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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

ONE of the most obvious and disquieting features of the religion of to-day is its loss of the note of certainty. The old religion was clear-cut and positive. There were certain things 'most surely believed,' which were proclaimed with absolute confidence by the preacher and received with unquestioning faith by the hearer. But to-day this sense of assurance is greatly weakened, and for many people entirely gone. Anything may be questioned. There is no body of truth divinely certain, no standard of morality which is absolute. In such circumstances the task of the preacher becomes extraordinarily difficult. It is felt by many that no man has the right to speak with authority to another. In the general welter of uncertainty each man must be held free to form his own opinions and follow his own practice unrebuked. Preaching, therefore, tends to become apologetic and weakly conciliatory. And at times the preacher is seen manifestly groping about for some ground of assurance, leaning perhaps for support on some recent theory or pronouncement, because he finds himself unable to say with conviction, 'We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.'

Yet in men's minds there is an unquenchable thirst for certainty. Herein is the pathos of the present situation. Men want to be sure, especially in regard to vital matters; for no state of mind is more restless and uneasy than the state of uncertainty. In order to be rid of it some are ready

to make a blind plunge, like Newman, who in submission to Rome found a peace which was, he says, 'like coming into port after a rough sea.' To most of us that road to certainty is not open. To repress questionings, to dethrone reason, to abdicate our right of private judgment seems too heavy a price to pay for mental peace. None the less we feel the need for certainty. Without it the preacher is doomed to ineffectiveness; without it the Church can never fulfil her mission to the world.

How, then, are we to regain the note of certainty which has been lost? How, amid the confusion of present-day opinion, can we find sure standing ground? How can we, while keeping an open mind, while asserting the rights of reason, while welcoming every advance of knowledge, yet get such a grasp of reality that we can stake our very life upon certain truths? This subject is treated with admirable lucidity by Professor William Adams BROWN, Ph.D., D.D., in *Pathways to Certainty* (S.C.M.; 8s. 6d. net), a book which is full of sound reasoning and ripe Christian wisdom, and which should prove to many a sure guide to a reasonable faith.

Dr. Adams BROWN explains the present uncertainty as being largely due to a narrow conception of certainty. 'There is more than one kind of certainty and more than one way of reaching it. There is the certainty reached by science, in the

conventional sense of the term, and the certainty of common life. The certainty of science is reached by means of laboratory experiment from which all disturbing factors have been systematically eliminated and the result of which commands the assent of all competent observers. The certainty of common life involves personal factors which vary in the case of different individuals and which lead to correspondingly different conclusions.' There is a side of our life which science cannot chart, but where certainty is most important for us—the world of our hopes and fears, our aspirations and our loyalties. 'There are persons to be loved and promises to be trusted, causes which command loyalty and faiths to be embraced.' In regard to all these it is possible to reach certainty, but not by the rigid methods of mechanical science. Now it is to this side of life that religion belongs, and the mistake which is often made is to demand that religious truth shall be scientifically demonstrated, and to suppose that, failing such demonstration, it can never be known for sure. Yet you cannot demonstrate in any such way a friend's faithfulness or a woman's love. No scientist would dream of attempting it. Here he must think and act as a human being and find some other pathways to certainty. And he does find them, as ordinary mortals do. So is it with religion, which involves personal relations in the highest degree. It is possible here to find pathways to certainty such as will satisfy a reasonable mind.

There are four ways of reaching certainty, which may be called, for convenience, the way of Authority, the way of Reasoning, the way of Intuition, and the way of Experiment. All these ways have been in use since ever human thought began to test beliefs. Some have based their certainty upon their confidence in the wisdom of those who have studied the subject before them. Others have used the method of classification and analysis. Still others have reached their goal by the poet's method, as in some sudden flash of insight. Others have made practice their final test. These methods are used by the scientist as well as by the religious man, but they are not all equally applicable to the same subject. 'Where we are studying

physical phenomena like gravitation or electricity, the mathematical methods of exact science are appropriate; where personality is the subject of our inquiry other methods are essential. . . . In our study of nature the personal equation must be eliminated so far as it is possible to do so. In our study of persons it has an indispensable contribution to make.' We must bear this in mind, particularly in the study of religion, in view of the tendency to limit trustworthy knowledge to judgments which are reached through the methods of exact science.

Of the ways to certainty the easiest and most widely used is the way of authority. We believe in a righteous, loving God because our parents believed in Him, or our teachers, or the friends we know best and trust most. There is nothing in this to be ashamed of. 'The fact that through many ages men have believed in God; that the company of believers has included thinkers like Augustine, statesmen like Cromwell, and saints like Francis; the further fact that the belief has continued in spite of all our advance in knowledge and of all the changes in our social environment, creates a presumption in favour of the truth of the belief which commends it to our respectful consideration.' Authority does not relieve us of personal responsibility. We are responsible for the choice of the right authority, and we are also responsible for the right use of the authority we have chosen. There is, however, in our day a widespread revolt against authority; but if authority be properly understood as the authority of the expert speaking within the sphere of his competence we all recognize its right to be heard and trusted. 'In every science there is a central core of agreement which represents the consensus of the best opinion up-to-date, and we look to the expert to tell us what this consensus is and how it bears upon the practical questions which we have to decide.' In religion this authority speaks to us through the Church and the Bible from its ultimate source in Christ.

Certainty may be reached by the path of intuition. 'So far as certainty comes to us in our most in-

timate and personal relationships, it comes to us in this way. How do I know that my friend is to be trusted, or that the woman I love is worthy of my love? Not because any one has told me that it is so, still less because I have weighed the arguments on one side or the other. . . . There is something in me that goes out to what I find in them with an irresistible impulse. I love, I trust, with an intuition of faith.' So do we have irresistible impulses that certain things are true and beautiful and good, utterly to be revered and worshipped, and it cannot be doubted that these intuitions contribute to our knowledge of reality. The mystics have erred in seeking to separate these intuitions from the general intellectual life of man, for to the scientist and the poet also 'intuitions come of truth and beauty that lift them up above all that is transient and fleeting into the realm of the eternal.' Intuition is not in conflict with authority; the two paths meet to form a common highway. Authority adds to the witness of intuition the elements of universality and permanence. 'As authority led us to intuition, so intuition points us back to authority. Neither is complete without the other. In the union of the two we find the most direct and reliable of the ways of approach to God.'

The third of the possible pathways to certainty is reasoning. There have been periods when it was held in the highest esteem. The being and nature of God were thought to be discoverable by reason, and impressive arguments were advanced. These, if not achieving all that has been claimed for them, have not yet lost their weight. 'Granting that we cannot demonstrate the existence of God in this way, it is still true that multitudes of highly intelligent people have been convinced that of all possible explanations of the world that can be given that of theism is the most reasonable.' For many to-day this way of reasoning has lost its force. The magnitude of the physical world as revealed by science and the conditions of life seem to make religious faith in God impossible. These difficulties may easily be exaggerated, and on the other hand it should be noted that 'there are many things about the new universe which modern

physics is revealing to us which make it *easier* and not harder to believe in a God who can make a difference in human life.'

Lastly, there remains the way of experiment, not separate from the others but crowning them. 'The subject of the experiment is man himself as he faces the mystery of life or its tragedy. The thesis he wishes to establish is that there is a good God who is adequate to his need, and the only way to do this is to live as if God were what he assumes Him to be, and note the results that follow. This is what religious men have been doing ever since history began, and this is what they are doing to-day. The name which we give to this practical acceptance of the religious hypothesis is faith. Faith, in the sense of the acceptance of a postulate not admitting of complete logical proof, is, to be sure, not confined to religion. Science, too, lives by faith—faith in the validity of the basic assumptions without which scientific procedure in any form would be impossible. But the faith of religion differs from the faith of science as the conception of God, which is the object of religion, differs from the conception of Nature, which is the object of science. Faith, in the religious sense of the term, has an intimate and personal character which the faith of science lacks. . . . It means not simply to trust, but to prove one's trust by obedience. The story of religion is the story of men who have had faith in this sense, and of the transformations which have resulted in their lives and in the life of society. It is a story of test by experiment.'

What value are we to place upon the 'lay' attitude to religious problems? The question is suggested by an extremely interesting little book, *Christianity and Common Sense*, by Mr. G. F. BRADBY (Millford; 2s. 6d. net). Mr. BRADBY has written books on English poetry and on Shakespeare. Apparently he has no particular philosophical or critical equipment, but he has turned his attention to religion very much as Mr. Middleton Murry did, as something with which he has to

reckon, and on which he has to make up his mind. And he claims that the ordinary educated person ought to have a say in the settlement of these great questions—not merely the philosopher, the theologian, or the critic. Perhaps he would say that his voice really ought to be the decisive one.

It is not always recognized that this attitude is represented in the Bible. There are two religious strains in Scripture, the prophetic or evangelical or 'spiritual,' and the shrewd, sensible, 'wise.' In Isaiah or Hosea we recognize the former, with its intuitions, its spiritual experiences, its messages. In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Job we find the latter. The Wise Men represent common sense in religion. The unbeliever is not so much a sinner as a fool. The shrewd, sensible, level-headed man is seldom an atheist. The atheist is something of an idealist. But the man who deals in facts, and is not obfuscated with theories, can hardly escape from the conclusion that everything proclaims a God. He takes the same attitude to sin. Sin is not so much guilt (as the evangelical would say) as folly. The man who does not see that certain courses lead to ruin is a fool. That is common sense, and the 'Wisdom literature' brings this to bear on all the problems of life.

This is very much the attitude Mr. BRADBY takes up in his argument. He thinks that there are many people who are not indifferent to the principles of the Christian faith, but at the same time are honestly perplexed and unconvinced because of the difficulties in the way, obstinate facts about life and Nature which throw doubt on the Christian assertions. They would like to believe in God and immortality, but they wish to preserve their intellectual honesty, and they have the impression that only what is capable of scientific proof is to be accepted as true. In the case of such people Mr. BRADBY makes an appeal to that kind of reasoning by which ordinary men and women, without much expert knowledge, conduct the affairs of life successfully; a reasoning which faces all the known pros and cons fearlessly. He does not suppose that such reasoning is a sub-

stitute for spiritual experience, but he claims that the application of common sense to the problems of religion leads to certain definite conclusions which help us both to understand and to accept the main religious facts.

He begins with the existence and the nature of God. We are obliged to infer Him whenever we try to explain the existence either of ourselves or of the universe around us. We are obliged to infer Him as a creative Intelligence, working with a purpose. You may philosophize this into thin air, but when you are done, common sense faces you with *facts*, with the fact of Order, and the fact of Beauty, and the fact of Retribution as a law of life, and asks you, 'How do you account for these things apart from an Intelligence?' After all, it is an ordinary sane and sensible principle that you can judge the source of a thing by its nature. If you go into a room that is *arranged* in some kind of order, you *know* that a mind has arranged it. There may be things in the room which you don't like—dirt, broken chairs, and all sorts of things—but these do not in any way invalidate your conclusion that some one with intelligence has made the room what it is.

But what about the dirt and the broken chairs and other disagreeable things? In other words, what about the facts in the universe that are the real difficulties of faith—pain and sin and unequal treatment of men? Mr. BRADBY frankly says he cannot explain these things fully, nor can any one, for the reason that we cannot see the whole of the Divine purpose. Purpose is revealed in Nature, in history, and in life, but the Plan of God in its whole scope is necessarily hidden from our limited intelligence. At the same time common sense can help to set these difficult facts in their right proportions, and that is something. It recognizes, for example, that the 'cruelty of Nature' is an overdone phrase. There is very little real cruelty in Nature. And moreover, wild animals experience pain and pleasure on a much lower scale of intensity than we do. Suffering in our case is to a large extent mental, and if we were free of that, pain would play a far less part in our lives.

Again, common sense can accept the hardness of life, the weight of sheer indifferent Law on us, the inequalities of experience, because it knows that achievement (and particularly spiritual achievement) is only possible under conditions in which right does not necessarily triumph. Mr. BRADBY takes an illustration from football. If 'good football' (not only skilful but honest football) always won through supernatural interventions in favour of the 'godly' side, the whole interest of it as a moral discipline would vanish. We may not be able to envisage the whole scheme of life, but at any rate we can see that life without hardness, without suffering, without trial, would not be life at all in any worthy sense. It is part of our debt to Browning that he has proclaimed this again and again in unforgettable words. Mr. BRADBY goes so far as to include sin in the plan of God. 'The facts appear to show that the plan, of which the Universe is an expression, is based on immutable laws, and that sin, sorrow, and suffering are included in it.'

We cannot follow the writer into his examination of the teaching of Jesus. But we may conclude with an indication of how common sense looks at the evidence for the resurrection of Christ. Mr. BRADBY thinks there are only two possible explanations of the facts, other than their truth. Either there was a 'hoax,' or the experiences were hallucinations. The former is dismissed at once. The latter finds in common sense probably its most devastating critic. The main fact that is 'as plain as a pikestaff' is that the apostles needed a good deal of convincing, and that ultimate conviction was preceded by initial doubt. This seems to be absolutely fatal to the idea of hallucination. Moreover, hallucinations could hardly have taken the forms of the appearances of Jesus in the Gospels. The disciples would have seen Him in glory, probably in the sky, or else in His habit as He had lived before their eyes. But in the Gospels they do not recognize Him. He is changed, and yet He is Himself—a totally unique phenomenon in the way of hallucination.

The conclusion that ordinary sensible men will come to on the evidence, if they are prepared to

believe in spirit at all, will be (1) that Jesus did actually appear to Peter, James, the Apostles, five hundred others, and, probably, Mary Magdalene; and (2) that the dominant factor in recognition was not His form but His personality. 'When He died on the Cross, Jesus passed into the world as a presence that can be felt and known, invisible yet accessible to all who seek Him in spirit and truth. After nineteen hundred years He remains a living force, a personal influence, an abiding presence, in the lives of men.'

Modern thought, scientific and philosophic, takes little account of the Cross of Christ. In the various attempts which are made to interpret the universe, this, which to Christian minds is the most significant fact in history, is completely ignored. Many, indeed, would be ready to ask in surprise what relevance it could have to these discussions. Yet, on a moment's reflection it must appear strange that theology should be looked upon as a secluded and negligible field, and that even Christian philosophers should study the problem of human existence without finding a place in their system for the Cross, without seeming to consider whether there is not to be found in it the master-key to the whole problem.

Stranger still, theologians themselves appear content to acquiesce in this. They regard their task as consisting either in the intellectual interpretation of the religious experience of mankind or in the historical study of the ideas connected with Biblical and historical Christianity. They agree with the scientists and philosophers that theirs is a field apart. Some, through fear of rationalism, would contend that the truth of Christianity lies in a Divine confounding of the reason and conscience of mankind, a kind of 'cutting reason's throat with the knife of revelation.' In this attitude modern theology differs profoundly from the theology of mediæval and early Christian times. To the great Christian thinkers of the past Christ and His Cross had cosmic significance. In the most real and practical sense they held Him to be the Light of

the world, not merely in the sense of giving men moral guidance, but as the One whose coming enabled reason and conscience to see light and order where before there was chaos. According to them theology was the queen of the sciences, gathering together the broken rays of light from all departments of knowledge and labouring to show how they all focus on the Cross.

Whether the incomparably wider fields of modern knowledge will one day be surveyed and interpreted to like purpose by some great Christian genius only the future will reveal. It would be at once a giant's work and a supreme service to the Christian faith. Two very fresh and suggestive lectures bearing on this great theme, which were delivered before the University of Durham by Canon QUICK, have been published under the title of *Philosophy and the Cross* (Milford; 2s. 6d. net). In these the Cross is presented, 'not as the great *mysterium Christi* in which the religious consciousness may find the fulfilment of its adoration and self-abasement, nor as a theological doctrine which rationalizes the religious experience of Christendom, but rather as an abstract, general law of thought and life, which shows its authority and significance outside the specifically religious elements in our nature and beyond the historical revelation enshrined in the Bible and the Church.' It is an attempt to show that Christian truth is in the widest sense catholic and has a bearing upon all the problems of metaphysics and moral philosophy.

Metaphysics must regard the universe as rational, and in a rational universe the ultimate principle of order must be single. 'If there are two or more kinds of order determining different parts of the universe, and if those kinds of order are quite irreconcilable, and not to be harmonized at all in a higher order which includes them, then the total result is unintelligible chaos after all, and the universe must be called irrational.' Now the world of experience is found to manifest various principles of order, any one of which might on inquiry prove to be the all-inclusive principle we are in search of. Three distinct principles call for discussion,

which may, for convenience, be named the mathematical, the scientific, and the axiological.

Discussing these in turn, Canon QUICK finds that the mathematical principle of order leaves no place for the idea of right and wrong, or for the notion of time, or for the world of real events. In pure mathematics there are no real events, and its processes of reasoning are reversible. 'If, then, the rationality of the universe is of the purely mathematical type, there are many things besides the notions of rightness and wrongness which we must describe as illusions of the human brain; equally illusive are directed time, causation, and all actual events, including those which we describe as mathematical calculations. In fact, mathematical order can only become all-inclusive by describing as illusion practically everything that we commonly think of as concrete and real.' The scientific order differs from the mathematical in that it takes account of the world of real events. But it fails because 'it includes all events on an equal footing, and therefore can give no account of their difference in value. The wildest delusion of insanity is as much an event as the deepest inspiration of genius or the plainest intuition of common sense; all three are equally explicable in terms of scientific law; all three equally illustrate the scientific order. Diseased functionings, just as much as healthy activities, exhibit the consistent behaviour of known entities, whether in mind or body. And yet, if we are not to make nonsense of science itself, we must maintain that the carefully trained faculties of mind and will, which are the equipment of the expert, do in fact reveal the order of the real world more truly than the ravings of Bedlam. . . . There must be some principle of order and reason manifested in true insight, and not equally manifested in delusion and stupidity.'

There remains the third type of order, to which Canon QUICK gives the name of the axiological. He defines it as 'any order in which the determining principle is expressed by the word "ought" rather than by the word "must," whether the word "must" be used of logical necessity, as in mathematics, or of invariable sequence, as often in

science.' It is based on value judgments. It presupposes an order of reality which is essentially true and beautiful and good. When, however, we set out to interpret the universe as a rational whole whose ultimate, all-embracing order is of this type, we are at once met by the grim reality of evil. Some, indeed, would explain away this element as being in some way an illusion, but the law of truth lays upon us the obligation not to colour the grim outline of facts with our own ideals and hopes. Bertrand Russell says: 'Moral considerations are the worst enemies of the scientific spirit, and we must dismiss them from our minds if we wish to arrive at truth.' But is this really so? 'Suppose the scientific student seriously dismissed all moral considerations from his mind, suppose he recognised no moral obligation to be strictly honest, to give full weight to some fresh fact which would upset his most cherished theory, to be rigidly unselfish and impartial in his observation—would the cause of truth really be advanced by such moral indifference? Clearly not.' But this implies a value judgment that truth in itself is worth discovering, that there is a rationality in things not wholly alien from goodness. In like manner we find that 'the great artist who faithfully submits his soul and senses to the world as it is, so that his imagination may express for us its meaning, does somehow find a value in reality which rewards his quest, and, not least, when he makes us feel with him the intolerable pain of good wasted, degraded, or defeating itself.' Somehow we are made to feel that there is a worth in pain itself, and that through it the good of the whole is promoted.

What are we to make of these strange contradictions? May we find in them 'an indication that the fundamental structure of reality is after all not indifferent to the principle of value, that even the real evil in the world is or can be made subservient to a law of goodness in the whole or in the end'? The conclusion Canon QUICK reaches is that an affirmative answer is possible only if the doctrine of the Cross, which is the peculiar treasure of the Christian religion, is also the key to the true understanding of the universe. 'Abstractly stated, the doctrine of the Cross stands for the general law

that in all experience the higher good is realised through the loss or surrender of the lower good which is also at its own level real, and that the highest is realised only through the surrender of earthly life itself.'

This appears most clearly in the realm of moral action. Self-sacrifice has supreme ethical value, and we find that its value is even enhanced through failure to achieve its end, as when in attempting a rescue the rescuer himself is lost. Yet if we allowed ourselves to believe that self-sacrifice is vain and accomplishes nothing, the very motive to self-sacrifice would be taken away, since the faith and hope which inspire it would appear as idle dreams. Here we are brought up against an inherent contradiction in the moral experience of man. 'On the one hand, as Plato saw, right action itself implies and involves the faith that the good world, which is its end, can be brought into being by its effort. On the other hand, as Plato also saw, right action can only be seen in its truest and brightest colours, when it is unsuccessful, when it seems to serve no end beyond itself.' To solve the problem Plato postulated two worlds, the ideal faintly shadowed in the real, but he could not bring them into any satisfactory connexion. Christian faith finds the solution in the Cross. It is the supreme expression of self-sacrifice because on the earthly level it represents utter failure, but that very failure, because it is the supreme expression of the love which is at the inmost heart of reality, becomes 'the supreme instrument of Divine power, the means by which good triumphs, evil is redeemed, and the spatio-temporal world, with all its inherent imperfection as well as its unnecessary sins and sorrows, is transmuted so as to come within an eternal heavenly order wherein both the sacrifice and the triumph of love fulfil each other. . . . Vaguely, yet intensely, the Christian feels that he utters more than a conventional phrase of piety when he says that the Cross is in the heart of God. And he knows more definitely what he means when he declares that the Cross, with all its cost of self-negation, characterises for ever the soul of every man who wins eternal life.'