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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

It is good for nations, as for individuals, sometimes to see themselves as others see them. The keenest critic of himself or of his country is apt to miss blemishes or at any rate peculiarities which are obvious enough to outsiders. Some years ago Professor Münsterberg, in a brilliant book, gave the Americans an opportunity to see themselves through German eyes, and this year Dr. HERMANN WERDERMANN has furnished them with a similar opportunity in a more comprehensive and equally interesting book entitled *Das religiöse Angesicht Amerikas* (Bertelsmann, Gütersloh ; 8 Mk., geb. 10 Mk.).

The book is beautifully written, and the writer is equal to his task. He has obviously a complete command of the English, and even of the American language ; he is a careful, sympathetic, and impartial observer ; and he had opportunities of mingling with Americans of every type. More particularly was he interested, as the title of his book indicates, in the religious life of America. He knows books like Ralph Connor's 'Black Rock,' and he can quote the saying ascribed to Chalmers, that 'a house-going minister makes a church-going people.' The impressions of such a man were worth recording and are worth considering.

More than once he reminds us how difficult it is to estimate America, for there are so many Americas. There is East and West, there is North

and South, there is Fundamentalist and Modernist, and within these broader divisions there are endless types. The visitor begins by being enthusiastic, continues by being doubtful, and ends by being cautious, or, it might be more correct to say, ends with an admiration tempered by severe but friendly criticism. It is always difficult to feel the pulse of another people, and the truth about religious America has been too frequently distorted, on the one hand by idealization, and on the other by caricature.

Religious life on its external side, he tells us, and Church services play an incomparably greater part in America than in Germany, and yet the churchless masses of America are more unchristian than the churchless masses of Germany, for in the latter country Bible instruction in the day schools and preparation for confirmation secure some definite acquaintance, however slight, with Christianity and its great Book, to a degree which is not possible in a country where the State takes no official cognizance of these things ; with the result that there are in America no less than thirty millions of people who belong to the denomination of 'modern heathendom'—people who are most of them not indeed hostile to the Church, but indifferant.

All the more does the voluntary organization of

American Church life, with its almost illimitable energy, rouse Dr. WERDERMANN'S admiration. He is familiar with the envelope-system, and is struck by the abounding generosity of the gifts for home and foreign mission work ; indeed, he says, an outsider may get the impression that the Church is little more than an organization to raise money, though this, he admits, would be anything but a just judgment.

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Compared with the quiescent life of the average German congregation, American congregations—many of them—seem to be in perpetual motion, with their Brotherhoods, Ladies' Aid, Guilds of all sorts, Church Banquets, and outlets for activities, such as baseball and occasional dancing, whose intimate relation to religion is not exactly obvious to German eyes. The tremendous emphasis on social activities may constitute a weakness as well as a strength. The writer tells of a young German artist who complained that in the incessant din of the Church's social work, the gentle tones of religion were scarcely audible, and confessed that he would rather suffer bodily hunger in Germany than endure the hunger of the spirit to which American life exposed him. But it has to be remembered, as a young American lawyer acutely remarked, that America is not yet in the fullest sense a settled, but rather a wandering people ; and nomads should not be expected to possess a developed sense for the deepest values of music, art, and, in general, of the world of spirit.

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A really devout German is more devout than a devout American, and the ideal religious type would be one which would blend the profound and wistful quality of the one with the social energy of the other. For if the American pulpit is too much concerned with social applications of Christianity, and too little impressed by the majesty of God and the beauty of other-worldliness, the estrangement of the masses from the Churches in Germany may be due, at least in part, to the more meagre insistence on the social aspect of Christianity. The American preacher, with social interests ever before

him, is much less likely to be guilty of the unpardonable sin of tedium : he is interesting and alive. Laymen are attracted, not only into hearing but into definite service : the interest of the layman in the Church and her work is a feature which calls forth WERDERMANN'S unstinted admiration, and a feature which he would give much to capture for the German Church. And with this goes the relative friendliness, rising not infrequently to enthusiasm, of the working classes for the Church, in sorrowful contrast to the indifference and alienation of many at least of those classes in Germany.

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The preacher in America is very close to life, partly because his college curriculum keeps him definitely in touch with the problems he will later have to face in the city or the country. It aims at equipping him for his ultimate work as pastor, whereas the tendency, if not the aim, of the German theological course is to produce the scientific theologian. To a German the training at an average American seminary seems rather superficial on the scientific side, but the German system pays for its greater depth by a more slender emphasis on the purely pastoral side of the minister's calling, and on the necessity of encouraging the religious life of its theological students. WERDERMANN pays a glowing tribute to the warmer atmosphere of piety that characterizes the American college, and explains its more definitely religious and practical quality by the fact that American professors are nearly always drawn from the ranks of the pastorate, and so have a first-hand knowledge of the work their students will ultimately have to do.

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But he does not disguise the fact that the preparation is often very inadequate. He quotes Dr. Cadman, who was asked, 'What is the chief weakness of the Protestant clergy?' as replying, 'Only thirty-three per cent. have received sufficient education for the job.' In preaching, this inadequacy later appears as a love for the topical in preference to the expository sermon, a preference which some-

times expresses itself in themes of varying degrees of monstrosity, such as, 'Is kissing sin?' 'Why do women powder?' though WERDERMANN admits that it would be unfair to regard these as typical. The inadequacy frequently appears in the formlessness of the service: except in the Episcopal churches, there is little sense of liturgical dignity. The writer speaks of seeing a preacher appear in his pulpit with a coloured tie and brown shoes, and of another, at a communion service, sandwiching the announcements between the invitation hymn and the distribution of the elements.

For good and evil, America is practical. An American evangelist will drive home his truth by improbable and even humorous stories—a practice which naturally offends his sober German critic. And the children are as quick-witted in their practical applications as their teachers and preachers. One class, when asked to repeat 'in American terms of to-day' the story of the good Samaritan, promptly substituted the preacher for the priest, and the negro for the Samaritan! This practical quality can be a menace not only to liturgical decency, but to true religion, when it is used to stimulate a narrow patriotism. WERDERMANN relates, incredible as it may seem, that at a gathering of youth, after the reading of Isaiah 40, a hymn was announced and lustily sung, of which the refrain was, 'For army and navy for ever, three cheers for the red, white, and blue.' It is only fair to add that many Americans would deprecate this as energetically as any German could.

This long book of three hundred and twenty-five pages is of profound interest and value not only to Germans but to ourselves. On its better side, the American pulpit, as WERDERMANN justly remarks, has been deeply influenced by England and even more by Scotland, the books of whose preachers and scholars are to be found in many an American study. It will be a great day for the Church in every land when in her pulpits stand men who, to the theological interests inspired by

European scholarship, add the warm, eager, practical temper of America.

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The record of religious experience has always a peculiar fascination, even though it be crude, or abnormal, or pathological. But when it is the experience of one who, with religious fervour and the mystic's vision, unites a balanced judgment and a cultivated mind, open and hospitable to all new truth, then the record becomes of the highest moral and religious value. Such a record will be found in *The Capacity for God*, by the Rev. R. F. HORTON, D.D. (Allen & Unwin; 7s. 6d. net). Dr. HORTON, in Browning's words, has 'lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime, and all is for best,' and he has written to guide others to the same happy experience. 'In looking back over the seventy years of my life, I find the one unmistakable and persistent factor in it has been the presence of God. There have been no miracles in my life; only it has itself been a miracle. I have had few extraordinary experiences; but the experience as a whole has been such as fills me with wonder. I cherish the belief that most people have had my experience, or something like it. I am almost sure that every one might have it, and was even meant to have it.'

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The book is by no means wholly, or even mainly, biographical. Its main purpose is to discover the supreme regulative principle of all right living, 'the Master Faculty' as Dr. HORTON prefers to call it, and to get at the secret of using it. Is 'the Master Faculty Reason? The thought of our day says No. Reason is regulative, but the life-force in us acts before Reason comes into play, and our personality as it develops is greater than Reason. The very definition of it, even the description of it, far more the possibilities of it, tax Reason far beyond its powers. The Master Faculty within us is that which puts us into relation with the Power that conceived and made us, and with the Purpose for which we exist. Reason leaves us very uncertain about the Power and the Purpose. . . .

Meantime there are many, how many we never know, who are in contact with the Power and know the Purpose. These are the saving elements in human life. Thanks to these and their unconscious agreement, the march of humanity continues and is not lost in the waste.'

What, then, is the Master Faculty? The answer is, Faith. And what is Faith? Not a mental assent to a proposition or a theory, but an act of the whole personality. Faith is above all a deed, a strenuous, resolute deed, a great and courageous venture—the venture upon God. In the original constitution of our being we have a sense of God. We feel, dimly enough perhaps, that though there is no form nor voice He is there, and though there is no physical compulsion or direction He guides, cares, works for the best. Faith means to act on that assumption, to treat the assumption as fact, and to rely on it. 'Faith is the fling of the soul on the Unseen Power from whom the soul came. A life of faith is the habitual exercise of that Faculty, the ever surer and more convinced reliance on the Power not ourselves, a Power that works in us, not only to do, but to will.'

It may be defined by contrast to Self-reliance. 'A fine word, and suggesting a needed precept, so long as it is understood to be reliance on one's self as against dependence on others. But it is not a fine word, nor does it suggest a wise precept, if it means reliance on one's self instead of dependence on the Power not ourselves. Indeed, though for a moment of exuberant youth and health, a man may seem to himself sufficient to himself, it is only for a moment, and almost immediately his own boast mocks him. . . . Verily man at his best estate is altogether vanity. And if his reliance is on himself alone, he is a pitiable little creature, ridiculous to his fellows, and more ridiculous to the higher powers of the universe. One thing alone redeems him: he can fling himself on the Unseen Power, and trust Him, he can lose himself in the Oversoul, he can become the conscious and grateful organ of that larger life, the instrument and mouth-

piece of the Being who made him, and made him for Himself.' That fling of the soul on the Unseen God is justified and more and more approved, till it becomes a certainty, the surest certainty in the range of human experience.

There is, however, a great danger of isolating this Master faculty from other energies of the mind and heart, of regarding it as a heaven-born power working in some altogether supernatural way, independent of our personality and daily life. No error could be more disastrous. God dwells in us and works through us, not by setting aside or overruling our natural faculties, but by using them. The reason, the will, the imagination, the æsthetic or artistic side of our nature, are all to be developed to the utmost limit of their capacity, and through their highest use God speaks and works. Dr. HORTON illustrates this by his own experience as a minister. 'I gave myself to a constant and purposeful study, mainly of the Scriptures, but also of other books, history, philosophy, social science, and poetry. And, to avoid the dangers of the study and the student, I got into touch, by systematic visiting, with my people. It was a life of unremitting toil. I felt that I was not my own. I knew that I must live wholly to receive and to utter the word of God. . . . Very soon I noticed that, in the careful and systematic study of the Bible, subjects would start up with such vividness, such irrepressible insistence, that it seemed necessary to preach on them at once. . . . Subjects were always there, the only embarrassment was to know which to select for each occasion. But as time went on I observed that the selection also came to me. Circumstances, or the experiences of life, or some particular demand, showed clearly that this subject must be taken. . . . Sometimes I could have answered the question why I took that subject, sometimes I could not. But again and again I found that there were people in the congregation who were startled by the fact that the subject was just what they needed. . . . I began to recognise that my mind was directed by Another, that I was a mouthpiece, a little more than a

mouthpiece perhaps, a mind seeking to be used by the exercise of all its faculties to gather what God was saying and to utter it, and yet, strictly speaking, a mouthpiece.'

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The message of the book, and the summing up of the writer's life experience, is a word of hope, a real evangel. 'This is the one thing we absolutely know about the Unseen Power, that it responds to our absolute trust, and proves to be personal in the sense that a person comes into direct relation with it.' 'Into the mighty current of the Infinite, which is love, as well as wisdom and power, everyone can, if he will, push his tiny bark, and be borne along sweetly and securely to the murmuring sea.'

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Why has the Fundamentalist position so strong a hold on America, not to speak of our own country? Some time ago Professor Bacon assured us it was because 'Liberal' Christianity had so thin a gospel, and people were concerned at the prospect of losing any definite Divine remedy for human ills. Dr. RICHARD ROBERTS has a different explanation, which he gives at large in the current *Hibbert Journal* in an article on 'The Theological Dilemma in America.' When everything has been said that may fairly be said of the ignorance and prejudice upon which the fundamentalist propaganda feeds, and when the controversy has been stripped of its extravagances (there have been extravagances on both sides), we shall find, he thinks, that behind it all is a dilemma that holds most of our minds 'both religious and liberal' (that is rather a nasty knock at liberalism!) \_\_\_\_\_

The bugbear of the fundamentalist is evolution. And it is so because evolution implies a change in our conception of God. Creation implies a transcendent God; evolution, an immanent God. Creation recognizes a God standing outside the universe, having brought it into being by His *fiat*, and operating on it from without in perfect freedom according to His own will. And if evolution does

not actually imply immanence, at least the two ideas make good company in the mind. Now much follows from that. The God of Christian theology is purely transcendent, and to come to terms with evolution is to repudiate the faith once delivered to the saints. For a theology of transcendence cannot be reconciled with a theology of immanence. Evangelical liberals are in this matter inconsistent. They adhere to traditional forms and read into them an immanent content. This makes their defence against fundamentalist attack seem very feeble.

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The fact is the evangelical liberal is in a cleft stick. Indeed, cleft sticks seem to Dr. ROBERTS to be flying all around. First the liberal is in one. His religious experience and his intelligence are at odds. His religious experience gives him a God who is transcendent. His intelligence forbids him to deny the Divine immanence. The Incarnation implies a stark transcendence, God coming down from His throne, and excludes every view of Him coming up 'from the ranks.' An Act of Incarnation cannot be dressed up as a Process of evolution.

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But there is a cleft stick for the philosopher too. He tries to reconcile the Absolute with a universe in process. It is actually (though Dr. ROBERTS does not say so) the very same dilemma. Indeed, wherever you look you see the same two sides of a shield. Take St. Paul, for example. From his Judaism he inherited a transcendent God, and from this derives a theology of 'transactions,' of which the great terms are Justification, Redemption, Adoption, Propitiation, Reconciliation, all representing things done upon man or for man by a God acting from without. But St. Paul also had a theology of immanence, the heart of which is the conception of the indwelling Christ. This is an organic theology. And the point of interest (and Dr. ROBERTS admits it) is that Paul felt no incongruity between the two strains. They were both real to him, and both real at all times.

Now the conclusion of all this is surely obvious. This same duality is present and persistent wherever reflective men speak out of their religious experience. It may therefore fairly be surmised that 'the duality springs from two necessary aspects of a living religious experience, which are both real, but which cannot be intellectually formulated without logical contradiction.'

Is there any hope of a synthesis? Not at present. We must be satisfied with a provisional dualism. This will require us to hold two theologies at the same time—the substance of the traditional theology of the Church and the nascent theology of Immanence. 'For my own part I will continue to affirm the main theses of a "transcendence" theology—Inspiration, Revelation, Incarnation, Redemption, Grace. But I propose to hold also the main theses of an "immanence" theology—the inborn and indwelling Christ, the "new man," the kingdom of God as the purpose and goal of the evolutionary process. I propose to be both a traditionalist and a modernist, in the belief that a frank dualism is a healthier state of mind than a premature and muddled synthesis.' That is a quite good confession of faith. But it rather takes the wind out of some of his previous statements.

It may be true, as Dr. ROBERTS says, that the fundamentalist is inspired by a fear of losing the older conception of God out of which all his theology of redemption comes. (This explanation is rather like Professor Bacon's after all.) But it may be permissible to express a doubt as to the soundness of many of Dr. Roberts's generalizations. Why, for example, should the conception of evolution

exclude transcendence? No one is more of a monist or a believer in naturalism than Professor Lloyd Morgan, and yet he believes that the natural process is the expression of a Divine Purpose, and purpose is a conception of transcendence. Any action on a thing implies transcendence. No doubt the traditional thought of God was too exclusively transcendent, but there is no necessary contradiction between a God who does things and a God who expresses Himself in a process.

St. Paul was sounder than Dr. ROBERTS in his unconsciousness of any contradiction between the two elements in his experience, and one ought not to forget that all thought and all experience are beset by antinomies that seem to contradict each other and yet are both known to be true. Foreordination and Freewill are one, the Absolute and the Fluent are another. Probably all these are forms of one antinomy, and this problem of Transcendence and Immanence is but another instance of the one eternal problem. It is solved, however, in experience, as all the rest are. No fault is to be found therefore with Dr. ROBERTS's conclusion. It is in the picture of the situation he is inclined to over-statement or to unguarded statement. There are many 'evangelical liberals' who would warmly repudiate the statement that the Incarnation implies stark transcendence alone, for whom indeed evolution has thrown a fresh light on the Incarnation as the expression in human form of the Divine immanent Purpose of love. Dr. ROBERTS has, however, done a service in calling attention to elements in the thought or instinct of Fundamentalism for which a large place must be found in any reconciliation of divergent tendencies.

