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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

BOOKS which seek to relate the Christian message to the thought of the present age are sure to receive a ready welcome when they are so well written as Dr. George A. BUTTRICK'S *The Christian Fact and Modern Doubt* (Scribner's; 8s. 6d. net). Dr. BUTTRICK is the minister of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, and knows the difficulties of a modern pastorate well. What is more important still, he has a radiant certainty of the greatness of the Christian message, and has no desire to present to his readers anything of the nature of a 'reduced Christianity' to meet the needs of a sceptical age. 'I would staunchly hold,' he says, 'that the essential faith of Christ is more valid for the mind, more enkindling for the heart, and more heroically challenging for the will than our current agnosticism.' Perhaps he takes a pessimistic view when he says that 'for the first time in history, belief seems the exception and unbelief the rule'; but his opinion is worth noting, especially as regards conditions as he finds them in the United States; and, in any case, his affirmations are the more interesting and important when they are set against such a background.

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Dr. BUTTRICK has written a preacher's book. He has the advantage of being able to write in a direct and nervous style. Words like 'picayune' and 'happenance' will no doubt leave the British reader guessing; but his pithy sentences and picturesque language provide a medium of expression which many a preacher might well desire.

He explains that the language of his book is not technical, and that his purpose is not academic. Originally given to students, his lectures are now offered to a wider public in the hope that they may open up a path of light to many loyal and perplexed minds.

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It is natural that Dr. BUTTRICK should address himself to consider the revolution in thought brought about in modern times through science. He does not believe that science intended an onslaught on religion, but he is keenly alive to the fact that serious misgivings have arisen in the minds of those who suppose that God has been replaced by 'laws of nature.' Scientific tests, moreover, have been so exalted that by inference other criteria 'seem callow.' 'Nowadays "prove it to me" means "prove it as science would prove it."' A longer quotation from Dr. BUTTRICK'S book will show how he faces this problem.

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'To "prove it scientifically" does not necessarily prove it by more than a mere fraction. We need no science to show that a lilac-bush in bloom is beautiful, or that a man should not insult his mother. The tests that prove flavone (chemical formula  $C_{16}H_{10}O_2$ ) do not prove a friendship. Calvary may have its own deeper law of "the survival of the fittest." Scientific methods are applied by a segment of the man to a segment of his world. The segment, admittedly, has no lines: it is continuous with its circle, but it is yet only

a segment. We may well cherish the hope that another generation will overcome a too great absorption in the scientific, and explore loftier heights and deeper depths. Truth comes by the communion of the whole man, whether he be preacher or scientist, with his whole world. Who knows? in that communion the acme of intensity may be—prayer!’

It is a feature in Dr. BUTTRICK’S treatment that he preserves a fair balance. For example, he frankly admits that the quarrel of religion and science cannot be laid at the door of the scientist. ‘The strife arose only when the advocates of religion stood athwart the quest; and, confusing the Ark with the Presence, constituted themselves the sole guardians of truth.’ In his indictment of the Church there is a note reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets when, for example, he speaks of ‘the whittling and twisting of Jesus’ heroic “Thou shalt” or His “Blessed are they that” into a carping series of “Thou shalt nots.”’ The anger, however, is that of a lover of the Church, for he believes that if we were to ‘shatter it to bits’ to-day, we should have to rebuild it to-morrow from the same human stuff. ‘Nay, if all the critics of the Church were on a desert-island and could there build a new church, it would not be faultless: its members would be people like you and me, or like Peter the headstrong or Thomas the doubter.’

‘The spire in the midst of quiet village or throbbing city is still a poignant augury—like a finger to the sky among a maze of streets and traffic, factories and homes, schools and hospitals; and outlasting them all, as though mankind sees in the Church his deeper home.’

Dr. BUTTRICK finds another ‘troubler of Israel’ in the new psychology, and he believes that in our time its spear of doubt has thrust more deeply than that of science. Like all youngsters, he says, it is too infallible. He writes, of course, from a land where J. B. Watson’s ‘Behaviorism’ has made a far deeper impression than it has in Great Britain; none the less, we can appreciate the rapier-like thrusts of a doughty fighter. ‘Is the

book *Behaviorism* also a response to external stimuli?’ he asks. ‘If so, how can it be “true?”’ These questions are not mere dialectic: the sight of a behaviorist solemnly urging parents to teach this true gospel to their children is one to awaken an Olympian mirth!’

After tracing the roots of modern scepticism in our contemporary practice with its mass production and materialism, its wars and fratricidal indifference, Dr. BUTTRICK treats such questions as ‘Is God Real?’ the Finality of Jesus, the Authority of the Bible, the Validity of Prayer, The Cross—and To-day, Life Beyond Life. Always he has something positive and arresting to say, and it is always said with point and emphasis. Perhaps this is illustrated best by his chapter on the subject of the Cross.

Why has the Cross ‘such strange persistence?’ Dr. Buttrick denies that either pity or theology is responsible. On the contrary, he holds that ‘the Cross has provoked and has kept alive theology.’ The Cross has persisted, he says, because Jesus has persisted, and lives because He lives. To the question, How does the Cross save us?, he has several answers. It saves us because it is a revelation of God, and because it shows us how we can live vitally by crucifying the lower self. ‘We are saved if we walk in that wisdom of choice which is livingly and dyingly taught on Calvary.’ But Dr. BUTTRICK knows that this is not the complete answer, and it is the merit of his discussion that he tries ‘the deepest depths—which can never be sounded’; and for him these are connected with the fact of sin. Sin, as he sees it, is something from which we are saved by sacrificial death.

Dr. BUTTRICK does not pretend to know how it is that a sacrificial death makes atonement for sins, but he more than hints at an answer in a passage with which we must conclude this Note. ‘The vicarious pain to heal us all must be the pain of some one in whom our common life is held. It must be the pain of God Himself. Yet not the suffering of a God unknown! How could that help us? Not the pain of a God remote from

our streets, our pains, and the dark folly of our sins : healing is by the touch of Life on life. Everybody's blood is weak and infected, and we are made strong by a transfusion of blood ; but it must be blood that flows in veins like our own ! The redemption clearly must come from *within* our humanity. It must move within our stream of life. . . . Where shall such an One be found, ready to live and die in the strange red law of our redemption ? " I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me " . . . '

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Mr. Archibald WEIR, M.A., is an original thinker whose thoughts refuse to be expressed in academic moulds. Such a thinker is not readily understood, and accordingly has to take the chance of being overlooked. But while the philosophy expounded by him is at once original and elusive, there is so much sincerity and attractiveness in his style that his readers are inclined to curb their impatience and make a real effort to understand his meaning. Miss Underhill classes him among ' natural contemplatives,' and the world is always ready to listen to such if they should be capable of describing the realities which have come home to their minds with power.

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In his recent volume *Shallows and Deepes* (Blackwell ; 8s. 6d. net), Mr. WEIR examines certain of the implications of his spiritual philosophy for life in the workaday world. The book falls into two parts, of which the first part, ' Understatements,' treats of questions that belong to the surface of things, and the second part, ' Deepes beneath Consciousness,' of issues that never can be dragged to the light of day. In the first part such subjects as hearsay, pelf, usury, make-believe, and change are considered ; in the second, such subjects as esoteric questionings, self universal, trust, and hope. It is the treatment of the last-named subject to which we would here call attention.

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Mr. WEIR begins with a consideration which, as he thinks, will damp much of the enthusiasm elicited by thoughts of a future life. Just as it was found in the Great War that men who had been

companions even for years in a prison camp failed to recognize one another after a few weeks of liberty (so rapid a difference in them did liberty make), so it may be that the dear companions who have encountered one another in this spell of a prison camp which is our life on earth will develop so variously in the freedom of the heavenly existence that they will also fail to recognize one another.

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He urges that we must face such a thought as this if we are to understand the nature of the ' deeps beneath consciousness.' But if our affection for other selves is to withstand the disintegrating influences of space-time, it must exist only as part of a larger reality, and the very things amid which our affection abounded we have to learn to disregard. All earthly lineaments and human contacts must be forgotten if the dear companionship is to be restored in the musings of the spirit. That will not readily be possible to the bereaved. But during that interval hope, which is the happiest possession of the single life, will console and fortify.

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' But the lesson is hardly acceptable to those who are dwelling upon charms, graces, and lineaments that but lately disappeared in the unknown. Yet the hope is that after long searchings beneath consciousness the lost fellowship will be recovered, unstained by any of the fleshly attractions and repulsions that are inseparable from earthly association.' And till the very end hope sustains the spirit.

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The conviction is here involved that beneath our transient life there is a tie with what is real and independent of space-time, so that when our life has dispensed with the here and now the same reality will be experienced as we were tied to in the flesh. What change death may affect will only amount to still closer union with what we never left. Thus there is indicated the tie between those behind the material screen and those who have had the screen removed. The tie is a communion in all that for earthly life has appeared as ' self universal.' Our hope, therefore, is for the communion of selves in a universal, exempt from the vicissitudes of change.

The Greek affinities of Mr. WEIR's thought are obvious, but for a clear explication of his meaning reference would have to be made to his philosophical positions.

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In *The Way to God* (S.C.M. ; 3s. 6d. net) we have the most recent of the Broadcast Talks on religion. It is mainly concerned with broad, general, or what may be called philosophical, questions. A further series is to be published in September of this year on distinctively Christian doctrine. The two questions dealt with in the present volume are: What is Man? and Does God Speak? It is no reflection on the writer, who deals excellently with the former question, to say that, when we see the name of the new Dean of St. Paul's opposite the second we turn eagerly to see what he has to say about it.

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In his three chapters headed, 'In the World Around us?' 'Through the Voice Within us?' and 'Through His Prophets?' Dr. W. R. MATTHEWS answers the question: Does God Speak? And he does so in the most satisfying and enlightening way. Dr. MATTHEWS is always fresh, direct, massive, and convincing. In his first chapter he gives as clear and final an answer to materialism as we could wish. In the second he shows how God speaks in reason and conscience. And in the third he takes a wide view of revelation, sweeping into his net Buddha, Socrates, Muhammad, the poet and the artist, as vehicles of the self-disclosure of God.

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But we turn from all this to the chapter headed 'Answers to Listeners' Questions,' for this is the most interesting talk in the book. The questions show the reaction of the listeners to the apologetic Dr. MATTHEWS has stated, and the difficulties that remain in their minds after all he has said. The first question goes to the root of the whole business: 'It seems we must use all our faculties in the quest for God; why then does Jesus say that we must become like little children if we would enter the Kingdom?' The point is: Why argue and

reason about religion when all that is needed is the childlike disposition?

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In answer to this Dr. MATTHEWS gives us a fine bit of expository writing. The popular idea of what Jesus meant by saying that men must become like little children is wrong. He cannot have meant that we should be childish in mind and credulous. Jesus tried to get people to think: 'After all, children generally are very inquisitive and never tire of asking questions.' This saying of Jesus has specially in view two characteristics of the child's mind. First a child is very direct in speech and thought. It goes straight for anything it wants. Its mind is not complicated by all kinds of conventions and compromises and inhibitions as the minds of most adults are. Those who would enter the Kingdom must have this same directness and simplicity in spiritual things.

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And secondly, the child mind is receptive and plastic. It has not yet drawn down any of the blinds of its soul, it is not set in a rigid mould, it is open to all the influences of the world around. This readiness to receive new impressions, new revelations, must be the attitude of those who seek God's Kingdom. 'I have known great thinkers and wonderfully learned men who could be truly called childlike in character. The kind of human being whom we should never describe in such terms is the hard, worldly, cynical type. He, and not the honest seeker, is far from the Kingdom.' Christ's saying does not discourage thinking; it tells us of the spirit in which our thinking should be done.

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The second question answered is a 'teaser.' Dr. MATTHEWS had argued that God is to be seen in the highest type of human personality, and a distinguished man of science wrote to him as follows: 'Why do you confine your attention to men like Socrates and Buddha? Why not bring in tyrants and murderers like Nero? If you infer the existence of God as the Creator of good men, why not infer the existence of the devil as the creator of bad men? Are you not just selecting the "comforting" facts and leaving out the rest?'

Dr. MATTHEWS says that as a Christian he is not concerned to deny the existence of the devil. But equally as a Christian he is concerned to deny that the devil can create anything. But his answer goes deeper. He had said that we ought to judge the Creator by His highest products. The challenge is: Why not judge Him by *all* His products? And that sounds reasonable until we realize that we are dealing with a world in which evolution and development are facts. There is not anything of which we can say 'it is complete; we know exactly what it is.' Aristotle said long ago that everything is what it can become. Its essence, its true nature, is what it has the potentiality to be.

Now, if we agree that human personality is the highest type of existence known to us, we still have to ask what essentially is human personality; what would it be like if its development were complete and if we could see all that it was capable of becoming? But no one looking at Nero or any other low grade of personal life could say, here is the real meaning of personality; here we see what it was meant to be. On the contrary we should

say rather, 'What wonderful possibilities are here wasted and defiled! Here is a person defective and spoiled.' On the other hand, when we look at one of the great heroes or saints we make a different judgment: 'Here is shown what man, in part at least, is like when complete. This is something like a man!' If we assume purposiveness in development, we must 'look to the end.' And if so, Nero is an example of frustrated purposiveness, for we could not regard him as having any value, whereas the saint or hero is an example of purposiveness triumphant.

The other questions raise the problem of suffering, and the practical issue: 'If conscience is a revelation of God, how is it that consciences reveal such different standards of conduct?' For the discussion of these points we must refer our readers to this admirable little book in which, in addition to Dr. MATTHEWS' talks, there is a section on man and man's need of God dealt with by the President of Cheshunt College, the Rev. J. S. Whale, as well as a general talk on the problems raised by the Rev. F. A. Iremonger, Religious Director of the Broadcasting Corporation.

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## Some Outstanding New Testament Problems.

### VI. The Epistles of the Imprisonment in Recent Discussion.

BY PROFESSOR G. S. DUNCAN, D.D., THE UNIVERSITY, ST. ANDREWS.

READERS familiar with recent trends in New Testament Criticism will not be surprised that the editor of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES has included among 'Outstanding New Testament Problems' a discussion of the origin of St. Paul's Imprisonment Epistles, *i.e.* Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. For in the last few years there has been developed a hypothesis regarding these Epistles which even so doughty an opponent of it as Professor C. H. Dodd has characterized as 'the most serious challenge that has been offered to the generally accepted view of the chronological

order of the Pauline corpus.' In the present article our main concern will be to restate that challenge, for critical studies of the New Testament still continue to appear in which it is ignored altogether or treated in a way that is too superficial to have any value.

In one respect the problem of the Imprisonment Epistles is severely limited. It is generally accepted that Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon (if they are all genuine) must belong to approximately the same time and place. The intimacy of link between these Epistles can only be broken by