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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

AMONG educated men the old controversy between Religion and Science will never again be waged, we may be sure, as it was waged during the latter half of last century. Then it was made to turn largely round the early chapters of Genesis: all the recent literature of that controversy shows how far we have moved from that restricted standpoint. The controversy itself is as keen as ever, but it is conducted in a much friendlier spirit, thanks, on the one hand, to a truer appreciation of the nature and limitations of science, and, on the other, to a better understanding of the nature of religion and the function of the Bible. Indeed, there are not a few thinkers, like Professors J. Arthur Thomson and J. Y. Simpson, who are prepared to recognize to the full the claims of each, and who are presenting us with a view of the world in which the controversy tends to disappear.

All the same, we have not done with Genesis yet. The work of the scholars, who are able to examine its early chapters in the light of comparative religion and more particularly of Babylonian religion, has served to throw into greater relief the wonder of the old Hebrew story, and to make it still possible for men who are the very reverse of obscurantist in their outlook to speak of 'revelation.'

As a contribution to a satisfactory interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis, which is just alike to the primitive nature of their mythical material

and to the extraordinary ethical and religious insight with which that material has been manipulated, the recently published book of Mr. A. Gordon JAMES entitled *The Creation Stories of Genesis and their Relation to Modern Thought* stands very high (S.C.M.; 4s. net). Mr. JAMES is fully acquainted with the work of the scholars, but his chief interest in the stories is patently as inspired interpretations of the meaning of human life. And that is as it should be: for the Bible is literature, and, like all great literature, its supreme interest for us is as a criticism of life.

Mr. JAMES is frankly modern. His appreciation of the Genesis stories does not lead him to see in them more than is there. He reminds us that they are pre-historic, pre-scientific, and pre-Christian, and that therefore it is illogical to resort to them for history or modern science or mature Christian doctrine. And he has no more doubt of the general truth of the evolutionary hypothesis than he has the desire to force those ancient narratives into conformity with that hypothesis. 'So vast is the evidence that has now been accumulated, representing researches stretching over a long period of years, that the existence of an evolutionary principle in the universe can only be denied by those who refuse to consider the facts or to exercise an impartial judgment upon them.'

Yet these immortal narratives stand alone in ancient literature in their power to penetrate and

interpret the secret of human life. And they do this all the more surely because they are essentially poetry rather than history. The ideas they embody are germinal, they are charged with an almost infinite suggestiveness, and the form in which they are clothed is ideally suited for the purpose of bringing them home to the universal mind. Or, as the writer puts it, 'One may take leave to doubt whether any form of artistic expression could have been employed for the successful transmission of ideas so germinal, so prolific and so expansive, more fitting than that used by the Genesis writers.'

Mr. JAMES has also the candour and the courage to maintain that the Book of Genesis furnishes no warrant for the idea of Original Sin, which holds that man is liable to punishment for sins he never committed and may never commit; or for the idea of Universal Depravity, which brings all men under condemnation, even before they have any knowledge of what sin is. Of the Pauline belief that the sin of one involved the death of all 'there is no trace in the whole of the Eden narrative.' Our Lord's words about the little children, who embody the spirit which is the condition of entrance into the kingdom of heaven, show that 'to speak of infants as though they were little sinners is to run counter to the teaching of Christ.'

The true significance of the story of the 'Fall' is psychological, not historical. Though clothed in a quasi-historical garb and set among the narratives of 'beginnings,' it is essentially an analysis of life as we know it—especially of temptation and sin. Essentially it is the story not of an individual named Adam who stood at the beginning of history, but of *adam*, that is, of man, of humanity, of every man. It is in reality a sermon, in the form of a picturesque narrative, written round the words of Jeremiah (17⁹), 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick: who can know it?' It was written by a man who, like Jeremiah, knew his own heart, and who, knowing his own, knows ours: that is why he 'finds' us.

The speaking serpent (like the speaking ass in the

Balaam story), the magic trees of knowledge and of life which only grow, as one critic has said, in the garden of religious imagination, are sufficient to warn all but the most hopeless obscurantists that, whatever else the narrative may be, it is not a narrative of historical fact. It is in other directions that we must look for the truth which it enshrines. Its truth is not the truth of ancient history, but the truth of universal experience: every man who has ever been tempted and fallen knows that the story is true and has sorrowfully to confess its searching power. As he reads, he hears a Voice saying to his inmost soul, 'Thou art the man.'

Where, within so small a compass, are we to look for a more searching analysis of sin? The tree was (1) good for food, (2) a delight to the eyes, (3) desirable to make one wise: here is temptation coming in the form of a sensuous impulse, an æsthetic enjoyment, an intellectual ambition. All these things are right and proper in their own place, at their own time, and when under the control of reason and conscience. But, as Mr. JAMES very truly says, 'Sin never gives the right kind of knowledge in the right way.'

Thus it comes about that man has lost his Paradise by his own folly. In man's natural environment there are factors that are not evil of themselves, but that, if wrongly used, will lead to his undoing. From the religious point of view, he fell through disobedience to the inner voice, through moving along the line of inclination and appetite in preference to that of reason and conscience; from the scientific point of view, he fell through failing to adapt himself to his environment. Sin is in either case a missing of the mark: it is the deliberate choice of the lower in the presence of the higher, and it is the failure to progress along the true line of development. And thus this ancient story, for all its mythical investiture, is in its inmost spirit and at its deepest depths true to the teaching of modern science.

Everywhere, as Mr. JAMES reminds us, man has recognized that there is something wrong, not only with the world, but also with himself. The root

of the matter is in man himself. This ancient Hebrew interpreter of life traces the evil and difficult things in the world back to man's perverted will. He believes that God is good, that man was meant for Paradise; but nothing is more certain than that he is not there now, and for that he has himself to blame. He disobeyed the reasonable Voice, he chose the baser way, and so he was cast—or rather he cast himself—out of the lovely garden.

There are points in the argument at which we may differ from Mr. JAMES. As, for example, when he says: 'There is no reason to suppose that man will not find a way to control the earthquake even as he has learned to master fire.' Living as we are in an age when man's control of the forces of Nature can be described as nothing less than wonderful, we may yet take leave to doubt whether it will ever come to that. Or, again, when he says: 'God is and must ever be a Probability.' What would Thomas à Kempis, or Augustine, or Paul, or any of the Biblical writers, have said to that? These men at any rate, and countless others, *knew* in whom they had believed. But for the general drift of Mr. JAMES's argument and its power to attract and convince the modern mind, we have nothing but commendation.

In view of the criticisms and challenges to which the teaching of the Bible has been and is being subjected, it is refreshing to meet a thoroughly modern, unprejudiced, scientific thinker who can yet honestly confess his faith in a special revelation. These are Mr. JAMES's words: 'The extraordinary manner in which the Eden story contains ideas that are not found in contemporary literature of a similar character suggests the possibility of a special revelation given to selected persons for a special purpose. If those ideas are found to be re-echoed by the patient, scientific investigator, working on quite different lines, and with a different purpose in view, we may begin to suspect that here, too, is revelation, though of a different kind.'

Our generation has seen a new interest arising in Jewish apocalyptic and the provision of abundant material for the enrichment of our knowledge of the subject and of its influence on the Christian hope. In *The Economic Background of the Gospels* (Milford; 7s. 6d. net), the Rev. Frederick C. GRANT, D.D., has set himself to account psychologically for the forms taken by the apocalyptic expectation.

In times of acute political distress, why did Jewish seers place in the forefront of their vision Divine intervention and chastisement of their enemies? How can we account for the apocalyptic conception, adopted by Jesus, of life in the world to come as a banquet, a Messianic feast in which the hungry are filled and the disheartened comforted? Why did even the more spiritual of the apocalyptists, those who knew that their hope was laid up in heaven, retain the crude symbolism of a politico-economic dream?

Our knowledge of psychology would lead us to expect to find the answers to these questions in repressed desires. Even those who are far from being experts in the subject can suggest facts that go far to explain apocalyptic imagery. The kingdom of God on earth remained for the Jew an unrealized ideal; and apparently the longer the coming of the kingdom was delayed, the more vividly were the kingdom and the consequences of its coming realized. Moreover, combined social, moral, and political ineffectiveness paved the way for the conviction that, since men were powerless to help, the kingdom could be realized only through the direct intervention of God.

We are learning to read the Gospels and the teaching of Jesus in the light of the political situation. What Simkhovitch and others have done for our understanding of the political context of the gospel story, Dr. GRANT has now done for its economic context. The thesis of his book is that the pessimism which gave rise to apocalyptic hopes was inspired largely by economic conditions; by over-population, especially in the cities, by a declining productivity in the soil beyond human

ingenuity to circumvent, and by oppressive taxation, civil and religious.

In the first place, there is reason to think that the population of Palestine had grown up to, if not beyond, the limits of subsistence. Moreover, this prolific race was in large measure deprived of the remedies adopted for other overpopulated areas. The Jews were not a military people; and, if they had been, the Roman Empire stood in the way of their possible conquests. In some degree the *diaspora* provided the safety-valve of emigration; but there was a strong feeling against the emigration of native-born Jews; was not the land promised to Abraham and to his seed for ever? Moreover, there was always a counter-current of exiles returning to Palestine.

Add to this the necessity of providing for the large military establishments kept by the Romans in the country, and of finding food for pilgrims who annually came in their thousands to keep the sacred festivals, and it is easy to realize that at times the resources of the country were strained to the utmost.

In the time of our Lord, Palestine could hardly have been described as a land flowing with milk and honey; yet it was sufficiently well endowed by Nature to support a reasonably large population. There were enough and to spare of olives, vines, and figs; and there was an export trade in fish; but agricultural methods were crude, and, in any case, there was another factor at work tending to impoverish and depress the people, namely, taxation. What made taxation in Palestine so onerous was that there were two taxing authorities, the imperial and the ecclesiastical. Neither of these was under any obligation to take account, or did in fact take account, of the burdens imposed by the other.

It is true that the positive demands of the Romans were not in themselves excessive, especially after the reforms of Augustus. Yet the Romans needed, and insisted on getting, tribute for the support of the administration and for defence, for the upkeep of the style affected by the

Italian gentry, and for free food to stave off a revolution of the Roman proletariat. The sting of the Roman taxation lay in the fact that it was paid to a Power that was not merely foreign but heathen; and that the system left not merely the collection but even the assessment of the taxes to unscrupulous tax-farmers and their agents. It was no wonder that Theudas and Joseph and others led riots 'at the time of the taxing.'

This imperial taxation was combined with the tax-system of the priestly theocracy, the proceeds of which went to Jerusalem to support the priestly hierarchy and the Temple worship. The growing power of the priesthood after the Exile was connected both as cause and as effect with the immeasurably great increase in the contributions which the priests levied on the people.

Of these taxes the best known is the tithe. The discussion of the detailed application of the law of the tithe is familiar to readers of the Gospels. But besides the tithe, pious Israelites recognized many other obligations of religious finance. There were, for example, the primitive taxes of the sin-offering, the thank-offering, and the shew-bread, the first-fruits of grain and certain fruits, the first-born of animals, redemption money for the first-born child, dues for release from vows, the annual half-shekel tax paid into the Temple treasury, and other more or less considerable imposts.

Besides all these, as the story of the widow's mites reminds us, Jews gave free-will offerings for the Temple, while there were further contributions for education, for charitable relief, and for the upkeep of the synagogues. There was also a tendency for taxes, originally alternatives, to be combined, for free-will offerings to be made compulsory, and for disputes to be settled in favour of the priests. Moreover, where the priesthood was hereditary and was not limited to the first-born son, there was no effective check to the number of priests who claimed support from the people.

The Jews *could* not resist the demands of Cæsar; they *would* not resist the claims of the priests; for

were not these the claims of God? Can we wonder that, driven at last to desperation, they took the road of armed rebellion which led to the destruction alike of their holy city and their Temple?

Mr. Middleton MURRY's 'Life of Jesus' has led, as it was bound to do, to a somewhat acute controversy. Not all the reviews were as sympathetic as that published in this magazine, and Mr. MURRY has adopted a somewhat truculent attitude on his side of the debate. Our review of the book was appreciative just because it was the honest attempt of a literary man to face up to the Fact of Christ. That is sufficient to arouse sympathy in any religious mind. And there is in the book so much genuine insight into the greatness of Jesus that it may be described without exaggeration as a profoundly religious book.

Widespread interest was therefore aroused when it was announced that Mr. MURRY was going to talk to the world—or that large portion of it that listens to the 'wireless'—on 'The Religion of a Journalist.' That could only mean his own religion. And one naturally wondered whether we should get any more light on Mr. MURRY's convictions, and more especially on his attitude to Jesus. Multitudes must have listened to the talk who do not listen in a church, for the simple reason that they are not there. There never was a time—at least Dr. Mott says so, and he should know—when interest in religion and on what it has to say for itself was so widespread in the world. And Mr. MURRY had a great opportunity to say something helpful to the great numbers of people who are at present waiting for some encouragement to believe.

One hearer is free to confess that the 'talk' was a melancholy, almost a tragic, disappointment. Mr. MURRY asked what religion is, and took the common description of it as belief in God. Well, but what can you really say about such a phrase? Can you define 'God'? Or can you define 'belief'? No, in both cases! Belief can only

mean such a confidence in God as implies the giving of one's whole life to God or resting one's whole self on God. But does any one do that? No. Therefore there are practically no people who believe in God. The conclusion would naturally be that there is no such thing as religion, because we don't know what we mean by 'God,' and nobody really 'believes.' And in this sense of religion probably that was Mr. MURRY's own conclusion.

But he had another idea of what religion is. His own religion is hero-worship. He did not mention what hero it is he worships. And in fact he suggested that it did not matter. This, however, was the right kind of religion and a sufficient one. And he left us there. It must, however, have occurred to many hearers to ask, 'But is there such a thing as worship?' Worship really means the giving up of our whole self to an object. It is very much the same thing as belief. But does *any one* do that? Does Mr. MURRY? We suggest that his hero-worship is as imperfect and as partial as the 'belief' of many people which he sets aside.

If you are going to suggest that an attitude in religion must be perfect, and completely embodied in action, before it is real, then Mr. MURRY's hero-worship must be swept aside as non-existent. Hero-worship must mean the complete and perfect surrender of ourselves in admiration and imitation of some ideal person. But there is nobody alive who worships in this ideal way an ideal person. Mr. MURRY would be the last to claim anything like consistent perfection for himself. But if his worship is to be as real as he demands that 'belief' should be, then it must be perfect and continuous, 'which is absurd.' The address was a quaint example of superficial and inconsequent thinking.

Hark back for a moment to the definition of religion as 'belief in God.' Because we cannot exhaust the significance of this word 'God,' because we cannot fully comprehend Him, does that mean that we do not know anything of Him? Or enough to justify our worship and trust? There are many millions of people (there always have been) who know what they mean when they say

'God.' They believe in a Heavenly Father who cares for each one of us, who is able to help us, and who is behind Nature, history, and life. They may be wrong, or they may be right, but at any rate they 'know in whom they have trusted.'

And about believing. Is it really the case that, unless we give ourselves up wholly and always and consistently to God's will, we do not really believe? That means that we must instantaneously be consistent and perfect in our life or we cannot be said to be believers. But it is matter of common experience that people are made better through their belief, that belief opens the way to the Divine grace. And it is equally matter of common experience that people believe in God who yet are not always able to translate their belief into practice. Mr. MURRY demands an intensity and power of belief which are only likely to be seen in heaven before he admits that any one has a religion of this kind; while, strangely enough, he does not apply the same exacting standard to hero-worship.

It was rather tragic to think of so many people listening to this kind of thing who really needed, and in many cases desired, some 'guidance in matters of faith' of a positive kind. Of course, hero-worship is not religion at all except in the widest and thinnest sense of religion. We may admire many things and many people, and our admiration may do us any amount of good. 'We live by admiration,' as well as by other things. But admiration (even of Jesus) does not constitute religion. It does not have any necessary connexion with the Unseen and Eternal, with the Creator of the Universe, or with the Source of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. If religion has nothing to say to us about these high matters, it will leave unsatisfied the deepest cravings of the soul.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection has not received from systematic theologians the attention which its importance warrants. Dr. PLATT, who has treated the subject in the *ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS*, writes: 'The subject,

strange to say, is a bypath in Christian theological systems, and one has to wander in search in many ways. But with time and patience much may be gathered; and a good modern treatise on the subject is needed, and would be valuable.' This blank has now, in large measure, been filled by a very excellent work on *The Doctrine of Christian or Evangelical Perfection*, by the Rev. H. W. PERKINS, D.D. (Epworth Press; 8s. 6d. net).

Dr. PERKINS begins by defining Christian or evangelical Perfection as 'a spiritual state, mediated by the Holy Spirit, in which the believer in Christ has a full assurance of his redemption through the blood of Christ, and enjoys unbroken communion with the love of God.' After some explanatory comments on this definition, he proceeds to a very careful and elaborate study of Biblical teaching on the subject. The terminology of both the Old and the New Testament is analysed in detail, and the doctrines of the perfection of Christ and the perfecting of believers and of the Church are fully elucidated. The point is emphasized that 'we are discussing, not the production of a perfect man, but union with the perfection of God.' This study of Biblical teaching raises a number of vital and interesting questions, such as these: 'Is the teaching of Perfection an essential part of the Gospel as proclaimed by Christ and His apostles? Can we find a better term, one less liable to misunderstanding, than Perfection? Ought we to describe the state indicated by that term as sinless? Is it possible in this life? Will the future life include probation or purgation for those who have not attained perfection in this?'

Before dealing with these questions, however, Dr. PERKINS enters on an elaborate historical survey. After dealing with 'influences outside Christianity which have affected the conception of evangelical Perfection,' he goes on to outline the history of the doctrine in the early Church, dealing at some length with Clement and Origen, Ambrose and Augustine. Coming to mediæval and modern times, he very happily treats his subject under three heads: '(a) the idea of attainment under the sanction of the Church, (b) the idea of attainment through

obedience to the Word, (c) the idea of attainment through the witness of the Spirit.' These three modes are exemplified in (a) Monasticism and the Catholic Mystics, (b) Wesley and the Methodists, (c) The Quaker Movement.

The historical survey having revealed 'the wide extent of the quest for Perfection and the inalienable place of the quest in the Christian Gospel,' the writer proceeds to a modern formulation of the doctrine. He finds it to be 'a present experience through faith and hope, to be consummated in eternity.' Dr. Forsyth is quoted with approval as saying that there are three ways by which men have sought to arrive at the goal, of which two are wrong and the third is right; but that all three are right compared with the notion that we are to wait for Perfection 'till some indefinite time in the indefinite future.' The objections raised against the term and its misuse are clearly recognized. 'Yet, when we consider the abundant use of the word in the New Testament, and the fact that the idea runs through the whole of it, we are not prepared to acquiesce in the suppression of the term. . . . And, after all, what better translation than "perfect" can be found? "Entirely sanctified" has been put forward as a synonym. It appears, however, quite as objectionable, so far as any claim to holiness is concerned, and it does not bring out the idea of *teleios*. . . . What the mature Christian is seeking for is some term which shall bear witness

to the fact that he is assured that he has passed out of his nonage, and that he has arrived at a stage of firm confidence that the divine purposes of love will be fulfilled in him, and through him to the blessing of many others.'

An interesting section deals with the preaching of the doctrine, and the general conclusion is reached that 'the doctrine of Perfection ought to take its place among those which in their union constitute the full Evangel. Its neglect has been one of the main causes of weakness and failure. This was clearly foreseen by the apostles, and stated by them with uncompromising plainness. Failure to reach maturity in the spiritual life has often been due to the absence of instruction and culture; and this failure has been the disastrous result of bringing in the idea of a double morality, which is a foreign intrusion, into the gospel message. The true doctrine speaks of a natural and normal development which all Christians ought to expect and pray for. Where this is not taught by those who are leaders in the Church, the soul experiences a sense of disappointment, which may induce it to turn to those who will lead it astray. Foolish and hurtful notions of Perfection spring up in the soil where the wholesome teaching of the full Gospel has been omitted. The Church ought earnestly to strive to formulate a message in which the state of Perfection shall be set forth as the definite aim of all who have entered on the Christian way.'

The Parables of the Treasure and the Pearl.

BY PROFESSOR W. P. PATERSON, D.D., EDINBURGH.

II.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE PARABLES.

THE business of the preacher is to persuade, and our Parables had the force of an argument by which Jesus sought to procure or to confirm a momentous decision. He called men to enter upon and to persevere in a life of privation and

danger, and the argument which He was accustomed to employ was that which best commends a painful and hazardous enterprise—namely, that the sacrifices were justified by the greatness of the expectations. It was used for the persuasion of the rich young ruler who, when he was bidden to sell what he had and give to the poor, was promised that he would thus have treasure in heaven (Mt 19²¹). It also served for the confirmation of the disciples