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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

WITH all our study of the humanity of our Lord we have made little yet of His knowledge. When we speak of it we land ourselves for the most part in contradiction. We are told that He knew what was in man, and we believe it. The next moment we say that He was mistaken regarding His own Return.

Did He know, or did He not know? Leave the Second Coming alone. Did He know what other men have not known? So strong is the tendency at present towards the emphasizing of His manhood that the answer will often be that He did not. But there are men that make much of His manhood who nevertheless are compelled to recognize it as a fact that His knowledge was more than the knowledge of a man.

Mr. W. P. LIVINGSTONE recognizes it. Mr. LIVINGSTONE has written a book to which he has given the title of *The New Outlook* (Hodder & Stoughton; 4s. 6d. net). But the sub-title describes it better, 'An Ideal of Life for To-day.' That ideal he expresses by a single word, a hyphenated word, love-law. For love and law are the great facts of our existence, not distinct and independent, but one, a twofold force. And 'evolution is what takes place when we submit to the love-law, the survival of the fittest not by struggle and pain but by obedience to the "pull" of the

influence at the centre of things. It is like an endless life-line running through existence; if we grasp it and yield ourselves to it, it will draw us onwards into the higher forms of being.'

Now this love-law, which is the one great fact of existence, needs an interpreter. The interpreter is Jesus. This is the way in which Mr. LIVINGSTONE understands the entrance of Jesus into the world. He came to make things clear. He came to explain the law of love under which we live. Mr. LIVINGSTONE is very well aware that there are passages which seem to speak of some other purpose. He has not forgotten that the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom. But he will not allow any passage to set Jesus in opposition to the love-law which rules the universe, whether by miracle or by substitutionary sacrifice. He came to interpret the love-law, not to set it aside.

But the surprising thing is that Jesus left so much without an interpretation. Was it because He could not interpret more? Mr. LIVINGSTONE will not allow it. 'With the knowledge that Jesus possessed He could have laid bare to men and women the mysteries of the universe.' Why, then, did He not interpret more?

Take the life to come. If He knew the mysteries of the universe, He knew every one of

the things which we so greatly yearn to know—and never more than now. Turn for a moment to another book.

Dr. J. D. JONES has published a volume of sermons which have been found good for comfort at this time. The title is *If a Man Die* (Hodder & Stoughton; 3s. 6d. net), and every sermon is occupied with immortality. But how little Dr. JONES can tell us about the life to come. For he has no certain information beyond what Jesus told, and Jesus told so little.

'I wonder,' he says, 'why it was He said so little. I wonder why it was He contented Himself with saying simply that beyond the grave there was His Father's house, and that in that house there was plenty of room. Why did He not go on to describe its life? Why did He not go on to tell whether in the life to come men and women know one another and love one another? Why did He not tell us more about the glory and blessedness of that life?'

Are there any answers? Dr. JONES thinks there may be two.

First he thinks that our Lord did not wish to detract from the critical importance of the life which now is. '*This* is the life in which we shape character and gain soul. *This* life is our day, in which we accomplish the work which the Father has given us to do. If Christ had laid the emphasis upon the Hereafter, and minutely described its glories for us, we might have been so consumed with desire for the "Saints' Everlasting Rest" as to neglect and almost despise the present hour.' That is one reason.

The other reason is that room must be left for faith to work in. 'We walk by faith, not by sight.' We have to take many things 'on trust.' 'Our Lord deliberately left some things in shadow, not clear-cut and defined, but just outlined and suggested—His own Divinity, for instance—that faith

in Him might always stand for a real venture and vote of the soul. And He left the nature of the Life Beyond in shadow too, that we might walk by faith, that we might venture everything on our trust in Him.'

Those are the reasons for Christ's reticence that appeal to Dr. JONES. Return to Mr. LIVINGSTONE. He also has two reasons. First of all, he says, Christ told men nothing that they could find out for themselves. And, next, He told them nothing but what they were able to understand.

'Suppose, for instance, that He had described the forces lying latent in nature and how they could have been applied to the service of the world as we see them applied now. They would not only have laughed Him to scorn, they would have deemed Him mad. And if they could not have believed had He told them things pertaining to the plane of the earth, how would they have believed if He had told them facts about the Unseen? He did not attempt it. On all points where a revelation of truth would have been inconsistent with the world-scheme of His Father He maintained reserve. An ordinary teacher, ambitious to make a reputation, would have endeavoured to answer all their questions, would have given them some theory of the earth, offered an explanation of the mechanism of living, and swept back with a light hand the veil that covers the unknown. It was because Jesus knew all that He told less than He knew.'

'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it' (Mt 16¹⁸). What is the latest interpretation?

You will find it in *The Church Times* for November 9. The Rev. N. P. WILLIAMS, M.A., Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, is delivering a series of lectures at St. Mary's, Graham Street, London, on 'Our Case as against Rome.' The lectures are reported in *The Church Times*. In

the second lecture Mr. WILLIAMS gives his interpretation of this much interpreted text.

But first of all he thinks that too much importance is attached to the text. It is reported only by St. Matthew. That shows that it made no particular impression on our Lord's hearers or on those to whom they reported it.

In the next place, this was not the first time that Simon was called the Rock. 'If you look at St. Jn 1⁴², you will find that even before St. Peter's definite call, when he met our Lord casually on the banks of the Jordan, our Lord looked upon him and said, "Thou art called Simon; thou shalt be named Cephas," which, as the Fourth Evangelist tells us, is by interpretation a stone. The name of Peter was, therefore, not given to Simon for the first time at Cæsarea Philippi. In Mt 16¹⁸, our Lord is simply playing upon a *soubriquet* or familiar name which Simon already bore amongst the Apostles: "Thou art Peter"; in other words, "Thou art already called Peter, thou art already called the 'rock,' and upon this 'rock,' symbolized by thy name, I will build My Church."

Thirdly, the Rock is Peter himself. It is not (in the decided opinion of Mr. WILLIAMS) Peter's faith or the doctrine of the Messiahship of our Lord which he had just proclaimed, it is Peter himself. 'If we approach the matter with open minds—if we try to follow the advice which a British judge gives to a jury, that is, to banish from their minds anything which they may have read on the subject of the case before them and to approach the evidence without preconceived opinions—it will seem to us most probable that the "rock" is St. Peter himself: "Thou art generally called the 'rock-man,' and upon this rock I will build My Church."

But Peter is not the only Rock. He is not *the* Rock. He is *a* Rock. And just as the binding and loosing was conferred on the other disciples as well as on Peter, so we must believe that the other

disciples were rocks on which the Church was to be built just as much as he.

And finally, the honour of the Rock carried no sovereignty or pre-eminence with it. How does Mr. WILLIAMS know that? He reads the New Testament. He reads the Gospels, and he finds that after Peter was made the Rock, James and John came to Jesus and desired the first and second places in the Kingdom; and he reads that the Twelve disputed who should be the greatest.

He reads the Acts, and He finds that Peter and John were *sent* to Samaria. 'Can you imagine the present College of Cardinals "sending" Pope Benedict xv. to administer Confirmation in Naples? Being "sent" is something that a chairman, or a president, or a primate might quite well experience at the hands of his colleagues, but it is an experience totally inconsistent with the idea of "Sovereignty."'

He reads the Acts again, and he finds that Peter is superseded, as it were, by one who never was of the Twelve, and that on a certain occasion this Paul 'administered what we should call a severe "lecture" to St. Peter; and he adds, with a slight touch of satisfaction, that he administered this lecture "before them all." He did not content himself with private expostulation, but denounced what he considered to be the vacillation and inconsistency of the chief of the elder Apostles, in the presence of a full Christian *Ecclesia*.'

Once more he reads the Acts, and he sees that not Peter but Paul was the man upon whom fell 'the care of all the churches.' If St. Peter, says Mr. WILLIAMS, 'had said that, it would have been an absolutely final and clinching proof of the Roman hypothesis; it would have been transparently clear that St. Peter exercised a supreme directing control over the whole Church on earth. But it was *not* said by St. Peter. This text alone shows as plainly as possible that St. Paul did not

conceive himself as being the deputy of St. Peter, and with that admission it seems to me that the Ultramontane hypothesis collapses, on its historical side, like a house of cards.'

There is a phrase in that text about the Rock which deserves a note to itself. It receives a whole chapter to itself in a fine scholarly volume of essays which has been published by the Archbishop of Dublin. The title of the volume is *Studia Sacra* (Hodder & Stoughton; 6s. net). The title of the fourth chapter in it is 'The Gates of Hades'—for that is the phrase referred to.

'The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.' Why the *gates*? We expect aggression, but gates do not attack. The phrase itself is common enough. Hezekiah says, 'I shall go into the gates of Sheol' (Is 38¹⁰); and we have the same expression outside the Bible as in it, in Homer and Aeschylus as in Isaiah and in Wisdom. The difficulty is in making gates into something that has to be resisted.

Perhaps the familiarity of the phrase is its explanation. In any case no explanation can be found for it as it stands, and Dr. BERNARD resorts to translation. He turns to the parable of the house built on a rock. What assailed it? The flood, the streams. Now if our Lord had said 'the flood of Hades,' or 'the fountains of the Deep' shall not prevail against it, the metaphor would have been impressive and the meaning clear. Perhaps some scribe mistook 'streams' (*πηγαί*) for 'gates' (*πύλαι*). That is one possible explanation. But Dr. BERNARD is not satisfied with it.

He tries another. Our Lord spoke in the Hebrew of His day. Now in Hebrew there is a word which, pointed one way, means 'gate' (*עַזְמַי*), another way 'storm' (*עַזְמַי*). The difference is so slight—it is literally the difference of a point—that any scribe might be excused for mistaking the one word for the other. If he was translating into

Greek he would then say 'gates of Hades,' instead of 'floods of Hades'—the very frequency of the phrase 'gates of Hades' helping to send him astray. The mistake is actually made in some manuscripts of Is 28².

'One other point ought to be mentioned. Commentators are prone to say that the metaphor of the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" in Mt 16¹⁹ was suggested by the mention of "gates" in the preceding verse. But it is not clear that these verses are connected. They are not conjoined by the word "and," which the *textus receptus* erroneously inserts. They are separate and distinct sayings: "Upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the storms (gates) of hell shall not prevail against it": "I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," etc. There is a complete change of metaphor, and even if the word "gates" be retained, the two sayings are best treated as independent of each other. The Rock which is the foundation of the Church is a different image from that of the Steward who holds the keys of the kingdom.'

It has taken the theory of Evolution a long time to make its issues clear. Two of its most momentous issues are even now but dawning upon us. Yet both were inevitable if the theory was accepted without reserve. One is that the Christian life is a gradual growth; the other that our Lord gradually recognized the work that He had to do. The one result makes Conversion a misunderstanding; the other makes Miracle an impertinence.

The first conclusion is that the Christian life is a gradual growth. It is stated plainly and quite uncompromisingly by Professor G. A. COE of the Union Theological Seminary in New York City, in a volume entitled *A Social Theory of Religious Education* (Scribners; \$1.50 net).

There are two commandments, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and

strength and mind"—that is the first. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'—that is the second. These two commandments are for young as well as old, for children not less than for adults. And the religious education of children is simply training them to love the Lord with all their heart and their neighbour as themselves.

We have recognized that. But we have begun with the wrong commandment. We have begun with the love of God. We should have begun with the love of our neighbour. Professor COE does not deny the possibility of 'early piety.' But he thinks it rare. In any case, no child, he says, can feel the love of God in his heart until he has felt the love of his brother. The religion of childhood is a social religion.

So also is the religion of manhood. The child growing to man's estate does not cast off the religion he has gained and begin anew. If hitherto we have taught that, as the period of adolescence approaches, a sharp outlook should be kept for a crisis in the religious life, our teaching has been a mistake. There are no crises in life, whether natural or spiritual. All is growth by imperceptible movements; if not always in a straight line, yet always forward to the shining of the perfect day. Instead of looking for, and encouraging the growing child to look for, a crisis in life, to be called his Conversion, 'the constant aim of elementary religious education should be to make conversion unnecessary.' Those are Professor COE's words.

Observe their double edge. First, it is no longer possible to say that as the wind bloweth where it listeth so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Professor COE claims that we have given up that text already, or at least our old interpretation of it. He says that we have ceased to speak of regeneration as a Divine experience, and when we speak of conversion we make it a purely human act. 'The typical appeal now becomes to "decide for Christ," and highly coloured emotions are

declared to be non-essential. Here we find a shift of emphasis from God's acts in us and with respect to us, to our acts with respect to Him and His purposes. What here remains as characteristic of evangelicalism is little more than the teaching that to be a Christian one must at some particular instant cross a line that separates the saved from the unsaved.'

But, in the second place, it is not necessary now even to decide for Christ. Referring to an article on Conversion by Professor H. R. MACKINTOSH of the New College, Edinburgh, Professor COE says: 'A recent writer in a magazine that is published in the interest of the religious life of boys treats the Christian experience as if it must have its beginning in the bluntness of a conscious life choice. He speaks of a *day* when we choose to take religion in earnest, of an *hour* when the gospel must be deliberately accepted or deliberately rejected. "The choice of life," he says, "cannot be broken up into little bits." Here we have a mechanical rather than a vital mode of thought concerning the things of character. The successive acts in which a will grows are thought of, not in terms of growth but of accretion, or as so many mutually external bits which are merely juxtaposed or heaped up. The same type of thought appears in those who hold that every child must be on one side or the other of a fixed line that separates the saved from the unsaved. Parents whose affection makes it impossible for them to set up any such mechanical division between their own offspring, especially between young children, often fail to see the incongruity of ascribing anything of the kind to God.'

* Now it is evident to Professor COE that his theory of religious education, which so unswervingly insists upon growth, with no crises or days of decision, is purely human. However much may be for God, nothing in it comes from God. It is human in its origin, it is human in all its history. Religion is brotherly love. Dr. COE slightly alters the language of St. John. He does not say, If a

man love not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? He says, the man who loves his brother loves God. 'A social conception of God' (these are his words) 'and of our reconciliation with Him will recognize every affectionate pulse-beat as divine. Religious education will seize upon every impulse to generosity, to justice, and to co-operation as an occasion to make the pupil realize that just here he is in fellowship with the church and with the Father.'

One issue of the theory of Evolution, when accepted unreservedly, is to make the Christian life a gradual growth and leave no room for Conversion. The other is to make the life of our Lord a gradual enlightenment of His understanding and leave no room for Miracle. Professor COE expresses the one result, the Rev. J. A. ROBERTSON the other.

Mr. ROBERTSON is an Edinburgh minister. He has a record of scholarship surpassed by few of his time. He has given himself to the work of the ministry with ability and untiring devotion. He has just published a volume of lectures, 'The Bruce Lectures for 1917.' The title is *The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus* (James Clarke & Co; 4s. 6d. net).

Many years ago Professor BRUCE of Glasgow headed a movement to which was given the title of 'Back to Christ.' The new movement is 'Back to Jesus.' If it has not more push, it has more momentum. And it means more. Professor BRUCE called us back from the theology of St. Paul to the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The new movement calls us from the Christ of St. John and the Epistles to the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels.

Of this movement there is no more representative and certainly no more fascinating writer than the author of *The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus*. His purpose is to detect the occasions on which

Jesus discovered the uniqueness of His relationship to God and the peculiarity of His work, and then to show how He maintained that relationship and accomplished that work.

We are arrested at once by that word 'unique.' Mr. ROBERTSON uses it without hesitation. 'This unique phenomenon,' he says,—'Jesus' *rapport* with the mind and spirit of God was not something that came and went, like the intermittent contact of a man with his friend. We might adapt Bengel's beautiful and suggestive remark about the closing days of the Master's life—" *habitabat in passione sua*"—and say that throughout the entire career of His mature manhood He was consciously dwelling in the soul of God.'

How did this unique phenomenon arrive? It came to Him very early in life, in His childhood, before the journey to Jerusalem and the visit to the Temple, probably years before. It came through contemplation of the things around Him, the fields round Nazareth, the village life. It came through His mother's teaching, His father's example. It was in part an inheritance. It came 'out of the accumulated knowledge of the long search of His race for God.'

In what sense, then, was it unique? Mr. ROBERTSON carries us at once to the great passage in St. Matthew's Gospel—the greatest passage in all the Synoptic Gospels—Mt 11²⁷: 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.'

The authenticity of that passage has been questioned. Mr. ROBERTSON does not question it. 'For if these words are not the spontaneous utterance of a genuine experience they can only be the result of prolonged speculative reflection. The straight-forward explanation—that they are the open avowal of an inner fact of consciousness—is the only one that satisfies. As such they are

simple, natural, and inevitable—all of a piece with the living context of the life of Jesus. They are the expression, clear and unsophisticated; of what leaps out like light from Jesus' words and actions in a hundred ways, direct and indirect. He at least recognized this consciousness as a personal experience peculiarly His own.'

But in what sense was this consciousness unique? That is still our question. Mr. ROBERTSON answers, In its degree and in its persistence, 'We do not say that such a consciousness of spiritual oneness with God has never, before or since, been approached or even achieved, in the religious history of the world. On the contrary it has. Indian and Semitic faiths alike bear witness to the inner strain and struggle of the One Immanent Spirit of God in its age-long yearning to find the perfect embodiment of the Divine Consciousness within the limits of finitude. But except in the case of Jesus we think it must be said that the experience of union with God has not always been coherent; it has been intermittent and always incomplete.' 'Of the entire life of no man save Jesus might it be written "*Habitabat in anima Dei.*"'

But Jesus was sinless? Mr. ROBERTSON has again no doubt. 'He carried "no scars of a frightful struggle," did not pass through "the desert of a deep contrition." His soul passed from the winsome innocence preceding moral maturity to that of the piercing purity that knows, without a *μετάνοια*, because, when that hour arrived for Him, His striving and aspiring soul, entering the realm of moral individuality, became linked in a realized communion with God. The vague inarticulate feeling of at-home-ness, child-trustfulness, in the world around Him, passed without pain of remorse or penitence into clear apprehension of that Divine Presence which was His soul's Home. Thus the words throb with all the reality of a personal experience on the lips of Jesus, "the pure in heart see God."

Does not sinlessness involve uniqueness absolute—a uniqueness to which no man has attained or can attain? Mr. ROBERTSON does not say that. 'Sinlessness,' he says, 'is not a non-natural fact, even if there be but one perfect realization of it in human history. Jesus' sinlessness is the moral miracle of Christendom, because His life was the only perfectly normal entrance on, and continuance in, the moral life; it is the ideal and norm of all true human development—the unfolding of a soul steadfastly and unbrokenly within the abiding presence of the Divine. . . . And there *have* been approximations to the ideal: cases of awakening to moral responsibility which might be compared to a mother rousing her infant from slumber with a kiss. It was so, perfectly, in the experience of Jesus.'

Well, what more need we ask? We ask just one thing more—a Saviour. Mr. ROBERTSON passes on to the third section of his book—'The Cross in the Experience of Jesus.' But even there the experience is a purely human experience, not the experience of one who can offer a ransom for his brother. We are in need of a Saviour, and Mr. ROBERTSON offers us a Saint.

'The storm has moved round the whole horizon; but it is rapidly concentrating its strength and fury above one sacred Head. This, this is the real issue of the fight—Is Christendom to believe in Christ any longer or no? It is a battle in which everything is to be lost or won. It is not a theory of ecclesiastical polity which is in danger, it is not a theological system, it is not a creed, it is not the Old Testament or the New, but the claim of Christ Himself to be the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind. This is surely enough to stir the Church to vehement enthusiasm, and to inspire it with its old heroic energy. It is a controversy, not for theologians merely, but for every man who has seen the face of Christ, and can bear personal testimony to His power and glory.'

Who said that? DALE of Birmingham. He said that in an address to the Congregational Union of England and Wales, on the 11th of May 1869—say, fifty years ago. He is here to say it to-day.

Do we say it? 'Our people come to us'—this is DALE again—'our people come to us wearied with work and worn with sorrow, distracted with the cares of business, anxious about their children, mourning for their dead. They are conscious of sin, and are yearning for a deeper and more perfect peace with God; conscious of spiritual darkness and weakness, and longing for the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. I believe as firmly as any one, that no Church discharges its duty to man and God that does not produce thinkers and scholars competent to take their part in all the religious conflicts which disturb and excite the intellect of Christendom; and I also believe that we may sometimes discuss in the pulpit the critical, social,

and philosophical theories which are imperilling the faith of our contemporaries. But such discussions can be attempted only occasionally by any of us; and very many of us must leave them altogether untouched.

'Again, therefore, I ask, What are we to do? It appears to me that our true course is plain and direct. We have one duty to discharge, which includes all others. We have no new Gospel to preach; we must preach the old Gospel still, and preach it to all men. Christ is the Prince, and Christ is the Saviour of the human race. That is just as true to-day as it ever was. It is not for us to rescue either individual men or nations from the doubt, from the misery, from the confusion, or from the sin by which they are distracted and oppressed, but for Christ. I want to show that by preaching CHRIST we shall best discharge our duty to this troubled and restless age.'

The World in the Valley of Decision.

BY THE REV. JOHN TELFORD, B.A., DORKING, SURREY.

JOEL committed his message to a little prophetic book which has brought it safely down through more than twenty-five centuries. His prophecy is more alive and more full of meaning to-day than when it was first written, for the Valley of Decision is in it with God's swift approaching 'Day,' and in it also is that Promise of the outpoured Spirit on which Peter based his mighty appeal on the Day of Pentecost.

We know nothing of Joel save his name. His father's name once meant something, but to us Pethuel lives in his son—the patent of nobility, like that of China, goes backward. It suggests much godly training in a home where enlarged views were cherished of the Divine government of the world, and the coming verdict on the ways of men and of nations was eagerly expected. Joel is a prophet for troubled times. He comes to a generation groaning under the severest strokes of national misfortune. His opening words set the whole scene before us: 'Hear this, ye old men,

and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.' The visitation brought by the terrible plague of locusts is then described. It has cut off the wine of the drunkard; it has laid waste the vine, and barked the fig tree. The temple is robbed of its meat offering and drink offering; all the husbandry of the land has perished. 'Joy is withered away from the sons of men.'

Here is surely a message for our own times. No one can say that Joel's faith and courage were not put to the sharpest test, yet he rises triumphantly above the storm. He sees God sitting on His throne. He feels that the day of the Lord is near in the Valley of Decision. Like a true prophet he makes capital out of the nation's sorrows. He bases on them an appeal to all that is best in the character of his countrymen. The