love. Godless men love their friends: the followers of Christ are to *love their enemies* as well. Our Lord is commanding perfect Love. This thought came to me with overwhelming power. The Victorious Life is simply a life of *perfect love.*'

So far well. Nor is it necessary for the author to prove that perfect love is enough. He proves it by quoting St. Paul's 'wonderful thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians.' 'Love is enough, for

“love suffereth long”—it drives away all impatience; “Love is kind”—it leaves room for no unkindness; “Love envieth not”—all jealousy is banished; “Love vaunteth not itself”—boasting and self-assertion disappear; “Is not puffed-up”—pride finds no place in the heart’; and on to the end of the chapter.

That is all very well and quite acceptable. The question remains, How am I to love? How am I to love perfectly? How am I to love as my Father which is in heaven loves? To that question also this unknown author has his answer. The answer is the meaning of his book.

We learn to love, he says, by receiving Christ into our hearts by faith. Nay, we do not need to learn; we love. We love at once, and perfectly, as soon as Christ by faith enters into our hearts to dwell there. *For the love which we then have is not our love, it is the love of Christ expressing itself in us and through us.* As St. Paul says, ‘I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,’ so he might have said, and would have said had it occurred to him, ‘I love; yet not I, but Christ loveth in me.’

There is a brave metaphor used in the Old Testament of the indwelling of the Spirit of God in a man. It occurs first of all, and of all places, in the Book of Judges. The metaphor is that the Spirit of God clothes itself with the man’s personality. The phrase in the Authorized and Revised Versions is ‘came upon’—‘the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon’ (Jg 6³⁴); but the margin of both versions gives the meaning accurately—‘the Spirit of the Lord clothed itself with Gideon.’ When the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ clothes itself with a Christian believer that man loves and is perfect as his Father which is in heaven is perfect.

When St. Paul wrote his first letter to the Christians in Corinth he found himself faced with the fact that Christianity had made little progress

among educated people. He explained the fact by saying that they had not been called. It may be that he even said, as the margin of the Revised Version suggests, that they had no part in the Gospel. But we may be sure that he was not indifferent. For it was indifference on their part that made them miss their opportunity. And the last thing that a preacher can be indifferent to is indifference.

The time came, though scarcely in the lifetime of the Apostle, when the educated Greek or Roman could no longer be indifferent to the preaching of Jesus and the Resurrection. Then arose the apologist. For as soon as the Gospel demanded attention from the scholar, it roused his opposition and received his criticism. Two movements now were seen together. The Gospel was still preached to the ignorant, and the ignorant received it gladly; Christianity was vindicated before the learned, and the learned disputed in the school of Tyrannus or another, and went on writing commentaries on Plato and Aristotle.

And since that day both movements have proceeded side by side, while the results have been ever the same. We see them most unmistakably in India. The outcastes are gathered in by the thousand: the learned Brahmin disputes and denies and endeavours to raise his ancient philosophy to life again. The temptation is strong to leave the wise to their wisdom.

But it must be resisted. And never in all the history of Christianity more hopefully than now. Great teachers, as Ward and Sorley and Pringle-Pattison, who some ten or twenty years ago, would have emphasized the distinction between philosophical and Christian ethics, have drawn very near to the teaching of Christ. The opportunity has been seized by the Rev. W. R. MATTHEWS, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion in King’s College, London, to commend to the wise, to the Scribe, to the disputer of this world, the Gospel of the grace of God.

If the Gospel is to be commended to the philosopher, it must be commended philosophically. And so, in issuing his book entitled *Studies in Christian Philosophy* (Macmillan; 12s. net)—it is the Boyle Lectures for 1920—Professor MATTHEWS says: 'My main object in these lectures has been to suggest that Christian doctrine rests upon a few simple affirmations of a philosophical character, and to indicate a line of thought which seems to lead to the conclusion that these affirmations are rational.'

The question is of the interpretation of the world. For if it is the business of poetry to interpret life, it is the business of philosophy to interpret the universe. 'Why does the world as we experience it exist, and what is its significance and the meaning of life? That, as I suppose, is a question which is devoid neither of import nor of importance. It is in fact, as I believe, the main-spring of all philosophical inquiry.'

And Mr. MATTHEWS believes that no hypothesis other than the Christian one has any answer to give to that question. In most cases, he says, the impotence is confessed. In some cases it is disguised under a denial that the question has any relevance. Christianity alone has an answer. What is it?

The answer is that 'the world exists because it was created by the love of God. Its purpose is to educate and fashion finite spirits, through free effort, into the status of children of God; to bring them to a condition of intellectual and moral development such that they may enjoy that complete communion with God which is the consummation of their being, and may form that community which, by the harmony of the selves with one another and with their Creator, constitutes the Kingdom of God.'

'Constitutes the Kingdom of God.' But what is that? The philosopher is at fault at once. He is not familiar with the phrase. He does not know

its meaning. For we have never yet been able to introduce 'the Kingdom of God' into our speech—not into our philosophical and not even into our familiar speech. There are few facts more puzzling than that. Even Professor MATTHEWS, Dean of his College and Bachelor of Divinity, is not at home with the phrase. He rarely uses it. When he arrives at the place where he has to tell the philosopher what the Kingdom of God is, and to prove its superiority to all other ways of interpreting the world, he drops it altogether and uses the expression 'Christian Civilization' instead.

Why have we not been able to naturalize the Kingdom of God? The sensitive Republican may be shy of the word 'kingdom.' For a kingdom involves a king; and here the King is supreme and all-determining. But that is not the reason. It is due to religious reticence. It is due to the religious reticence of our spoken and our written language. And reticence is often indistinguishable from cowardice. We should have welcomed from so outspoken and accomplished a writer as Professor MATTHEWS a steady adherence to the heroic word.

But he does not use it. He uses 'Christian Civilization' instead. And no doubt he can offer reasons for his choice. His purpose is to prove the superiority of the Christian to all other types of culture, and the phrase 'Christian Culture' or 'Christian Civilization,' he may say, enables him to make the comparison with least misunderstanding or offence. In what, then, does Christian Culture show its superiority?

First in this, that it is progressive. 'The illustration of this property which occurs most readily to our minds is the scientific advance which has revolutionised life and thought during the last hundred years; but this is neither the most important nor the most fundamental aspect of the phenomenon. Social organisation and social ideals have shown the same character. Compared with all other civilisations, Christendom

has possessed a freedom of adaptation and a forward impulse which is without parallel.'

But the fact of progress is not the most important thing. Greater is the idea of progress. 'We are apt,' says Mr. MATTHEWS, 'to overlook the uniqueness of the idea of progress because it has entered so intimately into the constitution of our minds, so that we are scarcely able to imagine a civilisation in which it does not exercise a like influence. Yet a comparison with the ancient civilisations and with the still existing cultures of China and India is sufficient to establish the fact of the difference on which we have been dwelling. Great as are the debts which we owe to the thought of Greece, the idea of progress is not among them. Let us quote a few words from one who will not be suspected of underrating the Greek legacy to humanity. "That a single principle or will lies at the root of nature, and is also embodied in the mind and actions of man, is the inspiring conviction of every progressive society, as of all science and practical energy. We can hardly realise the depth of the change by which this Christian doctrine initiated the belief in development, so characteristic of the modern world, unless we compare the timid social ideas of the wisest of the Greeks with the audacious metaphors which were the first that occurred to the Galilean peasant. . . . The future is quite differently regarded, not as the painful preservation of equilibrium, but as a free and natural growth towards perfection. . . . For almost the first time in the world's history the golden age is transferred to the future.'" The quotation is from Professor Bosanquet's *Civilization of Christendom*.

Again, Christian culture is superior to all other in that it is characterized by 'enlarging unity.' For 'Christian civilisation has exhibited an unexampled power of assimilating various nations and races and, while preserving their individual characters, organising them into some sort of whole. It is true that every civilisation which

has been able to survive for any considerable period must have had some unifying power within it; and it is certainly remarkable that this unifying power has been the existence of a common view of life expressed in a common religion. In a wide sense it is true that the formation of society is due to religion, and the continuity of social existence is conditioned by the continuity of religious beliefs. But though other civilisations have had the faculty of preserving self-identity through a long period and through many changes, not one has approached the capacity which Christendom has shown of integrating an ever more complex material.'

'A third characteristic of Christian culture is the development within it of the ideals of political freedom and equality. As a conscious movement the battle for freedom has doubtless been associated with a revolt against dogmatic religion; but the rebels themselves have drawn their strength from the same social culture as that against which they protest. It is a fact that Christian civilisation alone has produced the democratic social ideal.'

A great deal of confusion, says Mr. MATTHEWS, has been 'caused by the habit of describing some of the slave-states of ancient Greece as democracies; but it is clear that a social system which rests on a class of forced labourers is quite different from what in modern language we mean by democracy. It is, of course, true that perfect democracy has never existed anywhere; but the idea of it has never dawned upon the minds of men except within the sphere of influence of Christianity. It is destined, as every one can see, to be a dominant conception in the future. "The law," St. Paul said, "was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, and the Christianity of eighteen hundred years has been a schoolmaster to bring men to freedom.'" The quotation is again from Professor Bosanquet.

A fourth, and last, feature of Christian culture is its characteristic type of humanism. 'Only

within Christendom has the idea taken root that human personality as such is worthy of reverence and possesses rights. Compared with this the humanism of the great period of ancient civilization was narrowly limited and hardly contained the thought of the value of humanity as such. To Plato and Aristotle the slave and barbarian are almost outside the sphere of interest, forming, as it were, an intermediate species between the Greek and the beast. Even Plato's ideal city is a system of castes in which the highest activities, those that are truly and characteristically human, are reserved for a strictly limited few. It is not until the rise of the Stoic philosophy that we come across a belief in the common dignity of all members of the human race. In modern Christendom the humanistic spirit has taken a dominant place in the social conscience.

In the month of July a 'Catholic Bible Congress' was held at Cambridge. The occasion was the fifteenth centenary of St. Jerome, and the purpose was to encourage the study of the Bible. For in his day St. Jerome gave the Bible to the people in their own tongue, just as Luther and Tindale did in their day; and the Roman Church now desires to encourage the people to read the Bible. The addresses delivered at the Congress have been published by Messrs. Heffer of Cambridge, with the title of *The Religion of the Scriptures* (3s. 6d. net). The motto of the book is a quotation from St. Jerome's writings—'Ignoratio Scripturarum ignoratio Christi est.'

Of the first address, delivered at the Congress and published in the book, two authors are given, the Rev. J. P. Arendzen, D.D., M.A., and the Rev. R. Downey, D.D., both of the Catholic Missionary Society, London. We are not told in what way they collaborated, and it does not matter. Their subject was inspiration.

Now the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible has been so severely handled of late that we can

scarcely be sure if there is a doctrine left, and for the most part we have lost interest in it. Not so these men. To them it is a real thing, even if not a perfectly intelligible thing. It is in the first place *unique*, differing not in degree but in kind from the inspiration of Shakespeare. And in the second place it is Biblical, being the inspiration not of the writers whose writings are found in the Bible, but of the Bible itself. It is the Bible itself that is inspired, and every word of it.

So there are no mistakes in the Bible. None. 'Inspiration necessarily involves the absolute veracity of every statement of the Bible; for as God wrote it, and God cannot lie, the Bible cannot contain error of any kind.' So they say. And again: 'Though we do not hold verbal inspiration in the sense that the words were directly supplied to the human author by God, nevertheless God is immediately responsible for, and acknowledges as His own, the whole of the Scriptures and every word of it, so that we cannot say either that now and then words or sentences slipped through which were uninspired and merely human, or that the words are human and only the underlying thoughts divine. The ultimate result of inspiration is the written book, not the internal thoughts of the writer.'

It follows—and they have no hesitation in drawing the conclusion—that no part of the Bible is more or less inspired than any other part. Second Maccabees belongs to the Bible of the Roman Church. Very well: 'the Fourth Gospel and II. Maccabees are equally inspired.'

It follows, further, that no text in the Gospels or elsewhere can be better attested than another text. Does the prayer on the Cross, 'Father, forgive them,' occur only in St. Luke, or the formula of Baptism only in St. Matthew, or does the text which means so much to the Church of Rome, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church,' occur only in the First Gospel?—that is not of the least importance, 'for the complete

weight of divine authority is. at the back of every text in St. Matthew on account of its inspiration.'

That is a doctrine of inspiration indeed. Perhaps it is wise not to look more closely into it. But these two theologians, who have no desire to do that, find one or two difficulties even on the face of it. Thus they are sufficiently in touch with modern thought to realize that the narrative of the Creation in the very first chapter of the Bible cannot be taken as literal history. They do not say how they take it, but they prepare for some other way by saying that the 'complete inerrancy of Scripture does not of necessity imply that every statement must be taken in a literal sense, and as true in that literal sense.'

They are also a little disturbed over 'the prodigiously long ages of the Patriarchs.' How do they meet that difficulty? 'Some fact,' they say, 'not merely a moral or philosophical idea—underlies them. Above all they are not merely childish folklore to fill up gaps of unknown history. But what that fact is the Church has never authoritatively settled. At present we seem to have lost the key to those enormous numbers, perhaps we are on the eve of rediscovering their meaning through the finding of the lists of the Babylonian or Sumerian antediluvian Patriarchs corresponding not in sound, but in meaning apparently to the biblical names. If once we could ascertain what they conveyed to Abraham and his tribe, who came from Ur in the Chaldees, we would have solved the riddle.'

Whereupon follow the last words of the address: 'Thus Catholic scholarship will go on with utmost freedom, yet in utmost security, ever venturing farther out into the ocean because never severed from the Rock on which Christ built His Church, ever forward, yet in utmost safety, for the Infallible Interpreter of the Bible is always on the alert and living and teaching in the bark of Peter.'

One of the addresses contained in the volume just noticed was delivered by the Rev. Ronald A. KNOX, son of the late Bishop of Manchester. Mr. KNOX, it will be remembered, recently entered the Church of Rome and afterwards gave his reasons for the step. On that account, and still more on account of his own personality, his address must have been looked forward to with exceptional interest.

Its subject is the Church. The first few sentences must have been a disappointment. He says that in order to defend the Roman doctrine of the Church 'it is necessary to prove in the first place that our Divine Lord meant to leave behind Him an organized body of followers, and in the second place that He meant to leave that body organized in a particular way, and not in any one of a dozen different ways which have been proposed or adopted as rival interpretations.' He then says that his purpose is to defend the doctrine of the Church not in the second sense but in the first. In other words, he is to prove that Christ meant to leave behind Him a Church, but not that He meant to leave the Roman Church. We need not therefore consider the lecture further. But three things were said in the course of it which are worth a moment's attention.

The first is a very surprising thing. Mr. KNOX was at one time a Fellow of an Oxford College. Yet he says that 'the rejection of the Jews as a race, and their displacement (in large measure) in favour of the Gentiles under the New Dispensation is the secret of nearly half the parables.' You wonder which parables. He does not leave you wondering. 'The Jew,' he says, 'is the son who undertakes to work in the vineyard and does not; the Gentile is the one who refuses and then relents. The Jew is the elder son who has never left his Father's house; the Gentile the prodigal who is welcomed (it seems so unfairly) on his return home. The Jew is the early-hired labourer, who has borne the burden of the day and the heat; the Gentile, called at the eleventh hour, is made equal to him.'

The Jew is the rich man who fares sumptuously every day, and, though he has Moses and the prophets, has not learned to believe; the Gentile is the beggar who seeks to feed on the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table, "and no man gave unto him," the very same phrase that is used of the prodigal. The Jew is the invited guest who accepts the invitation and then cancels his acceptance; the Gentile is called in from the highways and the hedges. The Jew is the Pharisee who thanks God that he is not as other men are; the Gentile is the repentant publican who goes home justified. The Jewish people are the fig-tree which, fruitless, still cumbereth the ground; even now the Gardener of Gethsemane is praying that one more chance may be given to them. The Jewish people are the unfaithful husbandmen who are to murder the King's Son: the Gentiles are those "other husbandmen" to whom the vineyard will be given.'

It is a pretty long list. And a pretty amazing one. For it is as certain as anything in the interpretation of the Bible that the Gentiles are not once thought of in any of these parables.

How could they be? What occasion Jesus had to come in contact with Gentiles during His ministry in Galilee, in Samaria, or in Judæa we do not know. Thrice only are Gentiles definitely mentioned in the whole course of His ministry—two men and a woman. And on the occasion of His contact with the woman His attitude of aloofness was such that it has been a painful perplexity ever since, and has to be carefully scrutinized to find the essential meaning of it. On that occasion also He uttered the words, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'

That He created a gospel, good for the Gentile as for the Jew, there is no doubt. But neither is there any doubt that He left His disciples to offer it to the Gentiles. During His own lifetime He had to do with a division among the Jews themselves, which was as flagrant as the division be-

tween the Jews and the Gentiles, and much more fundamental—the division between the righteous and the sinners. That was enough to occupy Him, and it occupied Him entirely. It determined the whole method of His ministry. And every one of the parables referred to by Mr. KNOX has to do with it.

How can Mr. KNOX ignore the circumstances under which the parables were written? Take the best known of them all—the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Says St. Luke: 'Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them.' Then follow the three parables of the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Son without further introduction to any of them. Whether they were all spoken at the same time or not, it is quite certain that they were spoken under the same circumstances. We have often felt that this division among the Jews is not sufficiently recognized—it is clearly enough recognized by modern Jews who write on the Gospels—but we never expected to find a scholar like Mr. KNOX unconscious of it.

The second thing is more difficult. It is the meaning of the sentence, 'Many are called, but few chosen.' Here Mr. KNOX is less to be blamed, for he adopts the usual interpretation: 'Many are members of the Church, but few are true members.' Even here, however, he soon goes his own mistaken way. For his argument is that the visible Church on earth is the only Church. The idea of an invisible Church is abhorrent to him. Therefore this Visible Church, which is, of course, to him the Church of Rome, is the true Body of Christ. What the sentence means, then, is that only a few of those who make up the true Body of Christ really belong to it—a conclusion which is pretty nearly absurd.

But what does the sentence mean? 'Many are

called,' that is, invited. We ought to think at once of the marriage feast. Many were called to it—it is the Gospel invitation. But few accepted the invitation. And when they did not accept the invitation, our Lord did not say that they had not accepted it, He said that they were not *worthy* of it: 'The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.' He looked at the matter from the side of God. They refused the invitation, but that meant that God refused them. It is the same manner of speech as we find, and are so puzzled by, in the case of Pharaoh. As it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, while we know very well that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, so here it is said that God chose or elected the few, but it was just the few who accepted the invitation.

The third thing is the most mysterious. Mr. Knox comes to the words of the Institution of the Supper: 'This is my body: this is my blood.' He takes them literally of course—'this bread is my actual body; this wine is my actual blood.' But notice how he persuades himself.

He says that when Jesus 'uses allegory, the idea which He treats allegorically is the predicate of the sentence, not its subject; "I am the Way," "I am the Good Shepherd," "I am the true Vine." This habit of speech might cover such a phrase as "I am the living Bread," and an allegory might exhaust its meaning. But it quite certainly does not cover the phrase "This (*i.e.* that which I hold in My hands) is My Body." "This which is being poured out for you is My blood."'

The Sexcentenary of Dante's Death.

BY THE REVEREND J. P. LILLEY, D.D., EDINBURGH.

AT the news of a celebration like that of the sexcentenary of Dante's death (Sept. 14, 1321-1921), one readily calls to mind the old saying enshrined in the maxims of the Book of Ecclesiastes (ch. 7¹): 'Better is the day of death than the day of one's birth.' The proverb runs counter to our ordinary human feeling. The day of birth appears to be better than the day of death, because it is the beginning of the time when the cup of life is put into our hands. But when death arrives, the contents are drained and, in the phrase of Omar Khayyám, the glass is turned upside down.

On the other hand, who can miss the profound truth that lies in the heart of the paradox? Let a life be spent in harmony with the will of the Divine Parent of the universe and death shall be only the entrance into a new and stainless existence, in a more congenial and enduring sphere than earth affords. In truth, death itself shall then be just our final birth into a higher, though at present unseen, world, in which all that is richest in the old life shall be conserved and beautified and immeasurable opportunities of grander progress developed.

Clear it is at least that the death of a great

writer is the most appropriate standpoint from which his work should be estimated. For then his achievement is complete. The seed has been sown and the harvest ripened and reaped. All that is needed is to beat out and grind the grain and then adjudge its quality as a part of human nature's daily food.

The people of Italy, therefore, carried with them the full sympathy of every cultured nation, when in the middle of September last they joined in appraising the work of one of the four greatest poets which Europe has produced. We also can rejoice with them in finding that after long tracts of years, in which his writings were misunderstood and neglected, Dante Alighieri has come into his kingdom, and will henceforth abide in it not only as the foremost man of letters in the history of Italy but as one of the great teachers of the human family. With an enthusiasm that does them infinite credit, the people of Ravenna, where Dante spent so much of his exile from Florence, began a full year ago to study his works afresh and make arrangements for commemorating his death; and all the tidings that have reached us go to show that this example has now been