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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE subject of Immortality is of perennial human interest, and in recent years many discussions of it have been published. There is a useful chapter on this subject in Dr. W. E. ORCHARD'S *Foundations of Faith—IV. Eschatological* (noticed in another column), where it is presented from a liberal Catholic standpoint in a Christian setting.

With such a theological standpoint Dr. ORCHARD does not feel the necessity of laying much stress upon the rational or philosophical apologetic for the immortality of the soul. It is true he regards the immortality of the soul as the most fundamental of human beliefs, next to the existence of God. But just as Christian theology has been satisfied with admittedly negative proofs of the existence of God, so it rests content with an admittedly inferential argument for immortality. And why so? Because just as the natural basis of belief in the existence of God has been confirmed by the supernatural revelation of God through the Incarnation, so the natural basis of belief in immortality has been confirmed in the teaching and promise of Christ, and more particularly by the astounding revelation of His own Resurrection.

But there are many acknowledging Christ as Lord and Master who find it difficult to subscribe to the distinction between the natural and the revealed as it is formulated in Christian, *i.e.* Catholic theology. Such are inclined to look upon the rational or philosophical apologetic for immortality

as by no means 'otiose,' and they would seek confirmation of their belief in immortality in ethical, metaphysical, and scientific considerations.

The ethical or moral argument postulates the truth of immortality in order to find meaning and worth in human existence. It reviews the facts of life and experience, of experience intellectual, moral, and spiritual, in all their incompleteness, and finds in them—for the Soul of the universe is just—a confirmation of the inward assurance of immortality. Thus the moral argument rests ultimately upon the most fundamental of all human beliefs, namely, belief in the existence of God. 'Immortality,' says Dr. ORCHARD, 'is dependent upon the existence of a personal God who loves the souls He has created.'

The metaphysical argument, classically expounded in Plato, seeks to show that the soul is naturally immortal, that in its very nature there is something absolute and eternal. But even if this could be shown, we should not be so very much nearer the conclusion we really want, which is not that the individual soul or self shall survive or continue to live, but that it shall survive in all the fullness of personal self-conscious life.

Modern spiritualism (on which Dr. ORCHARD has some judicious remarks), even if its claims were allowed, appears no more than the old metaphysics of the soul to offer us what we really want. There is

a great contrast, for example, between the 'human survival' after death of which spiritualism speaks and the 'eternal life' of the Christian hope.

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The scientific argument is necessarily negative in quality. In the nature of the case one cannot look to natural science to establish so transcendent a truth as this of immortality and the life beyond. But we take it that, so far as psychology as such is concerned, it remains at least an open possibility that the soul may exist apart from the brain as its organ.

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Thus, when all is said, the moral argument for immortality, founding on the character and will of Almighty God, remains the strongest. And naturally so, because it is the only argument that is universal in its appeal. Only the few can weigh scientific evidence or estimate the force of philosophical reflections.

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Now we may all allow that Christianity reinforces the moral argument. It does this through the new sense of the value of personal life which Christ has brought, not to speak of the belief which it enshrines, that His life was not extinguished at Calvary, that He is alive for evermore in the heavenly world.

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Since the days of David Livingstone, some of the most notable contributors to such sciences as geography, ethnography, linguistics, and comparative religion have been missionaries. On the racial and religious problems of Africa, Dr. Donald FRASER has written an unpretentious book which, although aiming at, and succeeding in, being popular, will be found a storehouse of valuable and reliable information. It is entitled *The New Africa*, and provided with a full index, and embellished with four full-page illustrations, is published by The Edinburgh House Press at the modest price of two shillings. The author makes no high claim for himself of his right to be heard on the subject of Africa; he is too humble a man for that. Nor is such a claim necessary; his competence as an observer, recorder, and judge is evident on every page.

There are three points which we may select to give our readers a taste of the book and of its author's qualities—the native religion, the progress of Islam, and the problem of racial contact.

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As to native faiths, 'When the hidden depths beliefs of the African take form in the mist that enshrouds them, the sympathetic missionary finds that here, too, God has not left Himself without a witness, and "that which may be known of God is manifest in them." The deeper our knowledge becomes, the more are we convinced that Africa has a religion very sacred to her, and that here is a people deeply and essentially religious, whose faith is woven into the full pattern of their life, appearing everywhere, and giving colour and tone to the web.' The African believes in immortality. He cannot believe that death is natural. 'Death is an accident and not the natural course of events.' Again, he believes in a spirit world. Beings full of mischief and ill-will towards men many of those spirits are. The greater among them are worshipped not by the individual but by the official representative, the priest of the clan or nation. 'Over all this faith the African believes in the great creator God. He is an absentee to them, but it was He who made the world, and was the author of all life. His name is associated with the sky. There are many names for Him in Africa which give to Him some sense of personality and care for the world—the "Nourisher," the "Great Giver," the "Creator,"' but these names do not bring the ancient source of life very near to the common man. You need not begin to prove to the African that God is. He knows it and has never doubted.'

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As to Islam, within comparatively recent times it has undoubtedly been making great headway, not by the sword, as is sometimes supposed, but by peaceful penetration. Dr. FRASER accepts Mr. Roome's estimate that five hundred and sixty-two tribes are wholly Mohammedan, nine hundred and eighty-seven are under Mohammedan influence, and two thousand five hundred and thirty-three are still pagan. 'All these facts must be qualified by others. For example, if somewhere about fifty thousand Mohammedans are now to be found

in the Union of South Africa where none were at the beginning of the last century, in the same time there has arisen a company of one million African Christians.' Again, 'if Islam flows rapidly, it does not flow deep, and its course is stopped, or has dried up where once it seemed to run.' 'One fact remains patent, that where Christianity comes first, Mohammedanism has no chance.'

The problem of inter-racial contact is one of enormous difficulty. Dr. FRASER is fully aware of that. He shows, too, how contact with White civilization has meant for countless Africans a fearful degeneration. The heart of the problem is the individual. 'That is where the test of our Gospel comes in, not in study circles which deeply discuss national and social problems and seek the Christian solution, but in the effort to save this one and that one, souls of priceless value, capable of God, and of claiming His resources. It is necessary that we think, and think bravely and clearly, on the wider bearings of our faith. But it is more necessary that we apply our faith in redemptive action for the souls of men; that, like Christ, we go forth to seek one sheep lost in the wilderness, though there be ninety and nine others to care for.'

'Granted that the very heart of the problem is the individual, have we a key to unlock it? With my whole soul I believe we have, and the key is Christ Himself. I do not mean the Western expression of Christianity, much less Western civilization. These are too faulty. Nor do I mean alone the principles of Christ. It is not higher laws that change men. But I mean Christ, who was dead and is alive again, and who is the Omnipotence of God.'

The attention of readers may be drawn to a fact of considerable importance which has emerged in connexion with a good deal of the religious literature reviewed in these columns. The fact referred to is the indifference displayed by many writers to the value of history or historical fact. In some cases the writers appear to think that it does not really matter whether an event happened or not, so long as the idea behind the event leaves an

impression on us. In other cases an event, recorded with every appearance of veracity and vouched for with as strong a basis of evidence as any other in the Gospels, is calmly put aside because it conflicts with a theory of the writer or does not fit into the framework of his particular beliefs.

The most familiar instance of this tendency is the attitude of Catholic Modernism to which the historical facts of the gospel narrative are of indifferent value. They are symbolic. It does not matter whether the thing 'really happened.' What is permanent is the experience of the soul, which the Church exists to promote and foster. This attitude is one of the bad effects left in the mind of our generation (along with very much that is good) by the influence of Pragmatism in philosophy. The indifference to fact and the indifference to metaphysical reality are two results of Pragmatism which are doing a great deal of harm to the cause of truth.

But we see the same tendency to undervalue fact in writers who have no sympathy with Catholic Modernism. To take a typical example from a book recently noticed here, there is the attitude of certain writers to the Resurrection. In the 'Historical Life of Christ,' by Dr. Warschauer, the closing chapter deals naturally with the Resurrection, and the historical evidence for the fact is definitely rejected, a crude form of the Vision Hypothesis being put forward in explanation. But Dr. Warschauer seems to believe that Christ is alive, and he holds this belief, not on the ground of history, but on the ground of the experience of the Christian generations. This is a position maintained long ago by Dr. Dale in a famous book. Although Dr. Dale did accept the historical evidence, he maintained that it was unnecessary and that the belief in the Risen Christ was amply verified by the experience of the ages since Christ rose.

A good example of the disregard of historical evidence may be found in a book reviewed in the present number, *Christianity as Life*, by Mr. Edward GRUBB, M.A. It is an excellent book in most ways, and altogether on the side of the angels. But it is frankly a Quaker interpretation

of the Gospels. And this is how he treats the facts that are unacceptable. There is Christ's teaching on Judgment. That is not harmonious with the Quaker idea that evil can never be overcome by severity. What then does the writer say about a fact which is everywhere in the Gospels, and is attested as well as any fact they contain. He says simply that this teaching is inconsistent with the teaching of love and must have been radically influenced by the current apocalyptic beliefs. In other words, we do not have Christ's real teaching but something He said, modified by beliefs in the disciples' minds.

Similarly, in dealing with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Quakers have no sacraments, and the effort of Mr. GRUBB is to show that Jesus never instituted any permanent rite. But St. Paul definitely gives Christ Himself as his authority for the institution of this particular rite. How does the writer meet this? Simply by saying that this is no doubt Paul's way of affirming his conviction of the soundness of the tradition. There are many instances of a similar treatment of history in Mr. Middleton Murry's 'Life of Christ.' But one is not surprised to find them in an essay in which the author claims that his literary training is a good substitute for theological or critical ability. Mr. Murry, for example, believes that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas was a 'put-up job,' arranged by Jesus and Judas between them! How could one expect a serious treatment of history in a writer capable of this *tour de force*?

The serious aspect of the tendency referred to must be obvious to any reflective person. Truth has two sides, the side of fact or reality and the side

of subjective apprehension of this reality. The reality may be spiritual, like the existence of God, or historical, like the resurrection of Christ. But you cannot divorce the subjective side from the objective without peril. Take the case of the belief in a living Christ, which is the very soul of any Christianity worthy of consideration. You may say that the experience of the ages substantiates the belief. And that may be true, so far. But if you cut away the historical facts which recreate this belief and confirm it, you not only imperil the belief, but you give some reasonable excuse for scepticism to call the belief an illusion without a basis in solid fact.

Moreover, 'experience' can be found to support any and every belief. Romanists will say that experience supports their belief in Transubstantiation, while there are other churchmen who will say that experience supports their belief in the Sacrament as a merely memorial feast. The touchstone of fact is needed to distinguish the morbid, the individualistic, the arbitrary from the substantial and the real. And, therefore, on the ground of loyalty to truth and on the ground of the interests of a genuine Catholic Christianity, it is time that attention was drawn to the manner in which the facts of gospel history are too often treated. It is true that every statement of historical fact in the Gospels is not to be accepted without careful scrutiny. Let us by all means have a scientific examination of the evidence. But the *arbitrary* rejection of historical statements under the influence of preconceived opinions is not scientific, and we should have a truer and saner view of New Testament history if this caution were more generally observed.

## The 'Historical Movement' in the Study of Religion.

BY PROFESSOR HERMANN GUNKEL, UNIVERSITY OF HALLE.

THE misconception regarding the historical study of religion which prevails in some quarters had its origin in an interpretation of the words which was not intended by us. Books dealing with non-Biblical religions frequently bear the title 'Uni-

versal History of Religion.' From this fact it was held to be a legitimate assumption that the historical study of the religion of the Bible would seek to explain that religion in connexion with the extra-Biblical religions, and interpret Hebrew and