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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

DR. L. P. JACKS, Editor of the 'Hibbert Journal,' has published under the title *Elemental Religion* (Williams & Norgate; 4s. 6d. net) the Lyman Beecher Lectures for 1933, together with Three Sermons. The Sermons were delivered in Liverpool Cathedral. The Lectures are addressed primarily to preachers; they deal with such subjects as the preacher's difficulties, the traditions of his office, his task in relation to the educator's, and his duty to the rising generation. The whole volume is marked by the simplicity and directness that characterize this distinguished editor's writings.

We single out for exposition and comment the chapter entitled 'First-hand Acquaintance with Deity,' as perhaps the most memorable in the volume. The title itself is a phrase of Emerson's, occurring in his Divinity School address. Carlyle said to the new minister: 'What this parish needs before everything else is a preacher who knows God otherwise than by hearsay.' And Emerson was more positive in expressing the same opinion of ministerial qualification; the prime desideratum in a preacher is 'a first-hand acquaintance with Deity.'

Dr. JACKS takes Carlyle's knowledge of God 'otherwise than by hearsay' and Emerson's by 'first-hand acquaintance' as obviously referring to the same kind of knowledge and commends this joint definition to the preachers of our day. It indicates the goods which the preacher has to deliver. If he does not possess those goods, or, possessing them, does not feel a call to share them with his fellows, then it would be difficult to justify his office. His eloquence and learning would be little else than much ado about nothing, and would leave an impression of futility on those to whom they are addressed, an impression only deepened when resort is made to sensationalism or to the conversion of the Church into a place of intellectual entertainment.

Dr. JACKS has a helpful word for young preachers who may be disconcerted on being told that they must have a knowledge of God otherwise than by hearsay, an acquaintance with Deity at first-hand. We are intellectually convinced, they say, of the truth of theism, but we cannot say more for ourselves. Is not our knowledge of God, then, merely knowledge at second-hand? A Barthian theologian might agree that it is, but Dr. JACKS does not. Is it that he has learned of Spinoza and Schleiermacher, thinkers with whose immanentism the Barthian will have no traffic? In any case this is how he would encourage the young preacher.

The knowledge of God gained through intellectual study has unquestionably the appearance of being second-hand. Yet as we direct our thoughts to things divine, are we not in close contact with 'a power not ourselves' which impels us to think thus and not otherwise, which makes for truth?

Whither shall our thinking flee from its presence? If we can but catch ourselves in the act of thinking, we find ourselves in the presence of the Eternal, as Spinoza did. This is not the only way in which religion arises in the soul, but it is one way. And the nature of the Divine revelation is such that, whatever be the point of its emergence, it will presently extend to all other points, embracing finally the whole man.

The impact on the soul of the all-embracing, all-penetrating power of God is what Dr. JACKS means by 'elemental religion.' It is religion 'caught at the stage before the intellect has got to work upon it, but without which intellect would have nothing to work upon and theology nothing to explain.' 'It is completely *natural*, in the sense that it arises directly out of the spiritual nature of the universe in which our lives are immersed, and is due to the immediate action of its spiritual forces on ourselves, on our bodies as well as on our minds, or rather on the two together, in the inseparable unity of the whole man.'

In his very vital and suggestive book, *The Fading Margin* (reviewed in another column), Mr. E. C. OWEN has three chapters in which he gives us three views of Jesus from different angles, and endeavours to assess their value for us. They are Jesus as a mystic saw Him, Jesus as plain men saw Him, and Jesus on the background of Nature. The test of reality is persistence, and Jesus has stood this test as no one else has. He has in a unique sense what biologists call survival-value. And to-day He stands as the only real rival to Nature for the norm of conduct. It is Jesus or Nature, to-day as always. Let us try, then, to get back to Jesus Himself, and let us start with the latest book that seems to have contact with Him, the Fourth Gospel.

John's governing idea is Life. Humanity is a spreading vine through which runs one sap. Life lived in the whole vine is 'eternal life,' life as it will be lived when the *aion* or age, the Messianic age, has come, when narrower urges have ceased to please except so far as they serve the one big interest of the life of all humanity. This is *absolute* life in contrast with the merely relative life we find now. John seems to be feeling for the word 'absolute,' for which Greek philosophy had no exact equivalent. It is the pure gold of living, unalloyed by the frustrations that spoil our lives. It is life that will be lived when *agape*, the sap, is liberated to flow freely everywhere. This life is fruitful, no more withered twigs or leaves, or souls decaying by egotism, or frozen, starved by unkindness. It is friendliness infinitely extended. John eighteen hundred years ago seems to have visualized the goal to which emergent evolution is pointing us.

This life was, and is, in Jesus. His days were not serene. There were temptation and conflict always. But when the issues were before Him He chose the higher, because there were friends to be considered, and they would lose if He failed. 'So He stands in culture for the one man who has attained on earth to a standard of conduct which, if it became universal, would solve the problem of humanity. He is, in Lippmann's phrase, the anticipation of what life will be when the frustrations of struggle between personality and the greater whole in which it is merging have ended.' 'I am the vine,' and behind and in the vine is the Husbandman, God, whose essential property is *agape*, kindliness that reaches towards the ultimate realization of humanity as a whole.

This quality of life is seen clearly in the minority. The rest are the 'world,' those who order their lives apart from God. And in them there is no hope of progress. But John (and Paul also) saw a great whole, a humanity in which egotism and the narrower aims were dissolved in the Divine Friendliness. For a time it seemed as if the Roman Empire was going to make this catholic religion possible. The rise of national departmentalism and religious sectionalism, however, thwarted this for the time. 'But a new day seems to be dawning. World conditions are making not only possible but urgently necessary the growth of a world-culture and a world faith. . . . Can we seize the opportunity? If we

fail to seize it, will it ever come again? And can we find any alternative way to the way of Jesus?'

The second view of Jesus is that of the Synoptists. As presented by the moderns it is a very different picture from that of convention, not an emaciated figure, 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' but a strong, virile, open-air man, who took long tramps and slept out of doors, so formidable that the buyers and sellers in the Temple fled helter-skelter before His single-handed onslaught. He was a man full of the joy of living, who 'came eating and drinking,' a welcome guest at well-to-do tables, where His brilliant talk attracted as much as His story-telling on the mountain-side attracted the people. But the well-to-do listened with some nervousness, for He was no respecter of persons. And His repartees were unanswerable, though He reserved them for the malicious. Jesus hurt no one's self-respect. He spared mere stupidity and was merciless only to the self-satisfied and the cruel.

His talk was of 'the Kingdom,' but this on His lips was indistinguishable from John's 'eternal life.' The Kingdom comes wherever people treat each other with fairness and kindness, where friendliness takes the place of bickering and suspicion. 'Don't criticise and you won't be criticised,' He said. The measure you mete to others will be meted to you. If you put sand in the sugar, don't complain if the milkman puts water in the milk. He Himself had a gift for friendship and went about helping the depressed and troubled. And He was a realist in it all. No one has found among His recorded sayings a sentimental word. And in all this He has become what no other man in history has become, an accepted standard of form in conduct.

But the Jesus of the Synoptists is far more reticent about Himself than the Jesus of John. The enigma of His personality remained then as it remains now. And the enigma of His life extends to His death. Why was He killed? Among all Christians it is agreed that He 'died to save.' But in what sense? In the literal sense He saved no one by His death, unless it was Barabbas. He did not give His life a ransom for many as Father Damien did, or a warrior-hero, or the captain of a ship who stays on the bridge to the end, or a doctor working in a plague-stricken district, or an experimenter with virulent germs. His death does not seem even to have been inevitable. He could have escaped it by remaining in Galilee. He went to His death deliberately. He challenged the authorities, and calmly and with open eyes walked into the trap at Gethsemane. Why?

The answer Mr. OWEN gives will seem very inadequate. But it is what he sees in the Cross, and it is worth while listening to so devout and sincere a student of the Gospels, even when he seems to us to come short of reality. He thinks, then, that what Jesus aimed at was a change of heart in those who dominated the life, culture, and religion of the people, namely, the Pharisees. There were earnest men among them, and some were inquiring. If, on the one hand, the influence of this group could be strengthened and they could gain courage, and on the other, the simple loyalty of the Galilæans could infect the decadent rabble of Jerusalem, even now a revolution without force might be possible.

But the experiment must be tried at Jerusalem, the heart of the country. The crisis must come sometime, and now seemed the time. The purpose inspiring Jesus seems to have been the same as that which moved Luther to an effort to reform Rome, and Wesley to revitalize the English Church. They failed as Jesus failed, and schism followed; but not martyrdom. Luther was saved by the German princes, Wesley by the changed mentality of the times. Both of them would have been ready for martyrdom had that been the only way; and for Jesus it was the only way, so He paid the price, and throughout history ever since the Cross has become the symbol of sacrifice for the good of humanity. The purpose of Jesus is seen in the Supper He instituted, in which His followers were to have fellowship with the spirit of their friend, a fellowship which was to be one of voluntary suffering.

The third view of Jesus is on the background of Nature. Man has failed terribly; failed intellectually and morally. Has Nature any remedy?

Would you be surprised if she had provided a way out of the *impasse*, which could be found not only by the small number of her choicest spirits, but by the great multitudes of common folk? And would you be surprised if this way were by an appeal not to reason, which is too far above the many, but to imagination which all can understand? In other words, the way is friendliness, a power that can transcend all barriers and overwhelm the resistances of egoism and partisanships. And would you be surprised if, when, for the first time in history, a common government had made a common culture possible, God, behind Nature, had drawn a picture of the final goal of personal evolution in a Man whose life and death expressed the unlimited liability of essential friendship?

If this were so, it would explain many things—the unique personality of Jesus, His persistent appeal through the ages, and His failure, for He was born out of time, when the spirit of man was not ready for the machinery of a world-culture. It would explain also why, when the world reverted to a lower ideal, the ideal in Jesus still lived. And to-day, when the barriers seem to be cracking, when the peremptory creed of the time, admitted on all sides, is a world unity, and the sense of humanity seems to be slowly growing, it would give us a rallying-point where all those who desire to save both their own lives and civilization might meet.

The world to-day is like a plague-stricken area to which there comes a Great Physician. He has the skill and the passionate desire to save. He is ready. But He cannot save alone, and He enlists an army. In this army there must be His own spirit, unlimited service, unlimited sacrifice. When the plague abates there will be time for self-expression, but till then the service is an unlimited liability, and it stands first. There is a warfare going on. Every one who follows the Commander must take his share of sacrifice. It may be good or bad theology to say that the Commander bears the hardest part in the sacrifice. But that is a true picture of Jesus in the life of men. And the one hope for a world staggering under a burden too heavy to be borne is that men should see that picture, and surrender their lives to that service.

The name of Dr. H. E. Fosdick is so well known throughout the Christian world and his books on religion are so widely read that it will surprise many to learn that he has not hitherto published a volume of sermons. He has now, after thirty years in the ministry, issued such a volume under the title of *The Hope of the World* (S.C.M.; 6s. net).

He confesses to some misgiving on the ground that 'the essential nature of a sermon as an intimate, conversational message from soul to soul makes it impossible for printing to reproduce preaching, and, unlike the traditional child, sermons should be heard and not seen.'

He need have no fear, for these sermons are assured of a hearty welcome, and the printed word will reach multitudes who have never had the privilege of hearing the living voice. That is not to say that they are great sermons, but they are extraordinarily able and interesting sermons. Dr. Fosdick as a preacher has no claim to rank with the immortals. He has no wings to rise to the highest heights, nor does he plumb the deepest depths, but he is undoubtedly one of the wisest spiritual teachers of our time, a man alive to his finger tips, who has keen eyes to discern the sins and social maladies from which we suffer, and who brings a real message of healing and help.

He pleads powerfully for the application of Christian principles to every department of social life. 'We cannot separate the spiritual interests of individual souls from the social situation.' Men who think so are condemning the Church to inefficiency. 'In Russia the communists, starting out to destroy the Christian churches, issued orders that no social work should be done by them. They knew, able strategists that they have proved themselves, that if they could force the churches to be individualistic, with no social sympathy translated into action, no message of social betterment emerging from them, that would be disastrous to religion.

It has been. The astonishing thing is that one still finds so many people in this country who suppose themselves to be friends of the churches, but who are doing to some of our churches precisely what the communists did to theirs when they wanted to destroy them.'

In the construction of his sermons Dr. FOSDICK follows a practice common in America. Instead of starting from a text and proceeding to expound and apply it he moves in an opposite direction. Starting from a given situation, he works upwards to his text. This method has obvious advantages in the way of rousing interest and enabling the preacher to link on his discourse to the average thought of his hearers. But it sometimes has the very serious drawback of giving greater prominence to world problems than to the Word of God.

The situation which the preacher has to deal with to-day is one of great social, moral, and religious chaos, a situation which many people feel to be exceedingly unpropitious for the Christian faith. 'Even under favourable circumstances, they say, it is not easy to hold Christian ideas about the love of God, the value of the human soul, and a new society of goodwill among men, but in distracted days like these how can such unworldly faiths seem true?' This, however, is a complete misreading of the whole of Christian history. The times when Christianity has been most firmly believed, most active and vital, most heroic and triumphant, have not been prosperous times, but chaotic days like those in which we live.

Open the Bible anywhere and you will read of men who were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword, who were destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. The Apostolic Church throve in evil times, and the Mediæval Church had to struggle in the broken waters of the deluge that overwhelmed the Roman Empire. The Reformation was a chaotic and distressful time, till Luther was constrained to think that the end of the world was at hand for things could not possibly grow worse, while Calvin was crying out, 'Their wickedness has reached such a pitch, that I hardly hope to be able any longer to retain any kind of position for the Church.' 'Look at Christian history anywhere and you find Christianity grappling with tragedy, sometimes causing tragedy, often suffering tragedy, and, at its best, learning lessons from tragedy, changing the situations which produced it, and getting a new grasp on the meaning of faith because of it.'

Consider, then, some of the ways in which Christian faith has found profit in times of chaos. 'For one thing, repeatedly in desperate, dangerous times Christians have caught a new vision of the value and indispensableness of Christ's moral principles.' It is not material prosperity that is most favourable to moral well-being. We can see now that the pre-war years had in them foul seeds of corruption and social dissolution. While the nations rode on the high horse of prosperity the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount were of no account. But now that all are fallen into one common abyss of trouble men begin to see the relevance and to feel the value of brotherly love and service and peace-making and all the principles commended by Christ. 'This is not a bad time for Christian morals. This is a bad time for anything except Christian morals, bad for selfishness and cynicism, bad for lapses of integrity and poor citizenship. These are even times when I for one, a modernist, look on a shaken generation and out of the New Testament hear with fresh meaning and authority those words about Christ, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."'

Again, in difficult and shaken times Christians have often caught 'a fresh vision of the meaning and indispensableness of their faith in God and the eternal values of personality.' For most of all in the day of trouble do men need God for their strength and stay. 'When we are comfortable, stimulated, and sustained by favouring circumstance, we can get on without thinking deeply about the human problem and often without conscious need of God. But when tragedy befalls and we are stripped of the cushioning of circumstance, and in a dark hour the soul stands lonely and quivering before the eternal mystery, then there appears

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the utter unlivableness of irreligion—no spiritual source behind life, no eternal purpose running through it, no goal ahead of it, no sense in it.' Ought we not, then, to think and to say that this is no time for irreligion, but a time when, more than ever, men and nations need to stay themselves upon the eternal verities?

Once more, in times like these, Christians 'have laid fresh hold upon their social hopes.' This is not surprising, for it is of the nature of hope to spring out of despair. 'Out of the despair of the Egyptian bondage came the hope of a free Hebrew people. Out of the despair of a falling Roman Empire came the hope of a universal church. Out of the despair of tyrannical monarchy was born the hope of democracy. And to-day out of the disheartening tragedy of war has risen the hope of peace, and out of the sickness of an acquisitive society springs strong the hope of a more humane, co-operative, economic life.' Evil days are days when humanity strikes its tents and goes again upon the march, and times when Christianity seems to stand with its back to the wall are times which are sure to provoke a recoil. 'O my soul, grasp that philosophy! Make your hardships develop your resources. Make your tasks call out your reserves. Face the tragedies like a veritable pessimist. "In the world—tribulation." Never blink that fact. But make tribulation release the deeper levels of divine resource, so that you too may say, "Good cheer, I have overcome the world."'

Some Economic and Social Factors in the History of Israel.[1]

II. In Domestic Politics.

By Professor T. H. Robinson, Litt.D., D.D., D.Th., University College, Cardiff.

The subject which we have hitherto pursued has been the effect of the situation of Palestine on the relations between Israel and other countries. We have seen how the position of the land, on or near most of the great trade routes of the ancient world, first made a prosperous kingdom possible, and then led to its downfall under the pressure of foreign powers, who, with larger resources and a more extended base, succeeded in reducing Israel first to submission and then to incorporation in a foreign empire. We must now turn to the parallel effect of the same set of facts on the internal development of the country and on its peculiar cast of political thought. While the supreme contribution of Israel to humanity lies in the sphere of religion, it is worth remembering that, closely linked with this, we have a really distinctive conception of the State, which finds no parallel among the settled nations of the Ancient East.

The key to the history of Israel, political as well as religious, lies in the fact of the double element in the people. The great majority of those whose descendants went to make up the later Israel were, doubtless, those whom we call 'Canaanites,' people of a very mixed ancestry, who, by the middle of the second millennium B.C., yet formed a fairly homogeneous agricultural, commercial, and civic community. Except for the fact that, like the Greeks, they lacked a centralized government, and were split up into a number of petty local states and chieftainships, they were very similar in their social and political outlook to the inhabitants of other agricultural lands in the Ancient East. From time to time they might attain a nominal unity through inclusion in the dominions of a foreign power—Mesopotamian, Egyptian, or Anatolian—but this never gave them a real sense of oneness with their neighbours, and, as soon as the strong hand of the conqueror slackened, they broke up once more into their smaller elements. Their political theory was dominated by the conception of absolute autocracy; the sovereign,

[1] A lecture delivered before the Semitic Department, University College, Bangor, April 25, 1933.