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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

In view of the great demonstration to be held in favour of disarmament on the eleventh of this month, at which the leaders of the three political parties are expected to speak, in view also of the international conference to be held next February —a conference which may well be of incalculable importance for the future history of the world—we make no apology for returning to a book which we briefly noticed in these columns a few months ago by Professor G. J. Heering, of the University of Leyden, and which is introduced in a Foreword by the Rev. Dr. Hector Macpherson.

The book bears the rather unfortunate and in some respects misleading title *The Fall of Christianity* (Allen & Unwin ; 10s. 6d. net). It would have been better to replace this title, which does little to suggest the real subject of the book, and which might well cause it to be overlooked by those who would profit most from its perusal, by the sub-title, *A Study of Christianity, the State, and War.* The chief title appears to have been chosen to suggest the peril to which Christianity is exposed, when the Church becomes too deeply implicated in the fortunes of the State, as it has tended to do ever since the days of Constantine.

The book is in essence a very able argument against war as entirely incompatible with the gospel of Jesus Christ ; but its value is enhanced by a long historical discussion on ' Primitive Christianity and War,' which reviews the ethic of the New Testament and the teaching of the Christian Fathers, and traces the development of ecclesiastical opinion from an original antagonism to war and militarism to tolerance and finally to definite support. This historical discussion is followed by a sketch of the philosophical influences, notably in Germany, which helped to create the political atmosphere that was to some extent at least responsible for the catastrophe which broke upon the world in 1914.

Machiavelli, Luther, Calvin, Hegel, Fichte, and others are passed in review, and their contribution to the creation of opinion on the subjects of War and the State are carefully noted and discussed by a mind which we feel at every point to be peculiarly sensitive to Christian values and resolutely eager to maintain them. It will be no surprise to students of history that it is the humanists rather than the theologians who are opposed on principle to war. It is Erasmus who says : ' Things have come to such a pass that to open one's mouth against war is actually regarded as immoral and unchristian.'

The real crux of the matter lies of course in the relation of the individual to the State. Are there two moralities—one for the State and one for the individual ? Is the State free, in certain exigencies, to do what the Christian or even the merely scrupulous individual would not permit himself to do : and—what is still more important—has the State the right to compel him, in such circumstances, to act against his conscience ? It is here that

Dr. HEERING's discussion of the political philosophers is luminous and valuable.

The arguments of some of them led to the practical apotheosis of the State. Hegel, for example, regarding the State as the most significant expression of the Universal Spirit, argues that it has no higher duty than to maintain itself, and, for this, power is indispensable. The higher righteousness reveals itself in the will of the State, and to this the individual must be subservient. On this Meinecke makes the suggestive comment: 'So came to pass the new monstrosity, namely, that Machiavellianism was inserted *into* the context of an idealist philosophy which included and endorsed all the values of ethics, whereas formerly it had been obliged to lead its life *outside* the moral order which man had built himself.'

Other thinkers, however, dispensing with this philosophical defence, reach practically the same goal by frankly admitting that there are two standards of ethics, one pagan, the other Christian, and that both are necessary. Let us hear the great socialist preacher Friedrich Naumann: 'Both are necessary to life,' he says, 'the mailed fist and the hand of Jesus. The State is pagan, its demands are pagan, but not on that account immoral. It is another ethic, as inevitable as the Christian ethic.' But there is surely here an antinomy, which the consistent Christian thinker must feel it his duty to resolve.

Is the truth not rather that moral ends can never be promoted by immoral means? The spiritual values of which a nation is the custodian cannot be transmitted to the future if they are remorselessly trampled upon in time of war. 'Realpolitik,' as it is called, fails in the end, just because it is not 'real' enough. It does not take sufficient account of the future, it does not understand that it is moral forces that determine the ultimate issue: in short, it does not believe in the moral order. It has no appreciation of the fact that, if there is to be an order at all in human affairs, it must be a *moral* order; any attempt to create an order on any other basis—on the basis, for example, of cunning or force—can end in nothing but dispeace and chaos. Or, to state the case in the language of religion, it fails, as it is bound to fail, because it does not believe in God. It does not understand the truth put so trenchantly by Isaiah, that '*He also* is wise.'

The case against the cruelty, the wickedness, the stupidity of war is put with terrible realism by Dr. HEERING. He reminds us—and we need to be reminded—that it is impossible to humanize war; the attempt, which does more credit to the heart than to the head, is as impossible as would be the attempt to humanize the tiger. Early in the Great War two thousand five hundred British sailors were sent to their death in a few minutes by the sinking of three cruisers. The sooner we recognize that such things constitute the essence of war, the more likely we shall be to turn to a more humane way for the settling of international disputes. To the chemical horrors of the last war will in all likelihood be added, the, if possible, more appalling horrors of bacterial warfare in the next war, should there ever be another. A generation is rising up that knows nothing of these things, and it is well that they should not be forgotten.

But war carries in its train other consequences not less terrible, perhaps indeed more so. As some one has said, the first casualty to fall in war is truth. Misrepresentation and falsehood are not incidental, they are integral to the prosecution of it. Again, the rights of personality are ignored; each man is but a pawn in the cruel game, his only right being to 'do and die,' but on no account to 'reason why' —that is the monstrous demand of war. And again, reprisals are inevitable. Combatants are driven to do what they abhor themselves for doing, with the result that moral values, for the defence of which war is usually, at least by one group of the combatants, ostensibly undertaken, are trampled in the dust.

It is good to be able to believe that there are in every land men, however few, who even in the direst straits are prepared to uphold the moral ideal and who would refuse at any price to sacrifice it to political expediency—men like Professor Kohn-

stamm (quoted by Dr. HEERING) who says: 'There are things which I hope the Dutch nation would never do, even though it must go to pieces for declining them.' In truth, however, the moral constitution of the world is such that nations like these are little likely to go to pieces. This is the truth that sustained Habakkuk when he said, 'The just *shall live* by his faithfulness,' and it is the truth re-asserted two and a half millennia later by Professor Foerster when he says: 'Only those states shall live which are determined for the sake of righteousness to die. For Providence will not let those nations die which try to live with moral and spiritual power like this, by the deepest revelations and proclamations of truth which man has received for out of them may be built up something higher than the life and society of the beasts.'

There are welcome signs in these days that Christian thinkers are more disposed than formerly to concentrate attention upon the Word of God. Behind all questions of literary and historical criticism, which have too much occupied the Christian mind of our time, there is at the heart of the gospel a veritable Word of God, a Divine message, a *kerugma* which it is the mission of the preacher to proclaim, and the function of theology to explore and express. The Christian message, though it presents many problems, is not primarily an addition to our problems. It is 'Good News of God, a revelation of the character of God in which is to be found the answer to those questions which are every man's concern.' The influence of the Barthian school is doubtless to be traced in this increased emphasis on the Word of God, though more generally it may be regarded as a natural and healthy reaction of the Christian spirit, which feels the need of strongly reaffirming its central message in face of the radical criticism of the age. In these matters no saner guide can be found than Dr. Sydney CAVE, the President of the Cheshunt College, Cambridge, to whose teaching many owe a deep debt. He has now published a volume on *The Doctrines of the Christian Faith* (Hodder & Stoughton; 8s. 6d. net), in which he sets himself to answer the question, 'What is the Word of God, and how can we declare it?'

Dr. CAVE comments on the curious dislike for theology expressed in many quarters. 'The contempt for theology felt by those outside the Church need occasion no surprise,' for the theologian, like the preacher, must be content to appear 'a fool for Christ's sake.' What is surprising is the dislike felt for theology by many within the Church, and not least by some who themselves are preachers of the gospel. For what is Christian theology but the systematic attempt to explore more fully and express more adequately that Christian message which the preacher is set apart to proclaim. Yet preachers have been known even to boast of their ignorance of theology. 'We do not find students in other faculties boasting of their ignorance. They would be afraid, if they did, of being accused of idleness or of incompetency.'

The dislike for theology, however, is not restricted to the mentally indolent. In the general unsettlement of thought following upon the War many believers are driven to feel that the only path of safety for them is to fall back on a bold reaffirmation of Protestant orthodoxy or a revival of Medievalism when faith and reason seemed to be united and men were, as it is believed, untroubled by the perplexities which distress our generation. Others, perhaps a more numerous company, take the opposite course. 'In their natural revolt against the excessive dogmatism of an earlier age, they have an aversion to any definite statement. They feel the appeal of Christ's character. They prize what they call the simple Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount. But they do not desire to go on to ask, Who was that Man who spoke with such decisive force, and what is the content and authority of His revelation of God, and of man's nature and destiny? They prefer half-tones and neutral phrases, and, if they had their way, they would reduce the preacher's message to the record of his own devout impressions.'

For the Christian preacher, however, the choice does not lie between having a theology and having

none at all. It lies between having a theology which is good and having a theology which is bad. 'A theology is good or bad according to the measure in which it worthily interprets the Christian Gospel.' Judged by this standard all theologies have not been good. Some have been too academic, too exclusively occupied with the controversies of the past, ' with the result that many a young minister has turned away with weariness from the study of theology, believing that it has as its chief concern, not the exploration of the gospel, but the discussion of abstruse problems in which as a preacher he has no interest.' But we cannot rid ourselves of false theologies by the simple device of having no theology at all. ' The great problems of life and destiny are too solemn and urgent to be for long evaded. If the preacher is to speak, and not merely to mumble, he must have something to say in answer to them.' He has to confirm the faith of those within the Church who are perplexed, and he can only do that by fairly meeting their doubts and difficulties. He has to preach the gospel to those who are outside the Church, and to relate it to the problems which are stirring men's minds in a world that is largely pagan. ' They are problems which concern the meaning of the universe, and the value and permanence of our human lives. And these problems are only variant forms of that first and final problem, is there a God, and, if so, what is He like and what is the secret of His rule ? ' In dealing with these problems theology deals with the most practical of all themes, and is essential to the due fulfilment of the preacher's work.

If the prime concern of theology is the revelation of God in Christ received by faith, then it is evident that there can be no final theology. For our knowledge of God's revelation is imperfect, our appropriation of it is incomplete, and the categories in which we seek to express it are transient and local. ' Truth is one, but the approaches to it are many. A true theology and a true philosophy would agree in their conclusions. But the method of theology is different from that of philosophy. Philosophy works upward from the consideration of man and the universe. Christian theology has for its first concern the exploration of the revelation of God in Christ known by believing men.' Now this revelation is a revelation of God active in man's salvation, a personal revelation which can only be known by that personal response which we call faith. Faith, then, is an organ of knowledge, the knowledge of God, for we come to know God, not by an act of bare cognition, but by our experience of His saving influence. This knowledge of faith, it should be observed, gives us assurance only in regard to faith's immediate utterances. It does not guarantee the truth of our theories or the correctness of our inferences. ' Faith may know with certainty that God has spoken to us in Christ, and has in Him brought us into the relationship of children to their Father. But the Christian experience of God revealed as Father, through the Son and in the Spirit, is one thing. A theological statement of the doctrine of the Trinity is another. The first is an immediate utterance of Christian faith ; the second is an ultimate implicate, an attempt to give to faith's immediate utterance a coherent expression.'

Yet we are compelled to give some coherent expression to our faith. We cannot isolate our religious thought; we must relate it to the philosophy and science of our time. ' This revelation, which is known as it is received, and this experience, which is the experience of the revealed, have to be expressed in the thought-forms of our age.' In endeavouring to do this it is natural to inquire what reliance may be placed on Scripture and Church dogmas. In regard to the former we find that ' God has not willed to give to men a book of indubitable facts and clearly formulated teachings. A religion based upon an infallible handbook of religion and ethics would be a religion, static and legalistic. Christianity is not founded on a book, but on the personal revelation of the living God.' The Bible is the classic record of this revelation of God known in human experience and expressed in the thought-forms of its age. It is to be received as the Word of God in the sense that it is the only record of the redeeming love of God, a record known to be true by the witness of His Spirit in the believing heart.

With regard to dogmas, we find that the Church of apostolic times had no authoritative theology.

'What it had was a *kerugma*, a preaching message which represented the common tradition of the Church, and was summed up in such short and pregnant sayings as these: "Jesus is Lord," "Christ died for our sins and rose again." . . . Only when Christianity became the nominal religion of the Empire was the attempt made to secure the authoritative definition of Christian truth by Œcumenical Councils.' These dogmas did useful service in their day, and they mark decisive stages in the clarification of men's conceptions of God's revelation in Christ. But there can be no infallible dogmas. Each age has to formulate its own theology. 'We have the same right and obligation to express our faith in the thought-forms of our age and place as those who expressed Christianity in the thought-forms of the Græco-oriental world.' The one thing that is permanent and vital is the *kerugma*, the preaching message, for the Church cannot live unless it has a gospel to proclaim. 'Dogmas have their value as the expression of the way in which, in the past, errors have been rejected, and the content of the Gospel reasserted. But not even the most venerable and prized of the creeds can save us from the trouble of expressing our own faith. Theology has still to attempt the task of stating in the thought-forms of our age the common Christian experience of the God revealed in Christ.'

In a very able book, *The Head of the Corner*, by Dr. Louis Matthews SWEET, Professor of Theology in Chicago (Scribners; 7s. 6d. net), which is a first-hand investigation of how Jesus passed from being the Founder to being the Substance of the Christian religion, there is an interesting chapter on 'The Distinction between Fact and Interpretation and the Application of it in the New Testament' which not only reveals the quality of the book but throws some light on the value of New Testament ideas and beliefs. We hope our brief account of this discussion will send many readers to the book itself. It is an exceedingly helpful book for faith and understanding.

A broad line of distinction runs clear through the New Testament books between statements of fact and statements of judgment or opinion. Two examples of this may suffice. One is in the twentieth chapter of John, where the writer says that the 'signs' which Jesus performed were very numerous, and that those he had related were mentioned 'that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' The other instance is from the preface to St. Luke's Gospel. He says that many narratives of 'the established facts of our religion' have been drawn up, and that he has reduced them all to an orderly story, 'in order that your excellency may know the solid truth of what you have been taught.' The 'solid truth' referred to was the gospel which the Apostles proclaimed.

What is the distinction between fact and interpretation, and how does it work out? If you read St. Peter's speech in Ac 10^{36-43} you will find there in essence the whole story of Christianity. There is an *outline* of the gospel story made into the *substance* of the Christian message. And you can see how the interpretation which makes that message arose out of the events of history. The facts make the interpretation. Take, for example, the Resurrection of Christ which Peter centralizes. The fact of resurrection is not in itself momentous. It might be merely a portent. It became a part of the living message of the gospel because into it was poured the richness of the life and personality of Jesus. It is not merely a miracle. It is the truth of 'the Risen Christ.'

Or, again, take the assertion that Jesus was the Messiah. In the New Testament the term 'Christ' has a history. It was at first an adjective, then a title, and finally a proper name. In the Gospels the personal name Jesus is always distinguished from the title 'the Christ,' and the whole significance of the story is based on that distinction. In the later teaching this distinction has passed away, and Christ is just as much a proper name as Jesus, because Jesus for the believer *is* the Christ. But the value of the name for a gospel depends on the meaning which it has acquired from Jesus Himself. The Old Testament hopes and ideas give no basis for the meaning which actually filled the name for the Christian. The name was susceptible to mis-

interpretation, and in fact the Jews so misconceived it. The name had to be interpreted in the light of what Jesus was and did before it could fit Him. The Jew could easily imagine Messiah saying, 'Bow down before the Lord's Anointed.' He could not imagine the Messiah saying, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

Or take the name Son of God. There is extant in Asia Minor an inscription in which Julius Cæsar is called 'Son of God.' A term which could be applied to Cæsar would have to be redeemed before it could be applied by Christians to their Master. The meaning of the title depends on what is meant by God. And what God is Jesus revealed. The greatest sentence in the New Testament is 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' It does not matter who wrote this or when it was written. It expresses what the Christians of every age have found in Jesus. And when they called Jesus 'Son of God' they put into that name all that He had revealed of God to them. Their God is the Father whom Jesus has disclosed. Again, the fact determines the interpretation. The moral and spiritual qualities of Jesus give positive content and meaning to the terms which are used to interpret Him.

Apply this principle to the miracles in the Gospels. Are these facts or interpretations? The vital matter is the relationship of these deeds to the portrait of Jesus. Are they congruous with His character as Helper and Saviour of men? There are two principles established at the Temptation which were carried out consistently to their fulfilment in His death: (1) the acceptance of the limits imposed by a genuine incarnation, a life of subordination, trust, and obedience; and (2) a Messianic career of love and self-sacrifice rather than spectacular self-assertion and conquest. Now the wonders attributed to Jesus embody and realize these principles. They are a congenial and harmonious element in His self-manifestation as Son and Saviour. They exhibit His character in action, and cease therefore to be wonders to be doubted. They are natural in Jesus in the highest sense. Could anybody possibly thus dream out acts of Jesus which would harmonize with His character and uncover His heart?

As a matter of fact this applies to the whole portrait of Jesus. To construct an imaginary picture that would be true and harmonious is one of the most difficult feats of literary art. Indeed, it is hard enough to do this when facts are at your disposal. To do it 'out of your head' is an impossibility except for supreme creative genius. The life of Jesus in the Gospels consists of a miscellany of incidents in which Jesus speaks and acts in response to contacts with all sorts and conditions of men, loosely strung together, and representing the way the Apostles used to tell the story to pupils and listeners. And the only internal connexion between them is the character of Jesus. And the personality lives! We know Jesus! All the more that many of the details do not readily fit in with the ideas of the writers. They are telling the human story of the Son of God. And the human limitations are there simply because the writers cannot get away from the facts.

Notice this amazing result. The direct impression of the personality of Jesus upon the minds of the disciples was powerful enough to transform the very categories which were used to interpret Him. That is to say, Jesus has given to the terms used to describe Him, some of them consecrated by long and very sacred association, a meaning not drawn from history or common usage but from His own ideas and purposes. The preconceptions of His disciples were overborne and reconstructed by His personal influence. They were forced on all sides to a new scheme of interpretation. Take His teaching, for instance. That He should be a teacher at all was disturbing to the first followers. Messiah was to be something very different. It was only slowly that they came to see and interpret the teaching as wholly germane to the person. 'The light from his face fell on the teaching and was reflected back to the face again, lighting and giving light.' Here as elsewhere the fact was necessary before the interpretation became possible.

In the same way His disregard of many of the

most sacred things and usages, as they had been taught to regard them, must have been very unwelcome and puzzling to His disciples until they realized that this was part of His revelation of God to them. The sons of the Kingdom were *free*, and this was the point at which St. Paul takes up the very thought of Jesus. 'The sons are free' might sum up all Paul's teaching. And so we might pursue the same process in other directions. We see how the idea of 'salvation' was transformed by what Jesus was and did, and how the apocalyptic hopes of that day were transfigured by Jesus and found a necessary place in the message He gave to His disciples. And all through the New Testament we see how the positive content of their conception of Jesus as Saviour and Lord came not from abstract considerations, or inherited hopes or longings, or from Old Testament promises, but from Jesus Himself—what He was and said and did and suffered and achieved.

Moral Problems of Today.

XII.

Sunday Observance.

By the Right Reverend A. A. David, D.D., Bishop of Liverpool.

There are three currents of thought which intermingle and sometimes conflict in the general approach to this question. The first comes from the Christian Churches, the natural guardians of the Christian Sunday; the second from the State, whose main function in this regard is to preserve the liberty of the individual, but to prevent his encroachment upon the liberty of others; and the third is public opinion, that unstable but powerful and, in the last resort, decisive influence in the ordering of social life. It is the purpose of this article to examine the interaction of these three interests, both in history and at the present time, and to suggest how they may be harmonized in the work of building up a just and wholesome tradition which shall allow for them all.

Beginnings.—During the earlier part of the first three centuries, when most professing Christians were in humble walks of life, the question hardly arose. A simple service early in the morning with a common meal in the evening was enough to mark 'the fixed day' in every week for those who were not strong enough to separate it in any other way from other days. Gradually, as the Christians rose in social status and influence, was made the claim that their day of common worship should also be a holiday. This claim was strengthened by the tradition of the pagan festivals on the one hand, and on the other by the Jewish inheritance of the Sabbath. But it came from below. Public opinion was steadily moving in that direction, at first without much guidance, or indeed encouragement, from the official authorities of the Church. By the end of the third century, however, the ecclesiastical and theological leaders were adopting, justifying, and administering the popular conception of a day like the Sabbath, set aside for religious observance and involving a general cessation of labour. In 305 a Spanish Council went so far as to make attendance at worship compulsory, and to punish continued absence with excommunication; and in 321 came Constantine's famous decree, enacting a public holiday once in every week on the 'day of the Sun,' with exemption for those who tilled the land. What his motive was, has been disputed. Probably, like most motives, it was mixed. It is likely enough that for social reasons he seized the opportunity to substitute a weekly day of rest for the numerous but irregular pagan festival days. But it is certain that he was largely influenced by the Christian demand for freedom to exercise their own observance. Thus he secured what every statesman seeks, namely, separate streams of support from different sections, converging, each for reasons of its own, upon the measure he proposes. The decree was generally accepted as the basis of particular laws of Church and State, reflecting the special emphasis laid at various times and in various regions upon particular directions of its application. One Council in 585 goes further