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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

EVERY one interested in the life and work of the Christian Church feels how critical is the situation in our day. Multitudes are so apathetic about everything spiritual that they seem to be quite beyond the appeal of the gospel. One hopeful feature of the situation, however, is that preachers are being driven back on first principles. There is much anxious inquiry as to what the Christian message essentially is. In this connexion we draw attention to a book on *Modern Evangelism*, by the Rev. William MACDONALD, M.A., one of Edinburgh's most popular young preachers (James Clarke; 3s. 6d. net).

Since his college days Mr. MACDONALD'S mind and heart have undergone a very vital change. For this he acknowledges the influence of Karl Barth and Wilfred Monod. 'It was Dr. Barth who showed me how I could accept the results of modern criticism and yet retain my faith in the Bible as the Word of God, and it was Dr. Monod who kindled—or to be more truthful, who rekindled—the evangelical fire in my heart.' He has now written a book on Evangelism, which a few years ago he would not have thought it possible that he should ever write.

Such confessions are not uncommon in these days, and they show the direction in which the winds of the Spirit are blowing. In this case Mr. MACDONALD writes with all the fervour of a new-found faith, while at the same time he maintains balance and sound judgment in his thinking.

In a concluding chapter he deals with an important, but frequently neglected, subject, namely, the connexion between evangelism and social reform. It is a subject which social reformers in particular should seriously study and ponder.

The thesis is that modern philanthropy and social reform in England grew out of Wesley's revival. The testimony of Green the historian is quoted as to the moral and social degradation prevailing in England in the years immediately preceding that revival. Not only was religion laughed at in the higher circles, but in the same circles drunkenness and foul talk were counted no disgrace, while chastity and fidelity to the marriage vow were sneered at as out of fashion. While such examples were set in high quarters, the morals and manners of the mass of the people were coarse and brutal beyond words. The recent introduction of gin had given a new impetus to drunkenness. The London gin-shops openly invited the passers-by to 'get drunk for a penny, or dead drunk for two-pence.'

Then came Wesley and his revival, which moved the heart of the English people to its depths. And from that revival there followed results of prime importance in the line of social reform. To quote Green: 'In the nation at large appeared a new moral enthusiasm. . . . A yet nobler result of the religious revival was the steady attempt, which has never ceased from that day to this, to remedy the guilt, the ignorance, the physical suffering,

the social degradation of the profligate and the poor. It was not till the Wesleyan impulse had done its work that this philanthropic impulse began.' The fervour of evangelical religion found its outlet in a passionate impulse of human sympathy with the wronged and afflicted which, as the historian says, 'raised hospitals, endowed charities, built churches, sent missionaries to the heathen, supported Burke in his plea for the Hindoo, and Clarkson and Wilberforce in their crusade against the iniquity of the slave-trade.'

One might add indefinitely to the historian's list. It was the impulse derived from evangelical religion which upheld Shaftesbury in his lifelong crusade against the horrible conditions prevalent in the mines and factories of his day. Similarly one might speak of Dr. Guthrie with his ragged schools, of Dr. Barnardo, of Müller of Bristol, and of Quarrier with their orphan homes. Or one might take the notable case of General Booth, a son of the Wesleyan Church, who, setting out with the single aim of saving men's souls, was impelled to fight against every form of social evil and to work by every means for the social uplift of the people.

We are led, accordingly, to two conclusions which indicate the vital connexion there is between evangelical religion and social reform. On the one hand, the gospel when rightly understood and applied leads on to social reform. That universal love which is the second great commandment of the Christian law implies a serious effort to promote all that concerns man's welfare. We seek to win a response in men's hearts to the love of God as declared in Christ, but we presently find that many, by reason of adverse social conditions, find it hard to believe in that message of love. So we are constrained to fight for the removal of these hindrances. We are taught in the gospel that man has an eternal worth inasmuch as he is born to be a son of God, and so we cannot easily stand by and suffer his worth to be cheapened and his manhood to be degraded. It is all this teaching about man as the object of God's love and the heir of an eternal destiny, in a word, gospel teaching, which has sunk into the minds of our people and awakened a new sensitiveness to social evils. This is a sentiment of peculiarly Christian origin. Where the teaching of Christ is not known it is conspicuously absent. The untutored African is quite callous to the sufferings of any one who is not a fellow-tribesman; the Hindu never stirred a finger for the uplift of the millions of the outcastes of his own race and faith till the teaching and spirit of Christ had begun to leaven Indian thought. And among ourselves when it comes to purely unselfish work, work that is not likely to bring any return to oneself or one's own class, work that involves trouble and risk and self-sacrifice like the deed of the Good Samaritan, then the convinced Christian is the man to depend on. He has the spirit for it and the staying power, because his Christian faith has laid it on his conscience.

The second conclusion is that social reform leads back to the gospel. Let a man be interested merely in social reform. He strives to improve the conditions under which the people live, because he sees how deeply their environment affects their character and welfare. But he cannot go far before discovering that character influences environment as powerfully as environment influences character. He is interested in housing, but he soon finds that something more than the building of houses goes to the making of happy homes. He would fight the drink evil, or social impurity, or the like, but soon he finds that legislation, however good, provides no adequate cure. In short, he begins to see that the world needs moral reform as sorely as social reform. No matter how fine the machine is it cannot run sweetly without skilled men to work it, and so no social system, call it by whatever name you will, can function well without good men to constitute and guide it. It is pressed upon us that what we need, in the words of Lord Bryce, is 'a world of new and better men.' Or, as it has been put, 'the soul of all reform is the reformation of the soul.' In putting new hearts and right spirits into men the gospel has been rendering the highest social service, and the work of the evangelical preacher ought to be recognized and acknowledged, both inside the

Church and beyond it, as of the highest social value.

In a booklet entitled *The Sacrament of Sacrifice* (Longmans; 2s. net), the Right Rev. R. G. PARSONS, D.D., Bishop of Southwark, deals with some controversial questions concerning the Holy Communion which are exercising the minds of English Churchmen at the present time. His purpose is, however, not controversial. Rather he seeks to draw out agreements which underlie what are commonly regarded as opposing ideas.

Take the question of our Lord's presence in connexion with the Sacrament. It is not that He is present only in the celebration of the Eucharist; He is present at every service of His Church. It is not that He is present as the result of the Consecration; He is present from the beginning of every celebration of the Eucharist. But He does something at the Eucharist which He does not do at other services. He invests the natural elements of bread and wine with sacramental significance and effect, thus importing to those among whom He already is the very essence of His Being, His own Life, sacrificed for them and risen and ever living for them.

How precisely the divine Gift is associated with the earthly elements of bread and wine Christian philosophy may never be able to define. There has been great controversy concerning the theories of Transubstantiation (Roman Church), Consubstantiation (Lutheran Church), Virtualism (Waterland), and Receptionism (Calvin). What is sometimes overlooked is the fact that each of these theories affirms in its own way the objective reality of the divine Gift. But in so far as each of these theories goes beyond this affirmation, it becomes liable to criticism, and the sacrament of unity in the Body of Christ becomes a cause of dissension and division.

Or take the question of Transubstantiation, a doctrine rejected by the Church of England for reasons that were historically good. Yet the doctrine in its origin was intended not to inculcate, but to combat a gross and materialistic belief as to the manner of the presence of our Lord's Body and Blood in the Sacrament. As set forth by St. Thomas Aquinas, it does not assert that the bread and wine are transformed into His Body and Blood, but that the substance of the bread and wine is transformed into the substance of the Body and Blood.

'To the untutored mind the term substance, unfortunately, suggests the idea of something concrete, solid, and tangible. To the philosopher, on the other hand, it stands for something abstract, ethereal, intangible. For mediæval thinkers substance denoted the underlying reality by virtue of which an entity is what it is, its inner essence as distinguished from its "accidents," which are qualities not essential to its being. It could be conceived as something separable in fact as well as in thought from any accidents which might be associated with it. So it could be argued that the whole visible, tangible, physical nature of bread and wine might remain unaltered while yet their substance had been changed.'

With this in mind the doctrine of Transubstantiation can be presented as a truly spiritual doctrine. It is the Divine Person of our Lord Himself that is the substance or underlying reality of our Lord's Body and Blood, and by virtue of His consecrating power the bread and wine exist no more as merely physical entities, but become His Sacrament, with His Person as their true underlying reality. And if the distinctive reality of an entity consists of its meaning, purpose, and efficacy, in a word, its 'values,' then 'transvaluation' may be regarded as an equivalent to 'transubstantiation.' Roman and non-Roman thinkers may find here indicated a way which will at least lead to a better understanding between them.

Or take the question of Reservation. The Reservation of the Consecrated Elements for the purpose of giving Holy Communion to the sick or others does not of itself imply any particular explanation of the Sacrament. All it implies is

a belief that by their consecration the Elements have been rendered sacramental. What they become, that they remain for the purposes of Communion. The practice of Reservation existed long before Transubstantiation was defined, and has continued in churches which have never accepted that doctrine.

What is forbidden by Anglican authority is that the consecrated Elements should become the focus of acts and services of adoration directed to our Blessed Lord. Such 'extra-liturgical cultus,' as the practice of the Eastern as distinguished from the Roman Church shows, is by no means the inevitable logical outcome of belief in the Real Presence. Christ is everywhere and always present and accessible to His faithful people in the plenitude of His indivisible Being. And everywhere and always He is to be adored. The presence of the Consecrated Elements does not bring Him nearer or make Him more fully present. The gift of Himself, His own life, which the Elements are, is never identified with His Personality, however closely it is associated with it. It is a precarious step in logic to proceed from 'this is my Body' to 'this is I.'

A remarkable essay has been contributed by Professor Emil BRUNNER, the well-known exponent of the 'Dialectic' theology, to a volume entitled *The Church through Half a Century* (Scribner's; 12s. 6d. net). The book contains 'Essays in honour of William Adams Brown,' written by a number of his pupils and friends, and designed to trace the development of religious thought during the last fifty years. There are eighteen writers and eighteen subjects, ranging from 'The Liberal Movement in Theology,' through 'Science and Theology,' 'The Interpretation of the Bible,' to 'The Church and Society' and 'Ecumenical Christianity.' It is a fascinating book, but nothing in it compares in interest and value with BRUNNER'S essay on 'Continental European Theology.'

Professor BRUNNER is almost as familiar to us by name as Barth. His great book, 'The Mediator,' is perhaps even better known than any of Barth's works. He does not in this essay acknowledge any debt to Barth, but his general standpoint is the same. What he does here is to describe the nature and sources of a revolution that has taken place in continental theology within the short space of twenty years. It is the displacement of the theological outlook of the nineteenth century by what may be most intelligibly described as the Barthian position. In the nineteenth century the general standpoint was a Liberalism which regarded religion as the possession of every man. There was only one truth, seen in many forms, but really one. There was only one religion, seen in many historic faiths, but only one, and that is native to the human soul which is at its deepest depth one with the Divine Spirit.

This idea, that the fundamental nature of religion is always the same, though one religion is the purest form of religious essence, ruled all the theology of the last century. But (here is the amazing revolution) there is scarcely a trace of it left within the sphere of continental theological science. The writings of Rudolph Otto, for example, the only really significant representative of the theological tradition of last century, stand out to-day only as do those great pieces of rock in our woods which are regarded as witnesses of the ice age. And the new epoch is so recent that 'we who are engaged in theological work have all, so far as our own training is concerned, come out of that ice age.' How has so complete a reversal of position within so short a time been possible?

The revolution has not been the work of one man, or even of one theological school, such as the so-called Dialectic Theology, but is the outcome of several factors.

The first is that achievement of the critical historical work on the New Testament in which the liberal conception of Christianity in the nineteenth century dug its own grave; namely, the discovery of the New Testament eschatology by Albert Schweitzer. This completely disposed of the liberal portrait of Christ. Schweitzer went so

far as to say that this was a falsification of history. With the Jesus who really lived, and whom the Gospels picture, the Messiahship was not a secondary matter, but the sum total of all His activity, of His being and willing. With the picture of Christ set forth by Liberalism this Jesus has nothing in common.

The second factor in this revolution was the new discovery of Luther by Karl Holl. BRUNNER still remembers the delight with which he first read Holl. What Holl dug out of Luther's lectures on the *Romans* was as different from nineteenth-century Christianity as Schweitzer's picture of Jesus was from the Liberal one. If Christian faith is what Luther understood by it, then what Troeltsch and Otto and Ritschl understood by it is something other than Christian faith.

A third factor was the 'Conservative Theology,' which had flowed on as a separate stream alongside nineteenth-century Liberalism. This theology drew its strength out of the Revival Movement. Tholuck and Beck, Hoffmann and Franck are the genuine children of the great revival which set in at the end of the Napoleonic wars. They sought to carry on the orthodox Reformed tradition. This had seemed almost to die out at the turn of the twentieth century. But when the revolution came it was seen how valuable a treasure it had preserved, which could now be handed on to a generation ready to receive it.

The real impulse, however, came from the fourth—'Dialectic Theology.' The origin of this Movement, BRUNNER says, is to be found in three men, the two Blumhardts and Hermann Kutter. The former were the source and instrument of a spiritual quickening which was deeply influential. They had experienced the power of the Spirit of the Living God, and, though they were not theologians, they could make theologians think. Kutter taught the dialectikers to reckon with the Living God as a reality, and to let this reality be the starting-point for thinking. 'And if one wishes to understand what the Dialectic Theology seeks, then one must start here. He made no other presupposition than that God is God, and that therefore Paul is right.'

The fifth factor, without which one cannot understand either the speed or the completeness of the theological transformation that has taken place on the Continent is found in the historical events themselves. With 1914 an historical epoch came to an end, and with it a theological one—the epoch of the optimistic belief in progress that was an outcome of the enlightenment. The world catastrophe which began in the year 1914, and which to-day perhaps has not reached its height, shattered that faith upon which the whole modern world, and especially modern philosophy and theology, rested—faith in the divinity of the human spirit.

This has been indeed the real faith of the modern man, faith in himself. The whole modern philosophy from Descartes on has been a series of variations on this one theme, the divine truth in man. The fearfulness of the historical events has given the death-blow to this faith. The problems of evil and of death, so diligently avoided by modern thought, now press upon us with their full weight. And so the rationalistic thinking of the past is for ever impossible. This new comprehension of human reality, this knowledge of evil, is as characteristic a starting-point for the new kind of theological thinking as is the reality of God.

These are the five most important factors which we can make responsible for the almost unparalleled, rapid, and radical breakdown in theology. They all point in the same direction—the eschatology in the New Testament, the faith of Luther, the experience of the Blumhardts, the Dialectic Theology, and the shattering of the modern, rationalistic, optimistic humanism—all point to a chasm in human experience, where man with all his knowledge is placed in question, yea, is brought under accusation and is judged. All truth which man gains by reason, by culture, and even by religion does not alter the fact that when man looks upon his own countenance he must be appalled at what he sees. With all his truths man cannot avoid the penetrating and permeating accusation

that he is outside the truth and against the truth. That is the point of departure for the theology of revelation.

The Bishop of Bradford, Dr. A. W. F. BLUNT, has enlarged a paper on 'Christ in the Gospels,' read at the Bournemouth Church Congress in 1935, into a little book entitled *The Gospels and the Critic* (Milford; 2s. 6d. net). In this work, intended for those who are not specialist students of the Bible, a useful critical review is given of what has been done in the last fifty years in the field of what the Germans have called 'Jesus-research.'

Let us give an account of the timely chapter on 'The New Adventure in Criticism,' namely, Form-Criticism. Here the attempt is made to go behind the written sources, having regard not so much to the question of the Jesus-of-history as to the formation of the Jesus-tradition. The further question is naturally raised of the relation of the tradition to history, but it is a question which does not necessarily arise from the pure application of the method of Form-Criticism.

In Form-Criticism a study is made of the formative period of oral tradition in the hope that the 'forms' in which the evangelic stories had been told in that period may be discerned. The chief suggestion is that both the selection of the stories and the shape which they took were influenced or determined by the necessities, hopes, and beliefs of the Early Church (which was expecting the end to come soon).

The classification of the stories is, broadly speaking, as follows: (1) Short narratives ending in a striking saying of Jesus (Paradigms, as these are called by Dibelius; Apophthegms, by Bultmann). (2) Narratives in which a miraculous act of Jesus finds its setting (Tales, as these are called by Dibelius; Miracle Stories, by Bultmann). (3) Sayings of Jesus, such as wisdom-words, prophetic and apocalyptic words, and parables. (4) Stories about Jesus, called Myths or Legends, which are narratives explanatory of a rite, or descriptive of the actions of a divine Being. Examples are the stories of the Baptism, the Transfiguration, and the Resurrection, and the Birth stories in Matthew and Luke.

Now there is nothing here to disconcert any but a literalist faith. It has long been recognized among scholars that in the New Testament, as Hoskyns and Davey put it, events are set in a theological context and their record serves a theological purpose. But to hold that the Church selected among the stories is one thing; it is another thing to hold, as some of the Form-critics do, that the Church invented the stories. On this latter position Dr. BLUNT would make the following comments.

That the early tradition existed in fragmentary form is not true without qualification; even in Mark there is a real 'spinal column' in the narrative which makes against the supposition that the evangelist had to deal with a wholly disjointed tradition. Again, though it is probably quite true that in the Early Church there was no interest in the merely historical or biographical, yet it is difficult to believe that there was no personal interest as to the life of the Master, such as would have exercised some determinative influence over the formation of the tradition concerning Him. Yet again, although the theological setting and purpose in the Gospels are undeniable, they seem to have had less effect upon the shape of the stories than one might have expected. For example, the miracle stories in the Gospels are not used to prove Jesus' Messiahship.

Despite the tendency of Form-Criticism to offer a large field for subjective impressionism and to over-emphasize internal as against external evidence, it gives this much of solid help to those who would establish the authority of the gospel record, that it throws back into the twenty years immediately following Pentecost the rise of the stories which describe the estimate of Jesus held by His contemporaries. Thus the evidence for the truth of the Gospels is not made to rest on the authority of this or that evangelist but is linked to the living voice of the Christian communities in the earliest formative period.

'Rome, Antioch, Ephesus, Syria—one could hardly find a more important quartet of centres from which to gather the body of Christian tradition. From each comes a particular interpretation of Jesus. . . . Each Gospel . . . gives an aspect of the one Jesus; and we can best make the picture of Christ, not by abstracting from the Gospels the greatest common measure of agreed portraiture that we can justify, but by putting together the four classical aspects in order to make up the one comprehensive Figure. This, in fact, is what Christian devotion has done.'