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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It has been left to Dr. Edgar J. GOODSPEED, of the Chair of Biblical and Patristic Greek in the University of Chicago, to present and largely to substantiate the position that Christian literature may be said to have developed not so much by individual documents as by collections. This he does in a recent work, *New Solutions of New Testament Problems* (Cambridge University Press; 10s. net), a work marked by clear and popular exposition, but with a tendency in places to needless repetition.

It has not escaped the notice of students of the New Testament that up to the publication of the Acts no work of Christian literature shows acquaintance with Paul's letters, whereas after the appearance of the Acts practically every Christian document does so. What is the meaning of it? It shows, says Dr. GOODSPEED, that the publication of the Acts, in which Paul plays so impressive a part, led to the collection and publication of the Pauline letters. How else are we to explain on the one hand the ignorance in the Acts of Paul's letters, and on the other hand the knowledge of them in practically every later Christian document?

The collection of Paul's letters provides the clue, for example, to the problem of the letter to the Ephesians. It is not a letter to Ephesus, but a general or encyclical letter, as our most ancient manuscripts appear to show; it is apparently not by Paul, yet it contains much that is from Paul, and it had a place in the first Pauline collection.

What is the explanation of these facts (granted that they are facts)? It is that Ephesians is an editorial addition to the Pauline *corpus*, having been written in Paul's name for the purpose of introducing and commending the individual letters to the churches to which they had not been originally addressed.

We do not find any particular psychological difficulty in this theory as to the origin and nature of Ephesians, and are ready to grant that the writing of Ephesians in the name of Paul is analogous to the composition of the Pauline speeches in the Acts. But we would notice, incidentally, an apparent inconsistency in Dr. GOODSPEED's exposition. He cannot have it both ways. It looks as if he must either withdraw the suggestion (p. 19) that a model for Ephesians was supplied to the editor of the first Pauline collection by the general covering letter in the Revelation (14-20) which prefaces the letters to the seven churches, or else withdraw the statement (p. 23) that the model before the mind of the writer of the Revelation can only have been the Pauline collection (including Ephesians).

It is also claimed that the collection of Pauline letters following upon the publication of the Acts furnishes the clue to the next phase of early Christian literature—the epistolary. Until the letters of Paul were assembled and published the Church possessed only gospels and historical writ-

ings, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Acts. The appearance of the Pauline collection made for a revival of the letter form and was the signal for a shower of Christian 'letters' to churches: the Revelation, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 1 Clement, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Ignatius, etc. etc.

The principal exception to the epistolary style in this period is the Gospel of John, which none the less shows the influence of the Pauline collection. And just as the Pauline collection gave a new impulse and direction to the early Christian literature, so it was also with the collection of the Four Gospels. This latter collection led to the publication of almost a score of later Gospels, such as the Gospels of Peter, James, and Thomas.

Whatever criticisms of Dr. GOODSPEED'S 'new solutions' may be offered in detail, we think that his general position is well worthy of consideration, namely, that Christian literature developed by collections rather than by individual documents, and that it may serve to throw fresh light upon New Testament problems. It is certainly an interesting and plausible suggestion that he makes in his pages regarding the presence of Philemon in the Pauline *corpus*.

It is always a healthful experience to see ourselves as others see us, for self-criticism is notoriously difficult. We of the white race have been accustomed to regard our ways as in every respect superior to those of other races, and we have offered them, all too condescendingly, our religion and our civilization as unmingled blessings. How has it affected them, and what are they thinking about it all?

These are questions to which the Student Christian Movement has sought to find an answer. From five groups of nationals, weighty expressions of opinion have been secured on the impact of Christian civilization, its influence on native thought and life. Each group consists of about ten writers, all carefully chosen as men of culture and experience, able to voice with authority the

opinion of their various races and countries. The result is published in five small volumes, edited by Milton Stauffer (3s. net), under the titles *Japan speaks for Herself*, *China her own Interpreter*, *An Indian Approach to India*, *Voices from the Near East*, and *Thinking with Africa*. We are bound to acknowledge cordially the general competence and fairness of the writers. Their lofty tone, singularly free from bitterness, is well fitted to carry conviction.

What is their verdict? It may be given in a single sentence. They find much to criticise in our Western civilization, a good deal also to criticise in our churches and missionaries, but Christ they find to be above criticism.

Their criticisms of Western civilization are severe. They find it a mingled stream, with much mud and filth polluting its waters. Japan says, 'With Christ came anti-Christ, with the missionaries came anti-missionaries, with the Holy Scriptures came the bottle of whiskey.' Africa complains bitterly of land-grabbing and exploiting. There is no square deal for the black man. The native agitator says, 'The missionary told you to close your eyes and pray, and the other whites came and took away the land from behind your back. . . . At first we had the land and the white man had the Bible; now we have the Bible and the white man has the land.' The racial pride of the white man is universally declared to be intolerable. These nationals would echo to a man the cry of the Psalmist, 'Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us; for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.' Many of our social customs they regard as shameless. They speak of 'the shame it brings to Eastern eyes to see naked arms and necks, promiscuous dancing, attendance at questionable theatres and cinemas.' It is this which has made many of the best minds in the East view with horror the prospect of their women becoming westernized. 'Observe the conditions in western countries. Where is morality? Where is dignity and modesty? . . .

What we fear and what we flee from is her adoption of customs which call attention to herself, of the habit of painting her face and of wearing such absurd clothes that persons of a sound and pure character cannot but revolt against it.' Western civilization is in many respects a millstone about the neck of the gospel. 'Most natives have rejected the Christian life because of the white men who are non-communicants, non-service-attenders, non-prayer-sayers.' The missionary is compelled to combat strenuously the notion that Christianity is the white man's religion.

The criticism of the churches and the missionaries, if less severe, is weighty. The divisions of the churches and the intolerance of sects are everywhere deplored. 'There is hardly any greater hindrance to the spread of Christianity than the present diversity of denominations.' 'Why should we repeat in China this chapter of darkness found in the history, both ancient and current, of the Christian movements of the West? May we be spared these unchristian experiences?' The imperfect lives of Christians are another stumbling-block. 'The professors of Christianity have dismally failed to live up to the standard commanded them by their Master.' The missionaries themselves are not free from racial pride and a tendency to domineer. An interesting distinction is noted in various quarters to the effect that the older missionaries were more earnest and self-sacrificing, while the younger are more appreciative of native culture and religious thought. When all is said, however, by way of criticism, the verdict is practically unanimous that the Christian missionary is still needed. The native churches are too young and inexperienced to stand alone. The alien forces of Western materialism are felt to be too overpowering, and Christian help is earnestly sought. 'Should not the Christians of Europe and America send their finest men and women to point out to us different and better ways?'

Of Christ Himself and the spirit of His gospel there is not a breath of criticism. He is accepted as the supreme standard of judgment, and men everywhere are stretching out their hands to Him.

'Spiritually this country (Syria), like all the countries of the Near East, is thirsty for the plain and simple truth. The people are yearning to see the light.' Specially eloquent is the appeal of China. 'With all the opposition to, criticism of, and attack upon the Christian religion, our Chinese people, to borrow the phrase of an outstanding anti-Christian leader, are consciously or unconsciously longing for someone to deliver them from "the dark and chilly pit into which China has fallen." China needs Christ. China needs a Christ who is simple and not hopelessly entangled in creeds and dogmas; China needs a Christ who is natural and not foreign; China needs a Christ who is united and not divided; China needs a Christ who is constructive and not destructive; China needs a Christ who will save and will be her friend unto the end. . . . Christian missionaries and Chinese church workers who can introduce men and women to the real Jesus are needed in China now more than ever before. Our people are rubbing their eyes, they are standing on tiptoe, and with outstretched hands are crying, "We want to see Jesus."'

There is no novelty in the assertion that our idea of God has been changing. Perhaps that is putting the matter too strongly. It ought rather to be said that our emphasis has been changing. The traditional idea of God has emphasized His transcendence. That idea is behind all the great systems. It is behind Calvinism and Lutheranism alike, behind the religious traditions of England, America, of Scotland and Germany. God lives above. He intervenes from without, and occasionally. He is outside His world. He needs to come into it. Miracle is one of these interventions. So is the Incarnation. So is Regeneration.

But to-day we are learning to think more of the Immanence of God, or rather of God as immanent in His world. Both science and philosophy have had something to do with this, but especially science. Perhaps no single stream of influence has been so formative in this matter as the theory of evolution. It is perhaps in the attempt to interpret

evolution in a religious fashion more than in any other way that thinking people have come to dwell more on God *in* the universe than on God above it.

Canon Gamble of Bristol has devoted three lectures to this rediscovery of God and has published them under the title *The Traditional Idea of God* (Arrowsmith, Bristol; 1s. net). They are excellent lectures, and are specially helpful in suggesting several lines on which the idea of an indwelling God will be found useful in our religious thinking. These are not by any means exhaustive, but they point the way. On one point we might differ from the Canon—that the dominant idea of God in Scripture is that of transcendence. Surely the psalms are full of an indwelling God. And Paul's 'In him we live and move and have our being' is not singular in Paul. And what of the teaching of our Lord in which God is so near us that He counts the hairs of our head. It is not immanence as we are conceiving it. But it is in essence the same idea.

There are in particular three ways in which this thought of immanence has changed our religious thinking and helped us to better thoughts. To one of these Canon Gamble draws attention in a suggestive passage. It is the transformation in what used to be called an argument from design. Paley saw God in the world because the world was like a watch and demanded a maker. God was an Artificer. To-day we do not look at it like that. We look out on the universe and see one fact everywhere, that of order. And we see it as an expression of a Mind that is moulding the world and life from within. Evolution is one aspect of this order. The stages of life are the result of a Divine force working from within. And so comes a doctrine like emergent evolution. The different steps up in evolution are as it were the successive expressions of an immanent life and power. God is not so much a Creator as a Moulder of the universe.

Another result has been the widening of our thoughts about the world of men. God has not revealed Himself only in one nation. All great teachers have revealed Him. God has expressed Himself in all the leaders of all the nations. We used to think of other religions as false. Now we can see in them part of God's self-expression. Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, and Browning and Carlyle—these also are the outgoing of the Divine presence. We are even compelled to go further, and say that as God dwells in all, so all truth and all goodness are part of His ways. There is no necessary discrepancy between this wider view and the belief in a special revelation. The indwelling God reveals Himself everywhere and in all truth and in all good, but for special ends has revealed Himself fully in one people and one Life.

Finally, this rediscovery of God makes two of the Christian affirmations easier of belief, the Incarnation and Miracle. If God is in a sense incarnate in all good men, then the long line of leaders and saints have in a way prepared for Christ. But in Christ the Divine Life has at last fully manifested Himself. This makes history rational and Christianity credible. It places the unique Incarnation of God in Christ in a thought-setting which enables the modern mind to accept it. The same is true of miracle. Miracle is not the intervention of a God from without to remedy some trouble. It is the plus of the Divine activity within the world. It is the indwelling God expressing Himself with emphasis. It is the something more of God's activity.

In these ways, at any rate, this ancient and now modern idea of God is going to remodel or remould our religious thinking. But, it may be asked, is there not an equal truth in God's transcendence? Well, we can, any of us, only say one thing at a time.

