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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

WHATEVER Dr. W. R. MATTHEWS writes is worth reading. It is certain to be fresh, suggestive, and penetrating. He is one of the men in the theological world whose voice counts in any debate. It is therefore with interest and expectation we turn to his article in the *Church Quarterly Review* on 'Some Recent Tendencies in Philosophy and the Doctrine of the Incarnation.' There is no doubt that the Incarnation is the central truth of the Christian religion, and there is as little doubt that it is the centre of the controversial battle to-day. In what sense, and on what grounds, can we call Jesus Divine? That is the real question to-day, and every one who seeks to adjust his faith to the changing conditions of the intellectual environment has to ask and answer it.

What has philosophy to say that bears on the subject? We may reasonably seek from it an account of the world-view characteristic of our time. And if we are to adjust our faith to the prevailing intellectual outlook we ought to get some help from philosophy. But here there is a difficulty. The world-view is not a stable thing. It is constantly changing, and when we turn to seek help from philosophy, Dr. MATTHEWS seems inclined to echo Dr. Gore in asking whether there is any coherent philosophy in existence. There are all sorts of schools of philosophy, each saying a different thing. Yet it is to philosophy we must turn if we are to get

any conception of the idea of the universe which is emerging in the mind of to-day.

And when we look closer we discover that all the schools of philosophy arrange themselves in two groups—one that begins with the object, Nature, the given, and strives to build up a system on that basis; the other that begins with the subject, the knower, and attempts to construct a view of the universe as essentially thought, spirit, mind. The difficulty that one feels is how mind can find a place in Nature; the difficulty of the other is to find 'Nature's place in mind.' These are roughly realism and idealism. And representatives of these two schools at present who may be taken as typical are Professor Alexander and Professor Lloyd Morgan of the one, and Giovanni Gentile of the other.

The most interesting development in English thought on the naturalistic side is the theory of emergent evolution. This is not creative evolution, for the adherents of the former are opposed to the idea of a force which falls outside the order of Nature, whether you call that force God or *élan vital*. And yet it is not the old naturalism. It rejects the old mechanistic view. Its real point is the emergence of something essentially new, and that is naturalism with a difference. It is a kind of half-way house between mechanism and teleology. For though there is no plan beforehand, things work

out 'so as to produce a plan.' There is a *nisus* towards higher values. In short, there is everything of a purpose except the Purposer.

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How does the doctrine of Incarnation stand in this environment? Dr. MATTHEWS thinks that the spiritual values for which the Incarnation stands could be conserved under this scheme. It would be possible to hold that Jesus represents the emergent quality towards which the *nisus* is tending. But the real meaning of the Incarnation, the finality of Jesus and the embodiment in Him of a Purpose, could not be maintained. That is true of Professor Alexander's scheme. It is a good deal different when we turn to Professor Lloyd Morgan. For his position goes beyond mere naturalism. It is rather a monism which regards the temporal process as a manifestation of timeless spiritual substance. In this sense the emergent evolution may be regarded as the unfolding of a Divine purpose. And we have thus a place for the Incarnation. Yet even in this more spiritual view there are aspects of the Incarnation which it seems difficult to preserve. There is no breaking in of another order on this, nor is there any possibility of holding to the two natures in Christ. For to emergent evolution, as to all naturalism and monism, there is only one order and there is no room for any dualism.

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When we turn to the other line of thought, the idealistic, we take Gentile as a representative because his position is the purest kind of idealism. To him all is thought. Spiritual reality is the pure act of thought. When I speak of 'I,' for example, it is not what I mean in ordinary speech. My real ego is the transcendental ego, the thought which is continually realizing itself in the manifold of Nature and of empirical selves. Gentile would seem to find reality in nothing static, but in movement, the act of thinking. Is it possible to find a place for Incarnation in such a purely idealistic scheme? For a Christology certainly. There is room for a Christ who is the Divine Thought in us and in the world, a sort of sublimated Christ. But not for Incarnation of the Chalcedon formula.

What, then, is the result of a survey of contemporary philosophical tendencies? We may note some positive gains. Both the schools referred to agree in one thing, and that of great importance. They both come in the end to conceive the world as spirit, and as a realm in which spiritual values are realized through human personality. That is a gain. But there is something just as important to be said that raises a difficulty. Both schools agree in repudiating dualism; the familiar antithesis, Nature and the supernatural, God and man, disappears. And it is therefore clear that to the modern mind dogmas which are expressed in terms of such a dualism will be difficult.

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Dr. MATTHEWS has one final suggestion to make. He protests that what we want to keep is not any one formulation of the doctrine of Incarnation, but the spiritual values for which it stands. If the formulation of these is outworn, ought we not to seek other terms in which to express the spiritual values? Dr. MATTHEWS suggests that we shall find such a new and better formulation in the Logos conception. It is inclusive of both immanence and transcendence, and both these conceptions are involved in the two schools of thought reviewed. At least neither is excluded. In any case we must restate our faith not in terms which represent a world-view now outworn, but in terms of the thought of our day, of that belief in an Immanent Spirit which is behind all the life and movement and thought and achievement of man.

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It is long since Principal A. E. GARVIE earned his right to an attentive hearing from the Christian public when he chose to address it on theological matters, whether in their intellectual or their practical bearing. Besides being one of our most distinguished theologians, he is also one of our best known preachers, and he has ably represented his Church at conferences where momentous issues were at stake. We turn therefore with high expectation to his recent book on *The Preachers of the Church* (James Clarke; 6s. net).

Twice before Dr. GARVIE has written on preaching—in his 'Guide to Preachers' and in 'The Christian Preacher'; but the distinctive aim of 'The Living Church' series, to which this book is a contribution, has enabled him to traverse the familiar ground in a new way, and to present the subject under fresh aspects. The interest of the volume is further enhanced by a few autobiographical touches.

In dealing with the relation of the preacher to the Bible, for example, he hints that some of his brethren may regard him as 'too outspoken on all such matters,' and he tells us that he has even had the epithet 'blasphemer' applied to him. It adds to the force of his argument on the relation of the preacher to the social problem when he assures us that he has had practical experience of business, and when from this vantage-point he can affirm that 'with all deference to the laymen who are in business, the properly trained preacher is likely to have a wider knowledge and a keener insight in regard to Christian morality even in its particular applications, except as regards expert knowledge of the details of any business.' And his friendly reference to the Copec and the Stockholm Conferences shows how heavily the grave problems of the modern world lie upon his heart.

His book is divided into two sections: the first historical, the second practical. This is a happy division; for it enables him, before proceeding to practical counsels for the preacher, to give a vivid presentation of some of the great preachers of the Church at different periods of her development, such as Chrysostom, Bernard of Clairvaux, Calvin, Schleiermacher, etc., and to show how wisely in those various periods—prophetic, apostolic, patristic, scholastic, reformation, revival, and missionary—they adapted their message to the intellectual, social, and spiritual needs of their time.

Valuable as this historical sketch is, it is probably to the practical section that preachers will most eagerly turn. For, while preaching that is worth while has never been easy, it is to-day beset by

peculiar difficulties: for, as Dr. GARVIE puts it, 'one of the tragedies of the present hour is the extent to which the pulpit has lost command over the cultured class as well as the labouring masses.' Of the former, some of those who still care for the things of the spirit have run to Christian Science, Theosophy, and the Ethical Society; while of the latter many suppose, foolishly enough, that the Church has little interest in their needs and aspirations.

The problems presented to the preacher by Biblical criticism, modern science and philosophy, and modern social and industrial life are faced by Dr. GARVIE with engaging candour, and we feel in every phase of the discussion that we are in the hands of a wise and trusty guide, who knows not only the Christian way but the ways of the modern mind. The remedy for the present distress is just the old remedy, the gospel—nothing less and nothing more.

But Dr. GARVIE has some rather scathing things to say to those who misunderstand the meaning and implications of that deceptively simple phrase, 'the simple gospel.' 'The man,' he tells us, 'who claims to put the Gospel in a nutshell offers a measure, not of the Gospel, but of his own mind. The clamour for a *simple* Gospel is a stupid and lazy demand.' The presentation of the gospel should be as simple and lucid as the preacher can make it; but the gospel itself has to do with the deep things of God. It has endless implications and ramifications, it affects the whole range of individual and social experience, it penetrates the world of economics and politics and thought no less than the world of spirit; so it may happen that 'the demand for the simple Gospel is, even if unconsciously, a desire to enjoy the benefits without accepting the obligations of Christ.'

Governing all that Principal GARVIE has to say with regard to the preacher's treatment of the modern situation, whether in the world of industry or of thought, is the principle that he must qualify

himself, by a study as thorough as possible, to understand that situation. Without an experience of God, he has no competence to speak of God ; so without some hard-won knowledge of the problems of the time, his treatment of these problems can be little more than an impertinence. It is not his business to produce solutions—even the expert may hesitate before such a demand ; but it is his business to acquaint himself, so far as for him is possible, with the real nature of the problems which harass the minds of those whom he addresses.

Dr. GARVIE illustrates this thesis in several directions. An unapplied principle may be little better than a platitude. Not afraid of coming down to detail, Dr. GARVIE shows how some aspects of the social problem may be dealt with in the pulpit, and he maintains that no preacher is really meeting the challenge of the times 'unless he summons industry to appear before the judgment-bar of Christ.'

His remarks on 'the new psychology' are equally to the point. A knowledge of psychology, if it be adequate and not superficial, is part of the necessary equipment of the preacher. The phases of recent psychology which glorify instinct to the depreciation of reason and conscience exercise a fascination as fatal as it is intelligible over certain minds ; and it is the preacher's duty to understand and to combat such interpretations of human life as tend to obliterate the distinction between the man and the brute.

So the Principal goes through the dominant phases of modern thought and shows the preacher how he should relate himself to them, and how he may most helpfully guide those who are perplexed by them. One of his most useful discussions is that in which he deals with the proper attitude of the pulpit to the questions raised by Biblical criticism.

Here, as everywhere, the broad principle is that the truth must be spoken in love. No true Christian preacher will ever give needless offence. But this

does not mean that ignorant and blatant opposition to the methods and conclusions of reverent Christian scholarship is to remain unrebuked and unrefuted. Some of Dr. GARVIE's most vigorous thrusts are dealt at 'the zealous but unwise defenders of the older views about the Bible who by their distortions of what the modern scholarship teaches are doing untold mischief to the cause which they undoubtedly have at heart.'

The Bible is indeed infallible—Dr. GARVIE admits that—but 'infallible in its proper purpose, to bring God to men, and men to God.' But those who substitute for this, its proper infallibility, an infallibility which the Bible nowhere claims 'are often so offensive and intolerant that they do not deserve consideration, and even invite a chastisement by speech.' 'It is the traditionalists who are a far greater peril to the preservation of the Gospel for the thought and the life of to-day than are even the negative critics.' These are strong words, but they are not too strong ; and Dr. GARVIE, by his own solid contribution to theological learning, has earned the right to say them.

The preacher who believes in the modern approach to the Bible will not, as a rule, obtrude it : rather it will be implicit in all his presentations of religious truth, so that his hearers will, by a gradual and practically unconscious process, be detaching themselves from obscurantist views. But there are times, Dr. GARVIE believes, when the preacher, if he is competent, is bound to deal with these subjects explicitly ; and, speaking generally, the Bible class or the week-evening meeting will furnish the most suitable opportunity for such an effort.

In a concluding chapter Dr. GARVIE touches on the momentous question of theological training. What curriculum will best equip the student for the ministry of preaching ? Many will agree with him that on some students the linguistic demands are too burdensome, but those who believe in an educated ministry will equally agree that if these demands are replaced by others, then no less a

breadth and accuracy of knowledge should be exacted in these substituted subjects than in those involving linguistic discipline. Whatever is done should be thoroughly done, whether it be the exploration of the twentieth century or of the first.

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The writer of this book is equally at home in the modern world and in the gospel: above all he is one who, in a world which is tending to depreciate preaching and to replace its appeal by ritual or literature, magnifies the office of the preacher. And there can be few preachers so competent for their task that their ministry would not be enriched, guided, and stimulated by this able book.

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The modern world has travelled far away from the time when theology was revered as the queen of the sciences. To many minds nothing seems more sterile than theological discussion, and even preachers and students of theology are in haste to leave it in their eagerness to come at something more practical. Signs, however, are not wanting that this cloud is passing, and that theology will presently resume its sway as the science of the ultimate and most vital reality. Indications of this appear in a series of thoughtful addresses delivered to students at Swanwick, and now published under the title of *Theology and Life* (S.C.M.; 4s. net). Specially worthy of note is a paper by Dr. KULLMANN on 'Doctrine and Life.'

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Preachers and theologians, he believes, are still wanted. Why? Because 'this whole busy humanity of ours, so exclusively *this-worldly*, knows, in spite of everything, that somewhere, somehow, all this life of ours must be hooked up on a nail. . . . It is not we who are asking a question. God is asking us, He who is craving for our answer, who cares for *one* answer only—our love.' And because there is no escaping this question, men cannot help looking around for an answer. 'I tell you why the world needs theologians and preachers. They want you to tell them the answer to God they do not know themselves. . . . People need you because they

cannot escape from God questioning them. And they want you to tell them the word, in order to answer; the word about death which is a new life, the word about death which is resurrection, the word about sin and evil which is forgiveness and salvation, the word about the dreadful unknown which is revelation. Not *words*, not *your words*, they do not care about your words: God's **WORD** through your words.'

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Yet theology is sick and discredited, a deposed queen, tolerated perhaps beside other sciences, but looked upon as abstract, a mere side-show of vital religion. There are reasons for this. For one thing 'Theology has lost, to a large extent, a vital connection with the order of revelation and grace.' The order of grace means that in our act of faith we are touched and overwhelmed by God's reality breaking graciously in upon us. Ours is merely the desperate yearning for Him; His the merciful gift of grace. There is no knowledge of God outside grace and revelation. We can know about God only through His speaking to us about Himself. 'And yet theology plays with names and rational concepts *about* God. Whether dogmatic or anti-dogmatic, she has not any more the power to grasp the fact that behind and within human words and concepts we perceive God's living Truth.' God becomes merely an object of our investigation, like any other phenomenon of our consciousness. It follows from this that doctrinal statements about God become assimilated to scientific knowledge and are put in the same category with scientific findings about other subjects. Once the dogmas have been emptied of their mystical treasures, once theology has broken loose from the order of revelation and grace, the human reason, autonomous, knowing no other criterion than that of formal logic, begins to investigate the facts of revelation and faith with the whole apparatus of modern science. 'This passionate attempt to dissolve the order of grace and revelation in human reasoning, with science as the central object, included in its scope the personality of Jesus Christ. All the many lives of Jesus in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as they are

analysed in masterly fashion in Schweitzer's book, give you a stirring picture of what we have done with the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, of how we can get to know Him outside the order of revelation and grace! A wandering Jewish preacher with a hypertrophied self-consciousness! Is this the living foundation of power, the fearful and adorable image of God's love? Are we going to feed the hungry and the thirsty with exegetical shrewdness, popular scientific theories, to explain the miracles, the Resurrection?'

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Something else happened. 'Necessarily a reversion of order in the thought-plane was very soon accompanied by a reversion in the religious plane proper.' The phenomenon of religion is a human affair, just as the phenomenon of art or law. We got hold of this religious instinct and began to feel it was the primary thing. Religiously it meant that we began to adore our religiosity, instead of a loving God. Transcendence broke off from immanence, and immanence was made an idol. Thus, 'as we view the whole field of modern theology, we see that the sickness is not due to a conflict between traditional and rational supernaturalism and humanised liberalism—orthodoxy *versus* modernism. Neither of these aspects is sound, neither has the right to challenge the other. They are both wrong, their very existence is the symptom of crisis. *The one and the other are to-day the biggest stumbling-block in the presentation of the Christian faith.* Who wonders then that theology is discredited, and Christian life turns its head from Christian thought and doctrine?'

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What is the remedy? Life is revolting against doctrine, but life is helpless without doctrine. Doctrine has to go back to life and be healed in healing life. Doctrine and life cannot live without one another. In the depth of our heart we know it. Among the many healing processes which have to

take place in the Christian Church this is one of the most urgent. 'What we need is not merely *re-statement* but a new vision for the whole field of doctrine and dogmatics. We must learn to be more objective and not to over-emphasise our emotional inner life, with its religiosity and its emotional moods; on the other hand, we must be more critical about our passion for doing. He who loveth Him, knoweth Him. Do we know Him? Is the mind not God's gift? Must the mind not be re-deemed as well as our hearts and our wills?'

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At the same time we must keep in view the danger of Gnosticism. No doctrinal cognition whatever will replace the immediate experience of God we have in prayer and sacraments. There is no salvation and power in the mere road of contemplation. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' We have to approach Him in fear and trembling, and in love and faith. 'The central dogmatic formulations of Paul and of the Early Church, especially the Christology, are statements made in fear and trembling and in love and faith, when "we have come to know God, or rather to be known of Him," in other words, when God speaks in man, in His Church, through the Holy Spirit. And it is wisdom not of this world. Only rationalisation makes dogma wisdom of this world. It is foolishness to us because it is wisdom to God. And dogmas are descriptive on our plane of what happens on the eternal plane. Yet more, as God reveals Himself through them, dogmas partake of the wonder of incarnation; human words and concepts of this world become bearers of Truth Eternal. Dogmas are at the cutting line of the two planes. And instead of rationalising them and then throwing them away, we had better take off our hats, as Luther once said, and by prayer and repentance endeavour to get such a hold of God that He may open our eyes and let us see, through the dogmas, the Truth.'

