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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THERE is no doctrine that has been more radically affected by modern thinking than that of the Atonement. And we seem to be at present in an atmosphere which is fatal to some of the beliefs which were characteristic of the nineteenth century. This change of mental attitude to the Cross has been brought about imperceptibly by the influences which have been moulding the creed of the present generation. Among these are the new emphasis on the humanity of Jesus, the concentration on the Gospels at the expense of the Epistles, the insistence on the historical record of our Lord's life as alone normal and authoritative, the freer attitude to Paul's authority, so that it can be said with confidence to-day that if a theory is in accord with the mind of Christ in the Gospels it is part of Christianity; if not, it must be abandoned.

The newer point of view is expounded at some length by Dr. Douglas WHITE in the current number of *The Modern Churchman* in an article on 'The Christian Doctrine of Forgiveness.' At the outset he makes a remark which is profoundly true and wholly significant both with regard to his own views and with regard to those of others. He says that the two foci of Christianity are the Incarnation and the Atonement, and 'the ideas which they convey are closely interrelated. Whatever you think of the one is bound to react on your thought of the other.' He does not pursue that line of thought, but his article is a proof of its truth. Behind all views of the Atonement are views of the Person of

Christ. If to you Christ is the Eternal Son of God you will not find it hard to conceive of something being done at the Cross which is an objective ground of forgiveness. If you believe that Jesus is only a revelation of God, has 'the value of God,' then anything of this kind is incredible.

Dr. WHITE does not pursue this. Instead, he addresses himself to the questions: What do we mean by atonement? And what is there in the Atonement that is valid and true for us to-day? He divides all theories of the Atonement into two classes. Is it a satisfaction of God's justice, or a revelation of His love? It cannot be both, he says, for these are mutually contradictory hypotheses. This is one of a number of statements that even a modernist might very fitly question. The very nerve of the Catholic doctrine of the Atonement is that the Cross is the supreme revelation of God's love *because* it is the satisfaction of His justice. His love is so great that what hinders its outflow must at all costs be removed. God is love, but He is righteous love, and love that simply pardons without conditions is not moral. So at least the orthodox believer would argue. And certainly, whether the orthodox believer is right or wrong in his belief, this statement of his is sound. The real power of the orthodox theory of the Atonement, its evangelical force, has always been its disclosure of the heart of God. That is quite apart from the truth or otherwise of the orthodox view.

Dr. WHITE goes on to criticize, and reject, the traditional theory of the Atonement, which, he says, is the doctrine that satisfaction was rendered to God by Christ, on the ground of which we are forgiven. This idea of satisfaction given to God offends Dr. WHITE. But why? In its naïve forms it is certainly unchristian. The idea of 'reconciling' God is an unpleasant idea. The idea of God's honour needing to be placated is as much so. But satisfaction in itself is an ethical idea. If I am asked to inspect a piece of work I must be satisfied before I pass it. I may love my child tenderly, but if I am not satisfied that he is doing honest work I cannot have complete confidence in him. There are primitive, and even savage, forms of this satisfaction idea. But there are better forms, and in its best form it simply means that God's forgiveness, like man's, must be ethical.

Dr. WHITE, of course, follows in the tradition of Abelard, and such modern successors of his as Dr. Hastings Rashdall. With this view every one must have sympathy. It has been maintained by some of the noblest spirits in the history of Christianity, and it has been inspired by loyalty to the mind of our Lord. Its protest has been against the severe, and almost savage and immoral, conceptions of a crude substitutionary theory and an equally crude legalistic view. We have nothing but sympathy for Dr. WHITE'S effort to reach a view of the Cross which is intelligible and ethical as well as true to the mind of Christ Himself. But his essay, while sincere and earnest, does not do justice to the best thought on this high subject on the 'Catholic' side, nor does it go deep enough in its analysis of forgiveness. Dr. WHITE sums up the message of the Cross thus: 'Jesus has declared that God is a loving Father; you have only to come back to the love from which you have wandered.' That is a great message. But is that all that the Cross means?

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Georg MEHLIS, D.Phil., is well known in German theological circles as a rising scholar of great promise. He has written on Mysticism and the Philosophy of History, and his work is marked by penetrating

insight and deep sincerity of religious feeling. He is now turning to the Philosophy of Religion, and we have pleasure in cordially welcoming his brief introductory essay on that subject in English dress, under the title *The Quest for God* (Williams & Norgate; 5s. net).

We have already many outstanding works on the Philosophy of Religion, but there is still plenty of room for more. Some are so profound that the ordinary reader is discouraged and repelled; some are so superficial that the thinker is merely irritated. If Dr. MEHLIS writes his promised large and critical work in the manner of this preliminary sketch he will have performed a meritorious service. For he can evidently sound the depths of the subject, while his treatment wears the appearance of grace and facility.

It may be of interest to our readers to learn how this scholar views the religious situation of our time. Most of us have been somewhat concerned about it. The general decline in regularity of Church attendance, the prevalence of a seeming indifference to spiritual and even to moral issues, the rise of fresh rivals to the Church such as (in some quarters) the Labour Movement—such things have occasioned serious questioning as to whether religion is holding, or is likely to hold, its place. Dr. MEHLIS would not have us unduly alarmed. Indeed, he would not have us alarmed at all. On the whole he finds the situation hopeful. The controversies aroused in the Roman Church by Modernism, and by Fundamentalism among Protestants, are, he points out, at any rate signs of life. Even movements which stand as rivals or bear a surface antagonism to Christianity, as it is known in worship, creeds, and Confessions, admit of an interpretation which, he thinks, makes them in reality witnesses to 'a keener interest in Religion.'

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Take theosophy and the other occultisms so rife in our day. 'The strange appearance of theosophy and other forms of occult religion is but a clear proof of the awakened interest in religion to-day. Their teaching has become widespread during the last ten years. It would be more than foolish to attempt to

dispose of them with a gesture of superiority, relegating them to the backwoods of crass superstition. The growth of occult religion is one of the most interesting symptoms of our time.' 'I do not think we shall be far wrong when we suggest it portends a search for new outward forms in which to clothe religious worship—above all, it is seeking for new dogmas of religious life in accordance with truths that are now established.'

Or take Marxian Socialism. 'Its determined opposition to religion was purely fictitious. The idea of the founder was a great metaphysical conception, none other than the sacred idea of redemption. We must know and understand the former conditions of the lives of the working masses, in order to grasp how it was possible for this teaching to fan to life a holy flame of enthusiasm and joy in the hearts of the weary and heavy-laden.' 'Religious thought is always directed towards helping the poor, the wronged, the wretched and the suffering; it all seems so desperately wrong to one whose heart is filled with religion.' 'I am not thinking of Marxian Socialism as party politics, but as an important and apparently materialistic movement where a religious thought is the spark that lights the lamp.'

On the other hand, we are still suffering, in the author's view, from some tendencies that are inimical to true religion, most of them a legacy from the latter years of the eighteenth century. 'They all have this in common, that they entirely misconstrue the essential meaning and absolute value of religion. They seem to imagine that religion is something preliminary, revealing a naïve, fantastic view of life, comparable to childhood in the life of man.' 'To be sceptical in matters of religion proclaims the man of the world, it is a sign of a certain intellectual maturity, of reasoning powers, a proof of a clear, rational grasp of things as they are.' Further, 'the current utilitarianism of the age is inimical to religion.' For in this light 'man makes use of religion to weave a fantastic dream of happiness.'

Lastly, 'Another thing that hinders religious life in the present age is the extraordinary value set

upon activity—the hurry of the times that cannot tolerate quiet devotion, with a peaceful contemplation of the world, with a thoughtful insight into the secret innermost. And the voice of religion rings clearest where all is quiet and silence reigns.'

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Professor C. Anderson SCOTT's new book, *The Church: Its Worship and Sacraments—A Free Church Interpretation* (S.C.M.; 3s. 6d. net), has the three simple divisions of its title, and each is thought-provoking. Starting from the familiar words of Mt 16<sup>18</sup>, 'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell will not prevail against it,' Dr. SCOTT sees in them a deliberate claim by Christ that He is doing in a deeper way what God had done once before in history. The Ecclesia is to be the spiritual counterpart of the ancient Hebrew 'people of God,' united as that had been by a covenant, but a covenant which is (Jer 31) to replace the one already broken by man and is to be sealed by the very life-blood of the Master Himself.

The Church is a new covenant society, every member of which owes his place in it to the call of Christ as its Head. Now, just because this Fellowship was established as a Fellowship of the Spirit, it needed and admitted no organization imposed from without (even by its Founder); but under the guidance of the Spirit, it developed from within, adapting itself to different needs and different temperaments. Hence 'all the various forms of Church organization and government with which we are acquainted may claim to have the Divine approval, in so far as they enable the Church to fulfil its appointed functions, even as they must submit to the Divine judgment in so far as they fail to do so.' 'There is much to be said in favour of each . . . but there is one thing that cannot be said in favour of any of them, namely, that it is the form of government without which there can be no true Church.' From this position the author develops the idea of One Holy Catholic Church which is Indestructible and Indispensable. One could wish that he had been less sweeping in his depreciation of

the idea of the Holy in the Old Testament. It may be doubtful whether the moral Holy ever appears there quite free from any material embodiment, yet such a passage as Ps 15 suggests a need for greater caution in language than Dr. SCOTT has shown.

On worship itself Dr. SCOTT is good. He finds its basal principle to be sacrifice—our whole personality made over—in affection—as an offering to God. A word of regret may be permitted that his language on p. 51 does less than justice to the great prophets of Israel. To say that under their teaching it was discovered that sacrifices were only symbols is an understatement. There can be little doubt that the prophets rejected material sacrifices as a non-essential and misleading part of religion.

Viewed from a Christian standpoint, then, 'Public Worship, rightly ordered, will do three things: It will provide a sacrifice, which is nothing less than the Body of Christ. It will secure the cleansing and the sanctifying of the sacrifice. And it will culminate in the offering of the sacrifice.' The worshippers are made sensible of their unity in the properly ordered opening of the service; God, by Word and Love and Spirit, cleanses 'the Body of Christ' during the progress of Worship; there but remains the final act, the offering of the sacrifice.

The natural thing is to synchronize it with the 'Collection.' 'Is there any reason why the Minister and people should not, after the Collection, bring the whole service to its natural climax and fitting conclusion by repeating together the great sentence of the English Communion Service: "Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and our bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto Thee"?'

Many will find much fresh exegesis in the author's treatment of the Lord's Supper. The direction of his teaching may be roughly summarized in his own words: 'The "Body of Christ" was there' (he is speaking of the Early Church view), 'not because through the speaking of certain words by the proper person the Bread and the Wine had been changed into the Body and Blood, but because by the power of the Holy Spirit living men and women had been knit together into a living Body of Christ; because by the same Spirit they had been "consecrated" in public worship; and because they, conscious of themselves as the Body of Christ, had then made corporate offering and sacrifice of themselves to God.' It is a view which will be unfamiliar to many, but which is, as he says, gaining ground; and it is here expounded with great learning and persuasiveness.

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## The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

BY PRINCIPAL THE REVEREND ALFRED E. GARVIE, D.D., LONDON.

EXCEPT in a few devout circles, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has in the history of the Christian Church been very generally neglected. And this neglect has even found theological advocates. Dr. Denney in his book, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, and Dr. Rees in his book on *The Holy Spirit* indicate that they would be content to have it merged in the doctrine of the Living Christ; and Dr. Jackson has recently been contending for that course of treatment. Briefly to state the argument: as the communion with the living Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit

cannot be separated in religious experience, so the doctrine of the one and the other should not be distinguished. There has, however, quite recently been a revival of interest. It is significant that a few years ago, mainly owing to the influence of Dr. Wheeler Robinson, who is understood to be writing a book on the subject, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Godhead has been added in the syllabus for the B.D. degree of London University. Significant, too, is the choice of this theme as the guiding idea of the Church Congress recently held in Southport. In the book in which I have tried