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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'In the beginning, God'—in these grand words our Bible opens its wonderful story. It is a very splendid beginning, and it would be a very splendid motto for the New Year; for the work which is begun with God as the great Companion of our way will have some chance of being continued and ended in Him, with infinite profit to ourselves, and—so far as we can affect it—to the work of the world.

Of course those words refer in their original setting to the creative power of God. This is an idea which in the Bible receives much more emphasis and is of vastly more religious value than we are accustomed to suppose. It appears in the earlier (Gn 2) no less than in the later story of Creation (Gn 1). It is one of the dominant ideas in the appeals of the great prophet of the Exile (Is 40–55), it is in a sense the climax of the Book of Job (chs. 38–39), it is presented with singular comprehensiveness and beauty in the great Nature Psalm, so-called (Ps 104), and in other psalms it is touched upon, yet so lightly and incidentally that by the careless reader its full religious significance is apt to be overlooked, as in Ps 121, where the writer says, 'My help cometh from the LORD *who made heaven and earth*.' The wonderful thing is that it is no less a One than the God of the universe, its Creator and Sustainer, who condescends to take His place 'at my right hand.'

Now even those of us who are not scientists by training or inclination ought to strive to recapture the wonder of this thought, and to watch with gratitude its re-establishment among the ideas which are being emphasized by many of the great exponents of science to-day. The day is gone—let us hope for ever—when the universe can be regarded as a gigantic machine. Behind it—it is being increasingly felt and proclaimed—is Mind, Soul, call it what you will, but something, or rather some One, of a capacity inconceivable to our imagination, who originated and sustains it. The Bible calls this some one God, it finds Him controlling Nature and history; and the glory of the individual life is that it can link itself in glad submission to this 'Lord of all being, throned afar,' and reinforce its own feeble resources by the resources of Him who is the 'Centre and Soul of every sphere.'

The Bible's interest in ideas is always a religious rather than a scientific interest. Its satisfaction, for example, at the contemplation of Nature is never merely scientific or even æsthetic. Even if he could, the Hebrew would never have spelt Nature with a capital letter; Nature was not God, it was God's, a revelation of His power and wisdom. Thus there are, strictly speaking, no Nature Psalms in the Bible: the thoughts which Nature evokes are always used to confirm the religious temper and reinforce the religious life. The poet who looked upon the midnight sky with its moon and stars was led to think with grateful awe that the

God who hung them there was his God, mindful every day of His seemingly so insignificant creature, and he was filled with reverent wonder that this God 'so kind to him should be.'

The creative power of God is set forth in terms of peculiar grandeur and impressiveness by Deutero-Isaiah, but he has a purely practical and religious end in view. He is addressing people whose hope has been crushed out of them by the sorrows of the Exile, men who are saying, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my case is being ignored by my God.' And he seeks to rekindle their flickering hope by recalling them to the thought of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, never faint and never weary. Similarly, the wonderful panorama which is brought before the eyes of Job (ch. 38 f.) in language of extraordinary splendour is designed to remind him of the mysterious power and wisdom and care with which the universe, of which he is a part, is everlastingly sustained.

And it is not for nothing that Pss 103 and 104 are placed together. Even Ps 104 by itself is very much more than a noble eulogy of the creative power of God. It is instinct with the feeling of the love which inspired the great creative process and kept in view throughout it all the ultimate needs not only of human but of animal life. But how much more deeply charged with meaning and comfort does Ps 103 become, when it is realized that the God who forgives our iniquities and heals our diseases and pities us as a father his children is the God of unimaginable power and majesty, who covers Himself with light as with a garment, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and who laid the foundations of the world.

Perhaps this thought appears in its most intimately tender form in Ps 139. There the God from whose presence there is no escape touches human life in every detail and in the most vital way; and this God of the personal life is the God of the infinite spaces, Lord of all the generations of men, who sits as King upon His everlasting throne, high and lifted up, Lord of history, whose sublime purpose marches down the ages triumphant, despite all the folly and wickedness of men. What a source of strength to remember that it is He who is 'the Maker of heaven and earth' and who 'keepeth Israel' that 'keepeth thee.'

What this God is like, those know who have looked upon the face of Jesus Christ. As with full surrender of heart and life we can trust Jesus whose ways we know and whose witness is self-authenticating, so, and with a confidence no less, may we trust the God whom no man hath seen at any time, but whose name is Love, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. If we have the assurance that God is with us 'in the beginning' of our New Year, we may go forward with good hope to all its experiences, despite all political, economic, and individual perplexities, believing that the God who day by day sustains the world which His own fingers framed will no less surely sustain the souls of those who put their trust in Him.

A generation ago the works of a popular writer of religious stories for girls had a great vogue. One of the favourite themes of the authoress was that of the Philadelphia business man who had acquired immense wealth and lived in an enormous house and yet was always in his place in church, of the Boston lawyer who got steeper fees than any other lawyer in town and yet conducted a Bible class for 'down-town' boys, of one who owned the largest dry-goods store in New York and yet never missed the weekly prayer meeting. In our own day it is not unknown for the Church to receive the patronage of distinguished sportsmen.

If we do not feel that the Christian gospel needs these letters of recommendation from men who have won eminence in walks of life that are not distinctively Christian, correspondingly we are not depressed when our religion does not win the approval of well-known philosophers or novelists whose books sell by the thousand. Two criticisms of Christ are dealt with in *What shall we say of Christ?* by the Rev. Sydney CAVE, D.D., President of Cheshunt College, Cambridge (Hodder & Stoughton; 3s. net), a book written with all Dr. CAVE'S accustomed scholarship and grace.

Mr. Bertrand Russell finds one 'very serious defect' in the moral character of Christ, namely, that He believed in eternal punishment. One repeatedly finds in Christ 'a vindictive fury against those people who would not listen to his preaching—an attitude which is not uncommon with preachers, but which does somewhat detract from superlative excellence. You do not, for instance, find that attitude in Socrates. You find him quite bland and urbane towards the people who would not listen to him.' Dr. CAVE has no difficulty in showing that Mr. Bertrand Russell, far from knowing the elements of New Testament criticism, does not seem even to have read the Gospels in the Revised Version.

Mr. Russell's criticism, then, is that Christ did not show superlative excellence, that He was not always quite bland and urbane. Mr. H. G. Wells' objection to Christ is that He *did* show superlative excellence, that He was *too* bland and urbane. 'The Christian's Christ is too fine for me, not incarnate enough, not flesh enough, not earth enough. He was never foolish and hot-eared and inarticulate, never vain, he never forgot things, nor tangled his miracles.' One wonders if Mr. Wells has ever listened to anti-Christian street oratory. If he had, he might have learned that one of the Secularist charges against Him is just that He was 'hot-eared,' as in His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees in Mt 23.

But the question Mr. Wells raises is one of great practical importance, and it is one which we are all competent to answer for ourselves. When the prodigal repents, will he or will he not be more effective as a Christian preacher than the elder brother who needs no repentance? Do those confessions of sin which have so prominent a place in the Oxford Movement increase or diminish the influence of those who make them?

The late Dr. Denney once warned his students against an indiscriminate use of the principle of accommodation. He pictured a clergyman sitting by the kitchen-fire of a member of his congregation and talking the language of the people with the accent of the people, under the impression that he was making himself all things to all men and so becoming a better pastor.

But the difficulty chiefly concerns grave moral lapses. A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind. Does the knowledge that our religious guide has shown himself as weak as ourselves make him a more trusted guide? The writer 'To the Hebrews' was quite clear on the point. It was our Lord's fellowship in our temptations, not in our sin, that qualified Him to be our high-priest. Our Lord was tempted in all points like as ourselves; but if the statement had ended there, we should have found in Him no refuge and no strength. The 'yet without sin' is not an added ornament; it is of the very essence of the matter.

The knowledge that the Christian preacher has to contend with the same temptations as other men is a powerful asset in his dealings with them. The knowledge that he has yielded to these temptations is always a source of weakness, never in any degree a source of strength. If one has fallen before one of these temptations and afterwards, by the grace of God, overcome it, his victory will give encouragement to others engaged in the same struggle. But there is a certain degree of moral failure which, however much we may repent of it, or however much we may be conscious of forgiveness, will, for all practical purposes, effectually extinguish our influence as Christian leaders.

Dr. Charles E. RAVEN'S Inaugural Lecture as Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge has been published in pamphlet form under the title *Signs of the Times* (Cambridge University Press; 2s. net). The lecture offers some reflections—in the light of present-day attitudes—on the scope and opportunity of theology. It is a characteristic piece of writing, and it admirably fulfils the purpose of an Inaugural Lecture.

Professor RAVEN finds that theology is contemned in certain quarters as having failed in three direc-

tions. It has failed (1) to supply a coherent, unifying, and practicable interpretation of the universe, (2) to lay stress upon the personality of Jesus Christ, (3) to disclose the Spirit's resources of power.

(1) Undoubtedly there is need for a coherent interpretation of the meaning and worth of existence. Without such there can be among us no common purpose, no common ideals of life, no unity in the realm of international and inter-racial relationships; and the aspiration after unity finds increasingly clamant expression in our time. And if the interpretation of the universe is to be compelling, it must satisfy not only man's intelligence but also his emotional and moral nature. It must, in in fact, be a religion.

To judge by recent output, theologians are fully aware of the need of constructing a system of thought which shall do justice to our best knowledge of the natural world and to the highest experiences of religion. At a time of rapid and revolutionary change this is an enormously difficult task. But that it has been essayed in the University of Cambridge, Dr. Tennant's 'Philosophical Theology' and Dr. Oman's 'The Natural and the Supernatural' bear witness.

(2) Besides the need for unity, there is also strongly felt among us the need for a re-assertion of the worth of personality and for a re-ordering of our society and our standards on the basis of personal relationships. This need is experienced both in the world of industry, where the machine tends to negate personality, and in the world of thought, where also the worth and liberty of the person are threatened by the impersonal, the mechanical, the standardized (whether in poetry or painting, in religion or ethics).

It must be allowed that the personality of Christ has not been interpreted so fully and freely among us as it might have been. For the past two generations Biblical scholarship has been directed towards intensive study of the text, the authenticity, the dating, and the detailed criticism of the documents. But it has been the prelude to a greater task. The interpretation of the significance of the teaching and the Person of Jesus Christ should now increasingly dominate our studies. In doctrinal theology we should devote ourselves to the exposition of the Incarnation. This would do more than anything else to unfold the true character and highest possibilities of personality.

(3) A third aspiration of our time, occasioned by the failure to achieve the others, is the craving for power. The craze for speed and excitement, the enthusiasm for records and championships, the many-avenued search for spiritual comfort, all testify to man's need for power and consciousness of weakness.

Where the Church neglects or misunderstands the doctrine of the Spirit of power, from whom come the gifts of love, joy, and peace, it cannot expect to commend its message. And alongside of special study of the Holy Spirit and of His presence in the ordered life of the Church should go an endeavour to relate the work of the Holy Spirit more closely to the particular circumstances and practical requirements of our own time. The nature and use of money, of leisure and recreation, of sex and marriage, of commerce and industry, of government and racial contacts—on these and similar matters our future preachers should be helped to form considered and Christian convictions.

Clearly these three signs of the times correspond not only to the criticisms commonly passed upon theology, but to the central tenets of the Christian religion. 'One God, the Father, in whom we live and move and have our being; one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of Man and Son of God, unique image of deity, supreme and effective symbol of the eternal; one Holy Spirit, lord and life-giver, inspirer of the individual, creator of the fellowship; these three express our belief that man's present quest is for nothing other than that which theology has formulated and proclaims.'

There has been a welcome reaction in recent times against the mediæval conception of Christ as a pale, ghostly figure, and also against the 'Sunday-school' conception of Him as 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.' We are being taken straight to the Gospels in order to discover the real Jesus as the Evangelists have depicted Him and suggested Him. This picture has nowhere been more convincingly portrayed than in Mr. A. P. TERHUNE'S recent book, *The Son of God*, noticed briefly in our last issue. The interest of Mr. TERHUNE'S presentation is increased by the fact that, as he explains, he has never read any 'life' of Jesus, but has taken his idea of Him from the Gospels alone.

Here is the truth as Mr. TERHUNE has discovered it for himself. In the first place, Jesus was a carpenter, and carpenter work, in that day and in that region, was no job for a weakling. 'In my own very young manhood I used to stand by the hour at the unfronted entrance of the shop [at Nazareth] and watch the men at work. They had no modern labour-saving appliances. Tough logs must be hewn by hand with awkward tools. Beams and joists weighing hundreds of pounds often must be handled and swung aloft without pulleys. The day's labour called for more strength than skill. The Nazareth carpenter and his helpers whom I used to watch were squat fellows. They were bulging of muscle, stalwart in every inch; unbelievably powerful at lifting and chopping and hammering. The fragile and womanish body of the Christ of the stained-glass windows—how long could such a puny physique have lasted in a job like that? Yet, presumably, from His twelfth until His thirtieth year Christ was toiling constantly at just such labour. None but a strong man could have done that.'

Mr. TERHUNE points out that the forty days' fast was possible only for an unusually vigorous frame. Many notoriety hunters have tried the experiment, with the result that long before the end of the ordeal they were in a state of collapse. Weeks of recuperation and careful feeding were needed to build up their hunger-wasted systems. It was not very long after the wilderness fast that Jesus was mobbed by His fellow-Nazarenes who intended to throw Him down from the hilltop. Few normal men could have escaped rough handling at the least. But Jesus 'passing through the midst of them, went his way.' St. Luke devotes only these few words to a feat which is remarkable from any point of view. Even if 'giant strength' were not needed, the scene sets before us One whose personality and authority were sufficient to baulk the crowd and drive them out of His path.

A point of very real significance is the tremendous strain of the journeys Jesus undertook. 'I used to try to duplicate some of the daily foot journeys of Christ through the Holy Land. I was young and an athlete, and I was well shod. Jesus had been barefoot [did He not have sandals?], and often wearied by long journeys on the preceding days and by scarcity of food. Yet I found one or two of those walking records, across the steep mountains, impossible for me to equal. No frail stained-glass Christ could have accomplished such body-wracking hikes.' The facts are perhaps here pressed a little too hard, but the suggestion of bodily fitness implied in the actual conditions of the daily life of Jesus is soundly based. Another picture which confirms what has been urged about the physical frame of Jesus is His Cleansing of the Temple. 'Men do not run away, leaving their goods behind them, unless their fear of the assailant who drives them away is greater than their desire for the valuables they are deserting.'

But it is not mere physical strength and fitness that are predominantly depicted in the Gospels. It is the power of Christ's personality that is everywhere clearly suggested. Look at some of the glimpses we have of Him. First of all, His steadfast resolution to go down to Jerusalem when He knew what awaited Him there. By turning back He might have lived comfortably to a serene old age. Neither Rome nor Judaism would have molested Him, whereas shame and desertion and crucifixion awaited Him in the Capital. And 'He set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem.' He might have escaped at any time during these

fateful days in Jerusalem. But He refused. In the same Spirit He refused the relief on the Cross of a stupefying drug which was frequently procured for a crucified criminal by his friends. He forgot His pain, indeed, to comfort the dying thief who was crucified beside Him. These pictures of Jesus are typical. Like instances could be multiplied to show the untruth of the traditional representations of Jesus found in 'Christian art' and in conventional religious teaching.

Mr. TERHUNE takes as the climax of his own presentation the moment on the Cross when Jesus uttered the words, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' These words are commonly interpreted as a cry of dereliction, expressing the Saviour's dreadful sense of forsakenness. But to Mr. TERHUNE this is inconceivable. And it is also unnecessary. The words are the opening sentence of one of the Psalms, the twenty-second. The Psalm was known by its first line, as 'Rock of Ages,' 'Nearer, my God, to Thee' are known to us. In this Psalm there are many phrases that could be read into His own experience, such as 'they pierced my hands and my feet.' And Jesus was repeating the Psalm to Himself as He hung on the Cross. Why? To comfort His friends who were there, says Mr. TERHUNE, by reminding them that all this had been foretold long ago. It was His supreme act of self-forgetfulness, the finest instance of His 'shining strength.' We may not be able to follow the author in this interpretation, and yet accept the fact that this cry was not one of desolation. For the twenty-second Psalm was really a song of trust in God, and Jesus may have been repeating it to Himself as a simple act of confidence in His Father. The words the onlookers caught were the opening words. But they may not have meant what traditional theology asserts they meant.

Brunner and the Moral Problems of our Time.

BY THE REVEREND SYDNEY CAVE, M.A., D.D., PRESIDENT OF CHESHUNT COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

THE title of this article may seem to some to savour of paradox. Brunner is a Barthian, and what have Barthians to say on the moral problems of our age? In his famous Commentary on Romans, Barth was as contemptuous of Christian Ethics as of Christian theology. Barth has long since recovered from what he later called 'the childish disease of being ashamed of theology,' but he still speaks as if we should jettison the whole development of theology from Schleiermacher through Ritschl, and in his Prolegomena to Theology (*Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes*) quotes with most approval the words of the Schoolmen of Protestant Orthodoxy, and that Orthodoxy was too concerned with correct belief to be much interested in moral problems.

Brunner writes without the violence of Barth, and is not, as Barth often is, the victim of a love for paradoxes. But his great book, *The Mediator* (*Der Mittler*), described by Canon Mozley in the September issue of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, poured bitter scorn on modern attempts to describe the Jesus of history. All such attempts are variants of the one theme: that men do not believe in Christ. In spite of the concluding paragraphs in which he speaks of following Christ being the consequence of faith in Him, a casual reading of the book could easily lead to the view that Brunner, too, had little interest in modern perplexities of conduct. It has been from the attempts to understand the Jesus of history which he condemns that modern movements in Christianity to deal with social problems have often sprung.

The publication a few months ago of Brunner's book, *The Command and the Ordinances* (*Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*), makes it impossible for any honest critic of the Barthian movement any longer to speak as if it had nothing to say on our modern problems. To the reviewer it seems one of the most suggestive and significant books on Christian Ethics he has read. Brunner writes with a knowledge of how many men have actually to