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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE 'Old Roman Symbol,' alternatively designated R, is a rediscovery of modern scholarship. It is the credal formula which Rufinus of Aquileia found in use about A.D. 400, when he wrote his commentary on the Apostolic Symbol. In several respects it differs from the so-called Apostles' Creed, which is an enlarged form of it, and eventually superseded it. Its origin is traced to the second century, and accordingly it is about six hundred years older than the Apostles' Creed.

In Professor Donald McFAYDEN's recent volume on the interpretation of the Apostles' Creed (reviewed in another column) there is an interesting exegesis and criticism of the Old Roman Symbol, which is regarded as primarily an anti-Hellenistic document; and under this author's guidance we should like to examine the article of the Old Roman Symbol in which reference is made to our Lord's birth.

The article in question reads, 'Who was born of (the) Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin.' Now the order of words in the Greek (*τὸν γεννηθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου*) puts the stress upon the word 'born,' and in this we may see an evidence of anti-Hellenistic tendency. 'As against the idea that Christ was wholly a spiritual being and that his body was simply a phantom, it [the Symbol] asserts that he was born, was crucified, and was buried. As against the alternative theory of the Hellenists that the heavenly Christ united himself with the man Jesus at his baptism and abandoned him before his crucifixion, it lays down that the one who was born and was crucified and buried was himself the Christ.'

To the Hellenist (Gnostic) it was inconceivable that Christ should have been a man of flesh and blood. It was only pure spirit that could have brought to man an endowment of spirit. A material nature, susceptible to pain, hunger, or the pangs of death, would have been a hindrance to Christ in the exercise of His spiritual function.

If the above interpretation of the articles of the Symbol be correct, more especially of the article on the birth of Christ, then it appears to follow that the reference to the manner of His birth is of secondary import. The purpose of the phrase, 'born of (the) Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin,' is to mark the Birth as historically attested. The words 'The Virgin' are merely an 'identificatory appositive,' and it is no immediate concern of the Symbol to assert the *Virgin* birth.

It is significant in this connexion that Ignatius, Irenæus, and Tertullian sometimes speak of Jesus as 'born of Mary' or as 'Son of Mary' without the addition of the words, 'the Virgin.' And in the so-called 'Sacramentary of Pope Gelasius,' probably representing the Roman ritual about the sixth century, this article of the Christian faith is reduced to the single word 'born': 'Dost thou believe in

Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, that he was *born* and that he suffered ?'

'Paradoxical as it may seem, therefore, the Virgin Birth, in the narrowly literal sense of the term, cannot be regarded as a doctrine asserted by the Old Roman Symbol. The framers of the Symbol unquestionably believed it to be an historical fact; in the second century most Christians so regarded it. But it is important to distinguish the faith which a creed asserts from the facts, historical or other, which it assumes.'

Dr. McFAYDEN is of opinion that the words 'of the Holy Spirit' are a later insertion in the article of the Symbol under consideration. If that be so, then further support is lent to the position that the Symbol is primarily interested in asserting the human parentage of Jesus. Indeed, had not the historical tradition of the Virgin Birth been so strong, the Church would have been inclined to strengthen her hands in the controversy with Hellenism by denying it.

In the Apostles' Creed, where the article having reference to the Birth is extended so as to become two articles: 'conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,' both the Divine and the human parentage of Jesus are asserted. But the addition of the words 'conceived by' introduces no new doctrinal significance, and appears to be due simply to a desire for historical completeness.

It is a familiar fact that the Bible contains a strong dramatic element, but its extent is not generally realized. This, at any rate, is the contention of Mr. George L. HURST, who writes in the current number of *The Canadian Journal of Religious Thought* on 'The Dramatic Element in Religion.' His subject is wider than the Bible, and he begins with religion generally, asserting that 'every faith is a stage with creeds and ritual for players.' Early mythology, for example, was essentially dramatic. Among the Greeks the naked truth was reserved for the higher intelligence; to the multitude it was decently veiled and presented in types and parables—an echo of our Lord's explanation of His teaching by parables.

But, apart from mythology, Greek drama and Greek religion were closely connected. Drama steadily invaded the area of religion until almost the whole of Greek mythology was drawn upon for the plots of Greek plays. And this, according to Miss Jane Harrison, arose from 'the cardinal essentially dramatic conviction of the religion of Dionysius that the worshipper can not only worship but can become, can *be*, his God.' Neither Greeks nor Romans, however, were really deceived by such dramatization of their religious beliefs even when it became crudely realistic.

All this is interesting enough, but we are much closer to our religious concern when we come to survey the same element in the Old Testament. The first instance Mr. HURST gives is the Creation narrative. There is a plot gradually unfolding, and the climax is reached when man appears and God breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. The object of the narrative is not to teach cosmogony, but to establish man's position in the general scheme of things. The whole scaffolding of the story serves its purpose when man enters upon the stage. Unless we grasp that fact we do violence to the spirit of the scene and the intention of the writer.

Another instance is the Temple service. The great body of the priesthood passed freely into the Holy Place, and performed their functions, but beyond the Holy Place was the Holy of holies, into which the High Priest passed once a year to present himself at the mercy-seat. This was drama: a spectacular performance to present certain religious suggestions to the assembled congregations. Pure drama, too, was the solemn ritual of the scapegoat. That moving ceremonial still thrills the imagination—Aaron laying his hands on the head of the goat, putting on it all the sin of the people, and sending it into the wilderness.

The prophetic symbolic acts are a well-known

case of representation and truth by dramatic means. A notable example is Isaiah's nakedness (20^{1-4}) as a visible prediction of coming captivity and shame. But of all the prophets Ezekiel is the one who furnishes the most copious examples of this element. Witness his model of the siege of Jerusalem (4^{1-3}), his 'recumbency' with the iniquities of Israel upon him (4^{4-6}), his bread-making with mixed grain (4^{9-13}), the removal of his household goods (12^{3-7}), his visit to the Valley of Dry Bones (37^{1-14}). Daniel is almost as rich in the same element. The drama of the Three Hebrew Youths (3^{1-30}) is a universal favourite. This vivid spectacular scene was meant to set before the persecuted and tempted nation the truth of God's protecting care. As history it is impossible, as drama—melodrama, perhaps—it is perfect, and as such has never failed of an interested and appreciative audience.

So valuable an adjunct to the teaching of religion found a cordial welcome among those Mystery Religions which captured the imagination and ministered to the spiritual craving of the Roman people during the early Christian centuries. In them the 'realism of a legendary divine drama' was united with an idealistic theology, as Dean Inge has pointed out. A mystery religion was a sacramental drama which appealed primarily to the emotions, and aimed at producing psychic and mystic effects by which the neophyte might experience the exaltation of a new life. The griefs, misfortunes, death of the god imparted a lesson in pity and consolation for men and women overtaken by similar experiences. The Osiris legend, which began in tragedy and ended with the happiness of comedy, was an emblematic representation of man's deliverance from the powers of death.

And this brings us to the Christian religion. It would be extraordinary, Mr. HURST says, if Christianity had escaped the infusion of an element so persistent and influential. But this has not been the case. 'As in earlier religions, so in our own, the dramatic element is present in easily discernible abundance. This is the explanation of much that we find in Romanism, for example. The cruciform plan of a church building is dramatic. The use of holy water at the entrance of the sanctuary, the smouldering incense waved above the congregation, the use of lights, are all dramatic gestures. But in this matter of dramatic representation the distinction between Protestant and Catholic disappears, for our common faith has the dramatic element in its very stuff and fibre.'

The story of the Temptation of Jesus is pure drama. The struggle was a profoundly psychological one, but it is presented as a drama, with a Prologue (the spirit driveth Jesus into the wilderness) and three scenes—the Wilderness scene, the Temple scene, and the World scene—and an epilogue of victory and its results. The same may be said of the story of the Transfiguration, which Mr. HURST calls 'an acted version of the confession of the messiahship of Jesus at Cæsarea Philippi.' The stage is a high mountain apart: the characters are carefully balanced—the disciples in the flesh and the visitors from the world of spirit. This drama of the Transfiguration displays the conviction that Jesus is unique and supreme: a conviction at first startling, but glorious with light and truth. It reaches its climax when an arresting voice from heaven makes doubt impossible. With the same instinct of true art the realm of the supernatural merges suddenly into the natural: the apostles descend swiftly into the realities and difficulties of the world.

Other examples are adduced—the great Judgment Scene of St. Matthew 25, and the fresh splendour of the imagery of Revelation in which 'the dramatic genius of religion is given free play for its highest powers.' But apart from all details in the New Testament, the facts of our religion are a great Drama. 'The eternal glory of the Divine child with the Father, His coming down to earth in voluntary self-abnegation and servitude, His life of poverty with the poor, His compassion, His temptations and His mighty works, the inexhaustible riches of His words, His prayers, His bitter suffering and death, and after the Cross His glorious Resurrection and return to the Father—all these episodes in the great divine drama . . . were intelligible

to every soul, even to the poorest.' These words are from Deissmann, and with this quotation and another of a rather curious kind from Glover, Mr. HURST ends a suggestive article.

The mysterious phenomenon known as the gift of tongues is usually but lightly regarded by the ordinary reader of the New Testament, who is well content to leave it in its native obscurity. It can hardly be said that the theologians have done justice to it. The old idea that it miraculously bestowed a knowledge of foreign languages in order to facilitate the spread of the gospel may be said to be quite dead, and the modern tendency is distinctly in the direction of disparaging the gift. There is undoubtedly an element of ecstasy and wildness about it which is antipathetic to the orderly theological mind. The psychologists have gone a step farther and in summary fashion have relegated it to the lower limbo of things irrational. An interesting article in the current number of the *Church Quarterly Review* on 'Psychology and Glossolalia' seeks to restore the balance and lead to a more careful psychological study of the whole subject.

In the narrative of Pentecost we read of two classes of observers. There was the multitude (πλῆθος) who were profoundly impressed and who were able to discern in the utterances of the disciples an intelligible meaning and a spiritual message. But there were others (ἕτεροι) of a more critical temper to whom it all seemed but the maudlin babbling of drunkards. 'After the closest reading of the story, one feels convinced that the open-minded and sympathetic πλῆθος approached closer to the correct explanation of the Pentecost scene than the partial and prejudiced ἕτεροι.' It must be said, however, that the new psychologists have, on the whole, ranged themselves on the side of the ἕτεροι.

They have agreed that glossolalia is simply the outcome of a pathological condition. 'The name,' says Thouless, 'is generally applied to a stream of meaningless syllables, sometimes mixed with real words, poured out under the influence of intense emotion.' It is closely related to convulsive attacks of hysteria. It consists of 'senseless combinations of vowels and consonants,' of the nature of a 'hue and cry, yell and howl.' 'These attacks are extremely contagious, and whole multitudes have been known to fall down, to jerk their bodies in extraordinary contortions, to bark, to laugh, to dance.' According to this view the phenomenon is simply one of the baser manifestations of the herd instinct. It is irrational, the sudden surging up, out of the dark depths of man's animal nature, of a wild, uncontrollable emotion.

In criticism of this view two observations may be made. The first is that the psychologists have not observed the facts and examined the evidence with sufficient closeness and attention. They have spoken loosely of whole multitudes running mad, but this can be shown historically to be an exaggeration. If a single person becomes hysterical in the middle of a crowd it will cause a pretty considerable commotion, and if there were a dozen such scattered among the crowd it might seem to an observer as if the whole mass were in violent mental agitation. Hence we can see how an exaggerated report might get abroad. But wherever the phenomena of ecstatic religious emotion have been carefully observed, as in the case of the Welsh revival, it has been found that the 'demonstrators' were but a small minority, while the vast majority preserved to the full their sanity and self-control. 'Mass-psychologists have been as prone to rush to wrong mathematical exaggerations as the pious historians who wish to appreciate the revival and forget their mathematics—both fitting the facts to their theories, and not their theories to their facts.'

The second criticism is that the psychologists have made no serious attempt to search to the root of the matter. They have failed to give a rational explanation of glossolalia. 'They have assumed, not proved, that this phenomenon can only be classed as of an extra-rational kind—a phenomenon in the story of those who have lost their *compos mentis*. They have ignored the previous story

which must have led up to this extra-rational phenomenon, failed to offer any psychological reason for it, and assumed the *lacuna* between the rational and extra-rational stage. To cover this *lacuna* in fact and not in theory they fell back on questionable assumptions, viz. that glossolalia is due either to the emergence of an animal instinct or to the existence of some social magnetism whatever be the reason, if any, in that.'

Now in striking contrast to this stands the careful and quietly reticent narrative in the Acts. 'Psychologists must assume that there is a standard point of normal activity for the mind of man, after crossing which that activity must be reckoned abnormal. The psychologists have assumed that the glossolalic phenomenon is an incident of that abnormal activity. The Lucan evidence assumes that it is an incident of the normal activity, which stands clear of the suggestions, whether of animal instinct or of a magnetic touch of a "madding crowd," in the plain story of the Christians as he knew them.' In no case does he speak of it as a mass movement. In all three cases mentioned in the Acts it is associated with the intense spiritual experiences of a Christian group. At Pentecost the multitude witness the phenomenon but do not share in the experience. The other two instances recorded are in connexion with the conversion of Cornelius and the conversion of the Baptist's disciples in Ephesus, the former under the guidance of Peter, the latter under that of Paul. In none of the three cases is there the least hint of anything abnormal or irrational. 'At Pentecost the sympathetic πλῆθος discovered plenty of evidence to show them that the subjects had not passed over the boundary of mental normality. They could distinctly hear coming from the lips of the glossolalists intelligible words about the "mighty acts of God" for the salvation of men through the "Prince of Life."' Similarly Peter and his company heard the converts of the house of Cornelius speak with tongues so as to 'magnify God,' and the Baptist's disciples, when they received the same gift, 'prophesied.'

In all cases the narrative suggests a normal religious experience, strengthened doubtless by a sympathetic environment, growing in depth and intensity until it reaches a climax in which God becomes the one absorbing reality. The soul is uplifted to an unusual height of intimacy and nearness where it enjoys 'a direct and personal approach to God, a face to face "talk" with God, in which "Thou and I" become the subjects, exclusive of all thought of and reference to surroundings, environment and fellows. . . . To the outsider he seems carried away from all things worldly—lost in his communion with God.' Broken and seemingly incoherent utterances fall from his lips, but they who are in spiritual sympathy are able at times to catch the drift of them and to recognize in them the presence and working of the Spirit of God.

Leaders of Theological Thought.

Gustav Adolf Deissmann.

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Of Adolf Deissmann I confess that I am not very capable of taking a purely objective or scientific view. Admiration, friendship, domestic intimacy on either side of the North Sea, come between me and any impersonal estimate of him. And indeed it has been his own consistent practice as an interpreter to protest against the application of merely academic standards to the task of judging men and writers, so that I can, with a good conscience, stress the personal note at the outset of this sketch.

It was in the summer of 1901, the year in which his two series of 'Bible Studies' were published in an English volume, that I found myself a student at his feet in a modest classroom, high above the