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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It is a curious fact, which does not seem to have been noted and commented on hitherto, that the theological thought of the nineteenth century underwent simultaneously a double movement in two apparently opposite directions. At the very time when the Fatherhood of God was beginning to be emphasized as against the Sovereignty of God there arose, on the other hand, and quickly advanced to great prominence, the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. The natural connexion of thought is fatherhood and family, sovereignty and kingdom, and we should have expected the generation which gloried in the Fatherhood of God to have laid stress on the Family rather than on the Kingdom of God. But the opposite has been the case. The Kingdom of God is emphasized to-day in association with the Fatherhood of God, whereas a previous generation, which made much of the Divine Sovereignty, had also much to say about the Family of God.

One may, doubtless, trace in these combinations certain spiritual influences working to preserve the due balance of gospel truth. As regards the prominence given to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God it is without question to be understood in large measure as a protest against the undue individualism of a previous time, and as the expression of a growing feeling for the social implications of the gospel. Be that as it may, the fact remains that for more than a generation the idea of the Kingdom of God has reigned supreme in Christian thought, at least in the English-speaking world, and has come

to be regarded as the *Magna Charta* under which all manner of social reforms have been carried forward in the Christian name.

At the Stockholm Conference on Christian Life and Work in 1925 this conception of the Kingdom of God became the subject of sharp controversy. The English and American delegates used the term as comprehending the whole social, moral, and religious progress of the human race. To which the German delegates replied in effect that that was not at all the Kingdom of God as revealed in the New Testament. The Kingdom there spoken of is a heavenly kingdom, brought into being by the grace of God and dependent on Him alone for its progress and final triumph. Both sides were genuinely astonished at what they regarded as the blindness of the other party, and since the Conference various German writers have commented unfavourably on what they call Anglo-Saxon *activism*, that is, the tendency of the energetic Anglo-Saxon mind to pursue a policy of salvation by works.

Principal GARVIE, who was present at the Conference, has given serious thought to the problem thus abruptly raised, and the fruits of his thought are given in his book now published on *The Christian Ideal for Human Society* (Hodder & Stoughton; 16s. net). This book, it may be said in passing, is the companion volume to his work on 'The Christian Doctrine of the Godhead,' and is an extraordinarily able and comprehensive account of Christian ethics

in all its branches and applications. Part iv., which treats of sociology, is unusually complete and will be found rich in wise Christian teaching in regard to many burning questions in the social, national, and international life of to-day. Principal GARVIE says that at first he had intended to use the term, Kingdom of God, in the title of his book, but further study and reflection have led him to 'the conclusion that this term is not the best to describe what is the Christian ideal.' In the choice of a guiding principle he has been led to prefer, not the Kingdom, but the Family of God.

Now it cannot but be regarded as highly significant that so profound a mind as Dr. GARVIE'S should have passed through this change, and that he should have detached himself, as he says, from current usage. It cannot be taken as less than a strong challenge to the dominance in our theological thinking of the Kingdom of God and a serious call to rethink the contents of that ideal so as to bring them into harmony with the teaching of the New Testament.

What reasons have led to this change of view? Dr. GARVIE enumerates five. The first is the ambiguity of the term. Here he refers to the discussion at Stockholm. 'It is still much disputed whether the term should be understood ethically or eschatologically, whether the Kingdom is a present, progressive, moral, and religious order for mankind which can be hindered or advanced by human effort, or is a future, supernatural event, the act of God alone, which men can neither hasten nor delay, but the advent of which can be determined only by the counsel of God.' Subsequent to Stockholm a small group of English and German theologians met to discuss the point and reached certain findings which Dr. GARVIE summarizes. 'Only a drastic criticism of the sources can justify the eschatological view, only an undue modernising of the teaching of Jesus the ethical. The data justify an intermediate view—the presence of the Kingdom in its commencement in the ministry of Jesus and the response of men thereto, the consummation of the Kingdom in the future by the action of God, which, however, can be delayed or hastened by human unbelief or faith.'

The second reason is that the term is rooted in the Old Testament conception of the relation of God and man, and not that of the New Testament. 'God as sovereign and man as subject is not the truest description of the relation of God and man as realised in Christ, and as through Him to be realised in all men.' Jesus as the Jewish Messiah used the language most appropriate to His historical situation. But we do not now think of Him as the Jewish Messiah, and when we speak of the kingdom we put into it a meaning which He never did. 'Many activities to-day are justified as services of the Kingdom of God which did not appear on the horizon of His aims and hopes.'

Thirdly, the term itself is a figure of speech, which carries far less meaning for us to-day than it did for the contemporaries of Jesus. 'It meant then an absolute sovereignty, a claim over the whole life, such as no modern monarchy would with safety to itself among civilised nations ever dare to claim. . . . Monarchy is not necessarily the permanent and universal form of government, and is being widely superseded. It is, therefore, not the best analogy of the relations of God to man.'

Fourthly, it is by no means certain that the term really carries the social implications which in our day it has been held to carry and express supremely. The primary meaning is *Kingship* not Kingdom, *Rule* not Realm. 'The term thus does not settle the quarrel between individualism and the more social apprehension of Christian religion and morality. Its use, then, in describing this moral ideal does not determine what the contents of that ideal must be.'

Lastly, it does not correspond to the reality of the relation of God and man as Christian theology defines it. God is revealed in Christ as Father, and man redeemed in Christ as child of God. This is the least inadequate analogy of the relation of God and man, and should be carried through the whole body of Christian doctrine. 'This analogy does not lend itself to individualism, the exclusion of the social applications of the gospel; for, even although God's Fatherhood is an individual relation—and the

stress of Jesus on the one sheep and the one coin must never be allowed to fall out of our thought—yet as God is the universal Father, it carries with it a universal relationship to men—"All ye are brethren." The absolute love to God and the equal love to self and neighbour does not so closely correspond with the relation of sovereign and subject, or of fellow-citizens, as does that of the father and the family.' This is not a mere question of words, but of a dominant conception which will affect, and ought to govern, the whole of our Christian thinking.

Along with Principal Garvie's book there might be considered a chapter in another volume published this month—*The Worth of Prayer*, by Mr. Edward GRUBB, in which there is an extraordinarily interesting and suggestive essay on 'The Christian Idea of God.' We may not agree with all its conclusions, but the points are worth considering, and we shall set them out here as fairly as we can. Mr. GRUBB deals with two things: first, the Idea of God in the mind of Jesus; and second, the question whether this idea has been rendered obsolete by the progress of human knowledge. It might be thought that no one could produce anything new on the first of these matters. But Mr. GRUBB certainly does.

The outstanding feature of the teaching of Jesus about God is His almost constant use of the term 'Father.' This is so obvious that it does not strike us as strange. But as a matter of fact 'King' would have fitted His fundamental announcement of the 'Kingdom of God.' It was apparently with deliberation that He set aside 'King' for the more intimate and endearing 'Father.' Now, what was new in this was His own religious experience, which was clearly unique. While we cannot penetrate the secret of His inner life, there is much to convince us that He felt God as his Father and inward Comforter as no one ever felt Him before or since. He seems to have rejoiced in an experience of filial communion that was never broken by self-will, or clouded by conscious sin. Such was the impression which His life made upon His immediate followers;

such is the impression that the earliest records leave upon ourselves. His teaching about the Fatherhood of God is unique in this—that He alone, if we judge aright, had perfectly experienced it. This note of personal experience, expressed in the often repeated phrase 'My Heavenly Father,' expands and deepens and enriches the loftiest conceptions of God reached by previous prophets.

In two respects, at any rate, an advance is clear. In the first place, even the most inspired of the prophets was scarcely able to shake off the idea of God as an Oriental despot. The very declaration (by a late prophet) 'Thou art our Father' is inserted between two passages in which the prophet takes back what fatherhood implies. In the second place, while Jesus clearly teaches God's willingness to forgive the penitent, He goes much farther than this. *God suffers loss* while any of His children are alienated from Him, and goes out with active love to seek the lost and induce him to come back. This is a new and authentic note in the teaching about God, to which none of the prophets ever attained.

But did Jesus teach that God is *love and nothing else*? This is perhaps the most difficult problem in the critical study of this piece of history, and it is one the solution of which deeply concerns the Christian life. In the teaching of Jesus, as we have it, He undoubtedly envisages a righteous *wrath* in God which will visit the finally unrepentant with the pains of Gehenna. Is this reconcilable with the picture of the Prodigal's father? The difficulty is not met by saying that the love of the Father is stern and holy love, and that sin must meet the Divine reprobation. That is true. But the difficulty is that the Divine judgments on sin spoken of in the Gospels are *not* thought of as loving chastisements, but 'just' retribution for persistent wrongdoing. God's final answer to wilful and persistent evil is to destroy the sinner in Hell.

Mr. GRUBB sees only two possible answers to this difficulty. Either Jesus was inconsistent, or He has been misrepresented. Mr. GRUBB prefers the latter alternative, and says so at some length. But

is there not a third, namely, that this was an integral part of Christ's teaching, and that *it is true*? Why not? Is it not one of the really serious things about the exclusive emphasis on Fatherhood in our day that it has led people to take a very light view of evil? God becomes '*le bon Dieu*,' and will not be hard on anybody. And is not retribution a *fact*, a terrible fact, in life? The Righteousness of God (which the prophets declare) is the foundation of any true thought of God, even of His Fatherhood. This may be included in any true idea of love. But may we not so include the stern element in the teaching of Jesus in His teaching about Fatherhood?

The other question is as to whether the idea of God in the mind of Jesus is valid to-day in view of the progress of human knowledge. What authority has this idea of God for us to-day? The world has grown so vast in its interstellar distances, and at the same time so inconceivably minute in its atomic structure, that the idea of an organizing Personality seems stretched beyond breaking-point. In the time of Jesus it was not difficult to think of God as breaking in upon its usual routine by miracle. Now, science and philosophy together have made the idea of a Divine Power outside the world, interfering now and then with its ordinary working, almost impossible for thoughtful minds.

Mr. GRUBB's answer to this is suggestive. There are, he says, two streams of human experience, and not one only. There is an inner experience as well as an outer. Man's moral and religious experience is just as much a fact of history and of present life as the experience which he gains by the use of his senses and his intellect. His religious creeds and observances could never have arisen and persisted had there not been behind them an awareness of the Divine, an experience felt as a real Presence with which man's life had to be brought into satisfactory relation. This religious experience is real, but it needs constant intellectual criticism, and man's religious history is part of the story of his attempts to 'rationalize' the conception he forms of God. Doubtless the idea of Personality is a stage in that process of 'rationalization.' It is, however, the

highest concept within our reach, and the rejection of the idea of Personality generally ends in thinking of God as infra-personal, or as an abstraction.

Now, the religious life needs to be nourished through 'correspondence' with the spiritual environment, and for this purpose the conception of God which Jesus brought is valid and even final. But this is not to say that for other purposes the idea of God may not need supplementing. Jesus was not a philosopher, but man needs philosophy, and for the purposes of philosophy he needs an organizing principle of Order and Unity, which the conception of Personality does not adequately provide. It would seem, then, that for the present—until our powers of spiritual apprehension are greater than they are now—the ideas of God as Person and as Law must be held side by side, whatever difficulty we may have in reconciling them. It may be that they are destined to be resolved in some higher synthesis, at present unattainable, differing from either, but doing full justice to both. Faith refuses to be 'rushed' by dilemmas, even if it cannot yet, out of the 'broken arcs,' fashion the 'perfect round.'

This is, as we said, suggestive, and more or less satisfying. But something may perhaps be added. Does not Mr. GRUBB tend to assume the idea of Personality as an exclusive thing? You are you, and I am I, different 'persons,' marked out from each other. But surely the true and philosophical idea of personality is *inclusive*. Individuality is exclusive. Our individualities exclude one another. But what makes a personality is not individuality but experience. We grow into persons by the enrichment of experiences. If, then, we get rid of this geographical idea of Personality, and think of it as consisting (as it does) of spiritual intensity, the difficulty Mr. GRUBB raises is not by any means so acute.

In Canon J. A. MACCULLOCH's recent volume, reviewed in another column, on *The Harrowing of Hell*, there is a fresh discussion of the meaning of the two Petrine passages which supply part of the

Scriptural foundation for the doctrine (found so frequently in the theological and popular writings of the early Church, and so frequently subjected in the Middle Ages to poetical and artistic treatment) of Christ's Descent to the hollow Underworld known now as Hell, now as Hades, and of His preaching there to the 'spirits in prison.' The passages are 1 P 3^{18f.}: 'Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah' (R.V.); and 1 P 4⁶: 'For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit' (R.V.).

These passages, especially the first, are regarded by some as wholly enigmatic; others find no reference in them to the Descent of Christ. St. Augustine, and St. Thomas following him, supposed that in the first passage the *pre-existent* Christ is represented as coming in the Spirit and preaching to the disobedient before the Flood. The spirits are said to be 'in prison' because they were in the darkness of ignorance while yet in the bodies of men. But 'quickened in the spirit' must refer to the discarnate Christ, and it is significant that the Syriac Version reads Sheol or Hades for 'prison.'

Luther's interpretation is similar to St. Augustine's in taking the 'spirits in prison' to be spirits of Jews and Gentiles still living on earth, to whom the apostles, inspired by the Spirit, preach in vain; they are disobedient, like those of Noah's day. Another interpretation (F. Spitta) makes the preaching that of the pre-existent Christ to the fallen angels of whom Jewish tradition, resting on Gn 6², spoke so much, and who were shut up in ward against the Day of Judgment (2 P 2⁴, Jude 6, 1 Enoch). These interpretations are even more strained than the first mentioned, and it makes against the latter that Jewish tradition regarded the lot of the fallen angels as hopeless. It is not unjust to say that they were all ruled by a more or less

dogmatic motive, namely, that the interpretation should conform to the interpreter's views of the nature of life beyond the grave, and more especially of the impossibility of enlightenment or pardon there.

The most thorough and comprehensive discussion of the two Petrine passages which has yet appeared is that of Dr. Karl Gschwind, which fills more than a hundred and thirty pages of his *Die Niederfahrt Christi in die Unterwelt* (1911), and we are indebted to Canon MACCULLOCH for a summary of Gschwind's interpretation, which also excludes any reference to a Descent to Hades, and, as far as 3^{18f.} is concerned, presents an entirely new and striking meaning. He takes the words ἐν ψ̄ in 3¹⁹ as meaning 'whereby,' 'wherewith,' and as referring not to 'the spirit' but to the whole preceding idea of Christ, who did good, and suffered even to death, but was glorified in His resurrection and ascension. This—the righteous suffering Christ thus glorified—is the subject of the announcement (ἐκήρυξεν), not necessarily a preaching by word, but an object-lesson. But an object-lesson to whom? The answer is in line with the third interpretation above-noted. To the disobedient angels and demons of the Flood-era, who are punished in the firmament or in one of the Heavens (as in 1 Enoch and elsewhere). As Christ discarnate, not pre-existent, ascends through the Heavens, the evil angelic and demoniac powers are shown the value of suffering for righteousness and made to recognize His glory who will be their future Judge. It is a novel exegesis, though it may possibly have the support of Irenæus; and we agree with Dr. MACCULLOCH that 'it introduces a topic which is much more a foreign body in the Epistle than a reference to the Descent to Hades would be.'

The interpretations of 4⁶ (the second Petrine passage) which avoid here a Preaching in Hades are mainly two. The first understands the νεκροί as those now dead, but to whom the gospel has been preached while they were in life; the second as those 'dead in trespasses and sins,' *i.e.* those who are or were spiritually dead, or simply the Gentiles—an interpretation favoured by St. Augustine,

and to which Gschwind's interpretation is somewhat analogous. Those who were spiritually dead, says Gschwind, learned the gospel when it was preached unto them: they now live according to God, *i.e.* spiritually, though men judge them wrongly. But Dr. MACCULLOCH holds that here again the literal interpretation gives the true sense: 'The preaching here spoken of is a preaching in Hades, a general preaching, not to one generation, of which a particular instance—to the disobedient of Noah's time—has already been given in 3¹⁹. Nothing was said there as to the purpose of the Preaching: that is now clearly stated here—that the dead, though

judged, may live to God.' It is added that, though St. Peter refers here to the purpose of the Preaching, he says nothing of its results. He does not teach a doctrine of a Harrowing of Hades. On the other hand, he is not writing a full account of the subject.

For the rest, whether the Petrine passages refer to the Descent or not, the doctrine itself, wherever derived (and Canon MACCULLOCH is opposed to the theory of pagan derivation), soon became very prominent in early Christian thought, as witness its place in the so-called Apostles' Creed.

Moral Problems of To-day.

IX.

Wealth.

BY PRINCIPAL W. F. LOFTHOUSE, D.D., HANDSWORTH.

THERE can be no doubt that in the minds of most thinking people the main issues of life to-day are economic. This is certainly true of politics. The discussions at the last Imperial Conference frankly looked upon the British Commonwealth of Nations as a union of vast trading concerns; the relations between the various European Powers are all of them deeply affected by tariff questions, even when they do not actually hinge upon them. 'Give us universal Free Trade, and there would be no more war.' No one seriously doubts the truth of this axiom. The proceedings of the League of Nations show the same dominant interest. Reviews of the past year at Geneva have observed that purely economic questions have taken up more and more time; and even when statesmen are dealing with the thorny problems of race and racial minorities, money enters into every problem; this is clear enough to watchful eyes at the Round Table Conference.

The phenomenon is not indeed a purely modern one. It is probably true that no war has been fought in the last three centuries in which one or other of the combatants has not felt that financial questions were really supreme, or which would have been fought at all apart from them. It may

even be said that the controlling power of money is the dominating problem for statesmen at the present time; for while the irresponsible use of political power itself has grown very difficult if not impossible in our day, the power of wealth in every department of life has been subjected to no such control, and is not improbably threatening to become an international and world-wide influence such as no empire has ever been.

Quite apart from all this, the question of wealth has a special importance for the Christian Church, and more particularly for the minister. The most serious attack ever made on organized religion as such started with Karl Marx's *Capital*. The real significance of life, urged that work (which was a philosophy as much as a system of economics), is economic and material, not spiritual or religious. Religion is but a drug which has been administered to stupefy the workers of the world, and prevent them from seeing where their real interest lies. For two generations this doctrine has been separating industry from the Church in Germany, and in the last twelve years its effects in Russia have startled and horrified the world.

But even if Marx had never written a line, and Russia were still living beneath the iron hand of