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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

In the recent output of theological literature an unusually large place has been occupied by studies in the life and teaching of Jesus, and even the problem of His person has attracted more than usual attention. In the newly published composite work, *The Lord of Life*, reviewed in another column, a 'fresh approach' to that problem is essayed, and the central study of the work, namely, 'A Christology in Modern Terms,' by Professor D. Miall Edwards, invites analysis and comment. By this contribution the value of the work as a whole must be judged.

Dr. Edwards begins with a consideration which every one must nowadays be ready to admit as true, namely, that the experience of Christ as Redeemer and Lord is prior to the formulation of Christological doctrine. And it should also be conceded that, given such an experience of Christ, it is natural and indeed inevitable that we should seek to formulate what appear to be its doctrinal implications. Not that a clear distinction may be drawn in this connexion between experience and doctrinal articulation; the doctrinal articulation reacts upon the experience itself, and indeed is part of it.

Passing from this point Dr. Edwards proceeds to emphasize the need of modern categories in the Christological statement. He affirms, for example, the unpsychological and unreal character, from the modern standpoint, of the Chalcedonian doctrine of 'two natures in one Person,' with its corollary of Christ's 'impersonal human nature.' Our reconstruction of the doctrine of the Person of Christ must be in line, he says, with our modern understanding of personality in terms of consciousness, experience, will, rather than nature or substance, as conceived without psychological content. From which we may gather that the traditional approach to the Incarnation does not satisfy the authors of this work.

Dr. Edwards then seeks to handle the Christological problem at close quarters, beginning with the foundation principles of a systematic restatement. These are (1) *the Jesus of history*, whose character, teaching, personal life, and experience really counted for comparatively little in the traditional Christology, but which are for a modern Christology nothing less than the revelation or interpretation of God; (2) *His true and full humanity*, which formally was always an emphatic element in the creed, at least from Chalcedon onwards, but which practically tended more and more to become a dead letter; (3) *His unique relation to God*, through His filial consciousness and His sense of unique vocation in relation to the Kingdom of God. In short, what constitutes the Christological problem is the fact that in all ages Jesus has presented Himself to Christian experience and thought as, on the one hand, a human, historical personality, and, on the other, Divine in origin and quality. How can we make that real and intelligible to ourselves to-day?

The problem has two aspects, (1) the Trinitarian problem, or the relation of Christ to the Eternal Godhead, and (2) the Christological problem proper, or the relation of the Divine element to the human element in the Incarnate Christ.

(1) How then is Jesus Christ related to the God of the monotheistic faith? So Dr. EDWARDS states the first aspect of the problem of Christology, and it should be observed that at this point he simply accepts the testimony of Christian experience that 'the Christ-values are the ultimate values.' But he affirms that the orthodox formula of two, or rather three, 'hypostases' within the one Divine 'substance' is a mere verbal compromise, and points out that orthodoxy under such a formula keeps oscillating between the extremes of Tritheism and Sabellianism. And he urges that the Divinity of Christ should be stated, not in terms of 'substance' and 'hypostasis,' but in terms of ethical value, adding that moral categories are the highest we possess for the interpretation of the universe. 'When we assert that Christ is one with the Father in character and purpose, we have reached a point beyond which we cannot advance except by a leap into the abyss of an abstract and unknowable Absolute.'

'If it be asked whether the Divine element which became incarnate in Christ was personal in the pre-incarnate period, we would reply that it was in a sense eternally personal—for it was the Spirit of the eternal personal God—but not in the sense that it was *another* or second person side by side with the Father within the one Divine Being. It was not a person in our modern sense of being a distinct centre of self-consciousness and self-determination, as the historic Christ clearly was.' From which it appears that Dr. EDWARDS, and presumably also his coadjutors, are not in sympathy with the Pauline, Johannine, and traditional idea of the pre-existence of Christ.

(2) How are the Divine and human elements related to each other in the Incarnate Christ? Here again the orthodox doctrine comes under criticism, as reducing the union of the Divine and human elements, conceived as disparate and mutually incompatible 'substances,' to a paradox. But, it is urged, is there an essential difference in kind (and not merely in degree) between God and man? Is the difference such as to make a union between them inconceivable, except by an act of 'sheer irrational omnipotence'?

The Bible postulates an essential affinity between God and man, in the sense at least that God is 'the ground and home of the highest human values.' Yet it must be allowed that this sense of affinity is ever balanced in religious experience by the sense of something unique and incommunicable in God, as the self-existent and the alone universal. We should not, however, like the ancient Greek philosophy in which the traditional Christology found a setting, overstress the difference between God and man. The Divine and the human types of experience are sufficiently akin to enable us to think of the same historic Person as at once Divine and human.

This is true on the ethical side; goodness and love are essentially the same in God and man. It is also true on the metaphysical side. 'There is an element of time in God's eternal life, and an element of eternity in man's temporal life. The Infinite and the finite are ever drawing towards each other; God communicating Himself to and craving for man; man craving for and capable of receiving God.'

The Incarnation may thus be conceived as the culmination of a double movement—the movement of God towards man and the movement of man towards God. But it is a progressive spiritual achievement, not a mechanical act complete from the first; an achievement which reached its climax at Calvary, at the very moment of apparent failure and defeat. It should be added that to speak of the union of the Divine and the human in Christ by no means rules out the presence in Him of a unique endowment as a Divine potentiality. But the 'given' must be appropriated by the conscious will before it becomes ourselves.

In thus indicating how the dualism of the Divine

and human 'natures' in Christ may be transcended, Dr. EDWARDS makes use of Dorner's theory of 'progressive incarnation' and at the same time would take a hint from the late Dr. Sanday's psychological theory of the Divinity of Christ, which finds the *locus* of Divinity in His subconsciousness. It may also be said that while Dr. EDWARDS has caught the spirit (and the language too) of much recent Christological statement, this 'fresh approach' is neither a novel and original 'approach,' nor is it more than an 'approach.'

During the turmoil of the General Election a lecture was delivered which at once commanded widespread attention, and which will be remembered and studied when the whole flood of political oratory is forgotten. The lecturer was Professor A. S. EDDINGTON, F.R.S., whose pre-eminence in the scientific world is undisputed, and his subject was *Science and the Unseen World* (Allen & Unwin; 2s. 6d. net). Those who are familiar with Professor EDDINGTON'S works, especially his recent Gifford Lectures, will not find here anything startlingly new, but they will be charmed afresh by the lucidity and beauty of his writing, the felicity of his illustrations, and above all by that breadth of view and large, ripe wisdom which are peculiarly his own.

Physical science cannot bring us into touch with ultimate reality. 'We have the same desire as of old to get to the bottom of things, but the ideal of what constitutes a scientific explanation has changed almost beyond recognition. And if to-day you ask a physicist what he has finally made out the æther or the electron to be, the answer will not be a description in terms of billiard balls or flywheels or anything concrete; he will point instead to a number of symbols and a set of mathematical equations which they satisfy. What do the symbols stand for? The mysterious reply is given that physics is indifferent to that; it has no means of probing beneath the symbolism. . . . Far from attempting to dogmatize as to the nature of the reality thus symbolized, physics most strongly insists that its methods do not penetrate behind the symbolism.' This, doubtless, has consistently been Professor EDDINGTON'S own attitude, but many scientists have spoken in far different tones and have produced a far different impression on the common mind. The silence on Armistice Day, says Professor EDDINGTON, cannot be fully explained by physical laws. If you attempt that, you miss its whole significance. Or again, the subject-matter of physical science bears the same relation to the totality of things as the business man's balance sheet bears to his whole physical, moral, and social life. The physicist resents the intrusion of the name of God into his sphere just as a business man would object to entering the name of God as an asset in his balance sheet. That is all very well if the position is clearly understood and the limits of physical science acknowledged.

But if it be supposed that physical science deals with the whole realm of reality the error is fatal. It is as if the business man were to say, 'Nothing is of any value but what is entered in my balance sheet.' The scientist may say that he has no time to turn aside to dispel this error from the common mind. But it may be replied that he has not infrequently made claims which encouraged the error. Be that as it may, it is surely the task and privilege of the preacher to expound, enforce, and reiterate this elementary truth that physical science, on its own confession, renounces all claim to deal with the whole of reality. There are realms of being beyond its ken, realms where its methods of investigation are inapplicable.

This clears the way for a fresh start, while at the same time it delivers us from the error, not unknown in our time, of trying to base religion on scientific discovery. 'Briefly the position is this. We have learned that the exploration of the external world by the methods of physical science leads not to a concrete reality but to a shadow world of symbols, beneath which those methods are unadapted for penetrating. Feeling that there must be more behind, we return to our starting-point in human consciousness—the one centre where more might become known. There we find other stirrings, other revelations (true or false) than those

conditioned by the world of symbols. Are not these, too, of significance? We can only answer according to our conviction, for here reasoning fails us altogether. Reasoning leads us from premises to conclusion; it cannot start without premises. The premises for our reasoning about the visible universe, as well as our reasoning about the unseen world, are in the self-knowledge of mind.' This does not mean that every whim and fancy is to be received as indisputable truth, but we have an inner sense of values which guides us as to what is to be heeded. The scientist who in a mood of natural mysticism feels the glory of the sunset does not reproach himself for having lapsed in his devotion to truth. On the contrary, he would be deeply concerned if he found himself losing the power of entering into this kind of feeling. 'In short, our environment may and should mean something towards us which is not to be measured with the tools of the physicist or described with the metrical symbols of the mathematician. We cannot argue that because natural mysticism is universally admitted in some degree therefore religious mysticism must necessarily be admitted; but objections to religious mysticism lose their force if they can equally be turned against natural mysticism.'

We want an assurance that the soul, in reaching out to the unseen world, is not following an illusion. We want security that faith, and worship, and above all love, directed towards the environment of the spirit, are not spent in vain. In answer to this, Professor EDDINGTON conceives that the crucial question is not, 'Does God exist?' He does not attach great importance to academic arguments about the existence of God. At the most they give us the idea of a creative spirit behind phenomena, and lead to the same feelings of wonder and humility as the contemplation of Nature itself can give. 'Religion does not depend on the substitution of the word "God" for the word "Nature."' The crucial question is, 'Has God revealed Himself?'

At this point Professor EDDINGTON turns strangely aside from the fact of Christ. 'I will not speak here of the revelation in a life that was lived nineteen hundred years ago, for that perhaps is more closely connected with the historical feeling which, equally with the scientific feeling, claims a place in most men's outlook. I confine myself to the revelation implied in the indwelling of the Divine spirit in the mind of man.' We note this omission as indicating that there is a region of truth, perhaps the richest of all, which is here left unexplored. But, apart from that, the shining of the inner light illuminates the way to faith in a Personal God. 'I suppose every serious thinker is rather afraid of this term, which might seem to imply that he pictures the deity on a throne in the sky after the manner of mediæval painters. . . . I believe the thought that lies behind this reaction is unsound. It is, I think, of the very essence of the unseen world that the conception of personality should dominate it. Force, energy, dimensions belong to the world of symbols; it is out of such conceptions that we have built up the external world of physics. What other conceptions have we? After exhausting physical methods we returned to the innermost recesses of consciousness, to the voice that proclaims our personality; and from there we entered on a new outlook. We have to build the spiritual world out of symbols taken from our own personality, as we built the scientific world out of the symbols of the mathematician. I think, therefore, we are not wrong in embodying the significance of the spiritual world to ourselves in the feeling of a personal relationship, for our whole approach to it is bound up with those aspects of consciousness in which personality is centred.'

Has the Bible a satisfying explanation to give of the problem of suffering? That is an important question, not so much intellectually as practically, for it is the problem which is constantly raised in the mind of youth. Group discussions among students invariably see this question thrust forward, and it is usually felt to be an insoluble one. James Hinton wrote of 'the mystery of suffering,' and he seemed to express what is a widespread impression. But is it a mystery? Is there any mystery at all in it? It may be a bold thing to

say that there is no problem on which we have so much light. But let us see.

The one Book in the Bible that sets out to deal with the problem is Job. What has Job to contribute to our question? In the *Abingdon Bible Commentary*, just published, Professor W. F. LOFTHOUSE, who writes on the Book of Job, says there are five answers to the question: Why is evil allowed? One is Satan's, to test a goodness which may be only skin-deep. A second is the friends', to punish wickedness. A third is Job's, because God is unjust. A fourth is Elihu's, to educate and train. And a fifth, that of God Himself, to bring to man his ignorance. The first three may be set aside as not the writer's view. Is the last the real intention of the Book? That would mean that there is no answer to the question. The only real peace would lie in a vision of God's reality.

This does not seem satisfactory. Perhaps we get a truer idea of what the writer had in his mind if we stand back and look at the Book as a whole. What impression is made on us by the situation and the discussion? Is it not that here is a man suffering, and tested by suffering, yet enduring, and not only enduring but learning and being perfected by his experience? That is what is left on the mind by the Book as a whole. And this seems to mean that the contribution of Job to the problem is that suffering is a discipline meant to purify and uplift and educate the soul of man. If that be so, Job makes a definite addition to our knowledge. For, if that is not a final solution to the question why suffering is in the world, at least it is true so far as it goes. It is Browning's great doctrine, that man *needs* suffering, hardship, trouble, if he is to be a man. 'Then welcome each rebuff.'

But Job is only one voice. There is, in addition, the voice of traditional orthodoxy, heard in Proverbs, which says, 'suffering is to be accounted for by sin. It is the penalty of wrong-doing.' It was this orthodox doctrine that roused the protest uttered in Job. But is it not true, so far as it goes? A very great deal of the suffering in the world *is* due to 'wrong-doing' in the broad sense. The world is built on the law of retribution. If we break a law of Nature we suffer for it. How much rheumatism is due to careless disobedience of the laws of health? And, going a step higher in the scale, to what is much of the misery and tragedy of human life due if not to the fact that men will not live within the barriers of moral law? All this is trite, but it is necessary to see that Hebrew orthodoxy, in asserting that suffering is due to wrong-doing, was accounting for most of the suffering in the world.

There are two other answers made by the Bible to our problem which must be taken into our view of the whole question. One is the Hope of Immortality, glimpsed in the Wisdom Psalms. There are inequalities in life which will be set right in a future state of existence. This seems at first sight a surrender of the whole question. But, on the contrary, is there not here also a part of the truth? If by 'life' is meant, not the few years, but life in the greatest sense, in the fullest sense, then 'God has for ever.' This existence is only the vestibule of life, a time of schooling, a probation, when we are learning to use our tools. Real life is beyond. And part of the schooling is found in the hardships, and even sufferings, of the present. And we must look to the end, the goal, to find an explanation of the meaning of conditions here.

But the highest reach of vision on our problem is found in the teaching of Second Isaiah, crowned by the Cross of Christ, that suffering is vicarious, that we suffer, or may suffer, for the good of others. This is true of much of the suffering in the world. Motherhood is the most notable example. Woman suffers that life may go on. Pioneers and explorers suffer that knowledge may be increased. The noblest and the best have suffered that some great gift may come to mankind. The Cross of Christ stands among all the crosses in the world, lifting them up into its own light and filling them with a profound and searching significance.

No one of these answers explains all suffering. But each of them explains some of it. And when

we bring them together, they do account for a great deal that, apart from them, would be dark. It is true that the question is, even so, not fully answered. There will always be mystery in God's universe just because it is God's. We do not presume to exhaust the meaning of any act or purpose of God. But when we look at the vast amount of trouble in the world, not making light of it but seeing it with humble sympathy, we need not feel staggered or hopelessly perplexed. For on this problem at any rate the Bible has something to say that helps to lift the burden of our ignorance and perplexity.

Books that have influenced our Epoch.

Moberly's 'Atonement and Personality.'

By the Reverend N. P. Williams, D.D., Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford.

'Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.'[1] 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'[2] 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.'[3] In such glowing words does St. Paul proclaim what (if we may judge by the general tenor of the speeches contained in the first part of the Acts of the Apostles) even the earliest Christian believers had not in the beginning completely realized—that the Cross of Jesus Christ is not a mere member of or detail in the Christian scheme, but the Christian scheme itself: the doctrine of the Atonement through the death of Christ *is* the gospel, containing as it does by implication and holding together all other truths of revelation. And what St. Paul was the first explicitly to assert has been vouched for by the experience of all ages and countries in which the flame of Christian life has burnt clear and bright. Wherever men's hearts have been moved to their depths by the thought of Christ, it has been by the thought of Him on the Cross. The lights, the rhythmical movements, the awful silences of the august drama of the Mass have no meaning, save in so far as the Mass is believed to be the showing forth before God and man of the mystery of the Saviour's death: the fervent preaching of the Salvationist, the thrill and tension of the crowded revivalist meeting, the sobs which rise from the penitent form, witness to the power of the oft-repeated appeal to wash in the blood of the Lamb. In Christian experience, the picture of the Crucified, whether set forth in the pages of the evangelic narrative, in liturgical or plastic art, in impassioned oratory, or merely held in the focus of meditative imagination, speaks with a compelling directness to the heart, like solemn music; and, as the heart, if left to itself and not troubled by the uninvited assistance of the head, can clearly grasp the transcendental meaning of some great work of Bach or Beethoven, so also the heart by itself can feel the self-evident truth of redemption through the blood of Christ, without being able to give any logical or reasoned account of its *modus operandi*. Yet the head, or the intellectual faculties, cannot be restrained from peering into the mystery, and striving to reduce it to a set intellectual form. It is part of the unique mysteriousness of the doctrine of the Atonement, or of the work of Christ, that it should be even less amenable to scholastic representation or construction than the doctrine of the Incarnation, or of the Person of Christ. It is not difficult to state what the 'Catholic' or 'orthodox' (in the technical sense of these terms) doctrine of the Person of Christ actually is, and though some versions of that doctrine may at different times and places seem to have become divorced from the deliveries of Scripture and reason, it has never developed any forms which are patently irrational or positively shocking to the moral consciousness. Whereas he would be a bold man who should endeavour to formulate the 'Catholic' doctrine of the Atonement in any words more precise than the Pauline 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures';

[1] 1 Co $1^{22ff.}$ (R.V.). [2] 1 Co 2^{2} (R.V.). [3] Gal 6^{14}.