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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'PREPARE to meet thy God.' How often have these words been used, and used with effect, as the basis of an evangelistic appeal. They have been taken as a call to the individual, a solemn reminder of the necessity of preparation for that great meeting of the individual soul with God which takes place at death. This is the topical use of the words: and if this use of them has been effective, as it undeniably has been, in awakening individual souls to a sense of the seriousness of life and of death, who shall say that such a use is entirely illegitimate? It is possible to believe in the expository method of preaching without worshipping it or regarding it as the only legitimate method. Preaching fulfils itself in many ways.

Still, it is always worth the preacher's while—and if he be conscientious, he will regard it as his duty—to see what his text actually means as well as what it says; and, when he does this, he will often find that it means something other, and frequently something better, than what he wants to make it say. Amos concludes his appeal to prepare with the words 'O Israel'; from which it is evident that the appeal is addressed not to the individual but to the nation, and that the experience in which the meeting with God is to take place is not the solemn experience of death but some catastrophe even more terrible than the locusts and the drought and the other disasters just enumerated which have already fallen upon the nation, and which, terrible as they were, have

not had the effect of bringing the foolish people back to their senses and their God.

Three points emerge from the text with startling clearness—the people to whom the appeal is addressed (Israel); the God whom the prophet invites his people to prepare to meet; and the preparation necessary on the part of such a people for a meeting with such a God.

(1) In the first place the prophecy itself furnishes the most vivid description of the people to whom the appeal is addressed; and as we read the book—and, with the exception of Jonah, hardly any prophetic book is easier to read—we are amazed to find how exact is the parallel between that ancient civilization and our own. Like ourselves before the Great War, Israel had been enjoying the fruits of many years of comparative peace. The people were 'at ease in Zion,' sheltered behind the fancied security of their mountains, as we behind defences of another kind. During that era of relative peace many evil things had reared their ugly heads.

There was, first of all, intemperance. Over and over again Amos comes back to this, evidently with the feeling that few things had cursed, weakened, and degraded his people more than this. There was drinking at the services in the country churches, and with the drinking was associated immorality (2^{7th}), there was drinking—out of bowls—in aristo-

cratic homes (6^o), drinking to which the women were as addicted as the men (4¹); and the drink was paid for by money secured through the exploitation of the poor (4¹). Of course in such a country as Israel it was inevitable that protests should be offered: there were Nazirites to whom drink was anathema, but their protests went for nothing or were even answered by violence (2^{11f.}).

Love of pleasure was the order of the day. Of extraordinary vividness is the passage which draws aside the curtain and lets us look into the 'palaces' which Amos, shepherd that he was and believer in the simple life, detests (6^o)—the luxurious homes where we see the princes of wealth and fashion and the great political leaders lolling indolently on sofas inlaid with ivory, lovers of rich food and drink, scented with the finest perfumes, enlivening their banquets with music and song, but caring nothing at all when their people were broken, as people can be broken no less terribly by the vices of peace than by the shattering blows of war (6⁴⁻⁶).

Further, their commercial life was honeycombed with dishonesty. The merchant princes, especially the great corn-merchants, used 'tricky balances'; they sold underweight, charged exorbitant prices, and even what they sold was adulterated, so that the people were trebly robbed (8^{af.}). It is no surprise to learn that those who cheated their people on the Monday had already cheated their God on the Sunday, and longed with undisguised longing for the passing of the holy day (8⁵). 'Shall not the land tremble for this?' says the prophet. A land in which such things can be done is no safe place to live in; it reels and rocks, for its foundations are unstable.

All this rampant materialism had its counterpart in indifference to spiritual things. The people might go to church, but they cared nothing for what the preacher had to say. There were men like Amos, God's best gifts to any people, who in His holy name challenged all those abominations, but the mouths of these men were stopped (2^{11f.} 7¹³). To such a people the intemperance and the immorality and the profiteering were vastly more

congenial than the stern voice of the prophet. Such was the people, then, at whom Amos hurled his message to prepare: it will hardly be denied that with such a people there was much need of preparation.

(2) Next let us see what is the character of the God whom this unprepared people has to meet? He is, first of all, a God who hates all those things that His prophet has been denouncing. He not only hates them, but He will not tolerate them. 'Shall not the land tremble for this?' What Amos has in mind is the staggering blow of war. A nation would come and afflict the sinful people from one end of the land to another (6¹⁴) with the horrors of a war from whose battles only one in ten would escape (5³).

To a people who had been assiduously serving their God with the most gorgeous and elaborate ritual it could devise such a message was nothing less than incredible. Besides, could they not plead privilege? Were they not the elect people? Had Jehovah not chosen them out of all the families of the earth (3²), and was He not therefore bound, as much for His own honour as for theirs, to defend His own beloved Hebrew empire? Assuredly, says Amos, they had been chosen; but the giddier the height, the more fearful the fall. God is no respecter of persons: 'you only have I chosen, therefore I will punish you.' What a heretical and blasphemous conclusion! But Amos means what he says; and what he says is that Israel is no dearer to Jehovah than the dark-faced men of Africa (9⁷). The consequences of sin are inevitable and inexorable, and from them there is no escape, even though they should succeed in hiding themselves in heaven or in the bottom of the sea (9^{2f.}). All that an unrepentant people can hope for is to be torn in pieces (5¹⁹). Things are what they are, and their consequences will be what they will be: why should they deceive themselves?

It is a very terrible gospel, and the conception of God which it envisages, if it were really exhaustive, is one from which the most careless heart might well recoil. But there is more in Amos

than that. Even the darkest passages are lit with flashes, lightning flashes, of the love of God. The refrain of the sombre poem which describes the manifold disasters that had fallen upon the people, runs, 'Yet ye did not return unto me' (4⁶⁻¹¹). These fearful blows were struck not in vengeance, but in love, to awaken in the people a serious mind and to bring them back to the God from whom they had strayed too pitifully far. So the God whom the people have to meet is at once a God of wrath and of love.

(3) How might they have prepared to meet Him? There were two ways—the false way of ritual, and the true way of morality. Within the congenial sphere of ritual—'for that is what *you* like, ye children of Israel' (4⁵)—these people were Jehovah's devoted servants (4^{4f}). But unhappily for them, that was not what Jehovah wanted at all. No true preparation for the dread meeting was possible along that line. It was conduct and character, not ceremonial, for which the God whom Amos worshipped cared.

The true preparation for meeting Him would have been at once negative and positive. Negatively, it would have involved the abolition of all those public and private sins so scathingly exposed by the prophet—the love of drink and pleasure, the shady commercial transactions, the exploitation of the poor. It would have involved a policy of prohibition of these and similar offences, enacted and enforced by the public and the private conscience.

Positively, the programme of preparation is stated with sublime simplicity in the all-embracing words, 'Seek good, and not evil'; or still more profoundly, 'Hate the evil, and love the good' (6^{14f}). 'Seek good, and not evil, and *so*'—on those moral terms and on no other—'shall Jehovah be with you.' But what is good? 'Establish justice,' says Amos in the same context—that at any rate is good; while the using of men and women as instruments to minister to our greed or lust—that is of the devil. Justice, fair play, as between man and man, and class and class, is good. This aspect

of the programme of preparation is summed up in the golden words of 5²⁴, 'Let justice roll down like water,' cleansing every avenue of social and political life, 'and (social) righteousness like a perennial stream' which never runs dry but flows on and on, whatever be the political weather.

If it be objected that this is a moral and not a religious programme, the retort is easy. Amos, like all the writers of the Old Testament, finds the inspiration of morality in religion. If he says, 'Seek good, that ye may live' (5¹⁴), he also says, 'Seek God, and ye shall live' (5⁶), and the latter is as truly a part of his gospel as the former; indeed, to him neither would be conceivable without the other. Morality is lifeless without religion, and real religion must express itself through social morality.

Amos is not an agitator. His motto is not, 'Down with the aristocrats,' or down with anybody; it is 'down with yourselves upon your knees before the high God whom you have offended.' His motto is 'Return unto me' (4⁶⁻¹¹). This is his message to the democracy of to-day—that, without the recognition of God, no noble or permanently peaceful society is possible. Men can only be brothers in a family the Father of which is God. 'Seek first,' said a greater than Amos, 'the kingdom of God, and all these things,' which men need, 'shall be added unto you.'

A few months ago in these columns we noticed 'The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought,' by Dean Inge. The most recent Bampton Lectures—*The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ*, by the Rev. A. E. J. RAWLINSON, D.D. (Longmans; 12s. 6d. net)—are a direct challenge to the main thesis of Dean Inge. Whereas he tends to say that salvation is of the Greeks, Dr. RAWLINSON is convinced that salvation is of the Jews.

That at a very early stage the disciples of Jesus ceased to think of themselves only as disciples,

and adopted towards Jesus an attitude of religious dependence amounting to virtual or actual worship, is beyond question. The point at issue between the school that Dr. RAWLINSON represents and that of Bousset is the question whether this change could have taken place upon Jewish soil or within the circle of the original disciples. Dr. RAWLINSON takes issue with Bousset's explicit denial of 'the existence of any *cultus* of Jesus within the circle of the original disciples, or of any sense, on the part of the original Jewish Christian community, of present communion with Christ.'

For the Bampton lecturer, the question what could or could not have happened is much less important than the question what *did* happen; and he makes it clear that he has no intellectual presuppositions that make it impossible for him to accept the New Testament account. 'Apart from the recognition of a supernatural factor as having been at work, the beginnings of Christianity are not really to be explained.' The events represented for us by the stories at the end of the Gospels and the beginning of Acts convinced the disciples that the crucified Christ was henceforth exalted in glory at God's right hand, which conviction they expressed in language borrowed from Ps 110.

The religion of the first Jewish Christians was something more than the apocalyptic confidence that the last decisive hour of the world's history was at hand. There was also the more personal element, the conviction that the Messiah was Jesus. The vague apocalyptic Son of Man had become for them a concrete reality, Jesus their Master and Lord whom they loved and revered and whose return they were expecting. He was also for them the prophet 'like unto Moses,' and the Messianic interpretation of this phrase from Dt 18¹⁵ seems to have begun with Christianity.

Further, and this is one of the points round which the controversy centres, it is not reasonable to doubt that already, in the language of Christian devotion, for the first Christians Jesus was 'Maran,' 'our Lord.' It was not in Greek-speaking Christianity that this title originated, but in the original

Aramaic-speaking Church. Analysis of the Synoptic Gospels seems to show that in the earliest records Jesus is not spoken of as Kyrios (Lord). For this, two explanations are possible. Bousset's inference is that, in the earliest period of the life of the Church, Kyrios was not known as a title for Jesus. The other, and surely the more feasible, explanation is that, at the time when even Mark's Gospel was composed, Jesus was the Lord of the Church; but Christians knew that the title was an anachronism as applied to Jesus in the days of His flesh. Their avoidance of the word is a testimony to the reliability of the records.

The Achilles' heel of Bousset's theory is the Aramaic prayer formula, *Marana tha*, which Paul quotes (1 Co 16²²) in warning against his Judaistic opponents. Apparently Jesus was sometimes called Rabbi, and there is evidence from the Talmud that a Rabbi was sometimes greeted respectfully as 'my Lord'; but 'Marana tha' must mean 'Come, Lord'; it could not possibly mean 'Teacher, come.'

Jesus claimed to be the Christ, though not the Anointed One of popular expectation; yet the revised ideas of the Messiah taught by early Christianity, the idea, for example, that the victory of the Elect Champion of the people of God should be gained only through suffering and apparent defeat, at the price of a cup of anguish and of a baptism of blood, though they were never made explicit in Judaism, were nevertheless essentially Hebraic.

The term 'Our Lord' as applied to Jesus indicated the absolute allegiance of His followers. Since Kyrios translates Jahweh in the Septuagint, the application of the term to Jesus facilitated the belief in His Divinity. But, since in the Gentile world there were gods many and lords many, there were certain dangers in applying to Jesus this term which the Hellenized pagans used for the central figure in their cults. There was need for the work of such a convinced monotheist as Paul. Two very different views, however, are taken of the work which Paul actually accomplished in the

shaping of early Christianity. On the one hand, we are told that his mission was primarily to promote the Hellenization of Christianity. On the contrary, Dr. Rawlinson believes that by his emphasis on the love, the redemptive activity, and the ethical righteousness of the one true God, he safeguarded for ever the Hebraic inheritance of our religion.

We are now accustomed to be told that, whether the change was made by Paul or was only adopted by him, the Christ of Paul was vitally different from the original Jewish Christ. Whereas Jesus had proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom, Paul taught the cultus of the present, glorified Lord; the place of the proclamation of repentance was taken by the teaching of a metaphysical change of the old man into the new man; for the direct relation of the soul to God was substituted the Divine grace of a Redeemer, physically mediated by the sacraments on the model of the pagan mystery cults; and the ethical call to save one's life by losing it was replaced by the pagan notion of union with a dying and rising God.

Yet, according to Paul's own judgment, Christianity was no new religion, but simply Judaism with its centre of gravity shifted in consequence of the new era. Paul applied to Jesus terms such as 'Son of God' and 'Lord' that the Greek could understand; he offered Christianity as a religion not only of future hope, but of present redemption; but there is no reason to suppose that from this point of view he would have presented Christianity to Jews under any other aspect. The Jewish Christian, like the Greek Christian, believed that in Jesus Christ God had visited and redeemed His people.

For Paul the Law was in itself holy; it was his heart's desire that Israel might be saved; for him the Gentiles were at best the wild branches of an oleaster grafted into the ancient stock of the true olive tree. Paul was anxious to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost; there is significance even in the fact that he had been five times beaten in Jewish synagogues. It is too much to tell us, as

Bousset does, that from the moment of his conversion onwards his affinities were wholly with Greek-speaking Christendom.

Again, Paul's teaching on the Atonement is at the antipodes of thought from the Hellenistic idea of an assurance of immortality and of deliverance from trouble as the semi-magical result of initiation into the mysteries of a saviour god. For Paul, Atonement meant the love and the redemptive activity of God. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and to such an idea there are no pagan analogies.

For Paul's conception of the Creation as having its beginning in Christ, of Creation as destined to be renewed in Christ, analogies have been sought in the Logos doctrine of Philo, and in the world-soul or world-reason of the Stoics. But in this matter also, Dr. RAWLINSON maintains, the foundations of Paul's doctrine are Jewish. As the late Dr. Burney pointed out, in the Book of Wisdom Divine Wisdom is described as God's image, and in the Book of Proverbs it is said of this Wisdom that it was 'begotten' by God 'as the beginning of His way, the antecedent of His works of old.' Apparently the 'Wisdom of God' was one of the first categories under which the Christians thought of Jesus (1 Co 1²⁴). But if Christ is to be identified with the Divine Wisdom, and the functions ascribed to Wisdom in Jewish literature are to be ascribed to Him, materials are already at hand for a very high Christology.

To illustrate: where did Paul get the Christology of Col 1¹⁶⁻¹⁸? If Christ is God's Wisdom, and if the Divine Wisdom is the Beginning, then Christ is the Beginning. That at once suggests the phrase in Gn 1¹. According to Dr. Burney, the whole passage in Colossians is just an elaborate exposition, according to the kind of exegesis that the Rabbis loved, of the Genesis phrase *bērēshîth*. The preposition has three possible meanings: in, by, into. All things, says Paul, were created in, by, and into Christ, who is the *rēshîth*. *Rēshîth*, again, has four possible meanings: the beginning, the sum-total, the head, the first-fruits. In the

Colossians passage, it is claimed that Jesus is the *rêshith* in each one of these senses.

Even the author of the Fourth Gospel is essentially a Jewish Christian. It was as the Jewish Messiah that the Saviour was crucified. There came a time when the Greeks too would see Jesus ; but in the very chapter that tells of this incident (12) the author finds in the ministry of Jesus the fulfilment of prophecies in a psalm (Ps 118), in Zechariah (9th), in the story of the call of Isaiah, and in Is 53. The Christian claim that in Jesus the true God is revealed is based on the historic claim of the Jewish race to be the repositories of the true revelation of God.

The supreme question for our day is beyond doubt this : Was Jesus Christ the unique Son of God ? There are questions raised by science that are important for religion ; and there are questions raised by psychology that are of even greater immediate importance. But none of these can compare in urgency with the question of the Deity of Christ. Has God broken through to us in a final and absolute fashion ? Is Jesus Christ a Divine ultimatum ? The significance of books like Mr. Murry's *Life of Christ* is that they raise this question again for our minds.

In *The Modern Churchman* for January 1927 there are two articles dealing with this point, one by Mr. H. H. FARMER on 'The Worship of Jesus Christ,' the other by the editor, Dr. H. D. A. MAJOR, on 'The Dynamic of the Incarnation.' They both strive to find an answer to our fundamental question which is positive and true to the facts ; and in their own way they both succeed, for they are both helpful to our faith.

Mr. FARMER especially. The question he starts with is this : What basis is there for the distinctively Christian conviction about Jesus Christ, namely, that He is unique in such a way that we are impelled to give Him the obedience and worship and finality for our thought which we should give

to God ? That is putting the question adequately. Mr. FARMER points out that the answer to it is usually pragmatic. Jesus solves men's problem. He brings their life into harmony. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. That is to say : faith in Christ *works*.

But how do we get from that to the conviction that God meets us in Him in a quite special way, and to the further conviction that we do right to worship Him as God ? There are many people (for example, Unitarians) who admit a revelation of God in Jesus, but they will not worship Him. They admit *an* Incarnation, but not *the* Incarnation. If people reach this lesser view of the value of Christ by the pragmatic way of His value for life, they have to answer the searching question, How am I to know that Jesus will be adequate for everything, not only in my personal life, but in all the history of man ? The pragmatic argument cannot lead us to the specific Christian conviction of the Deity of Christ or to the worship of Him.

Mr. FARMER goes further, and says that 'it is doubtful whether in any department of life anybody ever comes to believe anything or continues to believe anything *merely* because on the whole it seems to work and unify experience.' We need what Mr. Farmer calls a *coercive* element in our faith as well as a pragmatic. By this he means that in any genuine apprehension of truth the percipient is conscious of being forced to apprehend what he does apprehend by a reality which in some sense stands over against him and is independent of his mind and the satisfaction of his desires. In some sense the fact or truth has got to 'hit' him so that he has no option but to say 'that is so' ; it must shine in its own light and be there in its own right. The pragmatic element is necessary also. We must feel the truth to be a personal good. But the coercive element is just as essential. Man's nature is such that truth must lay hold of him by its own inherent cogency and force.

Now apply this to Jesus. The worship of Him

must be a half-hearted business unless there be that in Him which strikes the mind immediately and coercively into that attitude. Man has the capacity to recognize the presence of God in human life, and worship is the instinctive response of the mind to such a recognition. We can see the true, the beautiful, and the good in this world and realize their absolute value. They are sacred, and in this ethically sacred we recognize God.

Now here is the coercive basis for the place Jesus has in the Christian consciousness. We discern in Him the altogether holy will, the altogether sacred. This is the only means we have of identifying God immediately. Where we meet the altogether holy will we know we meet God. We know intuitively, coercively. God confronts us through absolute value. To have the value of God is to be God. No one would have the value of God unless He is God.

Some people feel a difficulty as regards the Christian conviction about Christ because He lived so long ago, and we know of Him only by scanty

records. But if in Jesus there is a complete and adequate unveiling of the Divine character and purpose, in which everything has its being and from which everything derives its meaning, then the lapse of time is irrelevant to the abiding and verifiable significance of Christ. And in proportion as Christ is what Christianity asserts Him to be, in that proportion will He persist in human life and be observable even to-day and in the affairs of our present existence. And you will find in Him the way to peace in our civilization and the solution of the problem of suffering and its relation to sin.

If this be a valid line of thought, it means that by identifying the coercive touch of God upon men's spirits with the sense of the ethically sacred we are given a permanent basis upon which to ground a living conviction about Jesus. And if, in addition to making this immediate coercive impression of the Divine upon us, Christ can in practice produce health of soul and triumph over the world, then the affirmation of His Divinity is as soundly grounded as anything well could be.

Present-Day Faiths.

Modernism in the English Church.

BY PROFESSOR PERCY GARDNER, LITT.D., OXFORD.

THE word Modernism is an ugly hybrid, combining the Latin word *modernus* with the Greek termination *-ism*. Many liberal Churchmen decline to accept it as a label; and one must confess that it is 'soiled with ignoble use.' There is a modernism in manners which it is hard to discriminate from discourtesy, and a modernism in painting which fills the new galleries with abominations. But, of course, in this paper we speak only of Modernism in religion, that is, of the adaptation of Christianity to modern conditions. And, indeed, in use the term is applied only to a particular class of Christians, who, realizing that sometimes the faith of the Christian Church is handicapped by the retention in formula and service of obsolete history, obsolete

science, inadequate ethics, are anxiously desirous to set it free from such hindrances.

The appellation Modernist was first applied in two documents of the Roman Church, the decree *Lamentabili* and the encyclical *Pascendi* issued in 1907, to a growing party in that Church, which, led away, as the Papal theologians assert, by pride and curiosity, had fallen into serious heresy. The documents sketch, with great clearness, though naturally not without bias, the views in philosophy and Church history which are at the root of this serious heresy, and which are declared to be false and pernicious.

At the bottom of the philosophy of the Modernists the Papal theologians place 'vital immanentism,'