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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

Books on preaching are apt to be singularly fruitless. The great preacher finds it difficult to convey to others the secret of his achievement, and his effort is often eked out by obvious generalities. When, however, two such fresh and vigorous minds as those of Canon RAVEN and the Rev. George MACLEOD of Govan combine to deal with the subject we are justified in expecting something positive and vital. Mr. MACLEOD delivered a course of lectures on *Pastoralia* to the Cambridge University School of Theology (the first person outside the Anglican Communion to have been asked to do so), and the same course was given under the Warrack Foundation at Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities. The lectures are now published under the title *Speaking the Truth—in Love* (S.C.M. ; 3s. 6d. net). Dr. RAVEN writes an Introduction.

Dr. RAVEN is very outspoken. We have, he says, inherited a great tradition, but we are conscious that it has become irrelevant if not obstructive, and we are quite uncertain how to modify or replace it. If you doubt this, read a sermon by Pusey or Liddon, and imagine it being delivered to a modern audience ; and then take a typical modern discourse, and see whether you can discover in it any clear form or principle of construction. The fact is that preachers of a century ago knew what a sermon was, had a definite idea of its function and structure, and studied its composition in the light of that idea. But all kinds of changes have taken place during the century, theological, religious,

in habits and education, and especially in one thing, the divergence between the written and the spoken word.

Oratory has disappeared. No modern audience will listen to it. Consequently the preacher must use the medium of extempore speech if he wishes to hold and move his congregation. He must therefore prepare himself, must cultivate a sensitiveness to the quality and needs of his hearers, and must be quick to adjust his language, style, and sequence, so as to express his theme in accordance with the atmosphere and capabilities of the congregation. Theoretically, the possibilities are much greater than of old. But in practice the difficulties have proved too great for most of us. In any case the new technique is inevitably far more individual than the old : each man must discover a mode suited to his own personality.

At this point Dr. RAVEN gives way to Mr. MACLEOD and his lectures. Mr. MACLEOD has been reading the history of preaching, and has emerged from this study with three impressions. One is the glory of it. Think of the ceaseless procession of men who have streamed out into the world to speak the divine message. And think of what has been done through them. Mr. MACLEOD is deeply moved by the spectacle, and his words will move and brace for their task all preachers who read them. But equally there is a tale of unwillingness on the part of the preachers. All of them—Moses, Isaiah,

Ezekiel, Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Knox, Frederick Robertson—all begged to be excused and protested their unfitness.

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But they all *had* to do it. Why? It was the Word. The Word, that once took flesh and dwelt among us, that is still only revealed to the shepherds and magi, that is, to the simple. And here is Mr. MACLEOD'S real message in his book. If you have the Word, you will preach. If you have not, whatever you are, you are outside the succession. All through his chapters the author plays on this string. Not that preaching is static. The Word is always the same. But we who apprehend and declare it change. And our presentation must change. The changeless Word must make contact with the changing lives of men.

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There is a chapter on 'The Old Verities.' And it gives the author an opportunity to show something of the variety that is to accompany the changeless Word. Ian Maclaren, at the end of his ministry, said, 'If I had my preaching days over again I would preach much more frequently from the text, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."' Not soothing was meant, but strengthening. And here we see the variety of preaching. For preachers must be heralds, and evangelists, and pastors. That is, they have to declare something, they have to apply what they declare, and they have to teach.

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Under these heads there are things said that are really urgent. In speaking of the applications of the gospel to actual people, for example, Mr. MACLEOD warns his young hearers not to be *clever* with people who come to church with some deadly serious trouble. And again, not to be psychological! You have a great gift for men and women, the Bread of Life, and they are hungering for it. 'A group of young men in Govan told us quite plainly that what they wanted, of a week night, was not more socials, or lantern lectures, or whist drives, but definite teaching on the Bible, the Reformation, and the essential Bases of our Faith.'

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Mr. MACLEOD speaks largely on this duty of

teaching. He says he asked a sympathetic churchman the other day what he thought was wrong with the Church, and he summed it up thus, 'I am a Freemason high up in my Order, and what I know of Masonry to-day is quite a different thing to what I knew ten years ago. But I cannot say that there is much I know about my faith which I did not know twenty years ago. I have to go through grades in Masonry. Why don't you preachers take us through grades?' And so Mr. MACLEOD says: 'preach Doctrine.' And also, don't be afraid of courses. You can disguise the courses. You can refrain from labels or names. But *teach* you must.

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Perhaps nothing in this course of lectures is more needed or more impressive than the reiterated emphasis on this. And it is obviously here that Mr. MACLEOD touches a weakness in the modern pulpit. There is a big gulf between the pulpit and the pew. The pulpit has absorbed a new standpoint about the Bible. It has learned what criticism has to say. But the pew is in ignorance of this. At most the pew has become conscious of something disturbing to its faith that has taken place. And this is doing, and has done, a great deal of harm. It is the unnerving vagueness of this impression that is sapping people's confidence and standing in the way of revival. And we are therefore grateful to this preacher for stressing so firmly the teaching function of the Church.

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Another thing that the author deals with in a very earnest spirit is the part which the Fellowship has in declaring the gospel. The grace of God is preached not only from the pulpit but from the pew. And as an example of how powerful this can be, he describes the experiment that was made in Govan. There are in this reasonably small parish (or were) a thousand non-churchgoing households. On this parish, after a year's preparation of his congregation, Mr. MACLEOD flung a mass of earnest, loving Christianity. A hundred men volunteered to visit from door to door. Thereafter there was a more intensive visitation by a hundred and fifty men and women. There was a continuous chain of prayer during a week of special meetings, uninterrupted for twelve hours a day.

'The results of spiritual activity are always indeterminate. But numbers are at least indicative. Three hundred children joined the Sunday school. Over a hundred people whose church connection had wholly lapsed rejoined the Fellowship. Two hundred and twenty others joined a ten weeks' course of instruction in the meaning of the Christian Faith: less than twenty falling away, and the rest accepting the full implications of membership. Eighty adults came forward to be baptized. All that happened as the result of a Church in the process of what should be our normal activity.'

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Mr. MACLEOD by no means ignores the demand for a 'social gospel.' Indeed, he is very emphatic about this. But when we read his book, and consider his counsel, we are left with one impression which is both discouraging and stimulating. The real outcome of this book is that everything, under God, depends on the man. What the Church is crying out for is men of God. Not clever preachers who can fill their churches. Not men who are a 'success.' But men who have heard the Voice, and given themselves up to it. Men who have the Word. All the rest is important. But this is the one thing needful.

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In his recent book, *The Bible View of Life* (Eyre & Spottiswoode; 7s. 6d. net), the Dean of Exeter, Dr. S. C. CARPENTER, in what is the most interesting chapter, deals with 'The Bible and Social Questions.' Clergymen are often reminded that they should 'confine their energies to the Bible and its teachings.' The implication is that they should not interfere with matters quite outside their sphere, like political and social problems. The suggestion that the Bible is only a book of 'religion,' and has nothing to do with secular matters is, however, absurdly wrong. The Bible has always been the storehouse from which social reformers have drawn their weapons. The view of life which confines man's duty to the practice of personal virtues, and deprecates religious 'interference' in politics, is one which wins no countenance from the Bible.

Dr. CARPENTER substantiates this by a careful review of the facts. Naturally there is not much to be found in the earlier literature bearing on the wider questions of social relations. In the Law, however, there is a decided ethical strain, and the whole social life of the community comes under review. The Book of Leviticus, for example, which seems at sight so barren, is in reality one of the most interesting books in the Bible, because of its meticulous care of the poor and the stranger, and its rigorous standards of justice and social righteousness. But it is in the great prophets that we first find a social and international gospel on the grand scale.

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The prophets were in the first instance and above all political. Isaiah is the only prophet who seems to hold a position at all like that of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. But all of them had to deal with the very questions that are before European statesmen to-day. Dr. CARPENTER says it is not easy for us to-day to lay hold of their political advice, because the problems that seem important to us, such problems as those of the Balance of Power, the League of Nations, and the like, for them hardly existed. But is this so? Was not the problem of the King of Judah just one of the Balance of Power, when Assyria and Egypt were contending for mastery, and the king had to choose which side he was to support? It was at that crisis that Isaiah came forward with God's message: 'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength,' which meant 'Keep out of it. Don't entangle yourself in alliances.'

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It is, however, in regard to internal politics that the prophets were most insistent and enlightening. Their duty was to rebuke unrighteousness like land-grabbing, oppression, injustice to the poor, fraud, and bribe-taking, and all this in religious people! It is a pitiful spectacle they present of the condition of Israel in the eighth century and later, but one familiar to ourselves, of conventional religion, a religion of form and custom, allied to conduct that outraged the simplest canons of right and merciful dealing. And so long as such contrasts continue to exist in human life so

stone,' to use another—the beginning and the end of it all.

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The Bampton Lectures for 1936 are worthy of the long and honourable succession in which they stand. They will also enhance the reputation of the Lecturer, who was the Rev. Frank Herbert BRABANT, M.A., Principal of the Mackenzie Memorial College, Zululand. They are published under the title *Time and Eternity in Christian Thought* (Longmans; 15s. net).

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The first four Lectures deal with the historical background, first in Greek thought (Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus), then in the Bible and in Christian thought (St. Augustine, Boethius, Aquinas, Hooker), and lastly in modern thought (from Descartes to Whitehead). The last four Lectures are of a constructive nature, and deal with the Nature of Time, the Nature of Eternity, and the Relation between Time and Eternity, this relation being viewed as at the beginning (Creation and Predestination) and as at the end (Eternal Life) of the world-order. There is an Appendix in which the relation between the temporal and the eternal in the course of the world-order (Incarnation) is briefly and competently considered.

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The whole course of Lectures is marked by much felicity and pointedness of expression; and, considering the subjects treated, it is refreshingly concrete in style. Observable also are its many references to philosophical and theological writers old and new, and the wealth of literary quotations with which it is embellished. One has the feeling that Mr. BRABANT has given us here not only of his own best but of the best in his treasury.

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The eighth and concluding Lecture, on the subject of Eternal Life, is the one in which the readers of this magazine may be chiefly interested. It starts from 1 Jn 3<sup>2</sup>, with its warning and promise—'It doth not yet appear what we shall be'; and the first point it would make is that all Christians would accept the term 'perfection' as descriptive of eternal life.

The word 'perfect,' *Teleios*, in the New Testament has reference sometimes to intellectual growth, implying the ripe sense of the grown man as opposed to the ignorance of a child (Heb 5<sup>14</sup>). Sometimes, again, it has reference to moral growth, or at any rate to moral growth principally, implying a contrast between those who have and those who have not grown up into Christ (Eph 4<sup>12-14</sup>). But in the final state of attained knowledge and holiness there will no doubt be differences and distinctions among the blessed: the seraphic doctor will know more than the charcoal-burner; St. Francis will retain his bent towards poverty, and St. Thomas his towards learning.

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But two questions concern more nearly the subject of Time and Eternity. (1) Can we conceive, after death, a progress to perfection, such as is suggested by the idea of an Intermediate State? (2) When the perfection of heaven has been achieved, is there still room for progress or change or anything in the least degree resembling Time?

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(1) The Intermediate State does not mean a place between Heaven and Hell, but the span between death and the Day of Judgment. In this case it would be clearly absurd to talk in terms of our chronology. But if our souls have still to learn and grow, there will be a state of progress, roughly analogous to what we mean by Time. Progress rather than penalty is the note which the mediæval doctrine of Purgatory should have struck.

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Still, it is true that the shock of death and the introduction of a soul into the spiritual world probably have a converting effect, where there is a germ of faith; there is no sin in the Intermediate State beyond what the soul carries with it, and no fresh temptation to sin; and therefore progress is far more rapid there than it can be under earthly conditions.

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(2) If the temporal process, as we know it, exists for the sake of growth and improvements, then it can have no place when perfection, *Teleiosis*, has been achieved. The life of the blessed must be all of one quality—and that the highest and holiest;

and it must be unchanging in the sense that nothing is lost and nothing gained, for all is at the same level. On the other hand, the blessed are not the same as God, nor are they the same as one another; therefore outside (so to speak) the perfection of each there is an ocean of perfection that can be the object of their experience. God is unchanging, because there is nothing outside Him; but the blessed may have constant enrichment from without.

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Mr. BRABANT deals with high themes, but not in the spirit of the dogmatist. Nothing is further from his intention than to use 'glib formulæ' to make the nature of Time and of Eternity and their relation to one another either less difficult or less wonderful. But he cleaves strongly to the mystic faith that beyond the changing appearances of this life there lies a life which does not change and which is our home.

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It is thirty years since the Bishop of London adopted the happy suggestion that 'a new book should come from London every year for Lent.' The result has been that a helpful series of little books has been published.

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This year the Bishop has been persuaded to write the little book himself, and he has chosen for its title *Everyman's Problems and Difficulties* (Longmans; 2s. 6d. net). It is not written for scholars or theologians, but for the plain man, and is manifestly the work of one who knows how to use great plainness of speech.

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The title of each chapter is in the form of a question, such as, Is there a God? Is there Life after Death? Are Creeds any Good? Are Miracles possible? Three chapters are given to answering the question, What is Sin.

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Dr. Winnington INGRAM deals with sin under three aspects—'in the light of the Creation,' 'in the light of the Redemption,' and 'in the light of the coming of the Spirit.' These lead us progressively into a deeper consciousness of what sin is.

Under the first heading we are taught to think of sin as *ἀμαρτία*, which means 'missing the mark.' What is the mark? In other words, what is the end for which we were created? The answer of the Shorter Catechism cannot be bettered, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.' Doubtless God the Creator had a supremely worthy purpose in creating the world, in creating the human race, in creating every single one of us. It must surely in all conscience be reckoned a most serious thing to ignore or oppose or violate that divine purpose.

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To ignore God, to go on one's way without regard to His will and purpose, is the very root and essence of sin. It is the most complete missing of the mark. It can lead to no good. It must end in futility and destruction. This explains why sin has always in the first instance a Godward reference. David, after a treacherous murder and adultery, said, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.' 'What about Uriah? What about Bathsheba? Yes! He did not deny that he had sinned against them, and that he would receive due punishment for what he had done to them, but he must begin with God, and he saw, when the words of the prophet had burnt into his soul, that behind all those against whom he had sinned, he had sinned first against God; that he had been exalted to his kingship for one purpose, that he had been created as a man for one purpose, and that instead of fulfilling that purpose, he had made men blaspheme God. . . . Yes, it was God first whom he had let down.'

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Are you dealing honestly with God? Is your doubt about His existence a sincere and honest doubt? Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. 'If I wanted to know if a piece of music was written by Handel, I should soak myself in music written by him, until I was familiar with his style, and then I should have a chance of knowing if the piece "rang true," and so it is only those who grow familiar with the things of God who are likely to recognise whether a revelation is from God or not.' Doubtless the root of man's disquiet is that he is out of harmony with his Creator, and he needs to

come back to his true centre. When his relation to God becomes normal, then his relations to others fall into their place. 'The earth has got back to its position in the Heavens and it now reflects the sun, as it was made to do, and the man at last is in the light, and reflects the glory of God.'

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If sin in the light of Creation is a falling short of the glory of God, in the light of Redemption it takes on an altogether new aspect. It is seen to be not merely the breaking of a law, but an insult and injury done to a loving heart. St. Paul felt this most keenly. When he came to know God in Christ, and could say, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me,' then he was impelled also to say that he himself was the chief of sinners. Then he realized what he had done, not merely 'missed the mark,' but he had 'crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.' Only in this way can sin be recognized for the thing it really is. Sin is to be measured and its hatefulness exposed by this fact that, when God's own Son came into the world, the world had no place for Him, and instead of a crown gave Him a cross. All sin, our sin, has this same base and hateful quality. Some may feel it unreal and sentimental to speak of our sins driving the nails into His hands and feet, but there is a profound truth in it, and the realization of that truth has humbled and broken many a proud spirit. For many who would lightly transgress a law feel the shame and baseness of breaking a loving heart. And from that humbling sense of sin in the face of God's love in Christ they have been led on to a happy experience of repentance and forgiveness.

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There is still another aspect of sin, which is perhaps neglected as much as any, but which ought really to come home to us most intimately of all,

and that is sin in the light of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle refers to this when he gives the warning, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.' The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost meant the coming into the Church and into the hearts of Christian people of a Living Person who can be honoured or grieved. 'If He is the Spirit of Purity, then every impure thought indulged and not instantly rejected and expelled from the mind grieves Him. If He is the Spirit of Love, then every unkind word, every spiteful story repeated, grieves Him. If He is the Spirit of Discipline, then the undisciplined life, the surrender to the lust of the flesh, the tyranny of the world and the power of evil, grieves Him.'

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We have not merely to deal with an exalted Creator, or with a divine Redeemer who may be conceived as a moving figure in ancient history with long centuries between Him and us. But we have to do with a divine Companion, a loving Presence that is with us always, watchful, interested, and sensitive, One whom it is not enough just not to grieve, but to whose blessed influence we ought wholly to surrender. 'It has been beautifully said by Phillips Brooks, "It is not when a ship is fretting her side against the wharf that she knows the true joy a ship is made for, but when she is out upon the ocean, with the winds over her and the waters under her," so it is not when a man is fretting himself against the wharf of his old self that a man knows the true joy a man is made for, but when he has cut the ropes which bind him to the past, and is out upon the ocean with the wind of the Spirit over him and the waters of humanity under him—it is then that he knows the true joy a man is made for.'

