

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

'THERE are three main adventures in human life—birth, death, and marriage. Comparatively few escape all three. Marriage surely is an adventure: it may turn out surprisingly well, it may turn out disastrously ill. Death every one admits to be an adventure. But birth—few think of birth in that way; and yet I think it is one—an adventure as great as any perhaps,—the coming to the planet, the becoming an individual, attaining a personality which, whether it begins then or not, at any rate is to continue. At birth we began a separate individual existence, but not from nothing.'

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Who tickles our curiosity in this way? It is Sir Oliver LODGE. He has written a new book and called it, harmlessly enough, *Reason and Belief* (Methuen; 3s. 6d. net). But is it harmless? Sir Oliver LODGE is not concerned with marriage. He is not concerned with death. He has written his new book because he believes that 'at birth we began a separate individual existence, but not from nothing.'

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'My message is that there is some great truth in the idea of pre-existence;—not an obvious truth, nor one easy to formulate—a truth difficult to express,—not to be identified with the guesses of re-incarnation and transmigration, which may be fanciful. We may not have been individuals before, but we are chips or fragments of a great

mass of mind, of spirit, and of life—drops, as it were, taken out of a germinal reservoir of life, and incubated until incarnate in a material body.' What is the word for it? It is not transmigration, nor is it re-incarnation. Incarnation, he says, is the word for it: whereupon we discover the point and purpose of it all. Sir Oliver LODGE has much to say about a previous existence and our sorrowful, perhaps shameful, forgetfulness of it. He has much poetry to quote—Wordsworth, Tennyson, Myers; but it all leads up to this, that in the name of science, and not in the name of poetry or of theology, Sir Oliver LODGE believes in the Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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He says that we are all incarnations. He says that we are all sons of God in a sense. But he means much more than that when he says that the whole Christian world dates its history from that momentous epoch which is *the Incarnation*. For he says that at that epoch a Son of God in the supremest sense took pity on the race, laid aside his majesty, made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, entered into our flesh and lived on the planet as a peasant, a teacher, a reformer, a martyr.

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Now this may not mean all that you or I may take it to mean. But for what it does not mean

Sir Oliver LODGE is responsible. It means all that we want. For he adds, 'The Incarnation is said to have literally happened; and as a student of science I am bound to say that, so far as we can understand such an assertion, there is nothing in it contrary to accepted knowledge.'

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'Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee' (Ps 32<sup>9</sup>). That is the rendering of the Authorized Version. And no one can say with perfect confidence that it is wrong. For the Hebrew is possibly corrupt and certainly very obscure. Yet the rendering that is most approved of now gives almost the opposite meaning. DRIVER'S translation is—

Be ye not like a horse, or a mule, without understanding:  
Which must be muzzled with bridle and halter,  
as its trappings,  
(else) it will not come near unto thee.

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This is very nearly as the Revisers have it, although in their margin they give an alternative, which is equivalent to the text of the Authorized Version. Now if Dr. DRIVER is right, what does the Psalmist intend to teach us?

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First of all, he intends to remind us that a horse does not wear harness for ornament. However gay its trappings may be, they are the badge of its lack of intelligence, the instrument by which a man imposes his will upon the creature, which otherwise cannot be made to understand. There are exceptional animals, and there are miracles of training, but, in the rough, it is true that bit and bridle are there because the creature has little understanding. And in the next place, and chiefly, he means to warn us that if God takes that way with men it is because they also are without understanding.

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The explanation is taken from Dr. W. M.

MACGREGOR. Dr. MACGREGOR has published a new volume of sermons. Like his earlier volume, it belongs to the series entitled 'The Scholar as Preacher.' Its title is *Some of God's Ministries* (T. & T. Clark; 4s. 6d. net). Near the middle of the volume occurs a sermon on 'God's Use of Compulsion.' This is the text of it.

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The sermon that is listened to with most delight is now nearly always a sermon that is well served with illustrations. Dr. MACGREGOR is more sparing of the illustration than any great preacher we can think of. Yet even Dr. MACGREGOR remembers here what Thomas FULLER has to say of the want of understanding in the horse and how it suffers from it. Why is it, FULLER asks, that a broken leg is incurable in a horse and easily curable in a man? And he answers, 'The horse is incapable of counsel to submit himself to the farrier, and therefore, in case his leg be set, he flings, flounces, and flies out, unjointing it again by his misemployed mettle, counting all binding to be shackles and fetters to him; whereas a man willingly resigns himself to be ordered by the surgeon, preferring to be a prisoner for some days rather than to be a cripple all his life.'

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Nor is Dr. MACGREGOR content with one illustration here. He gives another on the other side. For the advantage is not always with the man, and there is a saying of DONNE that 'they have sea room enough that will compare a beast and a sinner together, and they shall find many times that the beast is the better man.' Then Dr. MACGREGOR gives us the point of his text. The point of it is that it is against God's will and against man's nature that God should use compulsion with him.

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It was a surprise to the Psalmist that God had used compulsion with him. He had done his best to keep away from God. These were hard days with him; his bones waxed old, for the joy and zest seemed to have gone out of life.

What was the matter with him? He wanted to walk his own way and God would not allow him. Not that God stood openly in his path, as the angel interrupted Balaam. That was the worst of it, that there was nothing tangible to fight against. It was simply that things would not work out the way he wanted. A chilling mist came down upon his pleasures. Unseen hands were withdrawing all his comforts. And when at last he understood, he felt that he had been foolish and ignorant; he had been as a beast before God. And out of his own hard-won experience he warns others, 'Be ye not as the horse or mule.'

We all set out, says Dr. MACGREGOR, with the notion that we are able to manage for ourselves. Then we discover that another hand is interfering in our affairs, another will is crossing ours. 'Our plans fall through. Some one, on whom we counted, dies; or our chance comes when we are ill and cannot make use of it. Two and two obstinately make four, on a day when, if they had made five, it would have suited us much better. We have to toil at uncongenial work, we have to mix with people who are not wholly to our mind.' And then Dr. MACGREGOR uses another illustration. 'Cowper admits that it was distress that drove him to literature: "I have not chosen or prescribed to myself my own way; I might say I have been compelled and scourged into it."

How will a man take this thwarting? Mostly as the Psalmist took it. He will submit sullenly, but he will feel that his very moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Or he will take it peevishly, crying out and complaining all the day long. But it is useless. For there is transgression in the life, else God would not hinder. And even Nature can tell a man that it is folly to hide his iniquity from God. Whereupon Dr. MACGREGOR surprises us with another illustration. 'Infinite pity,' says Carlyle, 'yet also infinite rigour of law; it is so Nature is made; it is so Dante discerned that she was made.'

And yet it is no delight to God to use compulsion. The way He prefers with an intelligent creature is the way of love. 'I drew them with cords of love, and with the bands of a man.' And He has three particular ways of making appeal to us.

He makes appeal to our reason. He makes appeal to our experience. And he makes appeal to our affections. And so we come upon the last illustration of all. "'Lead me, Zeus, and I will follow," said the old sage, "for though I resist, I must still follow." By constraint or by persuasion, as brute or as man?'

The Rev. Edwin Abbott ABBOTT, M.A., D.D., was born in London on the 20th of December, 1838. In 1861 he was Chancellor's Classical Medallist at Cambridge, and in 1862 he was elected to a Fellowship at St. John's. The same year he became Assistant Master at King Edward's School in Birmingham. Three years later he was appointed Headmaster of the City of London School, and remained there till 1889.

Dr. ABBOTT describes himself as 'Student and Author.' It is an accurate description. He began to be a student early; he is a student still. He began to be an author in 1872; he is an author still. During those years he has issued no fewer than thirty-eight different books. This year he has issued the largest, minutest, and most amazing of them all. The title of it is *The Son of Man* (Cambridge University Press; 16s. 6d. net). And he is in his seventy-second year.

Dr. ABBOTT's literary life is divided into three parts. For the first fifteen years, from 1870 to 1885, he was occupied with a study of the English language, his most valuable book being *A Shakespearean Grammar*. During the next fifteen there appeared a series of volumes in Apologetic, marked by much freedom of thought and especially significant by the total, though apparently

reluctant, rejection of miracle. In 1900 Dr. ABBOTT published *Clue: A Guide through Greek to Hebrew Scripture*. And from that time he has given himself wholly to the study of the Gospels, issuing a series of volumes under the general title of 'Diatessarica,' of which the volume just published is the eighth.

The subject of the new volume is the designation 'Son of Man.' It is not the first volume that Dr. ABBOTT has published on that expression. In 1907 he issued *Notes on New Testament Criticism*. One of the 'Notes' was on the 'Son of Man.' It ran to a hundred and ten pages. Again, in 1909 he published *The Message of the Son of Man*. This was a popular book intended to prepare the way for the 'larger and more abstruse work,' and to draw forth criticism. It is that larger and more abstruse work that he has now published. It contains three prefaces and three indexes. It occupies nine hundred and twenty pages, arranged in paragraphs, which are divided and subdivided in the most elaborate manner. The actual printing must have been an unusual undertaking. What did the writing cost, where every sentence is the result of research and every word is the object of painful verification? And Dr. ABBOTT, we said, is in his seventy-second year.

Is it possible yet to understand what 'Son of man' means? It is quite possible. In the first volume which Dr. ABBOTT wrote on the subject, he stated the view which he held of the meaning of the name. He stated it only provisionally, it is true, and as a working hypothesis, but 'with strong claims to careful consideration.' And from the view then stated he has not in any measure departed. The 'Son of Man,' he said, according to Ezekiel, Daniel, the Psalms, the Apocalypse, and the Fourth Gospel, means man in his physical weakness. It is not simply man as man. It is man as having lost dominion over the beasts of the field. It is man as represented by the phrase 'babes and sucklings.' It is man on whom 'the mighty' look down with contempt.

With this 'man,' with man in his weakness and contempt, Jesus identified Himself. The devil might call Him the Son of God; He preferred to call Himself the Son of man. He identified Himself with man in his weakness in order that He might raise him to glory. Going back to Genesis, says Dr. ABBOTT, and interpreting Genesis by the Psalms and the Prophets, Jesus regarded man as but 'a little lower than God' and destined to have lordship over the beasts. That lordship it was His mission to confer upon him.

Is this, then, simply another way of saying that Christ came to seek and to save the lost? Are the men in their weakness with whom He loved to identify Himself—the 'babes and sucklings,' or to use the commonest expression of all, the 'little ones'—are they simply sinners? By no means. If they were sinners, Jesus also would be a sinner. For He identifies Himself with them from the very beginning. Certainly they are not the self-righteous Pharisees. It is the self-righteous Pharisee that despises them. The Pharisee must himself be born again in order that he may become a 'little one.' And even to His disciples, as indeed to everybody, Jesus says, 'Except ye turn, and become as little ones, ye cannot enter the kingdom.' The Kingdom is the kingdom of the 'little ones,' and He is a 'little one' Himself.

He is a 'little one' Himself. For so Dr. ABBOTT would explain that passage where our Lord says, 'There hath not arisen among those born of women a greater than John the Baptist, but the lesser in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he,' Not 'he that is least,' but 'the lesser'—that is Dr. ABBOTT's translation. And the lesser or the little one is Christ Himself. 'John had come first, and for some time stood first in popular estimation, as being at once greater and older than Jesus. During this period, John was the *Rab* whom his disciples might have addressed as Rabbi. Jesus came second, and for some time

stood second in popular estimation, as being at once less great and younger than John. Jesus then, comparatively, might call Himself "little one."

Now it is a curious circumstance that the little ones, the little children or the babes, though often mentioned in the first three Gospels, are conspicuous by their absence from the Fourth. How does Dr. ABBOTT account for that? He accounts for it by saying that the little ones of the first three Gospels have become the lambs of the Fourth Gospel. 'If His native tongue taught Him to regard "children" as "lambs," and if the Holy Spirit taught Him to regard Himself as a shepherd, a new light,' says Dr. ABBOTT, 'is thrown on Christ's doctrine concerning little children, and we can perceive that the Fourth Evangelist, while passing over, so to speak, the Synoptic child-element in Christ's doctrine, endeavours to supplement it by what we may call the "lamb" element in the parable of the Good Shepherd.'

Last of all, who are the angels of the little ones? The passage is Mt 18<sup>10</sup>, 'See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that their angels in [the] heavens (*or* in the heaven) do continually behold the face of my Father in [the] heavens.'

The text, says Dr. ABBOTT, seems to be corrupt. But the early variations of reading and diverse interpretations satisfy him that it was a saying of Jesus Himself. Superficially it seems to resemble the doctrine of intercessory angels in the Book of Enoch. The heretic MARCUS quoted it as referring to the four angels of the Presence (Enoch xl. 2). HERMAS says that two angels or messengers, a good and a bad one, accompany each man. And that some such belief was held by the Jews of the time is evident from the Epistle to the Colossians, in which the readers are warned against 'a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.'

But Dr. ABBOTT does not believe that the angels of the little ones are guardian angels. He does not believe that they are angels of any kind. All 'angels,' he says, are messengers, and these angels are (as Ephrem says) the messengers *or prayers* which are being continually sent up in the name of the 'Son of man' by those who believe in Him. The angels of the little ones are the little ones' own prayers. Inasmuch as these prayers will prevail with God, it is woe unto the man who will offend one of these little ones.

'Him who knew no sin he made (to be) sin on our behalf' (2 Co 5<sup>21</sup>). 'Made sin'—there is no Greek for 'to be'—what do the words mean? Whatever they mean, we know that the heart of the Atonement is in them.

The Rev. John B. CHAMPION, M.A., B.D., has written a book on the Atonement which has been published at the Griffith & Rowland Press in Philadelphia. Its title is *The Living Atonement*. In that book Mr. CHAMPION argues that it is a mistake to speak as if the death of Christ were the atonement. He argues that it is also a mistake to speak as if the atonement were the life of Christ. The atonement was Christ Himself.

Mr. CHAMPION quotes familiar passages. But he quotes them to place the emphasis on the personality, on the expression of a personal will, in them. 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins' (Gal 1<sup>4</sup>); 'The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me' (Gal 2<sup>20</sup>); 'Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity' (Tit 2<sup>14</sup>). The word of God, he says, is always in advance of us. We only come to its level when Christ Himself is made of more importance than His death. And he asks, 'Must not the worth of His death be found in Him, rather than His worth be found in it? Was it not that He gave satisfaction to the Father in His death, rather than that death itself

gave satisfaction in Him to the Father?' And then he quotes these lines:

Lord, grudging thee the bitter bliss of all thy  
woe,  
Men rob thee of thy cross,  
That landing-place for sin-wrecked souls,  
That place where God put forth alone with sin,  
And plunged it in the depths of his own blood.

And so he comes to the words 'made sin.'

For Mr. CHAMPION believes that the central mystery of the Atonement is the identification of Christ with sin. And he holds that it is our duty to understand that mystery so far as we are able to understand it. We shall never be able to understand it fully, because the experience of our Lord transcends ours. But just because it is experience, because it is found in the region of ethical endurance, it is not altogether an unsearchable mystery. We may be sure that the transcendent part of Christ's experience cannot contradict in moral principle that lower part which is parallel to our own.

There is first the experience of Gethsemane. What the wilderness temptation was in preparation for the ministry, the experience of Gethsemane was in preparation for Calvary. When

Into the woods my Master went,  
Clean forespent, forespent,

He realized what suffering and sacrifice were in store for Him. Gethsemane was the point in the path of Saviourhood where Jesus stood for a moment or two looking down into the abyss of death. And He knew, as no man did, what the abyss of death contained. He knew what there lay in that abyss for Him.

Can we conceive what He saw there? He saw, says Mr. CHAMPION, that death would be the doorway to a self-sacrifice that would be His for ever. 'It would be a painful birth into an endless life of self-limitation, because it would bring Him into still closer identification with humanity. It would involve the perpetuation for ever of the sacrifice

made in the incarnation. It would be a suffering transition and painful emergence into a new order of subsistence with, and indwelling in, humanity. His death would make Him the possession of man in a much larger way than did the incarnation. Henceforth He would have no life apart from organic union with the human race. It meant that He must be the life of humanity by the endless sacrifice of imparting Himself to humanity.'

Well, He accepted it. Was it hard? 'Father, if it be possible—nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.' He accepted it and went on to Calvary.

Out of the woods my Master went,  
And He was well content;  
Out of the woods my Master came,  
Content with death and shame.

And so, next, there is the saying on the cross—  
'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Now Mr. CHAMPION will not have it that the cry of dereliction was a mistaken cry. In his American way, 'Let us not be guilty,' he says, 'of squarely contradicting these words of Christ. Let it not be said that God had not forsaken Him—was never in fact nearer Him. For this would mean that His worst agony was due to hallucination; and that at least for once we knew better than He did. Never do we so need to be corrected as when we attempt to correct the Christ.'

And to strengthen his strong conviction—for it is a difficult place he has come to—Mr. CHAMPION quotes the words of the late Professor James CANDLISH of Glasgow, a wise and reverent theologian. We had better quote them after him. 'In regard to the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" I think,' says Dr. CANDLISH, 'it must be taken as expressing a truth, and not merely a feeling wrung from our Saviour by agony but having no reality corresponding to it. That Jesus,

even for a moment in the darkest hour, had a false and unworthy idea of His Father, and gave open utterance to it, seems to me inconsistent with His whole character and life, and with His other utterances from the cross. The desertion of which He speaks must be something not merely fancied, but intensely real. Nor can it be explained as simply His abandonment to the power of His enemies. If that were so, we should expect the cry to be uttered long before, not during the darkness that came over all the land.'

Mr. CHAMPION takes the cry as meaning that Christ was actually and on the cross 'made sin' for us. And by the words 'made sin' he understands that He was personally identified with sin. How He was, how He could be, identified with sin, he may not be able to show. For the only explanation must be an experiential one. And there is no perfect parallel in our own experience. Nor do the Scriptures describe the experience in detail. Yet some facts are given, and they carry us some way towards an explanation.

First of all, it is plainly said that it was God the Father who determined both the nature and the time of the identification. The identification with sin began by such identification with man as is involved in the Incarnation. The full identification with man may have demanded identification with sin. In any case the process was begun at the Incarnation. And the Incarnation was determined by the loving purpose of God the Father.

Not only so. The Father determined the time and the method of the identification of Christ with sin upon the cross. He laid upon the Redeemer the iniquity of us all. As there was the moment when God put forth activity in the

resurrection, so was there a time in which 'it pleased the Lord to bruise him.'

In the next place, it is clearly stated that the will of Jesus consented to the will of the Father throughout. He made the will of the Father the law of His life, and all His experience corresponded with it. 'Nothing,' says Mr. CHAMPION, 'could be more sensitive, responsive, and equational to the will of God than was the conscience of the Christ.' His obedience was as perfect as His love. The crucifixion became His experience because the cross was in His heart; and the cross was in His heart because the law of God was in His soul.

Now, suppose that in accepting the will of the Father, Jesus submitted to the sin of His crucifixion. Can that be the very centre of the mystery? The crucifixion could not have taken place without His consent. In consenting to it, did He not consent to the sinfulness of sin that men had ever committed? And, in consenting, was He not a party to its sinfulness?

Certainly He did not sin. It was Him who knew no sin, who never knew sin, that God made sin for us. It is the single case in history of a sinless assent to sin. Sinless it certainly was, for the very reason of His consent was as clean as the spotless holiness of God. But in consenting to the sin which brought the sin of the world to a head, did He not identify Himself, not merely with men who are sinners, and not merely with men in their sins, but with the very sin itself? Was He not in deed and in truth 'made sin' for us?

That is Mr. CHAMPION'S theory of the Atonement.