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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

So long as men continue to believe that Jesus Christ is beyond all comparison the greatest Figure in history, and that the historical and religious movement which has its literary counterpart in the Old Testament was the Divine preparation for His advent among men, so long will they continue to ask themselves in what particular sense that great literature testified of Him. Hitherto there have been, broadly speaking, two answers to that question. One is that prophetic men of the olden time were divinely inspired to foresee and to foretell specific events in His career, and that these predictions were 'fulfilled' when the events occurred: the other answer is that in Jesus Himself the whole movement found its wonderful consummation, and that the 'fulfilment' which it thus found in Him carries a far more persuasive appeal than any exact correspondence between specific predictions and their specific fulfilments could ever carry.

Between these two views there is no compromise. It is the difference between an external and an inner fulfilment—between the fulfilment of which we speak when we say that a man fulfils his promise, and the fulfilment of the blossom in the fruit. In each case there is a promise, but how much more profound and inevitable is the fulfilment of the promise made by the blossom when in the fulness of the time the fruit appears. The older theology took the former view of prophecy, which, in Butler's

famous words, is 'nothing but the history of events before they come to pass'; recent theology has increasingly tended to take the latter. And in doing so, it believes that it can appeal to Jesus Himself.

The Rev. G. T. MANLEY, M.A., of Tunbridge Wells, however, is inclined to emphasize the predictive element much more sharply than most modern scholars would. The aim of his book, '*It is Written*' (R.T.S.; 6s. net), is to ascertain our Lord's teaching concerning Holy Scripture, and one of the preliminary points to be settled, as he rightly sees, is just this, 'whether the Bible contains true predictions of future events, foreseen and foretold by the aid of the Holy Spirit' (p. 15). There can be no doubt where Mr. MANLEY stands. 'The view which our Lord undoubtedly held,' he maintains (p. 58), 'is that God conveys through the prophets not only a spiritual message for their own age, but, blended with this, a revelation in part of God's plan and purpose for future generations, and contained herein, *the prediction of actual events*' (italics ours), 'which as they happened could be recognized as fulfilments by those who had eyes to see and hearts to understand.'

Mr. MANLEY argues his case well, perhaps as well as such a case could be argued: but his word 'undoubtedly' is undoubtedly too strong. There are scholars with as much command of the relevant

material as Mr. MANLEY who would deny that our Lord held the view attributed to Him and who would sharply distinguish between His use of the Old Testament and that of His disciples, finding in His own use of it one of the innumerable proofs of His immeasurable superiority to them.

The spirit in which Mr. MANLEY emphasizes the authority of Christ will be evidenced from the following argument. He asks what would be the effect upon a student, facing the problems of modern criticism, of a resolution to accept as his standard of belief the strictest adherence to all that Jesus Christ taught, and, so far as that can be discovered, all that He believed; and he answers by saying that 'it would certainly stimulate his study and desire to find out the truth, and would put no bar to his acceptance of any new fact, or any conclusion consistent with certain general principles.' Now this seems unexceptionable enough, but to the footnote in which Mr. MANLEY amplifies this point, we entirely demur. It is this: Such a student 'would probably feel bound to accept, as particular conclusions also, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the Davidic authorship of the 110th Psalm, and the historical facts to which our Lord made reference' (p. 131).

We demur: for this would be to place the intellectually honest student before a monstrous dilemma. He would have to choose between abnegating his use of the mind which God had given him and forswearing his loyalty to his Lord. We hope and believe this does not represent Mr. MANLEY'S own view, as a page or two before, in dealing with the authorship of Ps 110, he had allowed that there was 'clearly scope for honest difference of opinion.' With the best will in the world most of those who have examined the Pentateuchal problem could not believe, whatever might be the consequences of disbelief, that the Pentateuch, as it now stands, was written by Moses. All Christian people will loyally accept whatever Christ can be shown to have taught; but He did not *teach* that Moses wrote the Pentateuch or David

Ps 110 as He taught that the pure in heart see God.

But to return to the question of prediction and fulfilment. Mr. Illingworth put the matter well when he said that to emphasize prediction is to view prophecy in the spirit of a mechanical teleology. 'And though the fulfilment of prediction' in the broader sense 'may seem to many minds less evidential than the apposite occurrence of a name or date would be, it carries with it a more profound conviction that we have reached the spiritual heart of things and are in presence of the Power that moves the world.'

There is really no warrant in the attitude of our Lord to the Old Testament for believing that it contains a miniature biography of Him or specific predictions of His career. There is nothing in His words comparable to Matthew's appeal to the return of the child Jesus from Egypt as a fulfilment of the prophecy of Hos 11¹, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son,' nor to his finding in the slaughter of the innocents a fulfilment of the word in Jer 31¹⁵ about Rachel and her lost children. Our Lord's allusions to the Old Testament are cast in a larger mould and breathe a more liberal spirit.

It is apparently of a general rather than a particular fulfilment that He speaks when He says, 'All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me.' True, in the verses that follow, specific truths are mentioned, but no particular passages are cited. It is almost as if He meant to discourage the literalist in His search for correspondences and to lift men's eyes to larger things. He claimed to fulfil the law and the prophets, but He also reminded us that the essence of law and prophecy was love, and in this profound sense assuredly He fulfilled them.

Of much significance in this connexion is the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth which Luke sets as a sort of frontispiece to the ministry of Jesus.

On that occasion He read the beautiful passage from Is 61st, and He began His comment with the words, 'To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.' In this narrative three things are notable. The first is the word 'spirit' with which the passage is introduced. Jesus moves in the sphere of the spirit. The letter itself warns us, as it were, at the very outset away from the letter and ushers us into a sphere of spirit where such external correspondences as appear in Mt 2 seem to be of very subordinate importance indeed.

In the second place, this spirit expresses itself in gracious words and deeds to the poor and the prisoners, to the blind and the bruised. But surely this is an ideal rather than a prediction. The specific deeds which are mentioned merely express and illustrate character, they embody an ideal, and Jesus is that ideal incarnate. This is a far profounder fulfilment than any mechanical correspondence would have been.

Again, not less significant is Jesus' sovereign treatment of this ancient prophetic word. The prophet had said, 'To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, *and the day of the vengeance of our God.*' It is of the first importance, both for our understanding of the mind of Jesus and of His sovereign attitude to the scriptures of His people that, having reached 'the acceptable year of the Lord,' He closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. In other words, Jesus deliberately declines to endorse the proclamation of vengeance. When that all too human and too popular note is sounded, He closes the book: *that* scripture was not fulfilled in Him. In adopting the ancient words He subtly criticises them by His silent rejection of those which were not consonant with His spirit. It is criticism of the most delicate and reverent kind, but it is criticism of the most trenchant kind.

The scene is one of inexhaustible significance. When He closed the book and sat down, 'the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him,' and they would be fastened upon Him with more wonder

than ever when He proceeded to make His stupendous claim, 'To-day is this scripture fulfilled'; for there, before them, sat One who claimed to be the consummation of the ages, the mysterious Being for whom the prophets of centuries long gone had yearned. That day in the synagogue Jesus sat at the very centre of history; not only were the eyes of the worshippers fastened upon Him, but no less the eyes of all the wise and good men of all the ages before Him, as the eyes of all the ages since and of all the ages to be. In that sublime sense Jesus fulfilled prophecy.

This is what St. Paul has in mind when, in the course of an argument, there leaps out like a lightning flash the splendid and daring thought that Jesus is the great Affirmation, the Everlasting and Incarnate Yes. 'In Him is Yes'; that is, He is the complete and eternal satisfaction of Old Testament aspirations, the fulfilment of Old Testament promise and prophecy. 'For of all the promises of God' made in the Old Testament or elsewhere, 'the Yes,' the affirmation, the consummation and satisfaction, 'is in Him' (2 Co 1st). All that God purposes to do is for ever done in Him. To all the hopes and aspirations of the noblest hearts He says, 'Yes, it is all true, and they are realized in Me.' He not only says Yes, He *is* Yes—the Yes become flesh.

The Christian Church has to-day many urgent problems to face, and, from some points of view, none more urgent than that of its own unity, or perhaps it would be better to say 'reunion.' This is not a modern movement by any means. The question has been alive, and efforts at a solution of the difficulties have been made, from time to time, for centuries. But the obligation of reunion has become insistent in our own day, and it is felt, not in one Church but in all. The friendly interchanges between the Eastern and Anglican Churches, the negotiations at Lambeth with the English Free Churches, and the 'Conversations' at Malines with

the Roman Church show how widespread the eager quest for unity is.

One reason for this is the clear vision we have to-day of the fact that only through reunion can the Church hope to meet the clamant needs of the world about us. There is first the need of Peace. The League of Nations has done noble work in this cause, but the League is hampered and limited because there is not behind it that unified Christian public opinion and that 'passion for peace' which only a united Church could create. Again, there is the presence and powerful operation of a hostile influence which may take the form of an anti-Christian philosophy, or the far deadlier form of a moral licence that justifies itself on intellectual grounds or that is frankly materialistic. A great united Church working on a Christian basis would be a powerful antiseptic to such evils.

Further, there is the demand (and the necessity) for the Church to make its spirit and its beliefs operative in the industrial problems of our time. We do not need to be socialists to realize the need of 'a fundamental change in the spirit and working of our economic life' (Report of Lambeth Conference, 1920). The motive of private gain needs at least to be modified and informed by the principle of co-operation in service for the common good. This is the only final possible solvent of 'class dissensions' and 'industrial discords.' And finally, reunion is the only way of ending a waste of energy and of resources that may surely be described as scandalous. If the whole force of a united Christianity is needed for the evangelizing and the Christianizing of the world, is it not a species of lunacy to expend so much of that force in useless competition, or, what is worse, in futile conflict?

That is the case for reunion which is presented in an able article in the current number of *The Church Quarterly Review* by the Bishop of Winchester, Dr. Woods. There is one phrase at the beginning of his article which may be isolated and very carefully pondered. 'We are,' he says, 'in the presence

of what we may dare to call a movement of the Holy Spirit.' It is so because 'it is in accordance with the will of God and with the most urgent needs of the world.' These are very serious words if their implications are considered. It is unlikely that Dr. Woods would write such words without fully meaning them, and what they imply.

But consider what they do imply. If reunion is the will of God and a movement of the Holy Spirit, then all who believe this must press it on and 'see it through.' They *must* do so or be found faithless. This is not a question of policies or diplomacies. It is not a matter which can be set aside as indifferent, or postponed as temporarily unessential. If the 'urgent needs of the world' demand it, if the will of God is behind it, then we must get out of the way everything that hinders it. The obedience of faith, the loyalty of the soul to God, calls for this.

What are the things that hinder? Dr. Woods does not go into this with any detail. He does refer to prejudices which may be mistaken for principles, and, in saying this, he cuts very deep, because this is one of the most deadly obstacles to reunion. And when we see this we come in sight of the real difficulties of the task. For to many people their peculiar views or watchwords or 'prejudices' are the truth, and they feel that loyalty to them is loyalty to conscience. That is why the movement is delayed. Reunion of Christ's broken Body is to them less urgent than the maintenance of something to which they are attached, it may be by inheritance, or it may be simply by a narrowness of vision.

And there is another difficulty. Reunion must not leave out the Roman Church, at least in its final goal. But when we look at the history of Rome during these last centuries, the question at once arises: is it the will of God that we should *in this generation* consider Rome as a possible partner? It may be that deliberate consideration will lead us to the conclusion that *that* is not a task God has

given us to achieve, and that we should devote our strength and our prayers to that which is at present possible.

But, in any case, the duty laid on us is to inspect carefully and with a large vision the things that separate the Christian bodies and the ways by which this separation may be ended. That includes an effort to rebuild the structure of the Catholic Church. What would the Church united be like? What is necessary to it? What can be considered a possible agreement on such a matter? Dr. Woods has some interesting suggestions about this.

He points out that in the Lambeth negotiations the episcopate was accepted by both parties as the necessary Constitution of the Church. But he says frankly it must be an episcopate that is constitutional, and not absolute. That is to say, the things that are the essence of Presbyterianism, the free co-operation of bishop and presbyter, must be included, and also that which is characteristic of all the Free Churches, the recognition of the Christian congregation and its freedom of choice of its own pastors of all grades. The striking thing about these suggestions is that they are simply a return to the best days of a real Catholicism. We have seen a scheme of reunion drawn up by a Scottish Episcopal dignitary which contained the following conditions. First, the episcopate as the essential feature of the united Church. Second, the Lord's Supper everywhere celebrated in the same words. Third, the Constitution of the united Church to be Presbyterian, with Kirk Session, Assemblies and Presbyteries. Fourth, all congregations to have the choice of their own ministers and of the form of worship, liturgical or free.

These examples are given as instances of the possible ways of approach, and also as something more. They are also instances of a breadth of spirit and mind which is to-day being brought to bear on this great question. We are deeply impressed by this fact. More and more, men are

seeking to find the good in other systems than their own, the good that has come down through the ages and has stood the test of time. And they are asking whether they can bring this good into the rich fulness of the Catholic life and polity of a united Church. That is the right attitude. It is the only attitude that will bring us to the desired haven. To reach that blessed goal of desire we must have patience and faith, not too much patience but a faith that has adventure at its heart.

In *Cosmic Evolution* (Macmillan; \$3.50), Professor John Elof BOODIN, of Carleton College, U.S.A., sounds a challenge to the 'materialistic drift of modern science.' In that phrase he characterizes the view according to which the world of Nature evolves from a state of diffuse matter to its present ordered form by changes of purely mundane origin, each stage of itself giving rise to the next. Doubtless scientific men have always admitted the action of a wider environment upon our globe, and taken account of light, gravity, and other forces, as linking us with regions beyond. Even so, however, says Professor BOODIN, science has worked too much with a world isolated in space and having an isolated history, and he finds the generally recognized factors of evolution quite inadequate to the production of the manifold types of existence among which we find ourselves, and, most of all, of those realities which we call life and mind. He will not have it that Chance is God (p. 82).

Let us enlarge the environment, says our author. What we perceive of the universe beyond our present sphere—stars and nebula—suggests the existence of worlds, systems, even universes, in multitudes without number and possibly in endless variety—worlds in their youth, their prime, their decline. 'All the cosmic generations co-exist in the depths of space' (p. 103). Now Professor BOODIN believes that these distant systems are ceaselessly emitting or radiating energies upon every side, and therefore playing upon our world, as indeed they

have played upon it for æons. These energies, moreover, are more than mere motions ; from their sources they carry ' patterns ' to other realms. The systems that have reached the higher levels send us, *inter alia*, patterns of their higher things, and these again stimulate the meanwhile lower states of being in our world, and draw them up into new forms of order and beauty. Things here, it is to be understood, have a capacity for reaction and response to the far-borne patterns. Touched by what comes from the vaster environment, they stir and act by a ' process of trial and error ' till at length they achieve the proper response—the fitting variation, the higher level.

In our world, then, at every stage of its history, there has been a ' creative adaptation ' to the ' creative patterns ' from beyond ; and here we have the true rationale of the evolutionary process upon our earth. Here we have the secret of the variations which scientific research has not yet explained ; here is the real origin of species, and also the explanation of the greater leaps—' gaps ' they have been called—in the development of the world : the transition from the molecule to the spore, from the bacterium to the structure that began with a mere awareness and ended with self-consciousness, and from this again to a sense of the Divine. Stage by stage they drew from out the boundless deep of the cosmos. ' Out of the everywhere into here ' is poetry *and* scientific truth.

Thus our world is what it is because it is part of an illimitable cosmos, a resultant of interaction with all the rest. At the summit of all, yet pervading all, is God. Professor BOODIN is no pantheist, but just as little is he a believer in a God who is a magnified ' ghost ' dwelling in some remote empyrean. For him, God is the cosmic genius, the super-mind, the highest level, yet overlapping and penetrating all the other levels, and, in fact, incarnate in matter. God is for us the highest level to which we aspire (p. 129). For we have a *nisus* towards the Divine, itself prompted by the Divine, and our salvation lies in living in the whole and for the whole. We are

immortal so far as the cosmic genius finds us adaptable to the whole. ' Jesus remains for us the choicest incarnation of cosmic genius in the warm flesh of mother earth.'

Perhaps in view of these latter utterances we may feel that Professor BOODIN's conclusions are not in principle irreconcilable with the Christian standpoint. It must be admitted, however, that the place of God in his hypothesis remains vague. To take but a single point : he thinks of God's relation to the objective world as in some sense like that of the human mind to its associated organism (p. 268). But, on his own showing, the human mind does not create its organism, and so, if the analogy holds, God is not the Creator. Treating his cosmic theory, however, as in part a scientific construction, we feel compelled to ask certain other questions. Accepting decay, disease, death, and sin as facts—may we not even say variations ?—we ask if these likewise are due to patterns in the heavens. And free-will, the most personal thing in man : was it brought to us by radiations from the starry spaces ? and if thus physically conditioned, how could we still call it free ? Again, is it less scientific to try to explain our partly known, partly unknown, world by what we do know of it than by reference to an infinity of other worlds of which we know much less ? Finally, if our world at the present moment is the resultant of energies beating upon it from other systems at the most varied distances from us, and at the most varied stages of development, should the result not be chaos rather than order, *tohu vabohu* rather than a world that God pronounced good ?

Is it not with a sense of relief that one turns from such soundings of the unplumbed and the unplumbable to what we may almost call a child's thought—a thought that, we imagine, never ceases to haunt the mind of the Agnostic—the thought that in the world and beyond it there is a Mind and a Will upholding all ? *In* the Cosmos, as Professor BOODIN so strenuously insists ; but also *beyond*. Not less, we think, will satisfy the Christian mind.