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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It would be possible to write a very dull book on *The Attributes of God*. The thing has been done before, and in all probability it will be done again. But it would not be possible for Dr. FARNELL. He knows too much about the concrete facts of the great historical religions to write about religion otherwise than interestingly. His Gifford Lectures on 'Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality,' delivered in St. Andrews in 1920, and his five elaborate volumes on 'The Cults of the Greek States,' show that, at any rate of Greek religion, there is nothing that can be known that he does not know.

It is therefore with a mind filled with facts that he approaches his discussion of *The Attributes of God* (Milford; 12s. 6d. net)—the subject he chose for his second series of Gifford Lectures. 'The view maintained throughout this course,' he tells us in the last lecture, 'has been mainly historical rather than philosophical or dogmatic, being chiefly fixed upon the phenomena of the living and working religions.' Many of Dr. FARNELL'S arguments and criticisms show that he might, had he pleased, have dealt with his subject philosophically, but most readers will be grateful that he has elected to present the great religious ideas which he discusses as they operate within religious life. This method clothes the discussion from beginning to end with warmth and vitality.

The very titles of his chapters prepare us for a discussion which will not be theological in the narrower sense of that word. While there are chapters on the Moral Attributes of God, on the Metaphysical Attributes, and on the Attribute of Power, there are others on the Attributes of Beauty, Wisdom, and Truth, on the Political Attributes, and on Tribal and National Attributes which carry us, by the very names they bear, beyond the region of abstract discussion into the warm and eager life of men.

Not the least conspicuous feature of the argument is its generosity. He believes, with another Gifford Lecturer, that 'it is at the least probable that all of the ideas about God have had some value' (Professor W. P. Paterson, *The Nature of Religion*, p. 380); only we imagine that he would express himself even more confidently. Take, for example, his kindly treatment of polytheism. While he frankly exposes its dangers, not the least of which was its inevitable introduction of the sex-element, with its influence not only upon mythology, but sometimes also on cultic practice, he urges that it contributed to the development of art, that it produced a religious tolerance which is usually conspicuously absent from the great monotheistic religions, and that it encouraged a certain *joie de vivre*, which has too seldom accompanied the austerities of monotheism.

Another interesting aspect of the discussion is the revelation it brings, at not a few points, of the curious permanence in modern religion—albeit in transformed guise—of ancient ideas whose superstitious origins are not recognized by one worshipper in a hundred thousand. As he well says, 'the liturgy of a great historic Church is the mirror of many ages.' The Communion-table, for example, has gathered to itself the immemorial sanctity of the ancient altar as charged with the real presence, and this idea 'is not aware of its kinship with the crude conceptions of the old world concerning a finite god.' Similarly a dead ritual is quickened with new intention, for example, in the Church-service of the churching of women, 'which was suggested by the primitive feeling of the impurity of childbirth, but has been transformed into an act of thanksgiving.'

These skilful transformations notwithstanding, Dr. FARNELL occasionally hints that the expression of modern religious faith should be in franker consonance with the demands of the modern religious mind. For example, he argues that our liturgy 'stands in urgent need of revision in respect of the objects for which we think it legitimate to proffer prayer: we do not pray for alterations in the tides or the movements of the planets; but we show ourselves on the primitive level of knowledge and religion when we pray for or against rain, as though the weather, being variable, obeyed no law but depended on the caprice or temper of an emotional deity.'

Similarly he offers criticisms, at once searching and refreshing, of religious creed and practice. In discussing monotheism and the difficulty it encountered in the attempt to combine consistently 'the divine man, near and most dear, attractive and appealing,' with the form of the supreme God, he bluntly maintains that the Athanasian formulæ have been of no avail to fuse these two distinct forms into one. And he is certainly well within the truth when he asserts that in spite of our hymnology there is little proof that the personality of the third Person of our Trinity is a living power for the mass of believers. More startlingly still, but with equal justice, he remarks that the current popular religion of Europe, so far from being a pure monotheism, should rather be described as 'a high spiritual polytheism tempered and restrained by the Athanasian creed.' And he punctures the pride of the theologians—if there be such a creature to-day as a proud theologian—by reminding them that a critical review of the efforts of the ages to reconcile the evil in the world of men and the world of Nature with the infinite power and the infinite love of God must pronounce that no such reconciliation has been found.

At many points in the discussion we are reminded how deep is the debt of the present to the often very distant past, not only for its religious ideas, but also for its not seldom imperfectly apprehended phraseology. We speak, glibly or reverently as the case may be, of the Name of God and the Word of God, without realizing how charged with magic potency these simple phrases once were. Whether or not any Biblical writer ever consciously attached to these phrases such associations, at any rate 'in tracing out the origin of the Biblical usage we must reckon with Babylon and the magical hypothesis.'

Dr. FARNELL never touches the Bible without saying something to which we must give heed, whether we agree with him or not. We agree that in the Old Testament we have the foundations of the first philosophy of history. Not all perhaps would agree with every clause of the statement that Jahweh 'has no discoverable nature-origin and none of the weaknesses of a nature-god, but is an ethical personality to the core and from the beginning,' though that is nobly said. Still more might demur to the description of the Hebraic and Christian God as aloof from the immediate world of Nature around us: this cannot be very justly said of the God of Gn 1, Is 40, Job 38 f., Ps 104, or of the God of Jesus who so loved the birds and the flowers.

His view of history is both challenging and

bracing. The deeper, he says, is a man's moral reading of history, the more impossible the doctrine becomes for him that the drama of history is God's work. 'We cannot say that human history represents God's purpose; for human history is the drama of human agents acting freely,' and reason and imagination would alike stagger at the thought that God was responsible for such a horror as the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, or for the War which recently convulsed the world. It is by the exercise of his free will, which he may use for evil as for good, that man regresses or advances, and 'progress means strenuous willing.' But 'to maintain this is by no means to rule out the idea of divine action in human affairs on a large scale.' Dr. FARNELL shares the faith, Homeric no less than Christian, in the Divine care for the human community.

There is a time for everything under the sun, said the Preacher, or, at any rate, words to that effect. And one application of his words must occur to every thoughtful observer who looks out upon the human drama. He sees everywhere in the world of thought, springing up spontaneously in different countries, one and the same tendency or drift or movement. It was remarkable, for example, how the same attitude to the problems of philosophy appeared simultaneously in three countries, in America taking the name of Pragmatism, in England of Humanism, and in Germany of Ritschlianism. It was the same movement, and it was an independent movement in each land. That is only one example of what is seen continually in age after age.

It may seem a descent from the exalted region of philosophy to offer as another example the movement for Church union. But it is not a descent. For this is not a mere ecclesiastical question, or one of expediency or politics. It is essentially a religious question and deeply concerns the interests of the Kingdom of God. And one of the most powerful reasons for pursuing the matter to a conclusion is just the fact to which allusion has been made, that it is obviously a duty to which the Mysterious Providence that guides the course of thought and actions is imperiously pointing.

There is a time for separation. There are crises when the plain duty of a body of men with life-and-death convictions is to come out of a Church which denies or nullifies these convictions. An instance is the Reformation. Whether the Reformed Church was right or wrong (that does not concern us now) the reformers believed their faith was vital to the interests of truth and religion and they were bound to come out. Another plain instance is to be found in the various secessions from the Church of Scotland. The Disruption worthies may have contended for a truth or for a chimæra, but at any rate, believing what they did, that the liberty of the Church was at stake, they had to separate. That was an era of separation, and each secession may be truly said to have enriched the religious life of the land.

But we have passed away from that era. What the secessions fought for has been gained. And we have now come to an age when the movement all over the world is for union. As patently as the previous age was one for dividing, is the present age one for closing up divisions. And accordingly we see everywhere, in England, in Scotland, in America, in Canada, the same movement springing up and the same irresistible impulse driving men to come together. When one looks at the matter thus it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the movement is under the care of the Divine Spirit and will inevitably issue in success.

That seems to us one sound reason why humble Christian men should feel the obligation to unite and to pursue ways of uniting. But there are other reasons. Professor SHAW, of Halifax in Canada, has published lately an address entitled *A Scottish Presbyterian and Church Union in Canada*, in which he gives his reasons for adhesion to the union movement there. It is a powerful plea,

and its main contention is an impressive one. It is this. The Church is the Living Body of a Living Redeemer, and it cannot be shackled by the chains of the past. The Church has always held herself free to change the forms of her faith or the forms of its expression, and also to review her organization and adapt it to changing conditions. This is the answer to those who resist union on the ground that it is likely to alter the face of the Church. The Church is not unchangeable unless in its faith in an unchanging Redeemer. It has to learn. It has to adapt itself. It has to meet the needs of every generation. And to do this to-day it must read the mind of a Providence which points to one overmastering service.

One of the objections to union which is most influential is that we are being asked to give up what we have contended for in the past. But this often amounts simply to an adhesion to old watchwords which have ceased to have the old meaning. In Scotland, for example, there has been a traditional objection to a 'civil establishment' of religion, and the present union movement is resisted on that ground. But in the new constitution of the Church of Scotland 'establishment' has ceased to have any objectionable meaning. All that was dangerous to liberty in the old *thing* has been removed, but still the objectors fasten on the old *word*, which is now without any fatal significance. That is one instance of the way in which words that once had a content that was to many evil are still treated as shibboleths or fetishes when the content has departed from them. Without offence to any one, perhaps the same may be said of 'Episcopacy,' which once stood to many for an invasion of spiritual liberty but which has no such significance now for anybody.

But there are other considerations leading strongly to the obligation of outward unity as well as inward. There is the call for a united witness. You may sneer at the men of the world, but this is a pragmatic age, and the world is engaged in sneering at the Churches because they cannot agree in regard to essential things. We fail to impress the world because the world says to us, 'You are unable to come together and look at the big things: you lay stress on secondary matters. Your minds are full of the petty things which divide you, and you have not the largeness of mind to look steadily at the great things which should be everything to you. If you had the mind to see what is really big these things which separate you would seem trivial.' Can the Churches afford to despise an indictment like that?

There is another and practical consideration. To-day the Church has to meet enemies that are more powerful than ever before. Not intellectual enemies, but forces that wish to nullify her witness and undermine her influence, and there is a need, and a call, for a fresh organization of her resources to meet the modern situation and the modern enemy. It is not merely a question of economy, though that is of real moment. It is the old question of unity of command. It was unity of command that won the War for us. The victory came when all forces were brought together and were thrown where they were needed. Is not that the precise situation in the religious world to-day? How can we win the greater war when we are all fighting just as we like on a broad front with no cohesion and no unity of organized plan?

In no sphere have Christian missions encountered more opposition and difficulty than in the Moslem world. Islam has hitherto been as a dead wall, immovable, impenetrable. Ever since the time of the Crusades it has seemed to present a solid front to Christendom, and has kept alive the fear that at any hour it might unite all its forces in a holy war. There is ample evidence that the British Government in its handling of Mohammedan problems has for many years been obsessed by this fear, and our Moslem fellow-subjects in India have known well how to play upon it. Converts from Islam have been few in number, and the tendency has been to direct missionary effort to other and more hopeful

fields. There occurred, however, in March 1924, one of the most dramatic events in history, namely, the abolition of the Caliphate by the Republic of Turkey and the expulsion of the Caliph and his family from Constantinople. It came as a thunderclap, and its echoes are still reverberating throughout the world of Islam. If Mussolini were suddenly to turn the Pope and his cardinals out of Rome bag and baggage it would not cause a greater commotion in the papal world. The Caliph has ever been regarded not only as the spiritual head but as the defender of the faith of Islam. In his name the faithful offered their prayers in every mosque, and his deposition seemed like dislodging the keystone of the whole structure. It was an event which could not fail to rouse world-wide interest, and it has revealed to many, as by a lightning flash, the mighty changes that have in recent years been passing over the Near East.

Any one desiring information upon this most important subject cannot do better than turn to a book just published on *The Moslem World of To-day*, edited by Dr. John R. Mott (Hodder & Stoughton ; 8s. 6d. net). The twenty-three papers which constitute this volume of composite authorship present with real comprehension and living interest many of the more important aspects of the Moslem world of to-day and describe the causes underlying the tremendous changes which have taken place in Islam in recent years. They show convincingly why this situation is one of urgent interest and concern to all Christendom. They are the outcome of a series of conferences which have been held in various parts of the Moslem world, culminating in a General Conference in Jerusalem in April 1924. Their object is to provide an up-to-date survey of the conditions, intellectual, social, moral, and religious, in Moslem lands, and to co-ordinate the experience, thinking, and vision of missionary workers.

Briefly the facts are these. The Caliphate has been swept away before the rising tide of democracy and progress. Its continuance was found to be incompatible with the spirit of the age and with reform. So it had to go. Nothing could more strikingly illustrate how profoundly the East has felt the impact of the West, and how the most sacred and venerable institutions have been shaken to their foundations by the War. A new spirit of nationalism has taken the place of the old ideal of Pan-Islamism. The Turk, the Egyptian, the Arab is a national first, a Moslem second. The possibility of a Holy War has receded below the horizon. Turks will be found saying that their nation made its biggest mistake when it adopted Islam. Evidences of revolution in the intellectual and social life of the peoples of the Near East are manifold. The railway, and still more the motor car and the aeroplane, have penetrated to the remotest corners. The cinema is a revolution in itself. A thirst for education has been awakened, and an amazing number of newspapers has sprung to life. 'Fleet Street may well envy the young Afghan editors,' said the *Times* in a notice of the Afghan Press, 'it is the golden age of journalism when a nation is beginning to think, and truth is as fresh as dew, and there is no bugbear of banality.' The supreme evidence of revolution in the East is the awakening of its womanhood, so long secluded and despised. In Stamboul itself seven in eight of the Moslem women may be seen walking unveiled in the streets.

These changes would seem to present to the Christian Church a unique opportunity. It is easy, of course, to exaggerate the crisis and to raise the cry of 'now or never.' Nations are neither born nor reborn in a day. But, when all allowance is made, the fact remains that there is a new readiness to hear the Gospel, though it may only arise from inquisitiveness. A daily paper in Constantinople recently conducted a discussion for seven months on the Personality of Christ. The press often speaks in terms of the highest praise of Jesus Christ. Here is part of a noble tribute which appeared as a leading article in *Al Iraq*, Bagdad, on Christmas Day, 1921. 'Nineteen hundred and twenty-one years ago the ray that leads to the right path appeared in Bethlehem as a bright star, and His

light spread over the East and the West. On that day was born the Image of Love and the Great Child. He spent His days calling people to the Truth and guiding them to the right path. He was a good shepherd who sheltered His sheep and defended them against the wolves. . . . The greatness of Cæsar has passed away, the Nero's page in history is a dark one; but time has failed to efface the greatness of the Apostle of Love, and His page in history remains white, with no spots on it.' On the other hand a great deal of the anti-Christian material produced in the West is being eagerly assimilated and skilfully used to attack the work of the Christian missionaries in the East.

The problem before the Christian Church is to turn this Renaissance into a Reformation. The situation in Moslem lands to-day presents an interesting parallel to the fifteenth century in Western Europe. The moulds which had contained and shaped the life of the Middle Ages were all broken up as new worlds swam into view. But only in those nations where the new spirit was directed into religious channels were the deepest springs of national life rejuvenated. The nations which rejected or crushed the religious movement, like Italy, Spain, and Portugal, were spiritually and morally, and soon, also, politically crippled. The wonderful flower of their springtime did not yield fruit because it lacked the spiritual vitality of the Protestant Reformation. So the Moslem world to-day needs to be vitalized by the Gospel if its awakening is to herald the coming of a better day. The old Mohammedanism is passing away, and many of its devotees, shaken out of that ancient stronghold, are taking the road of secularism. The issue is not Mohammed or Christ. It is Christ or decay and death. Here as in the case of the ethnic religions it is becoming apparent that upon the Christian faith there will ultimately fall the whole burden of keeping alive religion in the earth.

What forces are available for the winning of the Moslem world? The Churches of the East are, locally, in the front trenches, but they are so dispirited, darkened, and hardened by long oppression that little is meantime to be hoped from them. 'The really central question is: Has a missionary Protestantism vital power and spiritual energy enough to flood the spiritual deserts of modern Islam with the rising tide of a spiritual revival which will lead to a religious reformation and transformation?' The hour calls for a great Crusade. The Christianity of the West must approach the Moslem world with fullest sympathy and in the spirit of brotherhood, bearing in her hand a full Gospel in the assurance that it will meet the Moslem need. The workers already in the field have been confirmed in this assurance. 'The most searching experience and possibly the most creative hour in each of the conferences was the consideration of the topic, "What has Christ to bring to Moslems which they cannot under any circumstances obtain from their own religion or from any other source?" The corporate thinking and intercession of those memorable hours confirmed the faith of every one as to the absolute uniqueness, supremacy, and sufficiency of Jesus Christ the Living Lord.'

Recent Thought on the Doctrine of the Atonement.

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I propose to confine this report to literature in our own language. Before we attempt any historical statement, let us briefly consider the nature of the problem as a *locus* in systematic or dogmatic thought.

I. Two great doctrines have, in a sense, competed for attention from orthodox minds, alike in past ages and in our own day: the Incarnation and the Atonement. Mr. J. K. Mozley has remarked upon the comparative waning of what we may call the