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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE problem for many people to-day is how to *realize* God ; to have religion as a personal experience, to know God in actual sense of fellowship. There are multitudes in our churches who believe firmly in God, who are ready to do their part in Christian service, who take part in the worship, who yet have no real sense of God. It may be that something in their lives is shutting Him out. That is a familiar fact. But it may not be that at all. It is true that all sorts of camouflage are thrown up to 'rationalize' the fact that we have not made up our minds for God. But on the other hand the people we are thinking of do not belong to that category. It is simply that God is outside them, at least outside their conscious experience.

In his suggestive book, *Speaking of Religion* (Scribner's ; 6s. net), Dr. Bruce CURRY deals with this matter. Dr. CURRY, by the way, has been in touch with all kinds of practical, religious, and ethical problems, and with those who create them, at student conferences, and he puts the problem stated above as one of the most urgent in his experience. He suggests that in seeking a remedy we should begin with the fact that God is everywhere, and is seeking to express Himself fully in all things, and especially in human personality. And therefore—this is the first point—religious experience is in the nature of a response and realization of the already present God. We must capture something of the simple vision of those who were at the anthropomorphic stage of understanding,

and realize that we have not to *seek* God, but to see Him at our side.

What follows is simply an expansion of this first important point. But Dr. CURRY suggests three steps as necessary for what he calls 'achieving experience of God.' The first is *recognition*. If we would find God we must first identify in our universe what is God and what is not God. The fact that God is invisible and intangible should not discourage us, for so is the very thing we love in a human friend—his personality or self. This we identify through its characteristic expressions. We can come to know the characteristic expressions of God, inferring them from the spirit manifest in them. The fact that we cannot fully know God should cause less difficulty when we reflect how imperfectly we know our friends. Is it not plain that this recognition is already an experience of God, a realizing Him, a fellowship with Him ?

The second step is *appreciation*. This is a spontaneous response to something fine, beautiful, or worthy in a person we know. It involves both mind and feelings. We judge and discriminate and weigh, but are then touched and moved by something in the person that appeals to our sense of values. And this appeal ripens the acquaintance into friendship. This is what we find in God whenever we see anything of His greatness, power, or goodness. And it will stir us, in different degrees, to awe or peace or joy or comfort or, in some cases.

at some times, exaltation. And this is not something we work up or create or force. It is a moral vision. It is not merely a recognition of the *fact* of God. It is a recognition of the values that are in God, and has therefore an ethical content. Hence the term appreciation.

The third step is *co-operation*. When recognition has been followed by appreciation in the case of human beings, we desire nothing so much as to know the human being better, to talk with him, play, work, think with him, share with him the adventure of life. We want to discover more of his ideals and habits, and in this process there develops a sense of comradeship. *The will is brought into operation*. We choose to give ourselves to this relationship with the best that is in us.

Now in the truth of religion it is implied that God is already taking the initiative in this relationship, that He is in man, that He is striving to express certain values in human personality, needing only our conscious response and intelligent co-operation to create yet higher values. We can catch a glimpse sometimes of His plans, His 'ideals,' and can undertake our share of responsibility for their fulfilment. In this way a perfectly real and reasonable sense of fellowship with God is developed, warmed by ever-increasing appreciations, until we can say in truth that we know what it means to 'love' God.

If any one feels that all this is pressing the analogy of human friendship too far, let him try it sincerely with Jesus as the Mediator of the experience. We can identify Jesus, and recognize the expressions of His mind and spirit. But these are precisely the effects of the clear shining of God through the personality of Jesus. What one sees there is God most adequately expressed. And if one is deeply moved by the figure of Jesus it is really by what is in God that one is being moved. If we see shining through Jesus the glories of the eternal, we can realize that these glories are just, *in excelsis*, what we see around us and within us.

We need not be disturbed if it is said that this is

'mysticism.' It is, but so is all experience of spiritual things. We have, for example, never seen the personality of a friend. We only 'see' its manifestations. We cannot even 'prove' its existence. It is mysticism to realize that personality. The knowledge of God is no more mystical. It is not magical, or superstitious, or the purely imaginative response to something non-existent. It is simply seeing what is there. And perhaps the believer who yet finds that God is outside his experience needs nothing so much as to realize that he does know God and does experience God, that the things which he sees are the manifestations of God. What he needs is, like the youthful attendant on Elisha, to have his eyes opened 'that he may see,' and find all the world around full of the chariots of God.

Jacob awakened at Bethel to say, 'surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.' To realize God we need simply that awakening.

The angels keep their ancient places ;—
 Turn but a stone and start a wing !
 'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
 That miss the many-splendoured thing.

The Bible is full of people who made this sudden discovery of God, of God found sometimes in the commonplace realities of life, and once very greatly in the wounds of Jesus ('my Lord and my God'). What multitudes need is to recognize, appreciate, and co-operate with the God who is in and with them, 'though they knew it not.'

Dr. William ADAMS BROWN of Union Theological Seminary, New York, has been a leading figure for a whole generation in the Protestant theological and ecclesiastical world, and that not only of America : he is well known in Britain and on the Continent of Europe. Recently he appears to have turned from the field of apologetics and dogmatics and concentrated upon questions of ecclesiastical relationships. In his latest work, *Your Church and Mine* (Chapman & Hall ; 10s. 6d. net), he appears

as an earnest and capable exponent of irenic theology.

The book is described as a book for Catholics and Protestants, and it is written not only in the interests of Church unity and in view of the proposed reassembling in 1937 of the World Conferences on Faith and Order and on Life and Work, but also in the interests of civilization, which he regards as bound up with the cause of a unified Christianity.

It should be observed that in his exposition of the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism Dr. ADAMS BROWN would use the words 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' with special reference to the kind of faith and life for which they respectively stand. The Catholic type of faith and life is common to the various branches of the Church whose piety follows models set by the pre-Reformation Church. The Protestant type of faith and life is common to the various branches of the Church which find their standards in the post-Reformation period. It is not so much the differences that separate Christians in their ecclesiastical organizations that are here studied as the differences that separate them in their religious life. For example, the Catholic type of piety may be described as mystical, the Protestant as ethical.

Towards the end of his exposition of Catholicism and Protestantism, Dr. ADAMS BROWN considers what Protestants may learn from Catholics, and also what Catholics may learn from Protestants. Let us notice some of the points he would make under each of these heads.

For one thing, the study of Catholicism can teach the Protestant how impossible it is to make all people conform to a single type. In their effort to keep their Christian ideal high, Protestants have tried to standardize the religious life. But the Salvation Army—and more recently the Group Movement—has shown that there is room in Protestantism for smaller units with stricter discipline and more exacting standards, more or less corresponding to the Catholic Orders. On the other

hand, there might also be more adequate provision in Protestantism for patient dealing with the weakness and ignorance of the rank and file. Intelligent Catholics are not blind to the superstitions of existing Catholicism, but they know human nature, and would have the Church adapt its teaching to the capacities of different classes.

But the Catholic has more specific lessons to teach the Protestant. One lesson is of the ministry of beauty to the religious life. What the world has lost through the iconoclasm of the Puritans is a familiar story. What the world is losing to-day through the barrenness of many of our Protestant church buildings is less generally recognized. Another lesson is of the place of authority in religion. Protestants do right to protest against authority imposed from without, but they confess their bankruptcy when they can give no clear response to the soul that asks for guidance. Yet another lesson is of our need of discipline. Prayer, for example, is no simple matter, and for many Protestants it has become a forgotten art. Earnest spirits of our day are learning again through Catholic books of devotion how to practise the presence of God.

Besides helping the Protestant by way of example, the Catholic can also show the Protestant certain dangers which should be avoided. For instance, he can remind the Protestant of the futility of trying to purify religion by subtraction. Here is how Protestantism proceeded after the Reformation. If it found tradition corrupt, it cut it off. If it found the Sacraments encrusted with superstition, it substituted for seven two. If it found the worship of Mary and the saints ousting Jesus from His rightful place, it removed their statues and destroyed their pictures. But religion is not a matter of more or less. The Church of Christ is not a legal institution, but a fellowship whose bond of union is a common spirit. Where Protestantism has ceased to recognize this, it has been weak. Where it has kept true to its great insight, it has been strong. With its principle of faith bearing fruit in love as its criterion, it should reappraise its Catholic inheritance.

Dr. ADAMS BROWN also considers what Catholics may learn from Protestants. What it seems to him that Catholics may learn is, however, in no sense a monopoly of Protestants, but a part of the Catholic heritage.

First of all, the Church as an institution is a means, not an end. She is the mother of saints; and by her ability to meet this supreme test she must be finally judged. Where the welfare of the soul is subordinated to the institution the protest of the Protestant is justified.

Again, unity of organization carries in itself no necessary guarantee of fellowship of spirit. If outward unity were again to be attained, could the reunited Church be any more immune against internal corruption than it was before the Reformation? Where Rome has been confronted by a vigorous self-conscious Protestantism its ethical and intellectual standards have correspondingly improved.

Then there is the question of the proper limits of authority. If authority has its function, a function which Protestantism has not sufficiently appreciated, it has its limits too. It is no longer required when people have learned to think and decide for themselves. Too often, indeed, has Catholic Christianity been content to leave the ignorant uninstructed and to restrain the freedom of its scholars and thinkers.

Above all, Catholics may be reminded by Protestants that the one sure way to win those who are strangers to the faith is not by vindicating the authority committed to Peter by Christ, but by bearing witness to Christ through humility, loyalty, and endurance. The great saints have known this well, and it is this that has made them saints.

Further, Orthodox as distinct from Roman Catholicism has weaknesses which contact with Protestantism may help it to overcome. It is more tolerant than Roman Catholicism, and it does not demand a single all-inclusive organization, but

in its theology, in the type of life it fosters, and in the agencies through which it functions there is something which the Orthodox might learn from Protestants.

It might learn the need of distinguishing more clearly between the Church visible and the Church invisible. Roman Catholicism might also teach it this. If the Church with its ecumenical faith, its historic liturgy, and its episcopal organization be God's sole appointed means of grace, why should there be so many generous and gracious spirits outside its boundaries?

The Orthodox might also learn from Protestants, as indeed thoughtful leaders among the Orthodox are doing, that, if the Church is to recover its place in the life of the Russian people, it must be concerned not only for individual piety, but also for social service.

Once more, the Orthodox might learn from Protestants how desirable it is that they should have an officially recognized agency for common action. In any plans for the creation of such a central organization the experience of Protestants in their federations of churches might prove suggestive. It was surprising to find at the Stockholm Conference that men met there who, though important officials of Orthodox churches, had never met face to face in any Orthodox gathering.

It is evidence of the wide interest in Sören Kierkegaard which has been awakened in English theological circles in recent years that two lives have been published simultaneously of that great Danish thinker and writer. It may be unfortunate for the authors of these two biographies and for their publishers that they should have appeared at the same time, but they may be regarded as complementary to one another, while taken together they form a comprehensive and quite adequate treatment of their subject. To distinguish them it might be said that the one published by Nott is the more detailed, and that by the S.C.M.

the more popular. Their simultaneous appearance suggests that some remarks on Kierkegaard's life and thought may be timely.

Kierkegaard was pre-eminently a sick soul, and his path in life was pathetic in its utter loneliness. Like Keats, he could not be happy in the love that came to him, but was tortured by it. In his settled melancholy he reminds us of Amiel, but he had not the gentleness of that sad Swiss. On the contrary, he had a great deal of the Berserker in him, so that when he entered the battle he smote his adversaries hip and thigh. If genius, as has been said, is a ship on fire at sea for the entertainment of the people on shore, Kierkegaard was truly such a ship, blazing fiercely and consuming away by his own internal heat, but he was a battleship whose guns and magazines kept exploding with most devastating effect.

Three influences in his life were of critical importance. The first was his reverent attachment to his father. That father, already an old man when his son was born, was an able and profoundly religious man of a gloomy type, whose example and teaching deepened Kierkegaard's natural melancholy. The second influence was the love of Regine Olsen, to whom he became engaged, but whom he afterwards renounced, feeling it unfair that youth and innocence should be mated with his gloom. Her he never ceased to love, nor did he ever cease to torture himself with the question whether in his renunciation he had done right. Increasingly he felt himself a solitary being, alienated from his kind and perhaps called in a special sense to bear the burden of the Lord. The third influence which deeply affected him was the worldliness of the Church. He was stung to the quick by the funeral sermon which Martensen preached on the death of Bishop Mynster, in which he referred to him as a link in the chain of witnesses to God's truth which extended from the days of the apostles down to the present day. 'Mynster a witness for the truth! He the hedonist, the time-server, the man of the world, the clever and successful politician, to be numbered with those who had sealed the truth with their blood! They went to

poverty, loneliness, and death in a world which was not worthy of them, he was honoured and fêted, and found the Gospel of Christ crucified an admirable means to office, dignity, and wealth. To reckon him with those who were "destitute, afflicted, forsaken"—what a shameless lie!' This outburst led to a complete alienation from the Church, which Kierkegaard came to look upon as utterly unfaithful and worldly.

It may be felt that in many respects Kierkegaard's philippics were too bitter and severe, that his judgment was biased, and the tone of his mind unwholesome. Yet it must be confessed that voices like his are needed from time to time to prevent the Church from falling asleep and perishing in its own complacency. He did a very useful John the Baptist work, and his influence on theological thought in Europe, both directly and through the Barthian School, has been very considerable.

One or two of his leading ideas may be lightly touched on. He was a whole-hearted opponent of that type of modern thought which is associated with the name of Hegel. Hegel's view of the relation of God and the world was of a harmonious evolution which could be comprehended by human reason and stated in terms of a synthesis. In this system, man assumes the superior rôle of a spectator, able to view God and the world in a detached and impartial way. To Kierkegaard all this was falsehood and impiety. To him 'the world as seen *sub specie aeternitatis* is not an æsthetic harmony, but the battleground for a moral struggle. Man is not a spectator, but an actor. His business in life is to decide, not to speculate. Instead of a synthetic both-and, he is confronted with a tremendous either-or.' Kierkegaard expresses this by saying that his thinking must be 'existential,' grappling with reality in deadly earnest as of one whose very life is at stake.

Much criticism has been directed against his representation of God as the 'wholly other,' and his insistence on an infinitely qualitative distinction between God and man. It is easy to say that if God be the 'wholly other' there can be no revela-

tion, and that if man is made in the image of God there must be a degree of kinship. Of course in this high region all human words are inadequate and every possible statement is open to criticism. Kierkegaard meant to emphasize a truth which greatly needed and still needs emphasis. The tendency of the modern mind has been to sing 'Glory to man in the highest.' 'Remember,' Kierkegaard would say, 'that God is in heaven and man is upon the earth. There is a great gulf between the Creator and the creature which from man's side can never be overpassed.' Moreover, the fact of sin has immeasurably increased that gulf, working a complete alienation (which is just the Latin word for 'otherness') between man and God. Therefore it is vanity to seek to apprehend or to prove God by exercise of the intellect. Intellectual arguments for the being of God, which make God an object of man's thought, are powerless to bridge the gulf. But God in His grace has come near to man the sinner in a personal way, and enabled man the sinner to be united in faith to God his Saviour.

In this consciousness of man as in personal contact with God was grounded Kierkegaard's high sense of the value of the individual. 'When I am dead,' he said once, 'write on my grave, That Individual.' He viewed with nothing less than horror the idea of humanity as a 'mass,' human beings rolled into a nameless, will-less crowd. His mission was to assert against the tyranny of the multitude the forgotten crown-rights of the individual. This, as Brandes says, was 'the pearl of great price which Kierkegaard offered to his time.' It is a pearl which to-day is much in danger of being trodden under foot of men. Over against the communal man of Bolshevism, the dragooned and regimented man of Fascism, man as the cannon-

fodder of Imperialism and the 'hand' of Industrialism, even over against the majority-man of Democracy, Kierkegaard would set man in all the glory of his individuality as the chosen and redeemed of God and the heir of the everlasting Kingdom. This is a truth in defence of which the whole Church of Christ may presently have to fight to the death.

In accordance with this was the tremendous emphasis which Kierkegaard laid on Christian discipleship. To him it was indeed a stern and high calling which demanded complete renunciation and absolute loyalty. It cannot be denied that he had but little appetite for the sunny side of the gospel. The words of Jesus were not always trumpet calls to obedience; there were also 'gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth,' words of comfort for the sorrowing, of forgiveness for the sinful, and of encouragement for the weary and the heavy laden. Still the trumpet call does undoubtedly ring through the Gospels, and the Church has too often turned a deaf ear to it. Kierkegaard came to look upon the Christian community of his time and place as a caricature of the Christian Church. It made worship a substitute for obedience, and gave words instead of deeds. Its admiration for Jesus was but hypocrisy and an evasion of responsibility. Without committing ourselves to judgments on the Church we shall do well to recognize this danger which besets us all. Protestants view Romish indulgences with suspicion, but, as Kierkegaard pointed out, the free grace in which the Protestant trusts may itself become a kind of indulgence, making strict obedience no longer necessary. Every Christian, both Romanist and Protestant, must realize that Christ's claim to obedience is absolute, and must in no wise be evaded or qualified.

