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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It is not often now that a preacher chooses the story of the Gadarene Swine as the text of his sermon. No doubt there is a certain Sunday of the year when by the Church Calendar it is the Gospel for the Day. But even then preachers are for the most part content to have the story read. On that Sunday this year, however, the Dean of St. Paul's took it for his text.

Did he take it for his text in order to protest against its place in the Lectionary? Very nearly. He did not protest in so many words. He declared his unbelief in the historical accuracy of the narrative. And if you had asked him, he would not have hesitated to say that, the narrative being untrue, it has no business to be one of the Lessons that have to be read in Public Worship.

Why does Dr. INGE disbelieve in the historical accuracy of this story? It seems to be because of the swine. He does not disbelieve in the existence of evil spirits. He does not disbelieve in the power of Jesus to order them about. But he is unable to believe that they can be sent into the bodies of the lower animals. And he has some trouble about 'the injury done by the miracle to the unoffending owner.'

Well, first of all, concerning the unoffending

owner of those swine. It is not yet forgotten that Mr. Gladstone and Professor Huxley had once a long controversy on the 'Gadarene Pig Affair' (as one of them called it) in one of the monthly magazines. The Dean of St. Paul's recalls that controversy. He thinks that 'the eminent statesman did not show his power to great advantage in the duel.' How could he?

He argued at an impossible disadvantage. He argued on the supposition that the place where the swine were kept was Gadara, and so presumably the owner was a Gentile and had a right to keep swine. But it is not possible from the story itself to believe that the place was Gadara. For Gadara is six or seven miles from the sea of Galilee. And if you can believe that the swine ran these six or seven miles before they 'ran violently down a steep place into the sea,' then you can believe anything in the narrative or out of it.

The place was on the shore of the lake, as the oldest text itself is sufficient to indicate. And so the owner was a Jew and was not 'unoffending.' He could not very easily have offended against the law of his land or the sentiment of his neighbours more seriously than he did. If he lost his swine he gained a lesson; perhaps he saved his soul.

About the possibility of sending evil spirits into the bodies of the lower animals we have nothing to say. We have nothing to say either for it or against it, for we know nothing about it. Nor are we greatly concerned. Much more important is the question whether there are evil spirits to send. And the Dean of St. Paul's believes that there are.

You will find his sermon in the latest volume of *The Christian World Pulpit* (James Clarke & Co.; 4s. 6d. net). It is a volume in which a fair representation is to be discovered of the preaching, let us say the best preaching, of our day. There are other sermons in it which deserve attention not less than this sermon by the Dean of St. Paul's. We choose Dr. INGE's sermon because it is impossible to overlook the significance of it. That a man of his independence of thought and unimpeachable scholarship should at a time like this tell us that he believes—not in evil, that were nothing, though he is most particular to say that his belief in evil is belief in a reality, a positive and terrible power, not a negative good,—but that he should believe in the existence and activity of evil spirits, is significant enough.

At the beginning of the war, when it was felt to be necessary to carry Christ with us into it, much was made of the 'scourge of small cords' with which He drove the traders out of the courts of the Temple.

But more would have been made of it if Dr. E. A. ABBOTT's book on *The Founding of the New Kingdom* had been published (Cambridge: At the University Press; 16s. 6d. net). For there were two obstacles to its fullest use, and he has removed them. One obstacle was the opinion of the commentators, from Alford to Keim, that the scourge was merely a twist of rushes picked off the floor. The other was a haunting doubt of the scourge's very existence. For it is mentioned only in the Fourth Gospel, and the Fourth Gospel places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning

instead of at the end of our Lord's ministry. Dr. ABBOTT has given the scourge a real existence, and he has made it a real scourge.

First, why do the Synoptists omit all mention of the scourge? Because the scourge of cords (the Revisers omit the word 'small') was required for the sheep and oxen, and as the Synoptists do not mention the sheep and oxen they do not need to mention the scourge. But why do they not mention the sheep and oxen? Dr. ABBOTT's answer is, 'Because, after one or two visits of Jesus to the Temple, He had succeeded in abating the market abuse to such an extent that the sheep and oxen were removed and nothing remained but the doves.'

Dr. ABBOTT does not offer that as an absolutely certain solution. There are still 'great difficulties.' He even suggests another solution, that Mark (followed by Matthew and Luke) omitted the sheep and oxen deliberately because they affected only the rich, and fastened upon the doves because they represented the oppression of the poor. He leaves us to make our choice. But of one thing he is quite sure, and it is the main thing. The Fourth Evangelist did not invent the scourge. Though not too original for 'a great Jewish prophet,' it is far too original for John.

He is equally certain that it was a real scourge. He will have nothing to do with the rushes. The word never means rushes, either in the Septuagint or in Greek literature. And how do we know that the floor of the Temple courts was covered with rushes? "'Rushes" would seem more suitable to the bank of the Nile than to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.'

What was the scourge of cords, then? Dr. ABBOTT turns to the 118th Psalm: 'Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar' (Ps 118²⁷). 'Each victim, presumably, would have a cord attached to it for the purpose of leading it, and binding it, to receive the sacrificial

stroke. From such "cords" Jesus might construct, and encourage His followers to construct, the "scourge" in question.'

There is no more common, and there is no more mischievous, misconception of Christianity than the belief that it is a religion of negations. A biography (?) has been written, and is noticed on another page, of W. E. FORD, an educational reformer. One of the authors of the biography begins with this amazing statement: 'The practice of all present-day religions is founded on the commandments beginning "thou shalt *not*," treating God as lawgiver and judge, a creature swift to anger and to condemnation.'

Amazing as it is, that statement is characteristic of the thinking of our day. That is the opinion of men, of young men especially, here, there, and everywhere throughout the world; and nowhere more than in the fighting forces. And until we get men to see that that conception of Christianity is radically and ludicrously false, our hope of having them when the war is over is a hope that has not the least prospect of realization.

What is the origin of the idea? We shall not say the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, for the suggestion would be treated at once as absurd. But the writings of Nietzsche have something to do with it. This is the charge which Nietzsche made against Christianity. He made it with all the force of his marvellous command of language. And it has to be remembered that while the pocket edition of *Also sprach Zarathustra* had reached a circulation, before the war, of a hundred and forty thousand, the sale of the English translations (there are more than one of them) have also had a large though an unrecorded sale. We must answer every man who calls Christianity the religion of the coward. We must answer Nietzsche.

The Bross Lectures for 1915 were delivered by the Rev. John Neville FIGGIS, D.D., Litt.D., of

the Community of the Resurrection. Their title, as now published, is *The Will to Freedom* (Longmans; 6s. net). Their subject is the gospel of Nietzsche and the gospel of Christ. Dr. FIGGIS is no indiscriminate assailant of Nietzsche's gospel. He believes in much of it. But he is very sure that Nietzsche was all wrong when he denounced Christianity as the religion of the weakling.

'He might have been undeceived, had he read a little more Church history, or even studied the New Testament which he so heartily despised. He could hardly then have ignored the words about abundant life and fulness of joy—while St. Paul's frequent references to joy in suffering would seem almost designed to meet Nietzsche's own experience. It is not the sense of weakness, but of power that is the most obvious thing in the psychology of the early Christians. Two great facts about the Church impress themselves upon the reader of the New Testament: (1) it was possessed by a spirit of power; (2) it was a separating, distinguishing force, adding to dignity: "Ye are a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people."'

Nietzsche was misled by the Christian demand for self-denial. That he interpreted to mean a demand for self-suppression; and such a demand went contrary to his favourite idea of the Superman. But even his own Superman has to deny himself. In describing him Nietzsche went so far as to say that self-denial which involves suffering is a condition of insight. It is just what any good Christian will say. Did not Bishop Creighton assert that suffering gives an insight denied to thought? And did not Professor Hort declare that power of life means power of suffering?

In the demand for self-denial the gospel of Christ and the gospel of Nietzsche are at one. They are also at one in the purpose of it. For this is the question regarding self-denial: 'whether it be to abstain from alcohol, or to face an almost certain death in the trenches—to what purpose is

this waste? Is the ointment of man's tears to be poured out, and the alabaster of his gifts to be broken for a noble or an ignoble purpose? Is the result to be the development or the annihilation of the personality? The latter is the teaching of Schopenhauer, of Buddhism, and of the various forms of Oriental pessimism. To them the individual being is the supreme evil, or else the curse of existence. Christianity and Nietzsche also might commend the same ascetic practices as the Buddhist; but the object is different. Always it is the development of the personality—not its extinction. It is a negative means to reach a positive end. "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" is the principle of Christian asceticism; every whit as much as the expansion of Life is the maxim of Nietzsche.

There is this difference, however, that Nietzsche never discerns power except as explosion. There is no reserve with himself: there is no repression in his doctrine. No doubt the first lesson of courage is what he calls 'Yea-saying to life'; not to shrink; not to stop development because of dangers or fatigues; to face the unknown; to be adventurous, and so forth. Equally needful and harder to teach is the lesson of No-saying, *i.e.* to concentrate, to limit oneself, to hold oneself in; to control the desire to be always on the move.

That is the first great error which Dr. FICCIUS finds in Nietzsche's conception of Christianity. The second is the belief that Christian love is nothing more than sympathy with suffering. It is not only weakness in itself but it encourages weakness in others.

Now sympathy with suffering is a large part of Christian love. It may even be said, and with thankfulness, that the central doctrine of Christianity is the loving pity of a Saviour for the 'lost.' It will not be hidden by any preacher of the Christian gospel that the Saviour's own sermon was on the prophetic text, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good

tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.' Nietzsche may object to that. He may call it the most detestable doctrine that ever was preached. But it is only his astonishing ignorance of the history of the Christian Church that makes it possible for him to say that that gospel has produced the weakling or perpetuated his existence in the world. 'I came,' said Jesus, 'that they may have life, and may have it abundantly,' and that purpose He has fulfilled in His sympathy with suffering.

There is another misconception. Nietzsche 'misconceived the Christian doctrine of equality before God. That doctrine asserts that every soul has an eternal value, none is merely a thing, a tool. Nietzsche, it is true, would deny this, except for the few. But when he goes on to say that Christianity makes all souls equal, in the sense that it denies the aristocracy of character, he is asserting the direct contrary of the fact. This alleged over-democratic character of Christianity is not there. In its doctrine of the saints, it asserts clearly definite degrees and carries them beyond this life. Further, it goes on to say that what matters is the whole personality. That, indeed, sometimes undergoes a cataclysmic change in the process we call conversion. But this is not universal. The point is that neither on earth nor beyond it does Christianity deny the "aristocracy of character"—although it has never, like Nietzsche, asserted its right to tyrannise in virtue of superiority.'

There is no doctrine that seems more reasonable in itself or more appropriate to the present time than the doctrine of Purgatory. We may be offended by the name, for assuredly it has offensive associations. But it stands for the belief that those who have been taken unprepared into Eternity are there made fit, before they enter finally into the inheritance of the saints in light. And what can be more reasonable or reassuring than that?

But the Rev. R. G. GILLIE does not believe in Purgatory, or in anything that the name stands for. A volume has been prepared for the present distress under the title of *Our Boys Beyond the Shadow* (Sampson Low; 4s. 6d. net). It is edited by the Rev. Frederick HASTINGS, and consists of eighteen papers by scholars from all the Churches—Dr. Charles Brown, Mr. Bernard Snell, the Bishop of Birmingham, Mr. Charles Allan, the Archdeacon of Middlesex, Dr. Horton, Mr. Spurr, Mr. Rattenbury, Mr. Piggott, Dr. Clifford, Dr. Monro Gibson, Mr. Day Thompson, the Dean of Gloucester, Mr. Hastings himself, and Mr. Gillie. Mr. GILLIE writes three of the papers. One of them is entitled 'Is Purgatory Necessary?' Mr. GILLIE does not believe that Purgatory is necessary.

Now if Purgatory is not necessary it is nothing. For it has no support from the New Testament. Only three or four passages can by any kind of interpretation be taken into its service, and the interpretation that takes them in is unreliable. Its existence as a doctrine is due, not to a study of the New Testament, but to the attempt of an un-instructed Church to meet a natural human failing. Any attraction that it has to-day is due to the encouragement of that failing, together with a complete misunderstanding of 'that state of the blessed dead which we call heaven.'

But it is not necessary. For our young men were not what we thought they were when hastily they departed hence. They were not so unprepared as we thought. We did not know them. 'They were inarticulate and shy, and the effort was too great for them to make, to speak of their inmost thoughts. There was much more in them than they ever allowed us to see, or themselves to admit. "A boy's will is a wind's will, but the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." There are two things that make us sure of this.'

One thing is the way in which they gave themselves to the sacrifice. 'Quite simply, drawn as irresistibly as the iron filings by the loadstone,—

they yielded to the calls imperilling their career, their prospects, their dearest hopes, and their earthly life. We can never forget that revelation of what lay asleep in their young manhood, this capacity for utter surrender to the call of duty. Having seen that glimpse of heavenliness in lives that sometimes seemed so earthbound, one may well be slow to conclude that God cannot give to such their starting point in His heaven.'

The other thing is more immediately convincing. It is the reading of the letters which have been written by them and which were to be opened only if they died. 'Facing the great experience of death, scarcely hoping to escape it, they have written a few lines unbaring their hearts for once, and what have we read there? Thoughts of home, a plea for forgiveness of any distress they have caused, an upward look to God, selflessness, courage, thanks for any spiritual influence, a great love. Though I know something of the human heart, such a letter,' says Mr. GILLIE, 'has shown me that I too had failed to read what lay behind the gay exterior and the joy of life. Yes, and it lay even behind the not infrequent aversion to services or indifference to Church matters. Behind all, there was still a seed of reverence, of sacrificial love, of loyal trust in those hearts, which many never knew, and which sometimes they did not know themselves.'

Is that not enough to make Purgatory unnecessary? There is more than that. Turn to the gospel. What is the gospel? Is it not the gospel of the grace of God? And what is grace? Is it merit? Purgatory is matter of merit. They who enter heaven after passing through the discipline of a Middle State enter because they are worthy: Is that the gospel of the grace of God?

'We misread,' says Mr. GILLIE, 'the overwhelming power of the unhindered grace of God. None of us are going to be in the Father's House because we are worthy, but only because of His

mercy in Christ Jesus. We shall not be there because we are fit to be there when we leave the earth. The greatest saint on earth is not fit. "The spirits of just men made perfect" are the inhabitants of heaven. It is not death that makes us perfect,—it is not the escape from the material body and from this earthly scene which is going to perfect us. There has to be a miracle of completing grace before any one of us can be fit for the society of the angels and for the redeemed in their sinless robes.'

'The overwhelming power of the unhindered grace of God.' What hinders it? Not sin, not sinful habit, not even crime and a career of it. Nothing but unrepentance. The moment that repentance comes, the grace of God is free, and its power is overwhelming. 'Two young men greatly contrasted, ended their lives very soon after Jesus,—the one was the bandit, who was on a neighbouring cross by the side of Christ, the other was Saint Stephen, the first martyr. The assurance Jesus gave the criminal was, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Had the saint any higher assurance? Was it not the same assurance which made his death-cry, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," before he fell asleep? The difference between Stephen and that crucified ill-doer was far greater than the difference between many a young man, whose name was on no Church roll before he died, and the most devoted Christian.

Jesus did not hesitate to say, "To-day," "with me," "in Paradise."

We do not know the grace of God when we demand a Purgatory of discipline. And we do not know God. We make Him in our own image, after our own likeness. We think He cannot be bothered with us till we are ready to give Him no bother. To pass for a moment from Mr. GILLIE, there is a book on *The Unfolding of Life* which has been written by the Rev. W. T. A. BARBER, D.D., Head Master of the Leys School. It is the Fernley Lecture for the year. In that book there is a story told.

'We remember,' says Dr. BARBER, 'a happy home in which a buzzing swarm of children were always round an adored mother. Sometimes, in humorous despair, she would drive them away: "Oh, children, do go away and give me a little peace." When they came with the usual puzzles of childhood and asked why, if heaven were so lovely, God did not take them to live with Him right away, their mother could only point out how lonely she would be; but the answer obviously did not satisfy. One day the youngest boy came with face all radiant; he had solved the riddle: "I know why God doesn't take us all at once to heaven. *He wants a little peace first.*" Quite naturally and rightly he had made a God in the image of his mother.'

'If God be for us.'

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. A. G. HOGG, M.A., MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, INDIA.

'If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'—Rom. 8^{31, 32}.

How satisfyingly inclusive is the catalogue of dangers which, in the chapter from which the text is taken, the Apostle sums up and tosses contemptuously aside! 'I am certain,' he says, that 'neither death nor life, neither angels nor principal-

ties, neither the present nor the future, no powers of the Height or of the Depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to part us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Dr. Moffatt's version). In the commonplace days of peace, which now seem so far-away a memory, we might have been content with St. Paul's first antithesis, 'neither death nor life.' But in these present days when the name of a certain political power