
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Entre Nous.

'Not servants, but friends.'

ONCE in every four years the Student Christian Movement holds a Conference. The last of these was held in January of this year at Liverpool. The note of the Conference was friendship—friendship as the only solution of industrial and interracial problems. As one of the speakers said, 'I think of André Siegfried's book, *America comes of Age*, where he concludes his stark chapter on the colour question in the southern States with the words: "The race problem is an abyss from which we shrink back in horror." I think of the verdict of one of the most eminent of modern historians, Rostovstev, who ends his brilliant study of the social and economic life of the Roman Empire by saying: "*Our* civilization will not last unless it be a civilization not of one class, but of the masses."' Not only industrial and interracial relationships but also international relationships were constantly present in the minds of the members. 'I think, but need not speak of what even the professional soldiers are saying about a world still organized and organizing for war: armaments mean disaster, because war—of a scientific savagery yet undreamed of—is bound to come sooner or later where the conditions of that war exist. To put it at its lowest, the world's practical philosophy of human relationship is not only barbarous, it is dangerous; unless we can adopt and live by another philosophy, we are at our extremity.' How were these problems to be met? It could only be done by reducing them to problems in personal relations and by showing that the 'deepest need of the world is for some new power and hope in the realm of the spirit.' 'Not servants, but friends.' This is the new power and hope.

The addresses which were delivered at the Conference have been published under the title *The Purpose of God in the Life of the World* (S.C.M.; paper covers, 2s. 6d. net). The recently appointed Grote Professor of Philosophy in University College, London, Mr. John MacMurray, who puts his thoughts in a very fresh and stimulating way, spoke on the words, 'Ye are my friends.' 'We have been thinking too much in terms of service—service of God and of the world,' he said. 'But there is nothing distinctively Christian about service. Socrates called himself the servant of Apollo. The key-word of the Christian gospel is not service but friendship. "But, surely," you will say, "we are called as Christians to serve Christ and to serve the world?" No! we are called to be the friends of Christ and the friends of men. That is not at all the same thing. Friendship often looks like service from the outside. So long as we stand on the earth, the earth going round the sun will look like the sun going round the earth. But when we take our stand at the centre of life with Jesus, the whole landscape is altered and service is swallowed up in friendship.'

There are two ideas which are bound up with service, but are not found in friendship, Mr. MacMurray says. These are duty and self-sacrifice. Duty fades right out of the picture in the Christian view of life. 'Suppose a friend came to see you when you were ill, would you be satisfied to know that he came because it was his duty to come? Would you not rather feel that the one thing needful was lacking? In friendship the personal things—warmth and intimacy of feeling—must be the springs of action. The cold impersonality of obligation is unprofitable. We shall not then be surprised by the quaintness of Christ's treatment of the idea of duty. "So likewise ye, when ye have done *all* those things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants: we have only done that which it was our duty to do.'" Only our whole duty! and Jesus calls that unprofitable service! It is because His view of life begins where duty ends, because Christian relationships are all intimate personal relationships. To fall short of that is to miss the one thing needful.'

And so with sacrifice. 'The more deep and real our friendships become, the more what looks like sacrifice from the outside is found to be the free and spontaneous expression of our own soul's necessity. If you discovered that a picture you had bought for an old song in a country curio shop was a priceless Old Master it would be ludicrous to say that you had *sacrificed* five shillings for it. In a perfect friendship, however, the word sacrifice is not merely ridiculous, it is just meaningless. In such a relationship what looks like giving what I value most is really getting what I most desire: the losing is the saving.'

'The fact is that in friendship we are beyond law and obedience, beyond rules and commandments, beyond all constraint, in a world of freedom. But did not Jesus say, "Ye are my friends *if* ye do whatsoever I command you"? Yes, He did.

We, on our side, are apt to miss the quiet humour of His paradoxes. "These are my commandments," He goes on, "that ye love one another." In other words, the friendship of Christ is realized in our friendships with one another.'

Do we make Christianity too easy a thing when we say it is the religion of friendship? But friendship is not easy. If we think it is easy we are confusing it with friendliness, Mr. MacMurray says, and friendliness is only a refined form of service. 'What men need from us is love, not loving acts; friendship, not friendly services. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not friendship, it profiteth me nothing"—just nothing. Friendship means losing ourselves, and that is apt to be a terrifying experience.' To be a friend means committing ourselves completely and revealing ourselves without reserve. 'It is to this dedication of themselves to friendship that the followers of Christ are called. Those who have the courage so to lose themselves discover with an ever-recurring surprise that in losing themselves they find themselves, and freedom. All of us know something of the freedom that comes—the tranquillity and self-realization that comes—when we slip from the company of strangers into the companionship of our intimate friends. . . . The purpose of God in the life of the world is simply the spreading and deepening of that experience until it covers the whole earth.'

The Formidableness of Jesus.

Dr. Bowie in a volume which he published in 1926—'The Inescapable Christ'—had a chapter on 'The Formidableness of Christ.'

In his latest volume of sermons, *The Inevitable Christ*, Dr. J. D. Jones has an address on the same subject. He tells us that he read Dr. Bowie's chapter and that this thought of the formidableness of Jesus had been with him ever since.

It is because there is a wonderful inclusiveness about Jesus that we can think of Him as the 'Gentle Jesus,' a gracious loving Person who went about doing good, and at the same time as the Person who proclaimed in such absolute terms the life and death authority of that spirit which He represented, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.' 'The men who listened to Jesus that day,' says Dr. Bowie, 'had no doubt as to what He meant, and neither need we. . . . There is no escaping the ultimate spiritual authority. If any will not make God's purpose the foundation stone for all their living, then the stone becomes an avalanche grinding them to powder beneath its awful weight. That is a gigantic thing to claim.'

Jesus was formidable through His very goodness, Dr. Jones says. For goodness is always terrifying to evil men. 'Goodness condemns evil men by revealing themselves to themselves. That was the reason Mr. Live Loose gave for wishing to have Faithful put to death—"He would always be condemning my way."' There are many illustrations of this in the Gospels. One from the beginning of the Ministry might be cited: 'When at Nazareth Jesus turned round and faced the crowd on the brow of the hill, and none dared stretch out a hand to do him hurt.'

But the formidableness suggested by the words of the eighteenth verse of the twentieth chapter of Luke is a deeper and a more solemn formidableness. 'Things that come into collision with the mind and spirit of Christ are doomed because they are in conflict with those eternal forces and laws which express the working of God's purpose.' Jesus is formidable still to every system, every institution, that is not based on justice and truth. Is our present *social system*, asked Dr. Jones, whereby some are inordinately rich and some desperately poor, in accord with the spirit of Christ? If our *international relationships* are to be governed simply by regard for our own interests, our own rights, our own prestige, they are definitely anti-Christian. This is true of *individuals* also. 'It is not a matter of no concern what a man does with Jesus—it is a matter of infinite moment. We speak—and we act—as if it didn't matter very much whether a man accepted Christ or not. As a simple fact, it matters everything. If a man rejects Christ, he rejects goodness and purity and love, he chooses the base and the evil, and when he chooses the base and the evil, and rejects goodness and purity and love, he is setting himself against the eternal laws of the universe, he is setting himself against God. There can be only one result of such a choice—a broken and shattered life.'

War: A Moral Discipline.

'Speakers for the League of Nations know only too well that if you show on a lantern slide two alternative ways of settling an international dispute—either by a cavalry charge with horses plunging and men sabring one another or falling

dead under the hoofs, or by a conference of rather plain and bald old gentlemen reading papers to one another round a table—practically every young boy and girl in the room is secretly in favour of the cavalry charge. It is not that they want to kill, but they want to face death and peril. . . . I accept fully and frankly the position that strife or conflict is a necessary element in the building up of character, and indeed a necessary quality of life itself.

'But must this strife take the form of actual fighting? 'Judged even by the standard of war itself, the civilized man, accustomed all his life to peace, showed no deterioration. The London clerk was certainly no worse than the Sikh or Gurkha, the French *poilu* no worse than the Senegalese. Judged by almost any other standard of moral fortitude, I think he would come out better.

'Consequently I do not think that there is any case to be made for the necessity of frequent fighting to modern men as a moral discipline. The moral discipline, for the majority of men who have to earn their own living, is there already. But furthermore, if such a moral discipline were really needed, I greatly doubt if modern war would give it. . . . War to-day provides comparatively little of that simple and clear-cut call to sacrifice which came as a matter of course to the ancient warrior facing death for his wife and his city. To the imaginative and highly intelligent, doubtless, the cause for which he faces death may remain present; but if so, a thousand other elements of experience will be present also whose effect will be to blur and blot out the element which once made the thought of war *dulce et decorum*. One friend of mine, after long stalking and hiding behind the stones of a churchyard, successfully shot dead a mild-looking middle-aged German, and found himself merely haunted by the thought that Christ had died equally for both of them. One, taking refuge from a hail of bullets in a cellar, in which there was only just room for himself and his own platoon, had to stand at the door keeping it barred against other bodies of French and English fugitives, shutting them out into the bullet-swept street. The things that had to be done became too obviously evil. One became too like a beast of prey, only more subtle and more relentless than other beasts.'[1]

Point and Illustration.

A tribute to the memory of the late Dr. W. L. Watkinson takes the form of a collection of his *Sermon Illustrations* (Sharp; 2s. 6d. net). It has been made by Mr. A. E. Salmon, a friend of Dr. Watkinson and a colleague in the ministry.

[1] Gilbert Murray, *The Ordeal of this Generation*, 27 f.

Excitement Harmful.

Some of the trees on the Thames Embankment cannot thrive because they are deprived of rest at night. Powerful electric lights take up the work when the sun sets, and the trees languish from arboreal insomnia. The light, not the kind of it, does the mischief, for electricity stimulates growth. The too-long-continued light causes the trees to languish, they need intervals of rest. And human life withers under abnormal stimulation; its best characteristics disappear, its blossoms are blighted, and its fruits are spoiled as by the caterpillar.

A New Man in Christ.

Professor J. Arthur Thomson, treating of the mutations and uplifts of Nature, writes thus: 'We turn to Nature's method of making extraordinarily new things out of very old things. For this is what has happened in a great number of cases where something apparently novel has emerged. The old is, as it were, recrystallized. The mineral becomes a jewel. . . . There is no doubt that to make an apparently very new thing out of a really very old thing is part of Nature's magic.' Shall we then say that the order of grace follows that of Nature, and that the new creature in Christ Jesus is an extraordinarily new being brought out of one old and familiar?

Spiritual Receptivity.

Unless we have aspiration, faith, receptivity, the precious influences that encompass us are lost. The Sahara Desert is visited by tremendous rainstorms, but it is none the better for them; not a drop but descends in vain, for the heat evaporates the rain before the drops reach the sand. We may live in such an unsympathetic state that the rain and dew of heaven leave us unrefreshed and barren. 'They all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer' until the power came upon them.

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