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Notes of Recent Exposition.

THERE are those to whom the most fascinating of all studies is Grammar. And something of the fascination of it is due to its dryness. Men have worked through the three monstrous volumes of Maetzner's *English Grammar*, sixteen hundred closely printed pages, and the immensity of their labour has not prevented them from enjoying it. Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders is a hero; if he enjoys his heroism it is because the burden is so unbearable.

But there is no heroism in the study of Grammar now. *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* by Professor James Hope MOULTON is as thorough as Maetzner. But it is written in a captivating English style. It scarcely matters whether we have already an interest in the Grammar of the Greek New Testament or not. It scarcely matters whether or not we have an interest in the New Testament. Taking this Grammar into our hands we perform no heroic act in reading it to the end.

This is the second volume, dealing with Accidence and Word-formation (T. & T. Clark; 7s. net). Or rather it is the first part of the second volume, and contains the Introduction, together with the sections on Sounds and Writing. It opens with a poem, a poem by the grammarian himself. Dr. MOULTON stands at the classroom door. He realizes that even for the study of Grammar imagination is

necessary and the fear of God. This is the poem:

Lord, at Thy word opens yon door, inviting
Teacher and taught to feast this hour with
Thee;

Opens a Book where God in human writing
Thinks His deep thoughts, and dead tongues
live for me.

Too dread the task, too great the duty calling,
Too heavy far the weight is laid on me!
O if mine own thought should on Thy words
falling

Mar the great message, and men hear not
Thee!

Give me Thy voice to speak, Thine ear to
listen,

Give me Thy mind to grasp Thy mystery;
So shall my heart throb, and my glad eyes
glisten,

Rapt with the wonders Thou dost show to
me.

After the poem comes the Introduction. And here we have the opportunity of saying that, if rarely was an editor entrusted with a more delicate task, rarely has an editor shown himself so worthy of the trust. The Rev. Wilbert Francis HOWARD, M.A., B.D., might be called perhaps, in theatrical language, an understudy of Dr. MOULTON. But if

but certainly religious feeling had a great deal to do with these vast movements, and the cross the crusaders bore on their shoulders expressed what was the most solemn and deepest motive inspiring them.'

And again, 'In the Reformation we find the same force at work in its central figure, Luther. The dominant thought in his mind was that which "is perhaps the most awful and imperious creation of Christianity—the sense of sin." "I tormented myself to death," he said, "to make my peace with God, but I was in darkness, and found it not." The light came with the realization that forgiveness could only be found through faith in the crucified Christ, and it was no chance collision, but the natural result of this deep conviction of the need and true source of salvation which drove him to kindle the flame of the Reformation by his public denunciation of Tetzels sale of pardons.'

The instances are notorious, and they are representative. The more recent cases are in entire agreement. 'In our own land and in more recent

times the Evangelical movements were inspired by the same motive. The awful consequences of sin and the love of God manifested in the salvation provided by the Cross were the two great thoughts animating the Evangelical revivalists; while later, in the Oxford Movement, which was ostensibly more concerned with questions relating to the outward organization of the Church, the title of one of Newman's sermons, "The Cross of Christ the Measure of the World," is in itself a sufficient indication of the place which the Atonement filled in the spiritual life of its leaders, and explains their emphasis on the doctrine of penance.'

If, then, we are to take advantage of the present opportunity, if we are to recognize the hand of God in that strange providence which has given the doctrine of Atonement the very first place in the thoughts of men, we must make it clear that what Christ accomplished in His death was not merely to move men to repentance and faith in God, as the condition of their being reconciled to Him, but, in the words of the late Dr. Denney, 'to do a work as Reconciler which tells upon God as well as upon the sinful.'

Praying for the Erring.

BY THE REV. B. B. WARFIELD, D.D., LL.D., LITT.D., PROFESSOR OF DIDACTIC THEOLOGY
IN PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

'If any one observe his brother sinning (sin not to death), he shall ask, and He will give life to him (to those sinning not to death). There is sin to death—I do not mean that he is to ask concerning that: all iniquity is sin, and there is sin not to death.'—1 Jn 5^{16, 17}.

No reader of the First Epistle of John can fail to be deeply impressed with the interest of the Apostle in the Christian community. The prominent place taken in the Epistle by exhortations to love of the brethren is one of its most marked features. Among the duties arising out of brotherly love would naturally be included those which found the occasion of their exercise in the imperfect sanctification of the brotherhood. How should the individual Christian conduct himself in view

of the sin of which he could not fail to be aware in the conduct of his fellow-Christians?

Well, for one thing, he should pray for his erring brethren. It is this duty of prayer for the erring brother which is laid on the hearts of Christians in the two verses which are now before us. Having intimated the intimacy of the intercourse which the Christian has with God in prayer, and the prevailing power of the Christian's petitions—it is even said that whatever he asks he receives—the Apostle founds on this an exhortation to use this prayer-power in behalf of sinning brethren. His zeal is for the holiness of the Christian community. The instrument which he here employs to secure it is brotherly prayer. As the community is bound

together by mutual love, he gives increased firmness to its unity by adding the cement of mutual intercession. Every Christian is to besiege the throne of grace with petitions for the brethren who come under his observation as living lives less perfect than they ought to be.

This is presented as a matter of duty—'he shall ask.' 'If any one observe his brother sinning—he shall ask.' The 'any one,' although unlimited in form, is limited in fact: it is not any one whatever, but any Christian that is meant, as the words 'his brother' show. This duty is one which holds good within the limits of the Christian community; it is a specifically Christian duty, a community duty, a duty to the brotherhood as such, having its warrant and finding its purpose in the brotherly relation. The conditional form of the sentence does not suggest that it is unlikely that the Christian will observe sin in his brother, or even doubt whether he will or not—'if perchance such a thing should occur.' It is rather assumed that the thing is a thing that in the nature of the case does occur. The Apostle is positing a condition of affairs which exists. Christians, he intimates, will be aware of the presence of sin in the brotherhood.

It is to be noticed that the Apostle does not say, If any one observe his brother sin, but, If any one observe his brother sinning. He is not speaking of a single act of sin, or even of a succession of disconnected acts of sin. He is speaking of habitual sinning, of a course of sinning. It is as if one would say, If you see a brother casting his life on a lower than the true Christian plane. What the Apostle has primarily in mind is a general life-manifestation which is content with a standard of conduct below the demands of Christian holiness. He is not thinking, it is true, of what we should speak of as gravely sinful lives, lives given over to all evil. Such lives would not be Christian lives at all, and those living them could have no place in the brotherhood. What he is thinking of is lives which are Christian but not as Christian as they ought to be. Therefore he adds at once a qualification. He does not say merely, If any one observe his brother sinning, but, If any one observe his brother sinning sin not to death. This is a brother. He is not of that world all of which lies in the evil one. He is born of God, and the evil one cannot lay hold of him. But his life is not all that the life of a child of God whose seed abides in him ought to be. What is the duty of

his fellow-Christian to him? Well, the duty now occupying the Apostle's thought is that he should pray for him. And the Apostle not only urges the duty, but adds a promise. 'He shall ask,' he says; and adds: 'And He,' that is, God whom he asks, 'will give life to him,—in the case of those who are not sinning to death.'

It is, no doubt, a little confusing to read that the answer to the prayer will be that God will give 'life' to the sinning brother. If his sinning is distinctly not to death, whether we take that phrase strongly as meaning that it is not such as brings to death, or weakly as meaning that it is not such as tends to death, he already has life. He has passed out of death into life, and that seed of God abides in him which—so we have been told—because it is God's seed will have the victory at last. We may perhaps suppose that by giving life there is meant rather the maintaining or perfecting than the initiating of life. He who lives below his privileges, in whom the life which he has received is languid or weak in its manifestations, is made by our prayers the recipient of fresh vital impulses, or powers, that he may live as the Christian should live. Hitherto living on a plane which can be spoken of only as sinful—though not mortally sinful—he will through our prayers receive newness of life.

The express limitation of the answer to our prayers for our sinning brethren to those who are not sinning to death so emphasizes this limitation, already inserted with reference to the prayer itself, as to bring the excluded class sharply before the mind. We are not surprised, therefore, to find the Apostle adding immediately, 'There is such a thing as sin to death.' We are impelled to inquire with some anxiety, what is meant by these phrases, 'sinning sin not to death,' 'sinning not to death,' 'sin to death,' 'sin not to death,' and what part the distinction intimated is intended to play in the Christian's actual intercessions. If what John means to say is that a Christian is to take good care, in interceding with God for his fellow-Christians, that he prays for none who are sinning to death but confines his petitions to those who are sinning not to death, we can only look upon his declarations as very extraordinary. For one thing, they would imply an exact knowledge in the possession of every Christian—for this intercessory prayer is required of every Christian—not merely of what kind or degree of sinning is to death, and

what is not, but also of what kind or degree of sinning is manifested in the life of every one of his brethren. Obviously this knowledge can only with difficulty be presupposed. And the assumption of it does not seem to underlie John's remarks. How, in that case, could he gravely inform his readers that 'There is sin to death,' and again that 'There is sin not to death'? Clearly his readers are not supposed by him to have all kinds and varieties of sin and all kinds and varieties of sinners already lying before their minds in clear-cut discrimination. It is implied in such remarks, that there are kinds and degrees of sinning, some of which are mortal and some not, although all sinning, because it is sinning, is a great evil. It is difficult to believe, however, that John expected his readers to classify these sinful manifestations in their minds in a graded series, not merely in the abstract but in the several manifestations of them in concrete instances, and to decide beforehand the exact standing of a brother, on the basis of the particular kind or degree of his sinning, before venturing to pray for him.

The question arises accordingly whether John may not define some sinning as sinning to death, and other as sinning not to death, not with a view to determining whom Christians are to pray for, but with a view to explaining the differences which occur in the answering of their prayers. When a Christian prays for a sinning brother, if his sinning is not to death the prayer will be answered and God will give him life; but if his sinning is to death the prayer will not be answered. Is not John, in a word, encouraging Christians to pray for their sinning brethren, and promising answers in all cases when the sinning is not to death? This explanation finds a ready application to the qualifying clauses in the early portion of the declaration. We have only to suppose that they are objective additions, describing what, in point of fact, is the case, and are not to be read subjectively as descriptive of what lies in the mind of those who pray: 'If any one observe his brother sinning what, in point of fact, is sin not to death, he shall ask and God will give life to him—in the case of those who are sinning, in point of fact, not to death.' The objective explanation may seem of more difficult application to the later clauses: 'There is sin to death: I do not say that he is to ask concerning that. All iniquity is sin, and there is sin not to death.' This is of course, in no case, a prohibition

of prayer for him who is sinning to death. 'I do not say that he shall' and 'I say that he shall not' are not the same thing. It may seem, however, to withdraw them who are sinning to death from the scope of the requirement that Christians should pray for their sinning brethren, and to suggest that apart from them there remains a wide field in which the principle of intercessory prayer may be exercised. Even here, however, the objective interpretation is not impossible. What the Apostle may be understood as saying is that, in requiring his readers to pray for their erring brethren, he does not forget that there are mortal sinners in the community. There are mortal sinners, of course; and no prayer can heal their hurt. But there is much sinning that is not mortal. And for fear of praying for the one unavailingly, we must not fail in the duty or miss the privilege of praying for the other. The question whether the sinning is mortal or not is for God, not for us. Let us pray for our sinful brethren: that is our plain duty. As to the answer to our prayers, leave that to God: let us only pray. In this view the phrase, 'I do not say that he is to ask concerning that,' may be taken with a certain concessive colouring—almost as if it ran 'I have not that in mind when I say he is to ask'; while the real scope of the injunction is given in the succeeding words: 'Every unrighteousness, however, is sin, and there is much sin not to death.' The conclusion of the whole matter accordingly runs, Therefore fail not to pray for the sinning brother: who knows but your prayer shall save the sick of soul, and the sins he has committed shall be forgiven him!

There remains the remarkable circumstance that the verb for asking in the clause, 'I do not say that he is to ask concerning it,' is not the same verb which is employed in the preceding context for asking. This sudden change in the verb, if we ought not to say that it is inexplicable, certainly has not as yet been satisfactorily explained. The synonymists have of course been at work on the two verbs, seeking to establish distinct shades of meaning for them. But their labours have not been very fruitful with respect at least to their employment in our present passage. It used to be said that the word which appears in the earlier portion of our passage is the more suitable for an inferior seeking a boon from a superior, while 'a certain equality or familiarity between the parties' is implied by that which now faces us. That dis-

inction brings us no help here; nor does the distinction which it is now more common to urge, that the verb used in the earlier clauses is employed rather in requests for things, our present verb in requests for persons. The sudden change in the word used is, indeed, so puzzling that it tempts to the supposition that the second verb is not employed here in the sense of praying at all, which is after all only a secondary meaning acquired by it in later Greek, but in its native sense of questioning, inquiring. The emphasis which falls on the word here lends colour to such a supposition; and the use of the two verbs in close contiguity in their divergent senses has a parallel in their similar employment in Jn 16^{23, 24}. If such a supposition were entertained, the passage would no longer have even the surface appearance of excluding one kind of sinners from our prayers, although, of course, it would still leave the fundamental fact untouched, that there are those for whom our prayers will not avail. It would, on the contrary, expressly require us to pray for all sinners, intimating that though there is a sin to death, that is a matter about which we are not to make anxious inquiry before we pray, but, leaving it to God, we are for ourselves to pray for all our brethren whom we observe to be living sinful lives.

Precisely what John means by the phrase 'sin to death' has naturally been a matter of much discussion. It has commonly been assumed that some specific sin or some specific class of sins is intended; and that this specific sin or class of sins is declared to be intrinsically mortal. On this understanding, the discrimination of sins in the teaching of the Roman Church into venial and mortal, pardonable and unpardonable, is very natural. And perhaps on this understanding it is not unnatural to seek some mitigation of what seems the harshness of the implied declaration. This mitigation is sometimes sought by representing 'death' to mean not exactly 'death,' but, say, exclusion from the Christian society,—that being supposed to be, from the point of view of the brotherhood, a sort of death, as involving exclusion from the community's life. It is also sometimes sought by insisting upon a weak sense for the preposition 'to.' John does not say, it is said, that the sin in question necessarily brings death, but only that it 'tends to death.' It seems to be clear, however, that John supposed it possible that sinners sinning sin to death might be found within the Christian community: they ought not

to be there, it is true, but it seems clear they were—for it is of sinners within the community alone that John is here speaking. And certainly if prayer is to be offered for no sin which 'tends to death,' no sin whatever will be prayed for. All sinning 'tends to death,' and will certainly issue in death if not expiated and checked. The assumption which underlies this whole discussion, however, is unjustified. By 'sin to death,' John is not speaking of some specific sin, some terrible sin known to all his readers as the unpardonable sin, by the commission of which a man cuts himself off once for all from the grace of God and condemns himself to hopeless destruction; for which, when committed, therefore, Christians dare not even intercede with God. And surely he cannot be supposed to be encouraging his readers to mount the throne of judgment and apportion their final awards to their companions,—assigning life to some and consigning others to eternal doom. He is merely saying that of those whom we observe to be sinning in the community, some are, in point of fact, sinning to death, and others not; and that, in point of fact, our prayers will be of benefit to the one and not to the other. Who they are who are sinning to death, we do not in any case know. John does not suppose us to know. Only, in urging us to pray for our sinful brethren, and promising us in answer to our prayers, the gift of life to them, he warns us that there are some for whom our petitions will not thus avail. But he warns us of this, not that we may avoid praying for these unhappy ones, but that we may be prepared for the failure of our prayers in their case.

We are not, then, to vex our souls with the anxious inquiry, what the sin to death is. Much less are we to vex the souls of others, God's children, by setting them upon so fruitless a quest, with perhaps the agonizing result that they torment themselves with the fear that they may have unwittingly committed the sin to death. We cannot quite say, with the memory sharp within us of our Lord's warning to the Pharisees, that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit has never forgiveness, that there is no 'sin to death' in this particularizing sense. But we are warranted in asserting that apart from this terrible blasphemy there is no sin which we may dare to pronounce unpardonable. There is no sin so small, it is true, that it is in itself pardonable; but no sin can be so great that it is not pardonable in Christ. All sin means

death; but the life that is in Christ is life from death. The lesson from our passage is not that there is some particular sin, on committing which we are hopelessly doomed; and that therefore we must take good care to avoid committing this particular sin. The lesson is that all sin is deadly, and, if we would have life, we must shun all sin,—and that we should come also to our sinning brethren's help with our prayers. It is pitiable how prone we are to seek out some particular acts on which we would fain suspend the issues of life and death, neglecting the really important thing, the course of life itself. Good Master, said the rich young ruler, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? He wished to hang his destiny on one act, one great decisive act, which would settle the matter once for all. So, in their view of our passage, men tend to seek out some great decisive sin, by which the die may be cast once for all, and our whole future be irretrievably lost. What great sin may I do, they ask, that there may be surely inflicted on me eternal death? There is no intimation in John's words of the existence of any such great decisive sin, *the* mortal sin by way of eminence; any more than our Lord allowed in His response to the rich young ruler the existence of any such decisive deed of righteousness as he sought.

Our Lord just said calmly to His interlocutor, Keep the Commandments. The keeping of the

Commandments is the sole rule of life. In not keeping the Commandments, therefore, the pathway to death is blazed out for us. Our Lord did not mean that a sinner may purchase life for himself by keeping the Commandments. And we cannot mean that no one who breaks the Commandments, even though he breaks all of them, can be saved. We must not reckon on the one side or the other without Christ, His blood and righteousness. But the truth which needs to be insisted upon here is that righteousness and unrighteousness are to be measured not by some great thing that is done by us, but by the whole life-manifestation, made up of innumerable things that are done, and that the rule of judgment is in both cases alike just the Commandments. Sinning to death does not mean, then, in any case, the commission of some tremendous, perhaps mysterious sin, but just living out of conformity with and in transgression of the law of God. We are all by nature sinners to death. Whom the Lord in His mercy has raised by His grace out of this death into His own abounding life, we cannot certainly divine. But we can pray for our brethren whom we observe to be sinning. The issue of our praying God alone knows now; we must wait until the last day to see. Meanwhile we have the assurance that our prayers have a part in the favourable issue, and that we are co-workers by them in our brethren's salvation.

Literature.

THE SECOND PERIOD OF QUAKERISM.

THE late John Wilhelm Rowntree projected a complete History of Quakerism, and he saw some of the volumes of it published before he died. The work is making steady progress. Three volumes by Professor Rufus M. Jones are reckoned to belong to the series: (1) *Studies in Mystical Religion*; (2) *The Quakers in the American Colonies*; (3) *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries*. The history of the Quakers in Great Britain was entrusted to Mr. William C. Braithwaite, whose first volume, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, was published in 1912. Mr. Braith-

waite has just seen the publication of his second volume. Its title is *The Second Period of Quakerism* (Macmillan; 15s. net).

Of most movements the second period is inferior to the first. It is not otherwise with Quakerism. Mr. Braithwaite's task in this volume cannot have been a pleasant one. He has to record a diminution of life and energy, even of moral influence and inspiration, with only some slight compensation in the way of outward social service. Can we trace the cause? The cause is nearly always the same—outward organization taking the place of inward inspiration. 'I have tried,' says Mr. Braithwaite, 'I have tried faithfully to record the extravagances which attended the first years of un-