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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

In his recent book, reviewed last month, on *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research*, Professor Deissmann has an interesting chapter on 'The New Testament in World History,' in which he traces the paths along which the New Testament has travelled in its victorious career. *Habent sua fata libelli*, and surely no single book in the whole library of mankind has had *fata* so extensive and intensive as the New Testament. It is the Book of Humanity because it began by being the Book of the People and has become the Book of the Peoples.

The first high road of the New Testament is the one leading out of obscurity into the big, wide world. In the middle of the second century the Christian literature lay in the quiet custody of Christian brotherhoods. The number of copies would not be more than a few hundred. A local church would have one or two. But no part of an original manuscript of this period has come down to us. In the third century there were probably thousands of copies in circulation, but large numbers were given up to the authorities and destroyed. We have small original fragments of the Greek Bible of this period in pieces of papyrus. In the fourth century, when Christianity had conquered the world, the number of copies must have been large, and we have entire manuscripts of the New Testament, richly ornamented.

Then the victorious march of the New Testament began. It came to the Syrians, Copts, Ethiopians, Arabs, Armenians, and other Orientals, and soon it was dressed in the curious garb of all these languages. From the East it came to the West in the Latin Bible, which is a westernized book. And then the New Testament spread up to the north-European peoples. The first Germanic Bible was that of Ulfilas, and this was followed by Slavonic translations, and these by Scandinavian and Celtic. But there were two Western translations that have been regarded as World Bibles—the German translation of Luther and the English Bible. Luther made the New Testament again the book of the people, and for its march through the great new world laid open by discoverers and explorers the New Testament put on the garment of the English language.

With the opening up of international communications began a new era in the history of the New Testament through innumerable translations. The British and Foreign Bible Society has translated the Bible or parts of it into six hundred and eighteen languages, and if we include the work of other societies, the number would have to be raised to eight hundred and forty. The Society referred to has circulated about three hundred and seventy-five million copies, and the American Society has circulated about two hundred and five million. No book has travelled such a mileage as the New Testament; none has reached so many eyes and ears.

Another high road along which the New Testa-

ment has travelled is the way up from the simple to the educated. This has not been described as the other has. Yet this ascent is one of the great chapters in the history of man's culture. The book came from the souls of simple men. But the living force pushed upward. In the middle of the second century the book was in the hands of the learned. Christian scribes began to deal with the New Testament much in the same way as the Rabbis dealt with the Old Testament. And from that time to the rise of exegetical and historical criticism the work has gone on. To-day there are four or five hundred Chairs for the study of the New Testament at about three hundred different places.

This has meant a great danger to the New Testament, the same danger that happens to a flower when a learned man plucks it and puts it in an herbarium. And often it has seemed as if mountains of paper would bury the New Testament and clouds of dust suffocate it. There has often appeared a doctrinaire way of estimating it. A theological system has been formed from the flowing and ebbing religious life of the New Testament, from Paul a 'Paulinism,' from Christ a 'Christology.' And so we get a distorted and lifeless picture of early Christianity. Everything is dogmatized and conventionalized. That which came from the mind of saints in the sunny East, in the open air and sunlight, is exiled to the wooden tables and Osram lamps of Western authorities.

But there is another side. Scholarship has often cut a way into the heart of the little book through the labyrinth of tradition. It has restored the original text and has led us back to the sources. It has protected the Holy Book from fanatics, legalists, and confused thinkers. 'The old tongues are the sheaths in which the knife of the spirit is put,' said Goethe, and scholarship has often been this knife that has cut in to the truth.

But there is a third high road along which the New Testament has travelled, a way of influence over the spiritual history of mankind. Professor DEISSMANN glances at some of the spheres of this influence. There is Art, for example. This is too obvious to need development. Then there is Law, for in marriage law, criminal law, and civil law alike there is to be traced a deep New Testament mark. But the deepest influence is seen in the religious life of humanity, a subject so vast that it could only be indicated.

You can see this influence in the Epochs of Recovery, when out of the darkness a new light has shone forth. Think of the rediscovery of grace by Augustine, the vision of St. Francis, the discovery of a free way to God by Luther, the emergence of Wesley. It is always the same, always some great word of the New Testament that starts out to make a new world. And think most of all of the countless souls to which the New Testament has brought liberty, peace, and power. This, the greatest chapter in its history, can never be written, except in 'the lamb's book of life.' 'Therefore,' concludes Dr. DEISSMANN, 'we can put the wonderful history of the Book of Humanity in one sentence: the New Testament has become the Book of the Peoples because it began by being the Book of the People.'

It would be a pity if the interesting and stimulating essay by Abraham CRONBACH which concludes the very erudite discussions in volume v. of the Hebrew Union College Annual for 1928, noticed elsewhere in this number, should be overlooked because it happens to appear in a volume which, as devoted almost exclusively to things Jewish, is little likely to find its way to that larger public which this particular essay particularly concerns. The essay is entitled 'Divine Help as a Social Phenomenon'; it might, perhaps, have been equally entitled 'Social Help as a Divine Phenomenon.'

For the central thought of the essay turns on the meaning to be attached to the words 'God' and 'divine.' Both these terms, Dr. CRONBACH argues, are ambiguous, or at any rate they may be, and are, used in a variety of ways. When, for example, we speak of Divine help, 'divine' may be taken

to mean 'supernatural' in relation to the cause of the help, or 'valuable' in relation to the ideal advanced by it, or 'religious,' in relation to the psychological expedients, such as prayer, employed to bring it about.

Similarly, a distinction is to be drawn between the God of worship and the God of customary theology. It would of course be folly to affirm that between these two there is a great gulf fixed; in the end, if the thinker is a really devout person, these two must be one. But equally it would be folly to deny that the atmosphere pervading these conceptions is different; the thinker, excogitating his theological system, could seldom claim to be in quite the same mood as when he is singing the praises of God in the sanctuary. It is the difference between 'the Rock of Ages,' 'the King of Love,' 'Sun of my Soul' on the one hand, and 'the First Cause,' 'the Great Hypothesis,' 'the Underlying Substance' on the other.

This essay is in part a plea for what the writer calls the 'evaluative,' as contrasted with the causative and supernaturalistic, idea of God. In other words, 'the dominant meaning of God is supreme value.' He is to be regarded as the supreme ideal rather than as supernatural cause; He is to be thought of no longer as the supernatural origin, but as the idealistic goal. This conception of Him is confirmed by all the highest flights of religious poetry, and notably of Hebrew religious poetry, where occur such great utterances as these: 'With Thee is the fountain of life, in Thy light shall we see light,' 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God,' 'My soul longeth for God, for the living God,' 'The Lord is my light and my salvation.' In utterances such as these 'God ceases to be the alleged means towards an end and becomes Himself the end.'

That is to say, essentially God represents value. When we speak of God as love, truth, or justice, what we really mean is that God is *the value realized when human interactions exemplify* love, truth, or justice. The italics are Dr. CRONBACH'S, and this sentence succinctly summarizes his argument; but we may be pardoned for wondering whether such a definition of God would have satisfied the psalmists or the prophets. It is not impossible that they meant something other than they seem to say, but surely their relation to God was something warmer, more direct and intimate than that.

The writer comes to grips with his subject when he begins to discuss human need, in relation to which his contention is that help which is Divine in its importance may be social as to its cause. What did the psalmist mean, for example, when he said, 'If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us'? The help—so runs the argument—was really human help; its divinity lay not in its cause, but in its value. The human friends constituted the Divine help, so that we have 'a social causation for the rescue from social hostility.'

And even where physical help fails or is absent, the sufferer may be sustained by a 'social presence,' which is something vaster than physical presence. The thought of the unseen friends, whose presence is 'unbounded in time or space,' is a spiritual factor of great and beneficent potency. It was this that sustained Edith Cavell when she was in the hands of her foes, and the hunted Elisha when he said, 'They that be with us are more than they that be with them.' As the writer suggestively says, 'Beyond the hostile Syrian cordon is the infinite and eternal social situation where Elisha has the victory.'

But besides the need of aid against concrete hostility, there is the need of spiritual aid. Is this aid, when it comes, Divine in the causative sense, or is it socially mediated? Here, again, it is for the latter sense that Dr. CRONBACH pleads. In the voice of an inspiring teacher, preacher, or companion, we sometimes confess that we have heard the voice of God. Such a statement, however, says the writer, is misleading if the word 'God' is taken in its causal sense; but it is literally true

when the word carries the sense of value, supreme, superlative value. This is the sense, he maintains, 'in which God is the comforter of sorrow, a strengthener against temptation, a cleanser of the heart, and the essence of that moral rehabilitation which is traditionally called the forgiveness of sin.' But again we ask, Is that all? Did the psalmists, the prophets, Jesus, Paul, and indeed all the great masters of the religious life not believe that God could and did speak directly to their hearts?

We take leave to doubt whether the intensely personal experiences of religious men, who are in their sublimer moments as conscious of the personality of God as they are of their own personality, can be volatilized in this way into experiences essentially social. In terms of social psychology, we are told 'the peace of God which passeth understanding' is 'of God' in the sense of its being 'wholesome, excellent, desirable, an exceptional embodiment of value.' But is this really all?

The climax of this 'social' interpretation of religious phenomena is reached when the writer comes to what, with rather ominous significance, he calls 'the reputed efficacy of prayer' that one person offers for another. We can agree with him when he asserts that prayer is the manifestation of one's interest in another, of goodwill, appreciation, esteem. But we emphatically demur when he goes on to say, '"Pray for me" denotes: "Take an interest in me. Be concerned about me. Influence me helpfully." The benefit of the prayer lies in the beneficence of the one who offers the prayer, while the God addressed in the prayer is that supreme good which, through it all, is being visaged and approached.' This is a courageous attempt to explain intercessory prayer, but to the average devout person it will seem pathetically inadequate.

But whatever strictures one may pass on this suggestive essay, it is searching, challenging, and valuable in an eminent degree. Its contention that 'not causation but value is the meaning of Divinity,' when applied to programmes of social amelioration, sets these programmes in a radiant light. For it comes to this, that not only prophets but benefactors are messengers of God, and God Himself is really present in all worthy attempts to advance human welfare. In seeking and finding the social good, men are seeking and finding God. But the social good must be recognized as involving the things of supreme value; it must not be conceived purely as food, drink, comfort, and relief from physical distress. Benevolence must have an idealistic motive: it must, in the last analysis, have as its aim the bringing of the sufferer to God. Or, as Dr. CRONBACH puts it, 'The soul, and not merely the flesh, must be the aim of all social endeavour.'

No passage of the Bible is more familiar than St. Paul's rapturous hymn of love in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and no words of that chapter better sum up the meaning of the whole than these three simple words from the eighth verse, 'Charity never faileth.' Simple words, yet great in their simplicity. For not only do they contain the gist of the classic passage which is their context, they set forth the deepest and most adequate principle of the moral life.

It is a commonplace among exponents of our Lord's moral teaching that He bequeathed to the world no code of morals, no system of ethics, but certain fundamental principles. Standing at a point of history, He could not have legislated in detail for all succeeding ages, and it would not be desirable that He should have done so: that would have been to impair, in Luther's phrase, the glorious 'freedom of the Christian man.' Nor need we regret that He did not present His moral teaching in abstract system. No abstract system, however rounded or complete, can compare in human interest and appeal with the Parables of the Gospels and the Sermon on the Mount. A few great principles enforced by aphorism and paradox, or translated into separate precepts and invested with a wealth of illustrative detail, such was the way of Jesus.

Now of the various principles of life laid down by Him the greatest and most fundamental is, as every one knows, the principle of universal love. It is the principle which St. Paul catches up in 1 Co 13 and sends down the ages in a deathless chant. And what the Apostle says in v.[8] is that love is an unfailing principle, in the sense that it will always be found adequate to sustain highest and noblest living, that it will be found applicable and sufficient in every kind of circumstance and to every problem of duty; it is the wellspring of the virtues, the touchstone of true character and conduct, the master-key which unlocks, swiftly and unerringly, those multifarious chambers wherein the human consciousness is called upon to live and be at peace.

Have other moral teachers besides Christ upheld, independently of Him, the adequacy and sufficiency of the principle of universal love? The inquiry is chiefly one of academic interest. It does not detract from the ethical value of the principle of universal love, nor from the authority of Jesus as a moral teacher, that it may be found clearly expressed, for example, in writers of the Stoic school of philosophy, such as Seneca or Marcus Aurelius. After all, it was the Christian religion, and not the Stoic or any other philosophy, which converted the world to the ethics of impartial love and brotherhood; and that is a point of decisive importance in any discussion of the comparative merits of Jesus and other masters of antiquity.

Far more important for the Christian apologist than any vindication of the personal and historical greatness of Christ as a moral teacher is the repudiation of certain current moralities to which our human nature is all too prone to respond, which would have us revert to ideals of naturalism and paganism—sometimes exalting æsthetic culture above humanity and charity; sometimes glorifying selfishness and the blatant assertion of individuality, and minimizing self-sacrifice as mean and contemptible. It is difficult to estimate, but one may easily underestimate, the influence of the moral teaching of that wayward genius Nietzsche in precipitating the crisis of the recent war, with his doctrine—which became so widely canvassed—of pure egoism and the rightful dominance of the strong.

But while the Christian apologist should seek to uphold against present-day detractors the principle of brotherly love as the basic principle of all true morality, he should uphold it in a sense that is reasonably possible. When Christ, and the higher moralists generally, bid us love all men impartially, they are not asking us to feel towards human beings in general exactly as we feel towards our nearest friends and relations. That would be to make an impossible demand. Most moralists appear to recognize two distinct senses of love. They distinguish between the affection which is a special attachment to particular persons, being naturally based on preferences and intimacies, and the affection which is a general direction of the will and desires.

It is a distinction of which our Lord's own life furnishes an illustration. The general direction of His will was towards the universal welfare of humanity. Yet, as we are told, He expressed special feelings of affection towards certain individuals. He loved the young man of great possessions who sought of Him the way of eternal life. He loved Lazarus of Bethany, and his sisters Martha and Mary. He loved one of the Twelve. And who that has stood by Calvary and listened to the Saviour's last words could ever believe that when He forsook His kindred and friends at Nazareth, 'hating' them—to use His own vivid, paradoxical phrase—for the Kingdom's sake, He there and then dislodged them from a special place in His affections? We may be sure that in His homeless wayfarings He was often solaced by the memory of Mary His mother, whom in His last farewell He entrusted to the care of the beloved disciple.

It is altogether natural that a general attitude of sympathy and benevolence towards mankind should as it were be punctuated by feelings of vivid personal affection towards particular individuals and by corresponding words and actions. It is largely, though not entirely, through the interest

we show in particular individuals and the services we render to them that our love of humanity shows itself.

For the rest, love is adequate both for the life which now is and for that which is to come. Prophecies and tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish away, but love is a principle of eternal value, and shall endure for ever. As love is a component of the eternal life realizable here and now, so it enters into the eternal life which shall be realized beyond the veil. As even in the present we pass out of death into life because we love the brethren, so in the future we shall find a heaven of moral opportunity, of wider horizons, of larger and enlarging service.

The Words from the Cross.

III. 'Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!' (Jn. xix. 26, 27).

By Professor A. J. Gossip, D.D., Glasgow.

If the editors will chivalrously give me leave to say so, frankly I dislike and shrink from sermons upon the Words from the Cross—have never yet, I think, been guilty of them—and, if my copy of this magazine fell open at this page, would never dream of pausing at it, but would hurriedly pass on to something else; which, with all gravity, I advise you too to do.

For if in some august cathedral, with memories of mighty spirits and momentous happenings brooding in every corner, and the air athrill and instinct with the very presence of the Lord God of our fathers, the soul is jarred and outraged by the breaking in upon these sanctities of the inane comments of some loud and far-carrying Western voice, is rudely dunted back to earth by the mechanical prosing of the guide's recital, which may be true enough, but none the less is horridly inadequate and deadening and soulless, how much more out of place is it to conduct parties over Calvary, to point and whisper there, to break that awesome silence in which the Master's agony is deepening to its tremendous climax with our poor superficial comments upon sayings that are not meant, as I feel, to be taken into our hands, and turned round, and examined in cold blood, but rather to be heard upon our knees, and with hearts hushed and tensely still.

Rupert Brooke had an unspiritual nature. But once the magic of the woods laid hold on him, till the key to the solutions of this baffling life of ours seemed fairly put into his hand. Another moment, and, the closed door open at last, he would be at the vital heart of things, he felt. And just then, most inopportunely, there came a crashing through the branches, and the swishing of a skirt, and, the key lost for ever, 'a flat, clear voice' was mouthing 'cheerful, clear, flat platitudes.'

> You came and quacked beside me in the wood.
> You said, 'The view from here is very good.'
> You said, 'It's nice to be alone a bit.'
> And, 'How the days are drawing out,' you said.
> You said, 'The sunset's pretty, isn't it?'
> . . . . . .
> By God! I wish—I wish that you were dead!

I am uneasy and unhappy lest my intrusion also is a profanation; lest, fingering these most holy of things, I dim for some their lustre, belittle them, and hide their deeps for some unwary souls; lest outraged spirits, goaded beyond endurance, turn on me, crying out in a fierce, sheer pain, 'If not for our sake, then for God's sake, and in common decency, keep quiet here.'

Every one knows that Jeremy Taylor has two treatises, one upon Holy Living, which is still popular, one upon Holy Dying, of which nowadays little is heard. And that is symptomatic. For the centre of gravity of things has shifted notably from death to life. Once on a day men's hearts, if they were serious at all, looked forward very solemnly to that tremendous moment, surely waiting for us all, when for us life will be over, and, the dear faces round us fading from our dimming eyes, we must rise up, and go our lonely