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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE newspapers, a few weeks ago, contained the report of the discovery in Rome of the bodies of S. Paul and S. Peter. The reports were evidently inaccurate in some details and might be wholly unreliable, so that little attention was given to them by scholars.

But Professor SAYCE has been in Rome and has verified the facts on the spot. He writes:

'Among the excavations I saw at Rome the most interesting to me were those underneath the Church of S. Sebastiano. According to tradition, the bodies of SS. Paul and Peter were secreted here at the bottom of a well during the Valerian persecution (A.D. 258), and it was from here that Constantine removed them to his new Basilica on the Vatican. When the modern S. Peter's was built, the sarcophagi were opened in the presence of the Pope, and an eye-witness has left a statement that the bodies were still lying in them intact, with the gold cross placed over them by Constantine, then the sarcophagi were closed again and deposited in the "Confessio" under S. Peter's.'

Now, says Professor SAYCE, 'the excavations have brought to light a basilica of the age of Constantine under the modern Church of S. Sebastiano, and under that again the remains of a Roman private house. From the "trichia" or dining-room of this there is a descent into a long

corridor, where two or three large Christian stone sarcophagi were lying. Beyond these the corridor extended to a niche-like chamber by the side of the bottom of a well. The walls of the corridor are covered with the graffiti of Christian visitors from the middle of the third century onwards, commemorating their visits to the bodies of the two Apostles and invoking their prayers. In many cases it is stated that before descending into the catacomb the pilgrims had partaken of a "refrigeratio" (refreshment) in the trichia above, which is explained as the Agapê, thus showing that the Agapê was still observed in Rome at the end of the third century.'

Professor SAYCE concludes: 'Once more archæology has confirmed tradition, and the bodies of the Apostles are actually lying under S. Peter's.'

It was necessary that some one should give himself to a detailed examination of Modernism. For the issues are fundamental, and newspaper correspondence is unsatisfactory. And now it turns out that the man who has done it, or done it first, is the Rev. Charles HARRIS, D.D., formerly Lecturer in Theology in St. David's College, Lampeter, and now Rector of Colwall.

DR. HARRIS is a scholar. His books are *Pro*

Fide, a successful apologetic for an open-minded, orthodox Christianity, and *The Creeds and Modern Thought*, a defence of creed making and of the Apostles' Creed. He is a scholar, and he deliberately undertakes to meet modernist scholars with scholarship. 'The "Modernists,"' he says, 'can lay claim to some good scholars and thinkers; but they have no monopoly of sound philosophy or of accurate scholarship. The only effective method is to criticize the critics, to meet learning with learning and scholarship with scholarship. That is what this book endeavours to do.' The title of the volume is *Creeds or no Creeds?* (Murray; 15s. net).

Dr. HARRIS covers the whole ground. The ground is partly philosophical. 'By general consent, the main philosophic basis of Modernism is the Kantian doctrine of "Immanence," or (to use the more intelligible term) the Relativity of Human Knowledge; nor do I think it possible to resist the contention of Professor Gardner, and indeed of most philosophic Modernists, that, given Kantianism, Modernism necessarily follows. Accordingly, the main object of this book is to refute the doctrine of Immanence, whether in its original Kantian form, or in the slightly modified forms which it has assumed in Hegelianism, Neo-Kantianism, Euckenism, Bergsonism, and Pragmatism.'

The ground is also critical, though the Modernist is not so strong critically as he is philosophically. 'Modernists and Liberal Protestants are most unwisely perpetuating in the theological field a type of arbitrary and subjective criticism which the *consensus* of scholars has long condemned in the classical. They may of course be right—majorities are often wrong; nevertheless it is important to realize that the textual and historical criticism of Modernism is behind the times, not merely by one, but by two generations. No classical scholar with a reputation to lose would *dare* to deal with the text and subject-matter of an ancient historian as even the more moderate Modernists deal with the Gospels—even the Synoptics.'

But we have not time to cover the whole ground with him. Come then at once to the central matter. It is miracle. Start where you will, you find yourself there. Most of the Modernists begin there. Miracle is not; never was; and cannot be—that is the axiom of axioms. No progress till that is realized. No beginning till that is conceded. But Dr. HARRIS refuses to concede it. He sees that the delivery of all the Gospel miracles on the scrap-heap of antiquarian rubbish is both uncritical and unphilosophical—in short, unscholarly. As a scholar he will not have it.

And not for many years has it been so easy to reject it. For the confident assertions of a whole generation about the stability, inviolability, and what not, of the processes of nature, are being every day proved more and more precarious, or even demonstrated to be untrue. Scientific facts were never more numerous or more reliable; scientific generalizations were never more uncertain. If there is a man who asserts to-day that within any considerable area of observation this or that cannot be, he is not a man of scientific accomplishment.

Dr. HARRIS gives examples. 'The important psychological discoveries of Mesmer (1733-1815), which formed the starting-point of the greatest positive advance in the science of psychology which has taken place since the days of Aristotle, were derided by the orthodox science of his day because they contradicted the laws of psychology as then understood, and also (practically) the whole previous experience of civilized man. Not till nearly a century later were the marvellous facts reluctantly and ungraciously admitted, with the result that the science of psychology had to be radically reconstructed in order to admit the amazing phenomena of hypnotism and of the subliminal consciousness.'

That is the first example. More unexpected is the phenomenon of stigmatization, which follows. 'Careful investigation of several modern instances has convinced the majority of those who have given attention to the subject that the phenomenon

is genuine, though at present physiologists are not in a position to explain it. M. Paul Sabatier, a Liberal Protestant and opponent of miracles, rejected it as incredible in the first edition of his well-known *Vie de S. François* (1894), but in his second edition he found himself forced to accept it.'

Much more surprising is the third example. 'Until quite recently it was a fixed principle of biology that without a supply of oxygen gas no living organism can exist. All experience confirmed this assumption, and not a single known fact contradicted it. Yet we now know that there is a large class of organisms, technically known as *anaërobic*, which not only do not require oxygen but which in some cases oxygen actually kills. It has been necessary to revise the principles of biology in order to admit this new knowledge.'

The fourth example is that of the mathematical horses of Elberfeld. But that example need not be repeated here. It was described in some fullness in a review of Maeterlinck's *The Unknown Guest*.

Mozley has made us familiar with the phrase, 'the reversal of human judgment.' These are some of the reversals of human judgment which have taken place in things scientific. They are not all, but they are enough to prevent any modern scholar from asserting that within the realm of nature this or that cannot be. We can still say that that cannot be which contradicts reason; we can no longer say that that cannot be which contradicts experience.

One of the authors of this month's books describes himself as a preacher of the simple gospel.

'The simple gospel.' The phrase is received in these days with a smile. But if there is not a simple gospel, what is to be done with simple folk? At the beginning they were considered. Are we

not to consider them now, being so many? Let us brave the smile and try.

Let us try the words: 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die' (Jn 11^{25, 26}). They are very familiar words. Are they as intelligible? They ought to be intelligible. For they were addressed to Martha, the plain homely woman, cumbered occasionally about much serving. 'He that believeth in me, though he have died, yet shall he be alive: and whosoever is alive and believeth in me shall never die.' Martha was puzzled; but we ought not to be so puzzled.

For we know that there are two kinds of life and two kinds of death. We usually speak of the one kind, Jesus usually spoke of the other. Here He speaks of both. There is the material physical life, and there is the immaterial spiritual life.

To live is to be in harmony with our surroundings. Our physical surroundings are air, food, heat or cold. To be in harmony with these things is to be alive; to be out of harmony is to be dead. If there is no air to breathe, or if we have not lungs to breathe it with, we die.

Our spiritual environment is God. To be in harmony with God is to be spiritually alive; to be out of harmony is to be dead. God is holy; if we are unholy, doing sinful deeds, we are out of harmony with Him. God is pure: if we harbour impure thoughts we are out of harmony with Him. God is love: if we are unloving or even indifferent we are utterly out of harmony with God, we are dead. 'Dead in trespasses and in sins.' 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Alive enough physically, she is spiritually dead.

Now we are born into the bodily life, and we are born again into the spiritual life. But there is a difference. We are born into the bodily life with no will of our own. In the spiritual birth

our own will is active and essential. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'—that is the statement to Nicodemus. 'Except ye turn, and become as little children'—that is the statement to the disciples. They are exactly parallel. To be born again is to start life anew, start it at the very beginning; it is to become as a little child again. And that can only be by an act of will. For let the wise and the simple both understand that 'except ye be converted' is a mistranslation. The verb is active. I have to do it or it is not done.

But I have not to do it alone. My will is essential, but my will is not everything. I cannot do it alone. It has often been tried, it has never succeeded. For even if I could bring myself by an act of will into harmony with God, what am I to do with my past? What am I to do with my present bad habits and evil tendencies? What am I to do with the weakness of the will itself?

I have to believe in Christ. That does it. For to believe in one (or *on* one, if you and the Revisers prefer it) is to be in harmony with one. Nowhere are we so hampered and side-tracked by the inadequacy of our English language as here. To believe, as Jesus spoke it, is to have faith. And to have faith is to throw oneself into the arms of another. If I throw myself on Christ, if I venture my life on Him, I believe in Him. And by doing so I am in harmony with Him.

And He is in harmony with God. So, if I have been spiritually dead, I become alive again. It is an act of my own will, this faith. But my will has not brought me into harmony with God. Christ has done that.

And then when I find that I am in harmony with God in Christ, I further find that the past is cancelled and the future secured. I have ventured myself on a Saviour who is able to save to the uttermost. He had power on earth to forgive sins; He has no less power in heaven.

And He gives Himself to me as surely as I give myself to Him. He is in me, my hope of glory. He is my present help in every time of need. He is to me the power of God. I can do all things in Christ who strengtheneth me. I am alive; I am alive for ever. 'He that believeth in me, even though he have died (physically), yet shall he be alive (spiritually); and whosoever is alive (physically), and believeth in me, shall never (spiritually) die.'

Why do men smile when you speak of 'the simple gospel'?

They smile because they think you mean the easy gospel. And in these days there is no thought that is more settled than the thought of the difficulty of the gospel. It is some years since a popular Methodist preacher published a volume of sermons and gave it the title of *The Strenuous Gospel*. Since that time the Christian pulpit has repeated the phrase and emphasized 'the difficulty of being a Christian.'

But the simple gospel does not mean the easy gospel. It is true that nothing seems easier than to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also true that for some of us nothing is more difficult. It depends on who we are.

If we are sinners and know it, there is no difficulty. But if we are righteous and think it, the difficulty cannot be exaggerated. For the sinner has nothing to do but repent of his sins and trust in Christ to save him, but the righteous man has to turn from his righteousness.

And so our Lord demanded always the conversion of the righteous; He never demanded the conversion of the sinner. The sinner had to repent. If he repented he was forgiven. He was forgiven at once. He was forgiven quietly. He was forgiven freely and fully. But the righteous man had to turn. He had to turn from his right-

eousness. That was the difficulty. And that is the difficulty still.

There is none greater. For to turn from one's righteousness is to turn from one's self.

'The strenuous gospel.' But when is it strenuous? At the beginning. The strait gate is at the entrance. The prodigal son had no difficulty in entering. He repented and was forgiven. The elder brother had great difficulty. Did he ever enter in? The 'woman that was a sinner' had no difficulty. She kissed His feet, and He said, 'Go in peace.' Simon the Pharisee had great difficulty. Did he ever enter in?

The difficulty is at the beginning. And for those who believe in themselves it is very great. But it is only at the beginning. Once in, the way is easy.

It is easy as all life is when it has room to live. There is nothing that more impresses us with ease than the life of the tree out in the open field, nourished with the soil, freshened with the rain, swayed and strengthened by the breeze. That is the life of the believer in Christ. If it is not always found so, it is the fault of the believer. The psalmists were sometimes perplexed, sometimes distressed, sometimes in despair. But they knew that the fault was theirs. It was due to feebleness of faith. When they believed, they got liberty—liberty to grow easily. 'Thou hast brought me out into a large place.'

For the life of the believer in Christ is unlike the life of a tree. The believer has a will and he has to use it. In order that his life may be easy he must *keep himself* in the love of God. There are certain ways of doing that, and he has to attend to them.

There is the way of Rest. That is first, and always first. It corresponds to sleep in the material life. Now we sleep not after the day's toil but

before it. We sleep to fit us for the toil of tomorrow. After sleep we come into the world. And the freshness with which we come, the abounding irrepressible vitality of the child is our continual astonishment. We begin our Christian life by rest. We put ourselves by faith into the Redeemer's hands; we 'rest upon him alone for salvation.' And then before every new morning's service we repeat the act of trust.

There is also the way of Service. In the material life we need to exercise the body and the mind. In the immaterial life we need to keep the spirit fit by daily doing the will of God. We take up our cross every day and follow the Lord. It is not necessarily a heavy cross. Necessarily?—it has no business to be. The Saviour's cross was heavy; but just to make ours light. For us now, 'my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

The service is manifold—some form that is most fitting for me always there. It obliterates distinctions. No sacred and secular. All is for Him. What *am* I fitted for? Let me not forget that every faculty I have is from Him and is to be employed in His service. And every faculty, as it is employed, is being trained for higher employment, for more pure and lasting service.

Then there is the way of Sustenance. In the material bodily life I need food. I cannot live long without it. In the spiritual life the spirit has also and as imperatively to be fed. What is the food of the spirit?

It is the Word of God. Take that comprehensively. It is found most accessibly, and we still think most nourishingly, in the book we call the Bible. Not equally in every book of the Bible? Perhaps not; but different appetites enjoy different sauces. In any case, first and chiefly in the Bible.

That is worth thinking about in these days. Many are feeble among us, and many sleep. They do not feed their spirits. They do not read the

Bible. You remember the Report of the Royal Commission—was it not a Royal Commission?—on the teaching of English? The commissioners said that the best teacher of English is the Bible. Ah, but it is the best teacher of God.

But how much Bible? Not much. Not much at a time. Take it in diets, as you take your bodily nourishment. How many diets in a day? Five, four, three, two? Surely two at least. What body will be sustained on less than two? Or what spirit? But the diet need not be a big one. Much better not. A full meal is undesirable. Let it be just as much as one can comfortably digest. And so rich are some of the meals which the Bible offers, that a very small portion will make a good diet.

Variety is commended in food. Do not adhere too closely or too constantly to one book. The Psalms are not as the Epistles. And the Epistles are not as the Gospels. Even the curried meat of Ecclesiastes has its use; even the sweets of the Song of Songs may be enjoyed by unjaded appetites. And if the Bible alone is to you as vegetarianism is to a meat-eater, then on an occasion, even for direct sustenance, go to John Bunyan, Thomas à Kempis, Alexander Whyte. And yet further?

Yes, further—if you know where you are and what you are there for.

But the great maintainer of the spiritual life is Prayer. It is the breathing of the bodily life.

And breathing is the first sign of life. Is the child still-born? Not even the doctor can tell otherwise than by the breathing. 'Behold he prayeth!'—it was the proof of Saul's spiritual life; what more could Ananias desire? And when the end comes, it is still the only evidence.

We watched her breathing through the night,
Her breathing soft and low;
As in her breast the tide of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

The breathing ceases and the life is ended. But he that believeth in Me shall never die. For he will never cease to pray.

He will never cease to pray. Did S. Paul forget that? 'Now abideth faith, hope, love—these three.' Did he forget prayer? He did not need to remember it. The anxious mother says, 'Now don't forget to take your meals regularly.' She does not say, 'Don't forget to breathe.' We do not need to be reminded to breathe. We breathe unconsciously. And this is prayer. It is unconscious. It is always. We pray without ceasing. There come occasions when breathing is conscious enough and even painful. It is then a wrestling with disease. And there come seasons when prayer is a terrible wrestling with doubt. But the normal prayer, the true prayer, is steady, unconscious, highly healthful communion with the Father.

Add to your faith prayer and reading and service and rest, and if these things be in you and abound, your spiritual life will be as a tree planted by the streams of water.