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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

Dr. W. B. Selbie, formerly Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, has written a little book to which preachers will turn with interest and expectation. It is published by Messrs. Duckworth at the price of 5s., and is entitled *The Fatherhood of God*. It contains the author's mature thought on the central theme of Christian theology, and its aim is to show how the conception of God as Father meets the needs of men as no other, and is sufficient both for thought and life.

A testing problem for the doctrine of God's Fatherhood is that of Providence. The problem of Providence is created by the assumption, apparently involved in the conception of the Fatherhood of God, that under the Divine guidance all things work together for men's good. But, as Dr. Selbie says, the facts of human experience, the constitution of the universe, and the course of history make it very difficult to believe that there is a good God over all working out His beneficent purposes. Let us see how he deals with this difficulty.

Let us notice, to begin with, that the difficulty in question is a result of the Christian revelation. It is the Christian revelation of God's fatherly love that accentuates the problem of evil and challenges a solution. If God is really the Father of men and cares for them, why is evil prevalent in the world and good so impotent? To this question there is no complete and final answer, and the Christian will be content in the long run to fall back upon faith. But there are certain considerations which seem to lend a measure of reasonableness to Christian faith.

In the first place, the problem of pain is not a hopeless mystery. Pain has a real part to play in the economy of life. It gives timely warnings against danger and disease. It may sanctify, refine, and ennoble character. It may evoke pity and compassion. Contact with pain and suffering has indeed been known to create an inward security which no misfortune can shake.

In the second place, the problem of the natural order—storms, earthquakes, floods, and plagues—is not a hopeless mystery. Man's struggle against the natural order produces in him qualities of skill, forethought, endurance, and courage which are beyond price. As he dominates his surroundings and subdues even the powers of Nature to his ends, he develops his personality. And as for the so-called 'acts of God' involving wholesale suffering and loss of life, it is only reasonable to believe that as these belong to that natural order which reveals God's habitual mode of activity, they are but natural incidents.

Thirdly, the problem of the individual, under Providence, is not a hopeless mystery. Many people find it hard to conceive that the God of the universe interests Himself in their personal welfare. But if we are to hold this faith we must possess a

right theological background. In other words, we must Christianize our theology. Jesus taught that men are the children of God and the proper objects of a Father's care and compassion.

St. Thomas Aquinas held a conception of God that was more philosophical than religious, more metaphysical than moral. He argued that grades of goodness are necessary to the perfection of the universe and that evil has a real part to play in God's economy. Thus God is willing to sacrifice individual good to the good of the whole, to the ultimate end and perfection of His creatures. He deals with men as His creatures rather than as His children.

Schleiermacher has a more Christian conception of God's Providence. Yet his view of the Divine love remains cosmic rather than personal. No doubt it secures its end, namely, the redemption of the race, through the redemption of individuals; but something very different is suggested from the sheltering care of a Heavenly Father who knows His children's needs, material as well as spiritual. It is only of the 'God-consciousness' in man, according to Schleiermacher, that the Divine love shows unequivocally a generally protective and fostering care.

In the theology of Karl Barth we find a conception far removed from that of a Fatherly Providence. God and the world are poles asunder. There is no such thing as natural religion, and men are not by nature sons of God. God's concern with the world is not so much revelation as revolution. In sharp contrast to this is the position of those modern theologians for whom God's revelation is not a bolt from the blue, but a progressive unfolding of His will conditioned by man's capacity to receive and apply it. Spirit with spirit can meet, and man's capacity to receive plays as important a part as God's willingness to give. Thus to state the problem of Providence in terms of a father dealing with his children brings us at least halfway to a solution.

The teaching and practice of the Group Movement has recently given great prominence to the question of Divine guidance. No Christian will doubt for a moment the reality of the Divine guidance or of his own dependence upon it. But God is not a general commanding troops and issuing to them orders of the day, but a father in the midst of his children, who wishes his children to do his will spontaneously and intelligently. He holds out to them a guiding hand, but not a pair of crutches. They must learn by their mistakes, and the discipline will do them good. It is only by Christianizing their conception of God, only by interpreting their relation to Him in terms of fatherhood and sonship, that men shall be able to see in God not merely a Providence which shapes their ends, but a Providence in whose will is their peace.

Losing Religion to Find It (Dent; 6s. net) is the attractive title of a recent book by Mrs. Erica LINDSAY, the wife of the Master of Balliol. It does not make easy reading, but it is the work of a profound and imaginative thinker who is not content to rest on custom or authority, but must needs dig down to root principles.

It will not be denied that many have lost hold on religion in these days, and many more are in deep perplexity. Much of this is undoubtedly due to the great influence which physical science has had on the modern mind, leading it to a deterministic view of reality. Such is the prestige of science that, 'whilst divines in the pulpit try to feed their flocks with science, which if not at first-then at second-hand is to save them, scientists are yielding to the persistent demand of an unsatisfied multitude and are supplying in answer to that demand a primitive philosophy and morals.'

Yet in the midst of the confusions and discontents of our time, living in our midst and subject to the same conditions as the rest of us, there are to be found men and women who possess the secret of a heavenlier life. The quality which distinguishes them is independent of riches and poverty, learning or ignorance, ease or difficulty of circumstance.

'They do not analyse or describe themselves; but they are pilgrims of eternity. Round them men are working havoc and engaging upon uncreative expenditure of energy, but these unselfconsciously peculiar people bear themselves as pilgrims in the realm of mortality, knowing in themselves an immortal spirit with which God communes. They seem to possess that liberty with which Christ made men free.'

Now these choice souls are like the little child whom Jesus set in the midst. They bid us pause and ponder. At the same time the presence of the little child in the midst, however beautiful and arresting, was not a gospel. We must reach through the individual to 'a principle and a method which the individual lives can reveal but can never exhaustively express.' The scientist may say, 'Of course we see the beauty of these Christlike lives, and we would gladly believe that in them we have a key to the spiritual significance of the universe. But our scientific world says it has no room for the importance of the individual, certainly not for individual power and spontaneity. How can a belief in undeviating scientific law live with a trust in redemption and in the individual spontaneity of Christlike lives?' The same difficulty is seriously felt by many within the Christian Church who are wondering what place is left for moral obligation and the eternal value of Christian truth and Christian living in such a world as science represents this world to be.

The fundamental problem, therefore, is of the reality of moral freedom and responsibility in a world where indubitably law reigns. A solution must be found which harmonizes the two and shows their organic relation within the total unity. It will not do to assert dogmatically an absolute freedom which is manifestly contrary to experience, or to regard faith as something which 'rebels,' or the incoming of the supernatural as something which violates law and order. The Christian faith, while it has its own absolute word to speak and its own freedom to offer, must speak that word and make that offer in harmony with all that is true in science.

Now, before we blindly accept the scientific doctrine of determinism, it will be well for us to examine with our own eyes the facts of experience. When we do so we at once begin to become aware that we have a real power, within strictly defined limits, of determining the course of events. The sailor, in the midst of forces which he has no power to change, which for him are 'determinism,' yet has within limits a freedom of choice, and can produce an effect of will. 'The tide and the blowing of the south-west wind will not alter for him, at his pleasure, but yet their effects on and for him vary, in ways he can foresee, as he chooses or does not choose to shift sail, oar, or rudder.' This consciousness of freedom to choose, of power exerted through will, is ineradicable in the human mind, and is continually assumed and acted upon in everyday life. No scientist carries his theory of absolute determinism into practical life. On the contrary, he consistently speaks and acts as if the opposite were the truth. In other words, he admits in his actions that our wills can be woven into the web of life, that they are an integral part of reality, that the laws of Nature leave us with some elbow-room, so that, relying on them and using them, we have power to effect our purposes and to alter the net result.

This element of spontaneity or unpredictableness manifests itself wherever life is to be found. It may take forms of harmony as in the play of lambs, or forms of disharmony as in the dizzy whirlings of a mad dog. In the world of inanimate Nature the evidences of spontaneity are less obvious, though physicists have recently raised the question of the indeterminacy of the electron. But when we look deeply into things there is ground for a reasonable faith that 'in reality itself, in the universe, in the nature of things, in God the Everlasting of Days, is always and everywhere to be found this freedom of being, this spaciousness, this indeterminateness that exists within, is as the living flower of, determination, a freedom that is unconstrained except by the warnings of disharmony. As a necessity of its true indetermination it has capacity for disharmony; but since disharmony cuts living fibres of being and engenders waste, it can function as disharmony only for so long as the life acquired

before disharmony can endure unrenewed and unsustained.'

Now this helps to throw some light on the problem of sin. Our modern tendency has been to think of sin '*both* as if God truly meant us to put away the evil of our doings, *and* yet as if, for all that, this same sin has a necessary respectable place in the scheme of things, and is in some sense intended by God, because life without sin in it would not offer any tasks for God's saints hard enough to deserve crowns of glory in payment.' But there is another view of it. When once we have looked with love upon the unforeseeable beauty of life and discerned that it is the flowering of a spaciousness and freedom in the nature of things, then we realize that God cannot 'make unfree freedom, determined indetermination, and that this grace belongs to a reality where there is *possibility* of waste, though no *necessity* of waste.' Between the evil that is undeveloped good and the evil that is sin there is a great gulf fixed. 'This relating of sin to an element or characteristic of indeterminateness believed to be present in the entire universe of things, in stocks and stones as in spiritual experience, together with this expressing of sin as *waste when waste occurs with consciousness*, might seem to offer a more terrible picture of the instability of virtue, of life, of a divine economy of creating spirit, of central peace, than we dare contemplate. . . . Only in the line of perfect union between law and grace is the everlastingly continuing line of life.'

This union of law and grace is what the scientist is most apt to miss. Scrutinizing the event after it has happened he takes it to have been rigidly fixed and foreordained. He leaves entirely out of account what might have been. Here is where the imagination of the poet and the artist comes in. They are sensitive to the 'might-have-been-otherwise' quality of the already determined, and the 'may-be-this-or-that' quality of things in the making. 'Shakespeare looking into the dark backward and abysm of time, and knowing the prophetic soul of the great world dreaming on things to come, makes us aware of reality in a way which it would be perfectly ridiculous to try to replace by Sir James Jeans's calculations of a probable winding-up and running-down of a measurable universe, with man as a measurably improbable occurrence in it.'

How this deeper view of life as a realm of grace in the midst of law, an orderly cosmos shot through and through with freedom, finds its supreme expression in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and how, because of it, all Nature becomes sacramental, cannot be set down here but must be left to the reader of the book. Suffice it to say that here is work of great freshness and power of thought which will repay the most serious study.

The widespread religious indifference of our time has naturally caused much heart-searching within the Church. This manifests itself in one direction in the form of dissatisfaction with present methods of worship and a willingness to experiment on new lines in the hope of finding some type of worship more generally satisfactory.

This is true principally of Protestant churches, though there is ample reason why the Greek and Roman churches also should have serious misgivings when they contemplate the atheism of Russia and the irreligion of Latin countries. It is a momentous question which all the churches need to face, whether in their forms of worship they are giving a true and adequate presentation of the gospel.

This question has been treated from the point of view of the Wesleyan Church by the Rev. J. Ernest RATTENBURY in his recent book on *Vital Elements of Public Worship* (Epworth Press; 5s. net). No one has a more complete knowledge of the Wesleyan tradition, or a more perfect sympathy with the spirit of Wesley. While written from that point of view, and historically of interest in that connexion, it is a valuable contribution to the whole subject of Christian worship, especially as it culminates in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

A study of early Christian worship shows 'from

the beginning two tendencies, one towards formal institutional worship, which is based on history, cherishes tradition, and directs men to the supreme sacred objects of devotion; the other is inspirational, individual, and spontaneous, and is dictated by human needs, feelings, and aspirations.' After the Apostolic Age the free exercise of the prophetic gift was more narrowly confined, and the public worship of the Church tended to become exclusively an ordered ritual. The Reformation, in one aspect of it, was a revolt of the prophetic spirit from this ancient bondage. It was a most necessary revolt, and none prizes its fruits more highly than Mr. RATTENBURY, but he expresses his 'strong conviction that our emphasis on the value of subjective and individualistic worship, necessary as it has been as a protest against the ceremonialism and rigidity of Catholic ritual, has gone too far and that to-day a restoration of certain neglected corporate and historical elements of devotion in our public services is essential to truly balanced Christian worship.'

The emphasis is laid on 'balanced worship.' 'One of the most refractory tendencies of human nature is that which says "Entweder-oder," that is to say, "either-or." This is the facile device of the mere logic-monger. I do not mean that there are no final issues on which one must take one side or the other, but I do mean that to nine-tenths of the issues posed there are quite a number of alternatives which are open, if not to a German, to an Englishman. We can, and indeed must, belong either to the Catholic or to the Protestant party, but that does not mean, at least in the Protestant case, that we repudiate all that the other party stands for.'

In passing, one may demur to the freedom with which Mr. RATTENBURY seems to give away the great word 'Catholic,' while no doubt he would strenuously maintain the Catholicity of his own and of all other Protestant churches. It may also be seriously questioned whether, in the case in point, the 'either-or' can be so easily disposed of, and the due balance maintained. It is often a fond dream of amiable and conciliatory minds that they can combine the good points of two opposing systems and find a *tertium quid* which will be free from the errors and disadvantages of both extremes. But generally it is found that both the opposing systems have an organic unity which refuses to be broken up and amalgamated. Experience has also proved that, connected with each, there are tendencies which, when we begin to follow them, lead us insensibly further than we had meant to go.

With these caveats, however, it must be warmly acknowledged that Mr. RATTENBURY has said well and wisely many things that needed to be said. While he holds up John Wesley as one who maintained the due balance, his main effort is to get down to root principles and to find out by what means the spiritual realities for which the Church stands can best come to expression. Now 'the fundamental constitutive fact of every Christian gathering which makes it into a worshipping Church, is the Presence of the Lord. While it is true that the Presence depends on no symbol or form of worship, it is also true that the Early Church from the beginning regarded the Lord's Supper as the service in which His Presence was specially pledged.'

It is not denied that 'the Presence' is also pledged in the preaching of the Word. To Martin Luther, for example, the Word of God was *par excellence* the Sacrament. No higher form of worship, nothing more glorifying to God, can be imagined than the plain declaration of His grace to sinful men. Speech is the greatest and most intelligible of all symbols, and a most effective vehicle for the conveyance of spiritual communion. It might be argued with the Barthians that what the Church of to-day supremely needs is a revival of the concept of the Word of God, a concept which the criticism of the nineteenth century tended so much to obscure. If the voice of the Church was once again heard, as in the first age, making an authoritative proclamation of the Word of grace, it would again move the world.

There is no antithesis, however, between the Word and the Sacrament. 'The notion that there is something violently opposed in Sacramentalism

to Evangelicalism is one of the worst instances to be found of the subjection of sensible men to catch-words. . . . Sacramentalism and Evangelicalism are complementary ideals, not exclusive ones, and their common enemy is the semi-Christian rationalism which always suspects religious fervour, whatever shape it takes.' That the Sacrament has been perverted, as the Word also has been, is a painful fact of Christian history, but that must not lead to a denial of the real Presence of the Lord at His table. 'This great symbol should be placed at the centre of Christian worship, and not regarded as a sort of appendix, as in so many Free Churches, of no particular obligation. No other religion possesses a symbol of like beauty and significance. It is more in the modern sense of the word than a symbol, for it not only declares but mediates a fact, that great fact that the Lord is invisibly present amongst the people who show forth His death till He come.'

This implies a high doctrine of the Church. The view that the Church is just a voluntary association of well-meaning Christians who are looking for mutual guidance and help is not tenable. The Church is constituted by the living presence of God in the midst. 'All attempts to improve worship by improvement of Liturgies, or by anything merely modal, will fail unless God, and not our own feelings, becomes central to our common devotion.' Attention must be concentrated on the object of worship. This can be aided both by symbol and instruction. 'Symbol without instruction hardens into unintelligent ritual. . . . Symbols of some sort, however, are essential to community worship. Preaching can never take the place in public devotion of commonly understood forms and symbols.' Through these the ideal of the Church may be presented, 'not a body of people just trying to be good and striving to bring about the Kingdom, as Modernism suggests, but the body of redeemed sinners saved by the grace of God, in whose midst is the Saviour, whose appearing as King they await with adoring awe, love, and faith.'

The Rev. W. Russell MALTBY, D.D., is highly thought of in this country, and evidently he is highly thought of abroad, for he was chosen to deliver the Cato Lecture to the Methodist Conference in Australia. With characteristic courage he chose as his subject the Atonement. The extended lecture he has now published under the title *Christ and His Cross* (Epworth Press; 5s. net). It is always interesting, and frequently rewarding, to see an original and devout mind engaged in grappling with a big subject. And in the present case there are some impressions which remain from a careful reading of this book that are worth passing on.

Dr. MALTBY at the outset calls attention to two points of interest. One is the way in which old views of the Cross have been tacitly given up, or have simply faded away. In a certain hymnal there used to be a verse which read:

> For what you have done
> His blood must atone:
> The Father hath punished for you His dear Son.

So it was in 1876. In the 1904 Revision the word 'punished' disappears, and the non-committal word 'stricken' is substituted. In 1933 the whole verse disappears. Like Charles Wesley's hymn, ''Tis finished! the Messiah dies,' it disappears, not because it was a poor hymn, but because it says what the Revisers no longer believed.

The other point is that there is no 'orthodox' interpretation of the Cross which can claim the explicit authority of the Scriptures or of the Christian Church throughout the centuries. No great theologian has been able to leave the subject alone; no theologian has ever been able to speak for the whole Church. It was natural to think that upon a theme so central to the Christian faith it was only necessary to assemble the materials provided by the New Testament, and from them derive an authoritative doctrine of the Atonement. Accordingly, throughout the centuries the Bible has been diligently searched, not without result, but not with the result desired. If we are inclined to blame the ambiguity of the records for this

diversity among the interpreters, it must be remembered that the writers of the New Testament were not retired theologians with time on their hands. They were ardent missionaries who had taken their lives in their hands; they were evangelists of a great message, and obliged to deal with a hundred urgent practical problems of thought and conduct in a new way of life.

What, then, has this new interpreter to say about his theme? Well, it is significant both of his own standpoint and of the age in which he writes that he confines himself to the Synoptic record. St. Paul is considered, but only later and as a secondary witness. Dr. MALTBY'S first point is a very striking one. In all the last period of His ministry Jesus was seeing, and thinking of, wide horizons. Dr. MALTBY goes over all the incidents one by one, and shows that in each case Jesus was thinking, not of the immediate situation or person, but of the wider world outside and the indefinite future. The Transfiguration, the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the Temple, the Parable of the Vineyard, the anointing at Bethany, the Holy Supper—in every case the same feature appears.

Jesus is shown as concerned with a far wider audience than His own contemporaries, and with a work that was nothing less than the salvation of the world. In all the closing scenes His purpose has outrun the calendar days; the horizons have widened to the scale of the infinite. The barriers of time and place have gone down for His mind. Already He is passing from the here into the Everywhere; from His own age to all the ages; from His own people according to the flesh to that new family which He was to gather from all the earth. He is not, as we say, preoccupied or absent-minded, so as to be unable to attend to those immediately about Him. But behind them all is Everyman. This point is both important in itself as showing clearly the universalism of Jesus, but also because it is a necessary foundation for Dr. MALTBY'S own interpretation of the Cross.

He passes then to ask two questions: first, why was Jesus put to death by the Jews? And second, why did He lay down His life Himself? We need not deal with the first question. The answer so clearly is that His death was inevitable because of His attitude to the authorities on various matters. The second question is the important one. Dr. MALTBY'S conclusion is this. Both by His character and His calling—and for Jesus the two were one—He was committed in life to a unique experience which in the nature of things flesh and blood could not long survive. To seek and to save that which was lost imposed a burden upon Him from which His love never drew back, but which the human frame, dependent as it is on brain and nerve, and subject to exhaustion when the due limits are passed, could not indefinitely endure. The records indicate that He knew this Himself, and was aware before the end that there was a breaking-point, and that it was not far away; and, with this in view, He was consciously hastening to the consummation of His death and resurrection.

Take the incidents, and go over them—the dulness of the Twelve, Judas, the woman taken in adultery, the problem brought to Jesus when they came down from the Mount of Transfiguration. There was always some clamant need, and Jesus had no defence against human need. Necessity was laid upon Him. He so loved that He gave. He so cared as to feel. But the power of responding to human need has its limits. Jesus had 'the most vulnerable heart in the world,' and never faltered in the constancy and courage of His sympathy. Now, when we consider what it was to live after this fashion—never to hide Himself from any need, to see His task daily increasing before His eyes and still retain the love that will not let us go; in a word, to bear the character of the Saviour of the world—it is no precarious inference to say that even the Son of Man could not indefinitely carry in a human frame a burden so awful.

His love could not fail, or His courage. But 'the outward man,' the bodily tabernacle, must break down under this ever-increasing strain. Jesus felt this within Himself. He knew also that

death would not release Him from His vocation, or end His work, but that it would free Him by the way of resurrection from human limitations, and put all authority and power in His hands. Therefore we see Him hastening to Jerusalem and to death, because He was also hastening to the Resurrection and fulness of life and power. Death had for Jesus two aspects—an aspect of suffering, and an aspect of release. Not of release from His task, for that would mean release from His character, but release from the limitations and frustrations which are inseparable from life within the body.

And so the Cross, Dr. MALTBY says, was really the self-dedication of Jesus to His great, world-wide, timeless task of saving men. 'If we may dare to say so, He there betrothed Himself for ever to the human race, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health.' His great word is, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.' That word is the meaning of the Cross. That pledge stands for ever, and binds Him to our race in its deepest need. On this interpretation the sufferings of Christ were not the penal consequences of sin endured on our behalf, or in our stead; nor were they the Divine condemnation of sin accepted by Jesus in our name; nor were they the sufferings of a vicarious or representative penitence offered to God in the name of those who could not offer it themselves. Their virtue was not in any *quantum* of suffering which could be set over against the sin of the world, as a vindication of the moral order, and so leave God free to deal with us in mercy.

His sufferings followed inevitably from His character and His office as Redeemer, because in love for sinful men He devoted Himself utterly to their recovery. There we see not merely a revelation of the love of God for men. We witness the act and deed of Christ done with all His heart and soul and mind, when, for the love He had for man, He burdened Himself with the whole situation which our sin had created, embraced the prospect of endless sacrifice, and dedicated Himself without reserve, in face of all that sin could make of us, to the task of our recovery to God and to holiness.

The source of our difficulties about the Atonement is to be found in our putting asunder what the New Testament has joined—the life and death and life again of our Lord Jesus—for our salvation is not in His death, or in His rising, but in Himself. He dedicated Himself at the Cross to the task of saving us. And He lives to do this. This interpretation of the Cross excludes all theories of expiation. It also goes beyond all 'moral' theories. The death of Christ was on one side an inevitable breaking of an over-tasked human frame, and on another a self-oblation to a work of salvation that was to be for all the ages. He hastened to it in the end because it was the release He longed for, the release of One who means now what He meant then, who fulfils now what He undertook at the Cross.

The First Commandment.

BY DR. A. MAUDE ROYDEN, C.H., THE GUILDHOUSE, LONDON.

THE Jews have been the spiritual educators of the Western world; ultimately, if Christianity fulfils its mission as the universal religion, of the world itself.

This cannot be claimed as a conscious and deliberate purpose. There were Jews who 'compassed sea and land to make one proselyte' but, generally speaking, they were conscious of their unique position as 'God's peculiar people' in a way which made a missionary attitude to the Gentile world uncongenial or even impossible to them. As a Hindu to-day must be born a Hindu to be truly of the faith, so the Jew must have 'Abraham for his Father' to be truly of Israel: it was only