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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It is one of the many tragedies of religious history —perhaps, indeed, its supreme tragedy—that the rite which might have united, and doubtless was intended to unite, all who are conscious of their infinite debt to Christ, should be precisely the rite which, in point of sorry fact, has most deeply divided them. We refer, of course, to the Lord's Supper. Perhaps it would not be quite fair to call this a scandal, though such it must inevitably seem to those who by any group of Christians are excluded from participating with them in the sacred rite; for those who exclude them are as sincere as they are themselves. But in an age when, by such an institution as the League of Nations, we are reaching out towards some genuine human brotherhood, it does seem passing strange that men who love the Lord and whose personal faith and character are beyond reproach should find it impossible to gather together round the Table of their common Lord.

A re-examination, therefore, of what the Lord's Supper essentially is and means, if it be conducted without polemics and with the single desire to ascertain the ultimate truth about it, can hardly fail to be welcome to those who value Christian brotherhood. Such a re-examination has been made by the Rev. A. F. Simpson, M.A.(Edin.), B.D.(Lond.), in *The Communion of the Lord's Supper: Its Meaning for Christian Experience*, published by Messrs. Ivor Nicholson & Watson at 2s. 6d. net. The method of the discussion is scientific, but its aim is a practical one; and in this it is typical of much of the best religious writing of the present day, which, while familiar with all the academic apparatus, keeps its eye steadily on the needs and problems of the day in which our lot is cast. In the practical part of his discussion the questions Mr. Simpson seeks to answer are these: 'What our Lord meant when at the farewell meal He uttered the familiar words about His body and blood; what is the nature of His presence in the Communion; who is the real Celebrant at the Supper; why the idea of sacrifice has been associated with the rite; and why Christians should want to perpetuate the observance.' It will hardly be denied that these are vital questions.

Mr. Simpson answers these questions by reverting to the Christian literature and the Christian practice, with the conceptions underlying it, of the first two centuries. The New Testament rightly occupies by far the most prominent place in the discussion—the statement in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts, with the Pauline and Johannine conceptions; but this is followed by a consideration of the Didache, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Irenæus. Naturally the Eucharistic discourse, attached in Jn 6 to the story of the Multiplication of the Loaves, is drawn into the discussion; also several passages in Acts whose relevance, though probable, is not quite so certain, such as Paul's breaking of the bread on board the storm-tossed ship (27^{35}).

Much of the interest of the book centres round

the question whether magical ideas were associated with the sacrament in, for example, the mind of Paul. A few of his words might conceivably be interpreted as pointing that way; but it is as good as certain that, considering Paul's antecedents and education, and in view of the whole trend of the Jewish mind as exhibited in the Old Testament, which was the basis of Paul's religious training, this would be a lamentable misinterpretation. It is true that towards the close of the first century there was a tendency in the Gentile Church to associate a magical efficacy with the Lord's Supper: this was only natural to men familiar with the Mystery cults. It is also true that Irenæus speaks of the 'medicine of immortality,' though this may be reasonably enough explained by his fondness for metaphor and his dependence upon Johannine thought. But Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a people to whom the idea of the eating of the God would have been at once inconceivable and abhorrent; and to associate that great heir of Jewish tradition with such magical conceptions is impossible.

Ultimately the thing that matters most is what Jesus meant when He pronounced the words, 'This is my body.' Were it not for the reverence paid in general to the exact words of Scripture and in particular to the words of Christ, it would seem initially incredible that these words should ever have been taken in their literal sense. For one thing, Jesus was there in bodily presence before the disciples when these words were uttered: it would seem, therefore, irrational to the point of absurdity to regard the bread as also and literally His body. Besides, Jesus, like all Orientals, was in the habit of speaking in figurative language—'without a parable spake he nothing unto them' (Mt 13^{34}). Nobody in his senses takes Him literally when He claims to be the Vine and the Door. This is the point that Zwingli urged against Luther at the famous conference in 1529 in the Marburg Schloss, and Luther's obstinate insistence, so inexplicable in a man of his poetic temperament, on 'Hoc *est* corpus meum,' may be said, in a sense, to have wrecked the unity of the Reformation. We do not exactly like the rendering of a well-known modern translation, 'This *means* my body broken for you,' but in view of the circumstances of the case and of the Oriental fondness for imagery, there can be little question that that is the true interpretation, and that Jesus means no more—and no less—by the words than that the bread and the wine are symbols which represent Himself as the source of life for all believers.

From that point of view the doctrine of Transubstantiation can only be regarded as a pathetic and irrational perversion of the truth, and it is a comfort to remember, as Mr. SIMPSON points out, that the first known use of the word in connexion with the Eucharist does not occur till the twelfth century, and that the doctrine was not expressly taught till the thirteenth. Utterances of the first and second centuries which have been held to point in the direction of a real change in the elements—whether that change is regarded as occurring at the breaking of the bread, the utterance of the words, 'This is my body,' or the invocation of the Holy Spirit—really mean only that the bread and the wine, which remain what they were, are now invested with heavenly significance.

Mr. SIMPSON does well to emphasize the fact that Protestants believe as earnestly as 'Catholics' in the Real Presence, and are as keenly conscious of that Presence in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. To them Christ is assuredly present there, as He is present in all experience of the Holy Spirit wherever He manifests Himself. Considering the sublime suggestiveness of the circumstances attending the Supper, which focuses, as it were, in one shining point, the great Christian doctrines of Incarnation, Atonement, and Immortality, they would even admit that that Presence may become more real there than at other times and places, and that the Supper is 'specially effective in drawing Christians into the presence of their Lord.'

It is in line with this view of the Sacrament that Mr. SIMPSON argues earnestly for an ethical as opposed to a magical sacramentalism. For the early period 'the celebration in itself is regarded as of no value apart from the moral and spiritual condition of those who take part.' Again, 'the atmo-

sphere of the early Eucharist is an atmosphere of prayer and penitence and the relationship thus experienced between the believers and their Lord is fundamentally moral.' And Christian writers of different schools all down the centuries agree that 'the Lord's Supper has no actual sanctifying power apart from the spiritual condition of the participants. Apart from the subjective faith and disposition of the believer, the objective reality comes to be a meaningless abstraction.' This is a point to be pressed vigorously home against the superstition that the Sacraments are effective *ex opere operato*.

Other controversial points of scarcely less interest and importance, such as Reservation, are touched upon in this scholarly and useful book. The centrality of the Lord's Supper for Christian faith and practice is so widely conceded that any competent attempt to interpret it in its original setting, and to set forth its implications for the modern Church deserves to be carefully considered by all who have the welfare of the Christian faith and the Christian Church at heart; and this gives special timeliness to Mr. SIMPSON'S discussion.

The Eternal Values (Milford; 2s. 6d. net) is the general subject of the fifth series of Riddell Memorial Lectures delivered before the University of Durham at Armstrong College, Newcastle-on-Tyne, by the Very Rev. W. R. INGE, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's. The lectures are two in number, the first treating of 'The Idea of Value,' and the second of 'God and the World.' In the first is justified the time-honoured and absolute pre-eminence of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. In the second is vindicated the transcendence of God, which is consciously or unconsciously rejected by some of our modern idealists.

In this second lecture there is a rapid review of the traditional or classical arguments for the existence of God, and our readers may be interested to learn how those arguments fare at the hands of so acute and vigorous a thinker as Dean INGE.

In his opinion the ontological argument possesses real cogency. But it should not be presented in its awkward scholastic form, as in Anselm and Descartes. Here is the form in which it commends itself to Dean INGE. 'We have an immediate apprehension of the intrinsic values of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. This apprehension is something which is given to us; it cannot be reduced to, or derived from, anything else. It is as much part of our mental furniture as the concepts based on sense-perception. Is it conceivable that all this aspect of the world as we know it is void of actuality? Is it all merely subjective, and homeless in the real universe? . . . But these three values are to the religious mind attributes of God, and they are not independent of each other. In proportion as we make them our own, they appear as revelations of one supreme Mind—that which we call God.'

The ontological argument, as thus presented, does not claim that the knowledge of God's existence is given intuitively, so that no doubt can be felt about it, but rather that it is the result of a valid inference from the appreciation of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

The cosmological argument, or proof *a contingentia mundi*, does not amount to much more than this—that the existence of the contingent presupposes a necessary ground. But this does not lead to a single real Being. Nor is it beyond question that the world is contingent. If God is infinite, eternal, and necessary, those predicates may also apply to the world.

The teleological argument is also very vulnerable. There is no way of proving that all things are directed by a beneficent design. What connexion is there between our globe and other abodes of life, a million light-years away, and billions of years sundered in time? Further, if God lives His own life exempt from the vicissitudes of time and change, why should He not have many purposes? 'Divine guidance must be postulated,' as Arthur Balfour said, 'if we are to maintain the three great values, knowledge, love, and beauty'; but Dean

INGE regards this as rather the conclusion of the ontological argument, restated as he has suggested.

It seems to us, however, that, while Dean INGE claims to have restated the ontological argument, he has actually transformed it. He presents it not as an *a priori*, but as an *a posteriori*, argument, and as an enlarged form of Kant's moral argument, if freed from the limitations of the critical philosophy.

In Professor J. F. MCFADYEN'S new book, *The Message of the Parables* (reviewed elsewhere), we have a fine example of the realistic type of exposition. Take as an example the Parable of the Sower. It is easy to see why this Parable occupies a position of such prominence in the gospel record. It deals with the unresponsiveness of people to the Christian message. And one of the great problems of the early Church was the rejection of Jesus by His own people. If Jesus was indeed the King of the Jews, and it was His claim to be so that was the legal pretext for His crucifixion, why did not His natural subjects acknowledge His sovereignty? The preaching of the early chapters of Acts emphasizes that the moral responsibility for the death of Jesus rested not with the Romans, but with His own countrymen (2^{23} 3^{13}). When the missionaries were dealing with the Gentiles the question was pertinent: 'If you claim that Jesus was the fulfilment of the Jewish scriptures, why did the Jews have Him put to death?'

The Sower must have made a strong appeal to the first evangelists in another way. Fresh from the experience of Pentecost, they felt the powers of the unseen world pulsing within them. Like the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, they had been crippled, by sin and doubt, by fear and diffidence; and now all that was gone, their shackles broken, their fears forgotten. For the first time they could stand on their own feet, and walk and leap and praise God. It was inconceivable, they felt, that to a message like theirs from men who had come face to face with the Divine, people would not listen. And it is clear even from Acts (which dwells more on their successes than their failures) that what they actually met with was largely indifference or even actual hostility.

Jesus had the same experience. It is clear, for example, that in the capital His movement made little headway, and (what is more surprising) that even in towns of Galilee, like Bethsaida, Nazareth, Chorazin, Capernaum, He met definite rejection. And the Christian preacher has the same experience to-day. It may be prejudice, as Paul found at Athens, where Greek absorption in philosophical speculation made the gospel seem absurd, or in Jewish quarters where Jewish preconceptions revolted against the thought of a crucified Messiah. In our day a knowledge of the supposed teachings of science closes many a mind to the message of Jesus. On the other hand, it may be the moral demands of Jesus, or worldliness, or the competition of other interests. The modern forms of the barriers to Christ are not difficult to mention.

But there is something more, though the gospel writers do not go any farther. We want more than an analysis, however skilful, of the causes of our failure. Whatever may be said of the spiritual problem, at least the farmer's problem was capable of solution. If he wanted grain to grow on his bypath, all he had to do was to plough it. If in patches the ground was too shallow, more earth could be brought or the stones could be taken out. If thorns are choking the grain, they can be weeded away. In other words, by a course of preparation unproductive soil can be made fertile. What is the counterpart of this in the spiritual world? The attitude of men to the things of the spirit depends not only on their nature and their voluntary choices, but also on their experience and environment. Poverty, oppression, lower contacts, a struggle to live, physical pain, failure of ambition, these and much else may make men indifferent to any spiritual appeal. What are we to say of the way to soften hard hearts or give depth to superficial hearts?

One lesson of the Sower is that, for multitudes, preaching does not by itself provide a pathway to the Kingdom. Our Lord's healing ministry to the distressed in body or in mind, His invitations to the

rich to help the poor, His attempts to free the people from the intolerable burdens imposed on them by the religious lawyers, His efforts to open the eyes of the Pharisees to the true nature of their religious code, were all by way of preparation, of ploughing and removing stones and weeds. In the West, until lately and in a measure still, in dealing with those sections of the population that seem to feel least need of the Church and all that the Church stands for, we have gone on mechanically offering them a gospel which obviously means nothing to the vast majority of them; often sending to them our youngest and least experienced workers, imperfectly trained and with little equipment of any kind.

We have at last learned that souls are not to be captured with less ingenuity than any other object of the chase, and that in His work God wants the dedication of brain as well as heart. The varieties of social and educational activities that now accompany our evangelistic efforts are a recognition of the fact that the soil counts for something as well as the seed. But the Church alone can never plough up all the hard ground, can never root out all the thorns that choke the growth of all good. It needs the Church and the State and the School all working together; and perhaps God alone, through the experience of life, can give depth to the shallow soul.

One striking illustration of this lesson is found in the mission field, where the crust of age-long superstition, pride, contempt, and unbrotherliness has to be broken down before the seed can enter in with any hope of bearing fruit. Here, too, are thorns of abject poverty, arrogant wealth, painful and often loathsome disease, ignorance, fear, class and national conceit. Hence the varieties of mission work that sometimes puzzle so much the observer at home; the hospitals and dispensaries, the schools and colleges, the homes and hostels, the training-schools, industrial institutions and printing presses, the co-operative societies and farm colonies. This preparatory stage may continue for generations before the gospel gets an opportunity to show its power.

This Parable is a piece of splendid optimism. Where there is failure, it is failure of a kind which can be traced to its sources and dealt with. But when the seed falls on suitable soil that has been carefully prepared and protected from hostile influences, God sends fruit out of all proportion to the seed that has been sown or the labour that has been expended.

Wilfred Monod's profound and beautiful little book on *Silence and Prayer* (Allenson; 2s. 6d. net) has been fittingly translated by Gladys A. SLADE, and will be found a rich storehouse of devotion. Several of the meditations deal very helpfully with Prayer and the Will of God.

In prayer there must, first of all, be a definite act of consecration to the will of God. 'In the morning, rising up a great while before day, Jesus went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' Each of His days started with the establishing of an ineffable communion between the Only Son and His Heavenly Father. 'The same religious experience is allowed to us. If we kneel in the morning to acquiesce in life, then the valiant and sincere acceptation of existence will awaken our sympathy for men, our brothers subject to the same conditions, and we will unite with humanity by an inward act. And this union with humanity will put us in contact with Christ, and Christ will lead us towards God. When we have reached this point, our prayer has touched the goal. We breathe the air from the heights. Now, we are ready for the day's work; a mysterious voice assures us of it; a pure force animates us; we are in harmony with life, with men, with the Messiah, and with God. We can go forward.' In this act of consecration we consent not only to be useful, but to be utilized. We offer ourselves, saying in spirit, Here am I, send me. 'I long to work at the establishing of Thy Kingdom in the house where I dwell, at my family fireside. I make an act of love faithful and holy for those Thou hast given me to love, and to serve by love. May I irradiate to-day in my home. . . . I long to work at the establishing of Thy Kingdom in the wide world. I make an act of solemn joy, in provision

of the labours, the struggles, and the revelations of the day. This evening I will possess truths which I ignored this morning; I will have brought this evening my stone to the building of the future City.'

But often the way is not clear. The will of God is veiled. We come to a parting of the ways where we are in perplexity, knowing not which to choose, but recognizing that the choice is a momentous one. 'Whether it concerns a marriage, a business transaction, the choice of a career, or a change of residence, or a resolution which will influence deeply the education of our children, we hesitate. The impenetrable future is contained in the present minute, and this appears to us like the fatal die which a feverish hand throws at random on some gaming table.' Why this darkness, this silence of our Heavenly Father, when our one desire is to know and do His will? This question raises the whole problem of prayer, the whole mystery of God's relation to the world. All the great saints have wrestled with it, and in wrestling have strengthened their faith. 'Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist have tasted the bitterness of this mystery; and our Saviour, searching with anguish the will of the Father, sweated blood in the garden of Gethsemane. But has He gone down, for that, in the whirlpool of chance, in the abyss of nothingness? No, He has refused tenaciously to give way to despair. He has terminated His life on a victorious finale, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Such is the atmosphere of heroism and serenity in which we must settle to search the will of God concerning us.'

Having thus settled the principle, we must come down to applications. Standing at the cross-roads, we must carefully scan the signposts for guidance as to the right direction. And here are some of them.

To begin with, we may take it that in every case the will of God regarding us is in accordance with the laws of Nature and reason, unless the contrary be proved. We need not expect the wise and necessary laws of Providence to be held in abeyance for our benefit. 'There are, however, careless, blind, and obstinate ones who delude themselves on this point. They will choose lodgings in defiance of all rules of hygiene; they will let their children run about scorning elementary prudence; they will decide upon a marriage of which the moral and physical consequences can only be disastrous; they will rush into an enterprise where a sure check is certain, according to all rules of arithmetic and simple common sense, and each time they will expect a benediction from on High! . . . On principle, the will of God is reasonable.'

The second guiding principle arises out of the fact that the world in which we live is not only the domain of Nature, but is also the realm of grace and redemption. It follows from this that the will of God regarding us must conform to the moral ideal which shines in the Bible. At the heart of that ideal is the Cross, and the will of God for us must ever move in line with it. 'If, in the darkness of a painful perplexity, we choose the line of conduct which leads to Calvary, our reason does not abdicate its right; but it puts consciously its power to the service of holiness and brotherly love; it disappears, without being annihilated, in the glory of their splendour, like the metallic wire heated to a white heat in the globe of an electric lamp.'

This does not mean, however, that between two ways, the rougher or the more repellent is always the way of duty. The problem of right living cannot be solved by any such hard-and-fast rule. 'Duty is, sometimes, to abandon renouncement, not to give way to the attraction of risk and adventure. Duty is, often, to attend to the nearest work, to devote oneself to the task of the day, now in one's family, now in one's calling. So we escape the stinging criticism expressed in these terms by a thoughtful Christian, "It is easier for some persons to be sublime than to be honest."' A prepared formula, however seemingly sublime, is not adequate to the complexity of life. We need guidance of a more intimate and personal kind, such as can only come when we constantly assume an inward attitude of intelligent and free submission. For 'communion with God is the spring air where the bud of moral certitude can appear, burst forth, and bloom.'

Having thus prayed and patiently waited for the light, having pondered the circumstances, and conformed to the rules of reason and the gospel, we may confidently expect the Divine guidance. 'Sometimes it is a flash of lightning which sets on fire the horizon; sometimes it is the pale and blessed glimmer of the dawn. But always, in our inner being, a solemn voice rises and cries, "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." It is a conviction so deep, so personal, that it remains incommunicable; but nothing can shake it.'

When such a decision has been prayerfully reached we are not to suffer ourselves to be troubled by vain regrets, even should something painful and unexpected follow. It is idle to picture to ourselves what might have been. 'To choose one of the ways of the cross-roads is to give up the other; and, from then, we are always free to picture to ourselves that it led to marvellous sights, of which we are deprived for ever.' But to return thus upon the past is inconsistent with moral health, and with the strong assurance that, in acting as we did, we obeyed a supernatural impulse of the Holy Spirit.

Even if an error is proved to have been made, error is in no wise fatal. Bewildered at the cross-roads, we have perhaps taken a false direction, and now we cannot go back. Something irreparable has been done. But that is no reason for despair, but only another reason for committing ourselves afresh to God. 'Our last refuge in all circumstances, and whatever may happen, will be faith. Do not let ourselves be paralysed by brutal reality; failure of family life, poor health, lost position, mediocre earnings, wasted youth, sacrificed reputation, friends far away, vanished illusions, graves dug. To believe in God is to deny the irreparable.'

The Question of Authority in Religion.

By Professor C. J. Wright, B.D., Ph.D., Didsbury College, Manchester.

The final question in the great theological debate now proceeding in all Christian countries is that of Authority. This is perceived by those who penetrate beneath the surface of religious differences or disagreements. The really important question is not so much the specific articles of our creed, but the grounds on which that creed rests. It frequently happens that when Christian leaders of differing theological or ecclesiastical traditions come together to discuss their views in order to reach some kind of unification or *rapprochement*, they are gratified at first by the measure of agreement in their beliefs. But a deep gulf manifests itself when some issue touching the fundamental question of Authority arises. It is then perceived that the deepest division is not between those who differ in the articles of their belief, but between those who differ on the Reason or Basis of belief.

Take, for example, the following statement from Milton. 'A man,' he says, 'may be a heretic in the truth, and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.' In other words, the real heretic is the man who believes for the wrong reasons, not the man who assents to the wrong beliefs. Now it is obvious that this is not the view most people take of heresy. To the Roman Catholic the supreme heresy is manifest in the attitude of Milton whose words I have quoted. The first principle of 'Catholicism' is that you must believe what the Church—that is, the Roman Church—tells you to believe.

> Ours not to reason why,
> Ours but to do and die.

Absolute submission of the mind to the dogmatic teaching of the Church is the virtue of virtues; it is, indeed, 'the one thing needful.' Rome represents not so much a *credo* as an *impero*. The heresy of heresies is disobedience. I do not suggest that the Roman Church is the only body of men which holds to this conception