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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

A COMMENTARY on somewhat unconventional lines is offered us by the Rev. Walter LOWRIE, Rector of St. Paul's American Church, Rome, in his *Jesus according to St. Mark* (Longmans; 20s. net). In 1913 Mr. LOWRIE translated Albert Schweitzer's 'Skizze des Lebens Jesu' (the second part of his book 'Das Abendmahl') under the title 'The Mystery of the Kingdom of God' (2nd edition, 1925). Since then he has been contemplating the possibility of writing a Life of Jesus from the point of view, namely, the eschatological, which historical criticism seems to him, following Schweitzer, to require. And now he offers us this book.

The book claims to give, not indeed a Life of Jesus, but a picture of Jesus, and a picture which may well be regarded as historical, as following faithfully and word by word the indications furnished by the earliest Gospel. But there is no picture here in any finished sense. It is only a commentary on the Marcan text, yet—as it may be allowed—a commentary which so emphasizes the positions of the 'thoroughgoing eschatology' as to provide the elements of a picture (whether reliable or not) which should embody Schweitzer's interpretations. Indeed, Mr. LOWRIE is more than a disciple of Schweitzer: he not only believes, with his master, that Jesus' outlook was thoroughly eschatological; he is also himself a 'believing eschatologist.' In this he feels mightily confirmed by Barth, Gogarten, and the 'Theology of Crisis.'

Accordingly, we find him exhorting us once and again to think eschatologically.

In this connexion the following quotation is full of interest: 'Albert Schweitzer, though he was the discoverer of the thoroughgoing eschatology of the Gospels, is not a believer in eschatology. He affirms that Ritschl's notion of the Kingdom of God—which is the entirely uneschatological notion we have all accepted—is the only conception possible to the modern man. And yet Schweitzer is living eschatologically in Africa, following literally the precepts of interim ethics. . . . His is *practical* eschatology. But so was the eschatology of Jesus. He required no vain sacrifices, senseless asceticism, or any sort of action which is of no benefit to others.'

We have said that this is no conventional commentary. It is not merely that it is marked by what we may call selective emphasis, it is also that in its frank expressions of personal opinion and in its hortatory and homiletical touches it goes beyond the usual ambit of the commentator. For the rest, the style is often lively and spirited, witty and piquant, but at times, perhaps, too self-conscious and bordering on jauntiness and flippancy.

Now we do not think that the 'thoroughgoing eschatology' has by any means won for itself the place in the esteem of New Testament critics which it at first bid fair to do. In fact, the

tendency of many recent academic theses has been adverse to the conclusions of Schweitzer and his school. Perhaps, then, it might be well to give eschatologism a chance of speaking for itself once more in these columns, through the medium of one who is a real or believing as well as a critical eschatologist.

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There are certain ideas of the New Testament under which may be subsumed its characteristic positions. Let us consider some of those ideas, taking Mr. LOWRIE as our guide. And first, that of the *Kingdom of God*.

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The reason why we prefer nowadays not to use St. Matthew's expression, 'the kingdom of heaven,' is that it is so plainly transcendental, so suggestive of that other-worldliness which has gone out of fashion. But, says the eschatological school, Jesus actually preached a Kingdom which is not of this world, which lies beyond the resurrection of the dead, and is altogether eschatological, that is, 'coheres with the *last* events which are to mark the dramatic culmination of the long struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, which issues in the complete triumph of God over evil spirits and insubordinate men, ushering in the unobstructed and eternal rule of the good.'

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No other pictorial form, as this writer adds, and no other form of words than that of the Kingdom of God so unambiguously describes God's transcendency and so wholly vindicates God's glory. That is perhaps the chief reason why real eschatology is so distasteful to many. The prevalent pantheistic or mystical habit of mind makes against the recognition of the Divine transcendency, and our 'god-almightiness' keeps us from giving God all the glory.

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Take, again, the idea of the *Messiah*. If Jesus had preached a Kingdom already come, He would have been obliged to indicate the Messiah: the Messiah and the Kingdom belonged together. But as a matter of fact He proclaimed the Kingdom as an event that was yet to come, and a future

Kingdom implied a future Messiah. Accordingly Jesus' hearers, with the exception of the disciples after the revelation at Cæsarea Philippi and the high priest after the 'Yes' of Jesus, regarded Jesus of Nazareth and the Son of Man as two entirely distinct individuals. Indeed, Jesus Himself did not say He was the Messiah; He said that He would be the Messiah in the day of the Kingdom.

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Or take the idea of the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. Mr. LOWRIE asks us to notice how predominant is the eschatological tone in St. Mark's account of the institution. When Jesus explains His earnest desire to share the Passover Supper with His disciples by saying, 'For I will never eat the passover again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God,' His use of the word 'fulfilled' makes even the Passover an eschatological type, testifying to a future deliverance immeasurably greater than the deliverance from Egypt.

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Moreover, St. Mark associates a strong eschatological reference with the cup of the Sacrament, stamping the Sacrament with the character of an eschatological pledge: 'Amen I say to you, I shall not again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' In this text 'new' is an eschatological word. Even the wine partakes of the newness which will characterize the new earth. 'That day' is another distinctly eschatological term, denoting the expected Day of the Lord, and not an indefinite day in the future.

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The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was in fact decisively futuristic rather than retrospective in its original orientation. And yet, as Mr. LOWRIE says, 'in our English Liturgy we have only one vestige left—the negligible and neglected phrase, "until his coming again"—to remind us of the original orientation of this Sacrament. And in America our bishops lately rejected the proposal to restore the *Benedictus qui venit*, for fear it might sanction the belief that Christ is really present in the Sacrament—and it never entered into anybody's head that originally this was an expression of an

eschatological hope. So far have we wandered from the original intention of this Sacrament that the earliest liturgy we possess (that of the *Didache*) seems suspicious to us because it is altogether and utterly eschatological. Not only does it terminate with the note of *Maranatha* (the Lord cometh!), but it interprets the one loaf as a symbol of eschatological solidarity.'

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In a book just published, *The Naturalness of Religion* (reviewed elsewhere), there is a suggestive account of the fortunes of religious belief during the last two centuries which contains some elements of reassurance for those who are intimidated by current unbelief. Such a survey shows that every age has its own discoveries or its own philosophies which at the time appear likely to demolish the foundations of religion. In every case, however, the threat has faded away, and the hostile system has proved to be in reality a friend in disguise, and has sometimes left behind it a residuum of real positive benefit.

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To begin with, religion was regarded as an imposture foisted upon the credulity of simple folk by unscrupulous priests and ecclesiastics. Religion to the eighteenth-century 'infidel' meant organized religion, and particularly the Roman Church, and this was held to be a fatal superstition which deserved to be exposed by all who had at heart the emancipation of the human spirit. Such a view, however, could not long survive the results of historical study, which made it clear that religion is a universal phenomenon, inherent in human nature at all times and in all places, and that its roots are ineradicably fixed in human beings. Man is an incorrigibly religious animal.

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The 'imposture' idea therefore disappeared, and was replaced by the argument of rationalism, that religion is a matter of self-deception. It is not something to be exposed as a fraud but to be eradicated as a weakness. It is an infirmity, and those who propagate it are as self-deluded as their victims. Sir William Watson, the poet, was a

typical agnostic rationalist when he wrote of belief:

Such are the tales she tells:

Who trusts, the happier he:

But nought of *virtue* dwells

In that felicity!

I think the harder feat

Were his who should withstand

A voice so passing sweet . . .

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This rationalism, which is so inharmonious with present-day thought, has yet survived into our day in a peculiarly virulent form. Communism, repeating Marx, preaches loudly that 'religion is the opiate of the people.' But where the earlier rationalism thought of people being deluded by baseless superstitions, the communists regard the churches as merely tools of capitalism, the willing buttresses of an economic system in which the proletariat are drugged into a torpid acquiescence. This attitude has not many supporters outside Russia, and in view of the powerful currents of present-day philosophy is a pure anachronism.

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In the nineteenth century came another phase of the eternal conflict with the startling discoveries of science. These inaugurated a period in which science was dominant, and in some respects arrogant. It was confidently affirmed in many quarters that religious belief was at last to receive the *coup de grâce*. So aggressive was materialism at the time that many people still alive will remember how hard it was for a thoughtful youth to retain his belief in God. This, the most serious threat to positive religion that had yet been made, in time passed away, however. It was seen, and to-day is 'as plain as a pikestaff,' that religion and science are two totally different interpretations of the universe, and in no way contradictory or hostile.

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Then came the great critical movement which applied to the documents of Christianity the most rigorous testing. The Wellhausen hypothesis about the structure of the Old Testament, and the destructive analysis of the New Testament by a generation of German and Dutch scholars, seemed to be even more deadly than the writings of Darwin and

Huxley. But again the challenge proved to be premature. The extreme theories of critics have been modified, their positive results have been more or less calmly accepted, and to-day, if the menace is not quite past, at least the New Testament documents have come to be generally accepted as on the whole and in vital matters trustworthy.

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We arrive now at the present day. The new 'enemy' is psychology. The influence of the study of psychology on the intellectual and religious life of the first half of the twentieth century promises to equal the influence of the study of biology on the nineteenth. With its analysis of experience, and the practical applications of this, medically and otherwise, we have nothing to do here. The threat in it arises from its assumption, or perhaps we should say the assumption of some of its protagonists, that to analyse religious experience is to dissipate it into subjectivism. This kind of contention is too well known to need exposition. Religion under this analytic process becomes an infantile thing invented by ourselves for our own comfort, or at least is a result of herd suggestion.

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We cannot say that the challenge of the 'new psychology' has passed. But it will go the way of the other great systems that have in turn abolished religion. It will go away inevitably for two reasons. One is that psychology is an analysis of experience, and nothing more. When it goes further and delivers a conclusion about reality, it goes beyond its province, and does so generally with as much incompetence as immodesty. The metaphysical sphere is in charge of philosophy and theology, and may safely be left there. The other reason is that, by the same process that analyses religion out of existence, all reality, the reality of the physical world, can be dissipated.

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Such a review is, as hinted above, reassuring. Religion cannot be banished from the soul of man. Its antagonists come and go on the stage of the world, and religion is left as real and as strong as ever. But more. None of these apparently hostile systems has given up its hostile attack without leaving some permanent good behind.

Religion has learned from science a far nobler and wider view of God's working than it had before science brought us its wonderful interpretation of this world. Criticism has given us a new Bible, new in many ways, both in understanding of its growth, and in faith in its worth. And psychology will leave as great a blessing if it leaves us, as it may, with a new and more penetrating understanding of the experience of religion itself.

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Thirty years ago Mr. Walter Page, afterwards the American ambassador in London, made his famous speech on 'The Forgotten Man,' in which he eloquently pleaded that the plain undistinguished man 'should have every opportunity, social, educational, and economic, to develop to whatever stature God intended him to reach, and that he should have his measure of control, not only over politics, but over life.' To-day the forgotten man has caused himself to be remembered, and stands on the threshold of his inheritance. The question is not what shall be done with him, but what will he do with himself. He has the power for good or ill, to make or mar, and it is of supreme importance that that power should be directed aright.

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A suggestive book has been published, entitled *Democracy in Search of a Religion*, by Canon S. C. CARPENTER, M.A. (S.C.M.; 6s. net), which treats its subject in an informing and helpful way. Democracy is by derivation a political term meaning the rule of the people, but it has come also to bear a far wider significance. It is equivalent to Demos or the People. It corresponds to Page's 'Forgotten Man.' In this latter sense Canon CARPENTER uses the word. 'Whereas democracy would commonly be defined as having its origin in politics, and thence spreading over other provinces of life, the conception here put forward is a conception of democracy as having a general basis in the whole of life, and finding, as a consequence of that, an obvious and congenial province in the world of politics.'

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A crucial question is concerned with the nature and seat of authority. Many, thinking in ultra-

political terms, assume that democracy means that authority comes from below. Canon CARPENTER sets out to state the vocation of democracy in a different way and to show that authority comes from above. Democracy itself shows a consciousness of this. It puts education, not only of children but of adults, in the forefront of its programme. That is an admission that the people are still *in statu pupillari*. It is a confession that there is such a thing as truth which has an authority independent of men's votes, and demands to be received with humility and obeyed, as something Divine. The same consciousness expresses itself in democracy's call for leadership. There must be leaders. 'With the prophetic insight that genius has, men of the Lincoln calibre, where they arise, divine what the plain man is feeling. They do not simply collect and register what the plain man has to say. As a rule he does not say much. He has not very much to say that is worth hearing. He has not thoroughly thought out the baffling problems of existence. But he dimly feels that somehow there must be a way. And the real leader of the people divines the matter of the silent litany, he interprets it by the penetration of his sympathy, he arranges it by the power of his intellect, and he clothes it with the richness of his imagination. And then he gives it back to the people—their own dim feelings, their own half-conscious creed—but now alive, with form and order and inspiration. And the people say, "Yes, that is what we meant."'

So then democracy is seen to be dimly groping for an ideal. That ideal is variously and often vaguely expressed: the attainment of an economic paradise, the cult of the super-man, the triumph of the spirit of co-operation, the worship of a glorified humanity. Many of these conceptions have a distinctly Christian colouring, and in their exposition Christian terminology is often used. The 'Christ-spirit' is an accepted term to express all goodwill and self-sacrifice and wholesomeness of moral living. Is not this an evidence that Jesus has touched something that lies deeper in our nature than the deep level where blood joins or time divides? 'He is Himself the heart and meaning of humanity. He has divined its secret, but He has divined it from

within, and of His reading of the riddle He offers a man's proof to men. There are two things, and two things only, that all men and all women have to do: to live and to die. He has exhausted the capacity of both these things. The short, celibate, untravelled life of Jesus is for all of them their mirror of perfection and their hope of glory.'

The Church, then, has a message for democracy, the great message that in Christ we discern the real background, the true meaning of human progress. It would be a tragedy if democracy should seek its ideal and its inspiration elsewhere than in Him and in the revelation of God which culminated in His Incarnation. Renan has spoken of the history of Israel as 'the most exalted democratic movement of which humanity has preserved the remembrance.' In it the 'forgotten man' is remembered in the mercy of God. 'Their national consciousness had begun with a serf-rebellion, a brickmakers' strike in Egypt, and the consistent aim of prophet and psalmist is to defend the poor and needy against oppression.' Later, when the gospel came, it confirmed and heightened all the best hopes of the Jewish poor, it broke down racial antagonisms, and declared the infinite preciousness of every man in the sight of God. Its message was written in the non-literary speech of the common people, it set up fresh moral standards of humility, of faith, hope, and love, and it created the very conception of human progress. Ever since then there has been in the background of human thought, often dimly seen, and sometimes ignored, but always there, potent for guidance and inspiration, the fact of Christ.

If this be doubted we have only to ask what the condition of democracy would have been if the story of the Cross had never been enacted. 'It is hardly possible to imagine that anything like the Christian ethic would exist. But if some form of it had somehow been evolved, it seems certain that no one would believe it. The rules of life which the less scrupulous now hint to one another in expansive moments would be written in gold letters round the domes of public buildings. To pretend that sacrifice is a condition of society, to talk of "grin and bear it," or even of bearing it at all, would be idle prating.

There would be no classical example, no compelling motive. The motive at best would be that high-minded, but unpassionate and ineffective thing, abstract devotion to an impersonal ideal. The saint of that devotion is a rare product. Moreover, his sanctity is incommunicable. We can listen with respectful attention to his lecture on Town Planning, or Eugenics, or the Moral Ideals of Neoplatonism. But the real thrill and quiver comes when we look through the window, like the Wandering Jew, and see the Cross of Christ go by to Calvary.

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'What was he worth?' is no uncommon question after a man's death, and such a question is a painful tribute to the commercialism of to-day. If a man is worth no more than what he left, he is worth nothing; and in the other world, which, with all his foresight, he has forgotten or ignored, he will start a bankrupt, if he start at all. All the gold of all the mines will not purchase him peace or pardon, or redeem him from the fate of those who have trifled away their opportunities.

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For a man is worth what he is, not what he has; and that is true both of this world and of that which is to come. While he lives he may win and lose everything but one—his own personality. That is always his; ultimately it is all that is his. In that lies his worth—not in the abundance of the things which he possesses and can lose. And when he dies, he loses what he has, but he remains what he is. He who is unjust will be unjust still, he who is holy will be holy still; but he who is wealthy will be wealthy no more.

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When a man is said to be worth so much, let us ask, To whom? Who was the better for what he was worth? Was even he himself the better for it, or was he only the richer? Did his presence lighten any darkness, cheer any loneliness? Was any heart the sorer for his passing? Unless he was a worthy man, unless, that is, there was something in him we could worship—for worship is

tribute to worth—he was worth nothing, though he had millions.

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The day is not yet come—will it ever come?—when inner worth is rewarded with its corresponding share of the world's good things, its honour, fame, and gold. Looking at history, we may well ask if that is God's intention. Some of the noblest exponents of religion have been burned alive, 'others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder.' Great poets have received for lasting work the indifference, even the scorn of their own generation.

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There may be some world where worth and wages invariably and accurately correspond, but assuredly it is not ours. Here fools have been made emperors, knaves have presided over the administration of justice, and traditionalists over schools of learning and religion. Folly and wickedness have reaped wealth and power and fame, while philosophers have been laughed at, explorers have lost their lives amid swamps and snows, inventors have been ridiculed, reformers have been pilloried, apostles have been beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, 'in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in hunger and thirst, in fastings, in cold and nakedness.' 'Often,' says St. Paul.

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Yet worth is worth, as God is God. 'It cannot be valued with the fine gold of Ophir,' nor need it be: for every man has what he deserves just in being what he is. A true man's native power, his goodness, his worth, is his dearest satisfaction. He craves no more than the privilege of exercising the gift that is in him, of doing his work and being himself, of developing his efficiency to ever higher points in the service of his brethren. That is at once his task and his reward, his exceeding great reward which can never be taken away from him.

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