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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

PROBABLY everybody except the confirmed and incurable pessimist begins the New Year with hope. We look forward to a year that will be better than 'the years wherein we have seen evil.' This is an attitude characteristic of the Old Testament, which looks steadily forward to the better thing that 'is to come to pass in the after-days.' History is both 'purposive and adventurous,' and the Hebrew prophets contemplated 'an ever-widening ideal, which does not exist complete in the mind of the individual nor in the mind of the generations, but is always ahead.' That ideal was the Torah of Jahweh, not indeed the legal and ritual Torah, but the Torah in its strict and proper sense of direction, 'the direction of Jahweh, the living God.'

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The sentences quoted are taken from a recently published book by Major J. W. ПОВАН, B.D., in *The Old Testament and Modern Problems in Psychology* (Longmans; paper covers, 3s. net; cloth, 5s.). Many of the pronouncements of the New Psychology need, and will no doubt in time receive, revision and modification, but it is undoubtedly a science that has come to stay, and it will have to be reckoned with; indeed, it has already grappled, not quite unsuccessfully, with such phenomena as the visions occasionally associated with the prophetic call, with ecstasy, and the like. It is all to the good that, in the light of modern knowledge, scientific students of the Bible should attempt to make those ancient experiences intelligible; and

Major ПОВАН seems to have made this province of study peculiarly his own. He has already given us a small book on 'The New Psychology and the Bible,' and a larger one on 'The New Psychology and the Hebrew Prophets,' a book in which he had many illuminating things to say on the prophetic experience of Hosea.

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In this new book he discusses, from the standpoint of the psychologist, some questions of immense interest to the student of prophecy—not only the visions of the prophets, but the distinction between true and false prophecy, and that fascinating and almost insoluble problem of the attitude of the pre-exilic prophets to public worship. But his interest is very far from being exclusively theoretical; he deals with such eminently practical topics as the Principles of Old Testament Sociology, while his concluding chapter is on The Prophets and To-day. It is further characteristic of his careful method, which explores all the relevant facts, that his opening chapter is on the Hebrew Language.

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For he rightly believes that we have much to learn of the Hebrew mind from a consideration of the Hebrew language and Hebrew grammar; he believes this indeed so earnestly that he would wish to see the study of Hebrew made 'an essential part of the training of all who are being prepared to become teachers and "spiritual pastors" in the Church.' He will be glad to know that, so far as

Scotland is concerned, this hope of his has been realized long ago, the Hebrew language as well as Old Testament literature being an integral part of the curriculum in the theological colleges.

His treatment of the familiar construction known as the 'waw consecutive' is highly suggestive. He shows that behind it lies the desire of the writer or speaker to move forward with his experience, carrying it all, as it were, with him: he does not jump from one stepping-stone to another, but he swims from one to another with the stream of his narrative. While fully admitting the remarkable deficiencies of the Hebrew language, it is yet possible to maintain that this particular feature of it encouraged the contemplation of the interrelation of facts and of the inevitableness of that relation of cause and effect on which Amos laid supreme stress. It was a language singularly well adapted for the work which the Hebrew writers had to do.

The chapter on Mythology which follows is scarcely so convincing, and illustrates the danger to which all highly specialized study is exposed. The symbolism of the Old Testament is explained in ways which will not commend themselves to the student of comparative religion as readily as they do to the psychologist. The cup is said to denote receptivity and to be a symbol of submission, willing or unwilling. That may be. But when we are told that the rod-serpent—of Moses, *e.g.*—is a libido symbol, we begin to wonder. The serpent into which the rod was turned when thrown upon the ground is symbolic of 'a grovelling and horrible libido,' and Moses in fleeing from it, was trying 'to run away from his own instincts.' The catching of it by the tail and the lifting of it up from the ground indicate the sublimation of the energy; 'the very libido from which he had fled in terror became available for the work to which Jahweh was calling him.'

So the fiery serpents which bit the people symbolize the libido or energy turning backwards, flinching from the task set by Jahweh; and the cure lay not in the extinction of the libido, but in the

direction of it forwards to an ideal. This seems more interesting and subtle than probable.

But whether we agree with these interpretations or not, the idea which they embody is a valuable one, and one to which Major ПОВАН recurs more than once. He maintains, *e.g.*, with much plausibility that sin, even when it seems to be positive, is often rather a matter of omission than of commission. Israel's sin in the wilderness was just a great refusal to face up to Jahweh's ideal; to the prophets sin consisted primarily just in that omission, or rather in that refusal to face reality, and the excessive devotion of the people to the ritual worship of their God was just a 'defence reaction' against facing Him in the realm and in the demands of moral reality.

Of great importance is the question raised by Major ПОВАН whether the prophets had any peculiar psychological equipment for their work, and he answers it with a decided affirmative. There were many loyal servants of Jehovah contemporary with them, men like Josiah, Baruch, Nehemiah, but psychically the prophets stand in a different category: they had a psychical constitution, he maintains, which in any age would be regarded as decidedly abnormal. It was through an 'abnormal' psychical experience that a man like Amos was first led to preface his message with the words, 'Thus has Jahweh said.' But it has to be remembered, as Major ПОВАН reminds us, that it is not this psychical abnormality that constitutes their inspiration, but the content and the ethical quality of their message, and its appeal to the highest moral aspirations of mankind. Otherwise we should have to predicate inspiration of the prophets who are ordinarily described as false, the prophets who were at the mercy of mass suggestion and who mistook for divine inspiration the spontaneous outbursts of their own unconscious minds.

Another hotly debated question is the relation of the prophets to the cult, and the writer has made it clear that the early prophets were closely connected with the sacrificial system. This is very

plain in the case of Samuel, and scarcely less so in the case of Elijah who defended the cause of Jahwism at the altar on Carmel. But in the case of the great pre-exilic prophets Major POVAH rightly maintains that the question of their attitude to sacrifice can hardly be answered with certainty. There were elements in the cult, like praise and prayer, of which they could hardly have disapproved, and their seeming condemnation of the cult can hardly have extended to these features of it. But the writer leans to the view that the prophets believed in a God who 'did not want sacrifice, he wanted righteousness and nothing else'; and, significantly enough, the false prophets who come under their lash are usually found in association with the priests.

Another vital question raised by the book relates to the sociological aspect of the Old Testament. The prophets, it is universally admitted, pleaded with unsurpassed earnestness for justice, mercy, and truth. But has the Old Testament nothing more to offer than these general principles? Has it no specific guidance, *e.g.*, as to the proper attitude to private property, war, and similar institutions, as to whose legitimacy some good men may be in doubt to-day? And the gravity of this question is enhanced when we pass from the prophets to our Lord. Did He do nothing more than reiterate the prophetic demand for justice, mercy, and truth? Did He give specific guidance of such a kind as to be a really practical contribution to the solution of our modern problems?

On these questions Major POVAH has thoroughly useful things to say. He directs attention to definite Old Testament teaching on the subject of the sex and the parental instincts, and points out that its sociology calls not for their eradication, but for their discipline. He calls attention to the fact that not only is private property nowhere denounced by the Old Testament, but that it is positively presupposed as an inherent principle of its sociology. And he further reminds us of what we too easily forget, that the teaching of Jesus has a broad Old Testament background, and that His silence may often be fairly interpreted as indicating His tacit

agreement with its general sociological principles, accepted as they were by His hearers as well as by Himself, and therefore in no need of explicit re-emphasis.

There are many other suggestive things in this valuable book, points which may be gratefully accepted, and points which may be challenged. Among the latter may be mentioned the writer's attitude to Messianic prophecy. He thinks that, in the case of certain great utterances, 'for all we know to the contrary, the prophets themselves may hardly have known what they did mean.' This we believe to be rather dangerous ground to take. There is, of course, this obvious measure of truth in the contention, that great men often speak better than they know. As the ages roll on, their words acquire a deeper meaning with the ever-widening and deepening experience of men. But even though they were the submissive instruments of a great cosmic Purpose, they were intelligent and willing instruments, and we should be sorry to think that they themselves hardly knew what they meant.

But this does not prevent us from acknowledging the justice of Major POVAH's argument that their visions may have come to the prophets as the result of a period of subconscious thinking. It is in the discussion of the subconscious element of the prophetic experience that the interest of his discussion largely lies. But he is well aware that the subconscious does not explain everything, and that in religion the intellect must come to its own; and not the least service of the book is to remind us that the Church is suffering, as he bluntly puts it, from the repression of the intellect, and that 'any extensive revival of interest in the normal modes of public worship will have to be preceded by an extension of adult religious education.'

The question of our Lord's teaching on the future destiny of man has been raised again by an excellent study of His actual words by an earnest and able layman, Mr. J. H. BROWN—*Eternity* :

*Is It a Biblical Idea?* (James Clarke ; 3s. 6d. net). Farrar and Cox made heroic efforts in an earlier generation to show that Jesus' teaching referred not to the duration of life so much as to its quality. Their writings gave expression to the larger hopefulness which was really created by the fresh discovery of Jesus and His teaching about God. And the acceptance it met with was due rather to this spirit than to its success in exegesis. Indeed, sound scholarship seemed to frown upon that exegesis, and Mr. BROWN agrees with this critical judgment.

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Opinion on the question at the present time seems to have swung round to the theory of conditional immortality which has been advocated lately in a number of books, notably one by Professor Pringle-Pattison. But Mr. BROWN will have none of this. He thinks the theory unworthy of God, and of man as well, and clears it out of his way at the start.

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In an introductory essay he discusses general theories and comes to the conclusion that 'the irrevocable determination of the individual's destiny at death' is difficult to reconcile with the justice of God. But if this be so, he asks, how shall we account for those sayings of Christ which seem to afford good ground for the doctrine? We read of a 'great gulf fixed,' of a place called 'Hell,' or 'Gehenna,' where 'their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched,' of 'eternal punishment' and of 'the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Is not the conclusion forced? It is, says the writer, if we take the words of those passages from the Revised Version as truly reflecting His meaning.

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It is true that a large allowance must be made for the frequent use of parable and metaphor in the teaching of Jesus, and also for the fact that He made use of popular notions and beliefs of the time. It is agreed also that the Scriptures were written in popular, not scientific, language. And, finally, it is urged that a question of such terrible import can hardly be decided on the meaning of 'a mere Greek adjective.' Still, making all allowance for

such considerations, the writer does not find them conclusive. There remain our Lord's many words, and especially His use of the word *aiōnios*. And for the author of this study the question seems to hang largely on the meaning of this word. If the word *aiōnios* were rendered by some word which did *not* mean endlessness, then very few unbiassed English readers would, he feels, come to the conclusion that our Lord taught the doctrine of endless punishment.

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Accordingly he bravely embarks on an inquiry into the meaning of this word. And his conclusions are these. The word has far more a Hebrew ancestry than a Greek, and when it is interpreted in the light of its Hebrew ancestry it refers to hidden rather than endless time. He admits it refers to duration and not mere quality of being (it was here Farrar made his mistake). But he is convinced that 'ages-lasting' is a better equivalent than 'everlasting.' The idea is that of time fading into the dim distance and undetermined. This conclusion is reached after a searching examination of every variation of phrase to be found in Scripture.

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It may be conceded that the author has proved his point. His argument and exegesis would be difficult to upset. And it may be admitted that the conclusion is important. But is it decisive? One question he has, so far as we have noticed, left unanswered. Supposing all this true, how would Jesus have *said* that punishment is to be endless otherwise than by the words He has used? Was this not the only way He could possibly take to say it if He meant it? Further, though it must be admitted that to prove *aiōnios* to mean not endless but *possibly* something less is to remove something of a nightmare from our minds, does it quite dispel the nightmare? Is not a dim, distant, age-long prospect pretty nearly the same thing as endlessness?

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The conclusion in this book is likely to bring comfort to minds that are divided between hope and fear. But surely the grounds to-day of the 'larger hope' are broader than any mere linguistic conclusion. They rest on the Fatherhood of God

and on such large conceptions of Jesus as are expressed in the Good Shepherd seeking His sheep *until He finds it*. Still, this inquiry has its own vital importance, and the writer has conferred a distinct benefit on the students of the New Testament by his thorough, able, and searching study on a topic of perennial interest.

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The Thirteenth Conference of Modern Churchmen was held at Girton College, Cambridge, in September. The subject was 'Sacraments: Their Psychology and History'; and the October number of the *Modern Churchman* is published with this title and contains the papers read at the Conference (Blackwell; 3s. 6d. net). There are eighteen papers, dealing with every aspect of the subject—historical, scriptural, and dogmatic. The writers are most of them well known, Canon NAIRNE, Professor Percy GARDNER, Archdeacon LILLEY, Canon Guy ROGERS, among others. This fat number of the well-known magazine contains a great deal of learning and a great deal of modernity, and the views ably expressed here will have to be reckoned with by serious scholars.

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Most people will turn first to two articles which contain the real issue: 'Sacraments and the Synoptic Gospels,' by Dr. Douglas WHITE, and 'The Value of the Sacraments To-day,' by Canon T. Guy ROGERS. We confess to disappointment with the former. Its gist may be expressed by saying that there is no real evidence that Jesus directed the Lord's Supper to be perpetuated; but that does not really matter. It remains a very special means of sacramental grace, wherein we may reach communion with and participation in the Spirit of Christ. It is likely that many will feel themselves satisfied with this somewhat nebulous assurance. But it is quite certain that very many will desire a more thorough and informed discussion. Dr. WHITE does not seem to be aware of the strength of the case for our Lord's institution of the Lord's Supper or of the probable reason why the command to perpetuate it is confined to St. Luke.

A much more satisfying treatment is given us by Canon Guy ROGERS in dealing with the Value of the Sacraments to-day. He entirely differs from Dr. WHITE in his view of the historical facts, and he presents the evidence for the traditional view with cogency. He admits that the logion in Luke, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' is doubtful, but the belief in our Lord's authority for the observance of the Supper does not rest on that. It rests on two facts of very great significance, especially when taken together. The first is Paul's statement that the command to observe the Supper came to him from Christ Himself. Is there any real ground to question a definite assertion like that?

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But this evidence is rendered even more persuasive by the fact that from the very first the Supper was held regularly by the followers of Jesus. In itself that might not be conclusive. But, when you have a clear statement of a fact by Paul and find it backed by the custom of the early Church, the evidence does seem to be conclusive, and, if so, the fact is not so indifferent as Dr. WHITE would suggest. It does mean a very great deal to Christians that this central act of worship is one Jesus commanded, and that it comes to them, not as a device of the Church (however useful), but from the Lord Himself.

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'It is very strange,' writes Dr. WHITE, 'if in none of the gospels is there any record of the institution by Christ of a rite which came to be regarded as the principal and most necessary means of spiritual life and progress.' On the other hand, it is not so strange when one realizes that the observance of the Supper had been going on for thirty or forty years before the earliest gospel appeared. It was an established and familiar custom, a part of Church life and worship, and it has been suggested with some probability that what the Synoptics give us is the formula used by the ministers in dispensing the Sacraments. And, though John does not record the institution, he admittedly implies the actual practice of the sacramental rite as being observed in his day.

Canon ROGERS goes on to deal with the theological value of the Sacraments, and with their human value. As to the former, having repudiated the Catholic view, he proceeds to vindicate the spiritual influence of the Supper. It brings to us a wider and more satisfying experience than any other by which God through Christ 'graciously' finds His way into our personalities. And he rejoices that in this way congregations are rendered independent of the vagaries and idiosyncrasies of individual clergy!

And as to the human value, 'the Sacraments testify to the world the value that the Christian

religion sets on man. God calls him to Himself, communicates to him His own divine nature, spreads for him His feast of love. He does not do so in virtue of any particular position, wealth, prestige, power of education which the particular man possesses, but just because he is a man.' The Christian cannot regard any man as 'cheap.' He means too much to God. Hence all that concerns him—his housing, wages, standard of life, his recreation, and his worship—counts for much. No greater service, then, could the Church do for the world to-day than to present to men the social consequences of its own sacramental faith.

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## Some Tendencies and Problems in Modern Theology.

BY THE REVEREND C. J. WRIGHT, B.D., PENZANCE.

THEOLOGY may be regarded as the intellectual statement of our Faith, the reasoned endeavour to set forth the verities of Religion. Let it be remembered that Theology, while indispensable to Religion, is not itself Religion. For, on the one hand, Religion is experience, and Theology is the endeavour to think coherently about experience. Yet, on the other hand, Religion never exists in isolation from thought; in every experience there is an intellectual element. Besides which, man's persistent effort is to co-ordinate his experiences into an intellectually-satisfying whole. As long as man is religious he will require a theology.

It will, I suppose, be agreed that in this generation Theology is at a considerable discount among educated people. Publishers tell us of the financial gamble involved in bringing out a book on Theology containing, say, the number of words that would be considered adequate for a modern novel. The average intelligent person seems to have little or no interest in what used to be regarded as 'the Queen of the Sciences.' Even ministers of religion, it may be said, have ceased to have a dominant interest in Theology. The financial difficulty is not the sole, or even the main, explanation of this state of affairs, for most people can afford to buy what they really want. Many regard Theology, with unhappy recollections of College days, as a

bore.<sup>1</sup> Others regard it, sceptically, as a futile ploughing of the sands. Let us concentrate, so I have heard it frequently said by ministers of religion, on the practical tasks of life, and leave these speculative questions about which there is so much, and increasing, uncertainty. A proportion of the others, intensely concerned with theological problems, have been driven to believe that little in the way of enlightenment is to be looked for from the professional teachers. And certainly it is difficult to avoid the acknowledgment that the persistent evasion of issues by the theologians is responsible for the fact that many now look for the illuminating word to various literary dilettanti in Theology. If, for example, Mr. H. G. Wells should choose to say anything about such matters, widespread interest is aroused, and the numerous references from pulpit and religious press seem to indicate the belief that now, at long last, something important has been said.

This state of affairs I cannot but regard as a great menace to the future of Religion. If Religion cannot be stated in terms of coherent thought, its future is in considerable jeopardy. A religion divorced from reason can as little meet the needs

<sup>1</sup> I do not here speak for myself, for I have nothing but a deep feeling of indebtedness to my own theological teachers.