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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

IT is a tribute to the personality of Jesus and the spell He has cast over the mind of our time that the synoptic problem continues to occupy the attention of so many scholars, and shows no sign of being exhaustively worked out. For all this minute study of the gospel records is essentially an attempt to break through to Him through the mists and the veils that hang between, so that the features of that Divine face may be seen as in the clear light of day. It should never be forgotten by those who have no sympathy with critical methods that many of the most radical critics of the gospel records have been animated by an ardent and reverent passion to 'see Jesus.'

A very notable book on the synoptic problem—small in size but rich in contents—has been published under the title of *The Gospel before the Gospels*, by Professor Burton Scott EASTON, D.D. (Allen & Unwin; 6s. net). It contains six lectures given on the Bishop Paddock Foundation at the General Theological Seminary, New York. These lectures are not only well informed and thoroughly up to date, but they contain original work of the highest value. The first lecture gives an extraordinarily lucid and informing survey of the literature which has appeared during the present century. It is not a mere catalogue of books, but is a human record of intense interest and vividness. It may be open to the plain man, having read this survey, to conclude that the various critical theories cancel each other and leave him in undisturbed

possession of the Gospels as before. But it is obvious that all this critical winnowing and sifting has not been in vain. If a good deal of chaff has been blown away, a considerable harvest of precious grain has been gathered in.

Dr. EASTON proceeds to deal at some length with 'form-criticism.' What is form-criticism? "Form-history" is a compound that is just beginning to be adopted into English. As used by contemporary writers on the New Testament it bears a sense derived from folk-lore terminology; it describes the history of certain preliminary forms not consciously created by individuals but developed by the force of constant oral repetition. If we amass folk-tales and popular traditions in sufficient numbers, we find that we can class them into certain more or less well-defined groups according to their forms; and folk-history is the study of these groups.'

The synoptic material obviously offers a tempting field to the form-historian, for here we have the product of an oral tradition little controlled by conscious literary art. Long before the method had been definitely christened scholars had endeavoured to give the stories some form-classification or other. But with the publication in 1919 of Dibellius' 'The Form-History of the Gospel' the method is 'raised to the rank of a distinct discipline, with rules of its own that make it competent to pronounce not only literary but historical

judgments ; in his hands " form-history " becomes " form-criticism. " ' _____

Form-criticism in the last decade has been pushed to ruthless extremes, but the method has its manifest limits. ' The first purpose of a form-historian at work on a story is to determine its relation to the life of the community that framed it. ' If it be maintained that the gospel stories, miracles, teachings are the production of the early Christian community, then formidable difficulties at once arise. ' It is easy enough to speak of the creation of sayings by a community, but the phrase is really meaningless. Communities do not create sayings ; such creation comes from individuals and from individuals only. Communities may adopt and transmit sayings, and may modify and standardise them in transmission, but the sayings themselves must first exist. ' Moreover, in this case we are dealing with the sayings of Jesus, sayings which all subsequent ages have found to be inimitable. If these sayings are not His, then we must make extraordinary assumptions regarding the ability and character of the early Church. ' Either it contained a single individual from whom the sayings all proceeded, but whose name and very existence has disappeared from history—something well-nigh unthinkable—or else there were a number of gifted individuals all fired with the same superlative genius and all endowed with the same exquisite style—an even more difficult conception. ' _____

There is a further difficulty. Even if we grant that there were individuals in the early Church so gifted that they could produce such sayings, we have still to account for the wonderful censorship of the Christian community. ' This censorship, we see, admitted nothing to the tradition unless it reached the highest level. Genius displays itself quite as truly in its ability to omit as in its ability to accept. Whence did the Christian community gain its selective power ? . . . We must hold that Jesus gave no systematic teaching but was able, none the less, to inspire His followers with the utmost moral and literary discrimination. ' This is really to canonize the entire Church. Plainly

there is a more natural and straightforward explanation. The less does not create the greater. It was the teaching of Jesus that produced the community and gave it its ideals, not the reverse. ' The sayings of Jesus in our synoptists are what they are because they actually *are* sayings of Jesus. And they are homogeneous because, as a whole, they represent *only* the teachings of Jesus. We need make only one historical assumption : the eye-witnesses, within whose days the first collections were made, could remember what He said and exclude what He did not say. Why should this perfectly natural assumption be held impossible ? ' _____

Finally, what is the figure of Jesus that emerges when criticism has done its work ? ' Ever since the eighteenth century (at least) we have had a succession of descriptions of Jesus in which history has been ignored. Writers seem to vie with one another in " humanising " the picture, until we have inherited a conception perfectly expressed by the average illustrator of to-day ; a figure that is mildness personified, below middle stature, with delicate features, hands and feet, the complete embodiment of the gentle dreamer. As has often been said, Renan's " Jesus " is simply the conventional ecclesiastical statue come to life, and Renan's " Jesus " holds surprising sway in many an " orthodox " environment. How such a figure could cleanse the Temple or pour withering denunciations on the Pharisees is an insoluble mystery, while that such a figure should proclaim impending doom is preposterous. ' _____

There is another side to the picture. ' Fundamental to Jesus' work was His vocation to proclaim the coming kingdom ; with a message of infinite blessing, no doubt, but equally with a message of infinite destruction. . . . He who is entrusted with such a message can never feel that He belongs to this world ; a sense of separateness must be an integral part of His nature. Now add to this the Messianic consciousness. Too many moderns treat it as if it were something almost any religious man might possess, as if it were an outgrowth of a sunny piety. It was nothing of the sort. It meant

that in the coming judgment Jesus felt He would not be on man's side but on God's.' Such a consciousness must have made its impression on His disciples. They must have experienced a sense of aloofness and of mystery. Dibellius speaks of 'the zone of silence that lay between the "Holy One" and His disciples.' He says, 'If we search for a term that will express this unique relation between the disciples and the Master, we probably should not speak of a mystic bond—for we can detect no traces of the manifestations of mysticism—we should rather use the word "numinous," as Rudolf Otto does, because here an apprehension of the Divine is dominant, which releases awe and self-surrender as in an act of worship. . . . Even in Jesus' lifetime the disciples were personal believers.'

The Fifteenth Conference of Modern Churchmen was held at Girton College in September. The subject was 'Christianity and History,' and the papers are published in *The Modern Churchman* for October. There are several distinguished names in the list of speakers, such as the Dean of St. Paul's, Professor Pringle Pattison, Professor C. C. J. Webb, and Professor Burkitt. Every aspect of the subject is dealt with in these papers, and, it need hardly be said, with conspicuous ability. But for the ordinary Christian, whether in the pulpit or out of it, there was one question discussed which stands out as all-important.

That question is: Can it be said that the historic element in our religion is essential? To put it concretely: If Jesus never lived, could we still be Christians? The editor of *The Modern Churchman* answers in the affirmative. He himself believes entirely in the historicity of Jesus. But he thinks that even if He were unhistoric we could still be Christians. Indeed, we could still believe in 'the essential truth' of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection, even if they never occurred. He amplifies this by saying that we have no difficulty in believing in the profound truths set forth in the Parable of the Prodigal Son though it is parable and not history.

He goes on to say that the test of the Christian life is doing the will of God, and asks: Would the fact of the discovery that Jesus never lived affect our conception of the will of God, or the sense of obligation to strive to do it? His answer is 'No.' Such a life would be entitled to be called Christian. Christ's test was the test of works, the test of conduct and character. 'We do well to realise this, for some people speak as though, if we lost the historical Jesus to-day, we should also lose the Christian religion. I doubt it. We should still have a form of Christian religion which could find its realisation in love to God and love to men . . . we could still seek the blessings contained in the Beatitudes: we could still pray the Lord's Prayer. And these, let us not forget, are the very heart of the religion of Jesus.'

There are a number of professing Christians (Dr. MAJOR is still speaking) who think that, if they became convinced that Jesus had no historical existence and was not crucified under Pontius Pilate, they must lapse, and mankind also, into a life uninfluenced by the sense of Christian values and Christian standards of conduct. But the moral and spiritual ideals of the Christian life cannot be proved absolutely true or false by any alleged historical event. No alleged historical event can prove to us absolutely that we ought to love the Eternal Goodness. There is a faith which finds its rest in the eternal, not in the episodic.

When Dr. MAJOR wrote 'some people speak as though, if we lost the historical Jesus to-day, we should also lose the Christian religion,' was he thinking of Professor Burkitt, the distinguished New Testament scholar, who had read a paper at the Conference on 'The Importance of the Historical Element in Christianity'? Indeed, Dr. MAJOR's editorial note, from which we have quoted above, might almost seem to have been written as a reply to Professor Burkitt, for the Professor uttered opinions in direct contradiction to those we have been quoting.

Dr. BURKITT regards the historical element as essential to the Christian religion. 'Christianity

is *not* the absolute religion, independent of time and place (he says), as if "Do as you would be done by" and a few other maxims were the core of the Christian religion. Christianity, from the first and all down the centuries, has been centred in what theologians call the Incarnation . . . the essence of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is that in some way or other the Divine life and power and grace was personified in Jesus, that in Him that which is really Divine had a career among men. . . . "Crucified under Pontius Pilate," says the official Christian Creed. What has Pontius Pilate to do with the definition of true religion? This, that he marks a place and a date.'

But if Christianity is concerned with history, is in some way really dependent upon history, how far is it vital that the history shall be true? What is to happen if it be discovered, to use the popular phrase, that 'the Bible isn't true'? Dr. BURKITT goes on to answer this, and in doing so states emphatically that by the Christian religion he does not mean religion in general. There have been many deeply religious people who have not been Christians at all—Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus are obvious instances. But, he adds, Christianity does seem to me to be bound up with certain alleged historical happenings. It is obvious then, he says, that, if what I have said is true at all, it is of the first importance that the alleged happenings really occurred, that if they could be proved not to have happened Christianity would fall.

Sainte-Beuve, speaking of the arid style of Antoine Arnauld and contrasting it with the more effective influence of the great men and women of Port-Royal, says: 'Truth, however exalted it may be, needs to be made man in order to touch men.' 'This,' says Dr. BURKITT, 'is good Christian doctrine; in fact, it is *the* Christian doctrine. And to be made man means being limited to a time and a place. This, in a word, is the importance of the historical element in Christianity. . . . The whole doctrine centres on Christ, on the career of Christ and the nature that alone made that career really effective. And the career of Christ led directly to the Cross; the Christian

religion must be a doctrine of the Cross, or it is nothing.'

The grace of God has always been regarded by Christians as indissolubly connected with the death of Jesus on Calvary. The plain wooden Cross on which the Son hangs is planted in the ground, here in this earth. 'Even so,' declares Dr. BURKITT, 'it seems to me we cannot contemplate eternal reality entirely detached from our earth, from human history, from the course of events out of which we spring, the course of events which has brought us to that state to which it has pleased God to call us. . . . The only thing the Christian is tied to, if he is to remain a Christian, is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . There is in the Gospel history an element which Christians cannot discard if they are to remain Christians.'

Dr. BURKITT's argument will commend itself to the common sense of most people. Dr. MAJOR makes two very obvious mistakes in his statement of the case. He confuses Christianity as a system of Ethics with Christianity as a Religion. And he evidently regards religion as consisting of 'truths of reason.' But we need not labour any reply after quoting Professor BURKITT's contentions. It does seem an extraordinary thing to find in a volume recording the papers at a great conference another by the editor which constitutes a reply to one of the conference deliverances. Dr. MAJOR is in the pulpit, and there is no reply to him.

The Rev. Dr. Hector MACPHERSON will scarcely be accused of exaggeration when he maintains that 'the problem of War is the greatest problem which faces the modern world.' With these words he opens his discussion on *The Church, The Bible, and War* (No More War Movement, 11 Doughty Street, London, W.C. 1; 6d. net) in a brochure which is remarkable alike for its lucidity, its historical grasp, and its sanity. For, until the problem of war is settled, we cannot get on. At any rate we cannot prosecute our several tasks with any sense of security; for war, should it come again,

will hurl all our achievements into the abyss. Any commonwealth we strive to construct, so long as that dreadful menace hangs over us, rests but 'on a foundation of planks stretched across a precipice.'

The world cannot afford to lose Europe with that fine civilization of hers which is the fruit of centuries of political and artistic effort and philosophic thought; but it is the practically unanimous opinion of all thoughtful observers that in another war that civilization, as we know it, would perish. The international forces of Labour, Science, and Religion, which were unavailing to prevent the last catastrophe, would certainly not prevent the next, and it is therefore a matter of supreme urgency to make as sure as is humanly possible that there shall be no 'next.' How is this to be done? It can be done only by the diffusion of the spirit of Jesus among men, and this is the peculiar task of the Christian Church.

That Church has a sacred Book; and there can be no doubt that the older part of that Book, with its toleration, if not glorification, of war and its presentation of God as a God of battles, has not infrequently blocked the way. At this point Dr. MACPHERSON introduces his wholesome and far from unnecessary reminder that there are in the Old Testament two attitudes to war. There is the earlier attitude of tolerance, natural to a people who had won their land by fighting and to whom war must have seemed part of the order of Nature; and there is the prophetic attitude, which points to 'a more excellent way.'

Amos, he says, was the first internationalist, and with the emergence of the international mind emerges a new attitude to war. A man who has learned to look not only upon his own things but upon the things of other men and other nations also is much less likely to regard the foreigner as a potential enemy than the man whose motto is, 'My country, right or wrong.'

Dr. MACPHERSON then proceeds to sketch the progress of the international idea through the Old

Testament, dwelling more particularly on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Deutero-Isaiah. To his purpose critical questions of literary origin are more or less irrelevant, consequently he groups together the three passages in Isaiah which describe the happy future in store for a world whose nations have the good sense to live on friendly terms with one another. This is the time when men 'shall not hurt nor destroy' (11¹⁻⁹), when Egypt and Assyria, and Israel, nations which in the past had hated, feared, and fought one another, will be united in the bonds of a Triple Alliance (19²³⁻²⁵), and when difficult international problems which were normally decided by sword and spear will be settled by arbitration at Jerusalem, the religious metropolis of the world; and with their settlement, those deadly weapons of war will be speedily transformed into beneficent instruments of peace (2²⁻⁴).

The case of Jeremiah is of peculiar interest, because it involves the question of the nature of true patriotism. That great prophet must have seemed a traitor to the patriots of his time when he counselled surrender to Babylon. We can well understand the fury of the military party when they denounced him as 'weakening the hands of the men of war, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them' (38⁴). Undoubtedly he did 'weaken their hands,' but the sequel showed that Jeremiah was right and they were wrong. Here, as so often, the prophets showed the same uncanny insight into the international situation as they did in their diagnosis of the national society and the social evils of their time. Jeremiah realized, as his opponents did not, that 'the power of Babylon was established in the purpose of the Almighty, and was irresistible until its mission was fulfilled.' It is the man who reckons with God and His purpose in human affairs who is likely to interpret those affairs most adequately. 'He also is wise.'

But the commanding interest in Dr. MACPHERSON'S booklet is the section in which he discusses 'War in the New Testament,' and more particularly that part of it in which he searches for the light

that is cast upon this thorny problem by the words or the spirit of Jesus. It is a very honest search. One feels that he approaches the crucial passages without prepossession, and with the genuine desire to discover the mind of Jesus. This honesty is revealed at the outset by the candid confession that war, as an ethical problem, is never directly faced by Jesus at all. It is not faced, because it did not need to be: the *pax Romana* then lay across the world; the nations could hardly war with one another, for, strictly speaking, there were no independent nations at all.

But unquestionably Jesus does touch the question of war indirectly; for His words and His attitude are full of suggestion and guidance in the problems raised by the place and use of force in human conduct. Jesus settled that question for Himself on the very threshold of His ministry. Not every one perhaps will agree with Dr. MACPHERSON when he says that, 'without a doubt the ideal of a great Warrior-Messiah, inaugurating a reign of righteousness upon the earth, made a strong appeal to Jesus at the beginning of His ministry.' It is difficult to believe that such a one as Jesus could ever seriously have contemplated the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness by a method which would inevitably have involved bloodshed as well as force. But, whatever the particular form which the temptation assumed, He put it away once and for all, and thus permanently alienated the enthusiasts who 'would take Him by force to make Him King.'

All the passages relevant to the discovery of the mind of Jesus are considered by Dr. MACPHERSON in detail, and he has pertinent things to say about them. Fundamental to the gospel of Jesus is the ideal of love as the essential quality in the nature of God and of all men who would be like God. This is the meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, this is the key to the Golden Rule, and this is the principle which receives its highest and hardest application in the demand that men should love their *enemies*. There are those who maintain that one can kill without hating; but the Great War made it plain enough that war engenders—

perhaps more among civilians than soldiers—an atmosphere of hate; and he would be simple indeed who could believe that war, with all its unmentionable horrors, can be conducted in a spirit of love. But the spirit of love is the spirit of Jesus.

It is true that, while some of Jesus' words are explicit enough, such as that 'all that take the sword shall perish with the sword,' there are others that may seem to sanction war; and one of the most instructive and convincing features of Dr. MACPHERSON'S brochure is his sane treatment of these passages. He points out, for example, that, when Jesus says of 'wars and rumours of wars,' that 'these things must needs come to pass,' He is simply stating an obvious fact; or that when He says, 'I came not to send peace, but a sword,' He is really, as the context shows (Mt 10³⁴⁻³⁷), thinking of the inevitable dissension which the acceptance of Him and His gospel was destined to introduce into domestic relationships.

Jesus certainly used military metaphors in some of His parables, but this no more proves that He would have countenanced war than does His friendly attitude to the centurion. Far more genuinely significant of the impression left by Jesus is the fact that 'the Church of the first two centuries, taken all in all, was opposed to the whole spirit behind the institution of war,' and that 'there appears to be no reliable evidence that Christians served in the army in any considerable numbers till the days of Marcus Aurelius.'

The booklet concludes with an interesting discussion of the reasons which help to explain the relative impotence of the Church to make its influence felt on international policy. Until the Reformation the Church was an international institution, but by the Reformation its unity was shattered and independent national churches emerged. These churches 'fell into the clutches of nationalism pure and simple.' The Church in these countries became subordinate to the State, and felt bound to bless such enterprises as the leaders of the State cared to embark upon. The international outlook was lost.

In Britain there was a tendency to split up into sects, a tendency which narrowed the outlook still further, and created a religion of a subjective and personal type. The result of this was that 'the Christian Churches failed, during the last century, speaking generally, to exercise a moralising influence on industry and social life generally.' And its influence on international relations has been even more negligible. But the business of Christianity is to transform all human relationships, and a Church whose interests are identified with those of the individual only or the nation only, and which has no ambition to carry the spirit of the Master into international affairs, is a Church blind to the glorious destiny to which she is summoned, and a Church which will in the end forfeit the respect of the world.

This inexpensive booklet of Dr. MACPHERSON

deserves the earnest consideration of all who seek to define their attitude, as Christian men, to war. He assures us that, despite all that has been said concerning the waning influence of organized religion, the Church has still undoubtedly great power in the creation of public opinion. There will be little fear for the future of a world in which the members of Christ's Church are not only animated by His spirit, but fired by the ambition to make that spirit effective in the affairs of men. This will indeed be no tame enterprise; it will call for all the resource and adventure within us. It will be in very truth the 'moral equivalent of war.' As Dr. Macpherson well says, 'If humanity is to survive, it is essential that something of that selfless enthusiasm and abandon which is manifest in the service of war be also displayed in the cause of peace.'

Books that have influenced our Epoch.

Ritschl's 'Justification and Reconciliation.'

BY THE REVEREND R. S. FRANKS, M.A., D.LITT., PRINCIPAL OF WESTERN COLLEGE, BRISTOL.

'THE Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation' (*Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*) is the theological masterpiece of Albrecht Ritschl, containing the last great system of Christian Doctrine of absolutely first magnitude.

Of its three volumes the first was published originally in 1870. It was translated into English in 1872. A second edition of it appeared in 1882. It contains a history of the doctrines of Justification and Reconciliation in the Middle Ages and in modern times.

The second volume contains the Biblical material of the doctrine. It appeared in 1874; the third and final edition was in 1889. It is still untranslated.

The third volume is constructive. Nominally a monograph on a particular pair of doctrines, it is in reality almost a complete system of theology. The doctrines of the Church and the Sacraments are the principal omission. Ritschl's views upon

these may, however, be gathered from his shorter work, 'Instruction in the Christian Religion' (*Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*), and from various occasional papers to be found in the two volumes of his collected Essays (*Aufsätze*). The Instruction has been translated, the Essays have not.

The constructive volume of *Justification and Reconciliation* first appeared in 1874. The third and final edition was in 1888. From it an English translation was made, appearing in 1900.

Ritschl was born in Berlin in 1822. His father was a pastor in that city, who afterwards became general superintendent of Pomerania. Ritschl was first a Hegelian in Philosophy, and as a theologian belonged to the school of Baur. He separated himself from this school in the second edition of his important book, 'The Origination of the Ancient Catholic Church' (*Die Entstehung der alt-katholischen Kirche*), a book which prepared the way for the still more important *History of Dogma*