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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

Two books have been published simultaneously which deal with matters vital to the Christian faith, and which bring out into clear and sharp prominence the truths for which their respective writers believe that the Christian mind must earnestly and uncompromisingly contend. One is by Professor H. Maurice RELTON, D.D., who discusses *Some Postulates of a Christian Philosophy* (S.P.C.K. ; 7s. 6d. net); the other is by Principal E. GRIFFITH-JONES, D.D., who has chosen the more restricted subject of *Providence: Human and Divine* (Hodder & Stoughton ; 8s. 6d. net), and who intends to follow up this first volume on 'Some Problems of Divine Providence' by another dealing with the human side of the general problem of Providence.

At several points these books overlap in a remarkable way. For example, in illustration of the thesis that the belief in free will is not in the least incompatible with the belief in Providence, both quote the striking passage from William James's 'Will to Believe'—a passage so striking that we may be pardoned for quoting it too. It runs thus: 'Suppose two men before a chess-board, the one a novice, the other an expert player of the game. The expert intends to beat. But he cannot foresee exactly what any one actual move of his adversary may be. He knows, however, all the possible moves of the latter; and he knows in

advance how to meet each of them by a move of his own which leads in the direction of victory. And the victory infallibly arrives, after no matter how devious a course, in the one predestined form of checkmate to the novice's king.'

Both writers agree that the personality of God, whom contemporary science and philosophy tend at least to depersonalize, 'the former by viewing the world as a mere theatre of force, and the latter by conceptualizing Him into a bare principle,' is a truth which we must do everything in our power to recover for faith. The choice, as Dr. RELTON puts it, is 'between an impersonal something, the Absolute, and Someone, whom we name God,' and the interests of the Christian faith rule out the first alternative as impossible.

Both, again, agree that reason alone will never yield an adequate solution of the problems presented by the facts of human experience and Christian dogma. Speaking of the undeniable fact that 'suffering brings final spiritual loss on so many who succumb through weakness in the struggle, and sink into a life of querulousness and despair, or die, in the midst of their days, broken in heart and bankrupt of hope,' Principal GRIFFITH-JONES frankly admits, as indeed we all must, that reason alone cannot handle so dark and painful a mystery. And in other connections, Professor

RELTON ungrudgingly makes the same admission. In particular is this true, he admits, of all attempts to rationalize the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Both dogmas constitute a perpetual challenge to thought: with regard to the Person of Christ, 'whilst fresh investigation and discussion may help many to grasp more fully the essential difficulties of the problem, it is well for us to recognize that no intellectual solution will solve it.' Christian dogma cannot be fully rationalized; a fully rationalized Christianity would be a contradiction in terms. Reason has grave limitations, and the intellect alone is not competent to sense the whole range of Reality.

Both writers take for granted the validity of the essential Christian doctrines, and they endeavour to express the Christian conception of God in the thought-forms of our time. In one aspect they may seem to differ, though the difference is more apparent than real. Principal GRIFFITH-JONES tells us, for example, that his book is written for the perplexed Christian believer 'who is anxious to harmonize his faith with the world-view of modern science and philosophy.' Dr. RELTON is not so much concerned to harmonize his faith with modern science and philosophy, for the simple reason that in science a new discovery may at any time upset an 'established hypothesis,' while in philosophy there is to-day no outstanding system which has won for itself any widespread acceptance. The clash of rival speculations presents a spectacle of hopeless confusion. To take one point: 'Modern Philosophy apparently cannot entertain the concept of Transcendence: Christian Theology cannot do without it. Here we reach the parting of the ways.'

Even in this point, however, the difference between these thinkers is not great. For, in describing the aim of his book, the Principal takes care to italicize certain words which practically bring his attitude into line with that of Dr. RELTON. His book is written, he tells us, for the Christian believer who is anxious to express his faith, 'so

far as that can be done without detriment to spiritual values, in the thought-forms of our day and generation.' If for 'spiritual' we substitute 'Christian,' the writers are in practical agreement. Many would welcome a book written, if we may reverse the words of Principal GRIFFITH-JONES, 'not for the perplexed Christian believer, but for the unbeliever, and the sceptic.' But we have no right to quarrel with writers for their choice of a subject; and it is certainly worth while to assert, as these writers do boldly assert, that Christian experience is as real an entity and as worthy of study as an experience which, whether defiantly or regretfully, would refuse to describe itself as Christian.

For this is one of the admirable features common to both books, that they courageously face facts. The one faces the sorrowful facts of human experience which have perplexed the minds, and all but broken the hearts, of some who have longed to believe in the love of God; the other confidently asserts the facts of Christian experience, and addresses itself to the question of what philosophical postulates these imply. 'We begin with our Christian data, which consist in both fact and interpretation of fact.'

But more than that, Dr. RELTON sees very clearly that he must bring the claims of Christianity to the test of experience, and he is not afraid of the challenge. The Truth for which he pleads must be able to justify itself in competition with its rivals, and this he believes it is abundantly able to do. This is how he puts it: 'The only test we can apply to Christianity as an historic religion claiming Divine sanction and Divine origin will not be an external authority of a Church, but the authoritative character of the Revelation as standing upon its own intrinsic merits in rivalry with other religions and tested by comparison with other spiritual experience and ethical systems.' And again: 'Whether the Church in its interpretation of the truth has or has not succeeded in giving to the world a true insight into Reality, can only be decided by an examination of the

actual content of the message it delivers and the work of Christianity in the world.'

In the last analysis this is the test that must be applied to Jesus Himself. 'His greatness and uniqueness must be judged by the effects of His Personality upon history.' But from this most just but drastic test neither He nor His religion has anything to fear. 'History justifies this claim in that Christianity in every age has proved itself as a dynamic force, and revealed itself as a living activity—the activity of a Living God entering effectively into human life in the Christian consciousness, and regenerating human sons by adoption and grace.'

Thus in his search for a Christian philosophy which will cover and explain the experience of Christian men Dr. RELTON asks for no favours. He fully recognizes that the system he adumbrates in this book must take its chance with other systems and must stand or fall on its own merits, worthy of acceptance only if it affords a better explanation than they do of the meaning of Reality, and if it yields a truly comprehensive view of God and His relationship to the world.

Principal GRIFFITH-JONES'S book has not the sweep of Dr. RELTON'S, but he deals more elaborately with that aspect of the Christian faith to which he has chosen to restrict himself. 'Our problem,' he says, 'is to justify the ways of God as the supreme Ruler of the universe in the face of the modern scientific view of the natural order.' He knows well how hard it is to defend the thesis that at the heart of things there is love, and not cruelty or even indifference, and he does not shrink from stating at the worst the case for his opponent.

The course of his argument, which is conducted with much philosophical ability, leads him to many interesting presentations of the concrete facts which make both for and against the view which he defends. Of particular interest is his discussion of the question whether animals suffer, and his

general conclusion is that 'the amount and intensity of suffering in the animate creation is far less than the exaggerated accounts given by some observers of animal life, and the morbid sympathy of many humane people, would lead us to believe.' This is a comforting conclusion and is probably not far from the truth.

Evil is dealt with under four aspects, as limitation, as error, as suffering, and as sin. There is a close and helpful analysis of the function of suffering, the organic and redemptive value of which is profusely illustrated. Prayer also naturally comes up for discussion in a consideration of the Providential order, and the conclusion is reached that, as God may subtly influence though He cannot compel those for whom we pray, intercessory prayer is as legitimate in a world ruled by a personal God as prayer in the interests of one's own soul. The issue of the whole matter is that, however hard and sometimes even impracticable it may be, our endeavour should be to cherish 'an unswerving and obstinate trust in the divine control and wise guidance of the world in matters beyond the reach of vision.'

Of these two writers, Dr. RELTON, grappling as he does with the arguments of Bosanquet, McTaggart, Unamuno, and others of similar calibre, will specially appeal to the philosophically minded, while Dr. GRIFFITH-JONES, in virtue of the subject and the nature of his discussion, ought to appeal to thoughtful men, whether philosophically minded or not. But each in his own way contributes to our assurance of the reasonableness of the Christian faith.

There is in many quarters at present a certain weariness of the whole process of creed-making, creed-subscribing, and creed-repeating. Some are turning from what they regard as the barren search for formulæ that will express religious truth to seek in an ornate and elaborate ritual the true nurture of Christian piety. Others, considering what they

regard as mechanical aids to devotion as futile as the study of metaphysical subtleties, tell us that the one thing that matters is that the everyday life should be infused with the Christian spirit.

Yet each one of us has a creed, a creed that is shaping our lives, often a very different creed from that which we profess and think we hold. The true distinction is not between those who believe in creeds and those who do not, but between those who have examined their working beliefs and those who have not.

Impatience with the continuance of ancient controversies over what is known as 'the Person of Christ' is due in a measure to our imperfect understanding of the meaning of the terms employed, in part also to the fact that the form in which the question has been discussed is largely irrelevant to our age. Yet, whatever categories or formulæ we employ in our answer, the question remains: Who is Jesus Christ? By what right does He demand my allegiance? 'By what authority doest thou these things? Who gave thee this authority?'

In trying to answer this question, it is well to know the answers that have been given in the past. The Rev. Sydney CAVE, M.A., D.D., has provided us with just the help we need in *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (Duckworth: 'Studies in Theology' Series; 5s. net), an admirable introduction to an historical study of Christology.

One is struck afresh with the very early date at which some questions we regard as modern cropped up in the Church. The proposal sometimes made to Hinduize Christianity, so as to facilitate its acclimatization in India, is an example of an attitude that is as old as Tertullian. 'What,' he asks, 'has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? . . . Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic com-

position. We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ.'

The history reminds us also of the supreme importance of keeping our creed in touch with life. It is useless, as the Eastern Church found between the Fourth and the Sixth Councils, to have a clear conception of the Trinity, if the God who is triune is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor is there any merit in asserting the true manhood of Jesus if at the same time we lift Him right out of human life. By the time of the Seventh Œcumenical Council (at Nicæa in 787), Christ 'had become so remote from men that popular piety had turned from the adoration of our Lord to the veneration of His image, or the image of the Virgin, or the saints,' and this Council legalized the veneration of these icons.

Of special interest is Dr. CAVE's chapter on 'Our Present Problem.' We call the Christian revelation final, but our understanding of it can never be final. We see only with the eyes of our time and only such facts as have come within the ken of our own or of past ages. As Paul says, now we only get a puzzled look through a mirror. Consequently, each age has to think out afresh its doctrine of God and of Christ.

Dr. CAVE will have none of the distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. The older apologists erred in speaking of the 'claims' of Christ. In the Synoptics at least, speaking generally, Jesus preaches not Himself, but God and the Kingdom of God. Yet even in the Synoptics the Message is implicitly but inseparably bound up with the Messenger. His revelation of God was at the same time a revelation of Himself. The Jesus who pointed men to God, but for whom as for His followers the question of His own Person was irrelevant, is a creation of Liberal Christianity. We do not find Him in the New Testament.

We make several preliminary demands of any

attempt to produce a doctrine of the Person of Christ. In the first place, it must absolutely conserve, with something more than verbal homage, the unity of God. If Muhammadans, and many besides Muhammadans, believe that the Christian worships three Gods, the fault lies largely with misunderstandings of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, misunderstandings for which Christianity must bear some measure of the blame. Further, it must avoid the tendency, not so common now as formerly, to set up God over against Jesus. It must recognize that we do not know God *and* Jesus; that we know God only in and through Jesus.

Further, our doctrine must use the language and the concepts of our own day. The word 'person' has played a large part in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity; but Tertullian did not mean by 'persona' what we mean by 'person,' even if we knew just what we do mean by 'person.' Again, the category of 'substance' may be useful when the deification of man is regarded as the end of Christianity. In the language of Athanasius, 'He was made man that we might be made God.' But an age which regards it as the aim of our religion that man should have fellowship with God has much less use for this conception of 'substance.'

Nor do we look with kindly eyes on any theory that would make Jesus, in the days of His flesh, an example of duplex personality, that would make of Him a being neither of earth nor of heaven, in whom the human and the Divine alternately took control in a way that separates Him from God as much as it does from man. Even if we relegate the Divine 'nature' of Jesus to the region of the sub-conscious, we are still parting Him in twain. It is not simply as a concession to our human limitations that we insist that the Jesus we know is not two but one.

As Dr. CAVE says, the truth about Jesus must cease to be an unintelligible mystery and become

a gospel. What is wrong with our creeds is not that they are creeds, but that we have had in them too much of the head and too little of the heart. Dr. Denney thought that creeds should be sung rather than signed; and when we truly realize what Jesus is to God and to man, the natural expression of that recognition is a hymn of praise rather than the formal recital of a creed. It is better to let Christ lead us to God, lead us to see the infinite possibilities of man, than even to understand how God and man may be united in Christ. More important than to explain Christ is to accept with all our heart the explanation of God and of the world that we find in Him.

Of the two great dangers that beset any search for a doctrine of the Person of Christ, Dr. CAVE thinks the greater danger is to conceive Jesus only as a God-filled man, 'the expression in human history of the "God-will" for our salvation. Christmas and Easter-day then lose much of their supreme significance, and the Communion Service, though still the precious memorial of the Redeemer's love, could no longer be regarded as the trysting-place of the exalted Lord with His redeemed community.'

The author of 'The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus,' the Rev. J. A. ROBERTSON, M.A., D.D., Professor of New Testament Literature and Theology at Aberdeen, has just written a book which is really a *prolegomenon* to the earlier work—*Divine Vocation in Human Life* (James Clarke; 6s. net). It is needless to say that, like all his other work, this new book is characterized by a refinement of both style and thought which makes it a constant pleasure to read. Dr. ROBERTSON has something of the mystic in him, more than a touch of originality and a gift of beauty in his writing which lends it a certain distinction.

Vocation, taken how you will, does not seem to be a subject that would last out a whole volume of two hundred and fifty pages. But there are topics

that lead up to it, and others that flow from it, which are germane enough to the central topic, and which lend additional interest to the treatment. The former are three in number. First there are the fundamental attitudes man takes to the world, the typical directions his soul takes in trying to comprehend the world; and finally the fact, which introduces us to the main study, that man is not the only seeker; God also is a Seeker, striving to establish a community of souls in His own life.

Thus we come to Vocation. In the New Testament the word is used chiefly of salvation. God calls us with a 'holy calling,' and it is ours to make our calling sure. In ordinary usage 'vocation' has not this august significance. It refers simply to our business or profession. The purpose of this book is to lift the word to the highest plane where its meaning is a Divine summons to service, to the fulfilling of a definite part in the Plan of God.

Dr. ROBERTSON, then, conducts us on a pilgrimage in which we rise from stage to stage till we see the full content of this great word. We begin with the man who says, 'My occupation was determined for me by accident.' And this suggests the real meaning of accident and leads to a discussion of coincidence, until we see that God works out His will through 'accident' and that the simplest happening may reveal His presence and Providence. Another man may say, 'My trade was determined for me by birth or heredity.' But even here we may trace opportunity in our limitations and the hand of God who leads the faithful steward into a larger room in life.

Another man may say, 'My profession was chosen for me by a friend whose advice or authority I respected.' But here, where purpose for the first time enters, we must not imagine the Divine Hand has been ruled out. It may be seen in the counsel of friends as well as in the facts of heredity. Still another man protests that he has chosen his own line in life, following his own bent and inclina-

tion. And when this is serious it really means that a man follows that to which he is called by the ideal of what he would be. He would be the perfect ploughman, the approved banker, the successful grocer. But how much is involved in this thought of a larger and fuller Ego?

When we ask the meaning of this self-determination we may get many answers, but all of them push us up to a higher and higher meaning of Vocation. One answer, for example, may be that we choose our path simply to make a living. But when we examine this we find one implication in it of importance, namely, that mere existence has a reason behind it. There are big issues in the decision to live. But the answer may be, again, that we work to maintain those we love, our children and home. And in listening to this voice a man may become self-forgetting. And here at last a truly moral conception of life emerges. Our vocation becomes a life task undertaken at the summons of love.

This answer takes us swiftly to a still wider conception of duty. For our family is only one among others. And we cannot stop at what would be an enlarged egotism. We are led on to the thought of a common weal, 'the call of the need of the community blends with the call of his family's need' for its head. And so our conception of vocation is seen as the call of human society to its citizens. And the ideal of success becomes displaced by the ideal of service. In other words, we come face to face with the moral ideal which F. H. Bradley has described in the classical phrase 'my station and its duties.'

But even this is not sufficient. The individual objects to dependence on his political organism. The moral saints and heroes are always ahead of their society. And for them the moral ideal floats away into the still unrealized. A stage higher is reached when one sees that behind even a fine nationalism lies a world-good calling to men in every nation to work and sacrifice that the world

may be a better place. Of course in this service each nation has its own share and contributes its own treasure, as Greece the love of beauty, Rome order and law, Israel the reality of God. And men may find in serving their nation a real service of the world.

But this brings us near the end of our pilgrimage. We begin to see the great Plan which includes all nations and all lives. Vocation is now seen to be

a call which comes to a man out of the heart of the Reality in which he finds himself, which is the will of the Infinite personal Life. There is an ultimate Reality which authenticates the summons of the ideal in conscience. There is a goal to which Creation is moving, and behind all a Purpose which is realizing itself. And when we see our place in this we can say, 'I have found Thee, who hast ever been seeking me; Thou hast revealed Thyself to me, who have ever been seeking Thee.'

Recent Thought on the Doctrine of the Person of Christ.

BY THE REVEREND SYDNEY CAVE, M.A., D.D., CAMBRIDGE.

It is peculiarly difficult to describe the thought of the age in which we live. As Goethe said, 'It is their outcome which gives to deeds their title,' and it is too soon to decide whether new tendencies mean advance or retrogression. Only when a conflict is passed, can its real issues be determined.

I.

It will be convenient to begin our study with a brief description of the position in Christology at the opening of the twentieth century.¹

In Germany Ritschlianism still dominated theology. Ritschl, indeed, was dead, but his influence remained. His reconstruction of theology had rendered the Church an inestimable service. By its concentration on the indubitable fact of Christ, and His value to us as God, it had helped to destroy the excessive intellectualism both of orthodoxy and of 'liberalism'; it had led men back from the worship of the vain idol of the Absolute to the God whom Christ revealed; and had shown that the essential element in Christianity is neither the speculations of orthodoxy, nor the 'idea of Christ' into which left-wing Hegelianism had re-

solved the meaning of His person, but the concrete work and mission of Jesus Christ, the founder of the Kingdom of God, the perfect revealer of God, the perfect redeemer of man.

Ritschl was a ponderous and often repellent writer, unduly controversial, and allowing at times his scorn for sentimentality to conceal his genuine Christian enthusiasm. His views found a more attractive presentation in Herrmann's book *The Communion of the Christian with God*, which, in our country especially, has had, we imagine, an influence greater than any of Ritschl's works. With a prophetic ardour alien from Ritschl's temperament, Herrmann sought to bring men back to what he held to be the certain fact of Christian experience, the communion of the Christian with God through our knowledge of the historic Jesus. No modern writer has described in more moving terms our indebtedness to the words and deeds and inner experience of the Jesus of whom the Gospels speak. For Herrmann, it was not enough to say that we come to God through Christ. 'It is truer to say that we find in God Himself nothing but Christ.' God makes Himself known to us through the fact of Christ, 'on the strength of which we are able to believe in Him.' 'The existence of this Jesus in this world of ours is the fact in which God so touches us as to come into a communion with us that can endure.' Yet the implicates of this faith, Herrmann

¹ For a fuller description of the modern period, I would venture to refer to the chapter on 'Ritschl and the Modern Period,' and for the standpoint here adopted, the chapter on 'Our Present Problem' in my recent book on *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*.