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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

ADMIRERS of Dr. William Adams BROWN (and they are many, and in all the churches) will welcome another volume from his busy pen. It bears the title, *The Minister: His World and His Work* (Cokesbury Press, Nashville, Tenn.; \$2.00), and is described in the sub-title as 'a study of some pressing tasks and problems of present-day Protestantism.' In effect it is a significant and timely contribution to the literature of Practical Theology.

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We commend, especially to ministers of religion, the chapters on the Minister as Priest, the Minister as Evangelist, the Minister as Teacher, the Minister as Pastor, and the Minister as Churchman. In all these chapters the author says informative and useful things out of the fullness of his learning and experience. But we would here direct the attention of our readers in particular to a chapter in the earlier part of the work in which the author seeks to fortify ministers in the face of a certain modern challenge to faith.

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The belief in God is nowadays challenged on two main grounds. It is challenged on intellectual grounds by scientists who tell us that the God whom religion offers us is not real. It is challenged even more directly on moral grounds by reformers who assure us that the God whom religion offers us is not good. The scientist's substitute for God is Nature; the reformer's—or moralist's, or humanist's—substitute is Man.

It is the chapter in which the humanist's substitute for God is discussed which we would now present in outline. The humanist sees in religious belief not the chief motive for service to man, but an obstacle to human progress; and, as a working substitute for the faith he would have us discard, he would ask us to turn to man and in the service of man to find a sufficient object for devotion.

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As for the form this devotion to man should take, it should either be individual self-development, self-realization, self-expression, or the endeavour after the good of society. Some humanists emphasize the first alternative, others the second.

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But the philosophy of self-expression as a substitute for God carries with it certain difficulties. One is that the attempt of an individual to express himself may bring him into conflict with other individuals similarly seeking self-expression. Another, and even more serious, difficulty is that the desire of each individual is subject to change with advancing years. But the fundamental difficulty is that there is no such thing as an isolated individual. Man realizes himself only through relation to other persons or to that system of collective relationships known by such terms as family, class, or nation.

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But in recent years we have been hearing less of the philosophy of self-expression, and more of the second substitute for God presented to us by our

contemporary humanists—devotion to the social good. Man as an individual they would replace by mankind as a whole, but not the humanity of to-day with its imperfections, but the perfected humanity of the future—perfected through the new knowledge which science will increasingly bring.

When we ask how this ideal society is to be reached, we find the ways parting. Some humanists advocate the way of reconstruction, others that of revolution. Those who take the first view—Bernard Shaw, for example—are inclined to be conservative in their attitude toward existing social institutions, many even to the social institution of the Church. Those who take the second view—the Communists of contemporary Russia, for example—tolerate no attempt to remodel old institutions like the Church or to redefine old terms like the word God. They would break completely with an error so deep-seated and long-continued as belief in God.

‘It is the view taken of the State which differentiates the Communistic philosophy from that of contemporary Nationalism in its Fascist form. Both alike magnify the State as having the right to the loyalty and devotion of all its citizens. But to the Fascist, whether he be Italian or National Socialist, loyalty to the State is justified as inherently excellent, the normal expression of man’s highest aspiration; whereas to the Communist this devotion is regarded as a temporary expedient, necessary to be sure, because of the fact of the class war, but at its best only a stage through which the Communist movement must pass on to its ultimate goal, the universal rule of the proletariat in a world from which all classes have disappeared.’

What should be the Christian attitude towards humanism? With what spirit should the Christian meet its challenge? He should sympathize with the movement in so far as it is a protest against evils for which he himself is partly to blame. He should also recognize that it stands for three great convictions, which Christians can share: the value of man as man, a truth which Jesus Christ Himself affirmed; the competency of man, his ability to become what he ought to be—but in dependence,

says the theist, not upon Nature but upon God; the responsibility of man for making use of his power to change the world for the better. Pride and selfishness alone cannot explain the rise and extraordinary vitality of these new religions—Communism, Fascism, National Socialism. Something larger and nobler is involved, something that appeals to loyalty and justifies sacrifice.

But while within the individual nation the sovereignty of the State is the condition of all ordered and stable life, in the world of nations the assertion of unrestricted national sovereignty threatens mankind with anarchy. This is the situation which we face to-day. And Dr. Adams BROWN concludes that against such a misguided loyalty the one defence is a higher loyalty—loyalty to the God who has made of one blood all the members of the human race, and that the one institution which exists to remind men of this fact and to summon them to this highest allegiance is the Christian Church.

Friedrich HEILER’s *Das Gebet*, published a few months before the end of the World War, has become a standard book on prayer. It was translated (with the omission of certain sections, and of much of the illustrative material) into English in 1932 by Samuel M’Comb with the assistance of J. Edgar Park—*Prayer: A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion*—and published by the Oxford University Press. And now it has been reissued in the series, ‘The Oxford Bookshelf,’ at the very moderate price of 6s. net.

It will serve to call attention to this reissue of so important and useful a book if we analyse for our readers one of its discussions. Let us take the discussion in the last chapter on ‘The Essence of Prayer.’

HEILER begins by reminding us of the astonishing multiplicity of forms in which prayer appears in history. He gives what seems to be a fairly exhaustive list of them, and then proceeds to ask:

What is common to all these diverse kinds of prayer, what underlies all these phenomenal forms, in a word, what is the essence of prayer ?

If we would understand the essence of prayer we must separate the primary from the secondary types and concentrate upon the former. The primary types are the naïve prayer of primitive man, the devotional life of men of religious genius, the prayers of great men, the common prayer of public worship in so far as it has not hardened into stiff, conventional forms. In all these instances prayer appears to be an immediate expression, bursting forth with native energy, of an original and profound experience of the soul.

Fixing our attention, then, on prayer in its primary simplicity, we must first of all discover the essential motive of prayer, its common psychological root. What moves men to pray ? It is the effort to fortify, to enhance life. 'The hungry pygmy who begs for food, the entranced mystic, absorbed in the greatness and beauty of the infinite God, the guilt-oppressed Christian who prays for forgiveness of sins and assurance of salvation—all are seeking life ; they seek a confirmation and an enrichment of their realization of life. Even the Buddhist beggar-monk, who by meditation works himself up into a state of perfect indifference, seeks in the denial of life to attain a higher and purer life.'

But the peculiar essence of prayer is still to be discovered. There are three elements which form the inner structure of the prayer-experience : (1) faith in a living personal God, (2) faith in His real, immediate presence, and (3) a realistic fellowship into which man enters with a God conceived as present.

The first two elements, belief in God's personality and the assurance of His presence, are the two pre-suppositions of prayer. But prayer itself is no mere belief in the reality of a personal God—such a belief underlies even a theistic metaphysic ; nor is it a mere experience of His presence—for this is the accompaniment of the entire life and thought of the great men of religion. Prayer is rather a living

relation of man to God, a direct and inner contact, a spiritual commerce, a communion, a union of a ' I ' and a ' Thou.'

As anthropomorphism is only a crude form of belief in the personality of God, so belief in the real influence of prayer on the divine will is only a crude form of vital intercourse with God. It does not belong to the essence of prayer. The miracle of prayer does not lie in the influence of man upon God, but in the mysterious contact between man and God established by prayer.

The living communion of the religious man with God in which the essence of prayer consists—with God conceived as personal and present in experience, is only imperfectly realized in the subordinate types of prayer : in liturgical prayer, in the philosophical ideal of prayer, and in certain forms of mystical communion. To pray means to speak to, and have intercourse with God, as suppliant with judge, servant with master, child with father, bride with bridegroom. But the tendency in the subordinate types of prayer is to substitute adoration and devotion for genuine prayer.

'As the mysterious linking of man with the Eternal, prayer is an incomprehensible wonder, a miracle of miracles which is daily brought to pass in the devout soul. The historian and psychologist of religion can only be a spectator and interpreter of that deep and powerful life which is unveiled in prayer : only the religious man can penetrate the mystery.'

In his brilliant *Life of Jesus*, reviewed last month, the Rev. Conrad NOËL is urgently concerned with what Jesus meant by the ' Kingdom of God.' He devotes a chapter and a long appendix to the subject. In the former he expounds the ἐντός ὑμῶν of Lk 17<sup>21</sup>, and in the latter βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. Mr. NOËL is certain that Jesus was proclaiming the immediate advent of a new world, a commonwealth of justice and love. You do not need, He says to the Pharisees, to strain your eyes, looking for any conventional sign of the Kingdom, for it is here already

in My own person and in the little community around Me.

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That is the devious meaning of ἐντός ὑμῶν. The Kingdom is in the midst of you. The conventional interpretation, 'within you,' in spite of Canon Streeter, will not do. This is 'the usual theme of the popular preacher,' but the context of the passage in Luke is against it. Most scholars agree in this conclusion. The Greek can bear either meaning, 'within' or 'among,' and in such a case the context must decide. It was the Pharisees who asked the question, *when* the Kingdom would come. Is it conceivable that Jesus would say to *them*, 'the Kingdom of God is within you'? They wanted signs, and Jesus replied that the real signs of the Kingdom were such as they could not understand or value. The signs were already given in His ministry. The Kingdom is not 'here' or 'there.' It is already thundering at your doors.

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Those who believe in the Kingdom as within the heart and its coming as a gradual spread from heart to heart are convinced that there will be nothing startling or apocalyptic about it, 'nothing ungentlemanly in its coming.' They are anxious to prove this from the New Testament, partly because they have the timid bourgeois mentality which cannot bear anything so unpleasant or disturbing as a crash, and partly (among other reasons) because they do not feel the horror of the system under which their poorer neighbours groan. They think they do, but there is ample proof that they do not understand in the least. Therefore they say the world is good, doubtless there are serious faults, and the whole apocalyptic assumption they dismiss as Manichean and false to the facts. So MR. NOEL.

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And so much for 'within or among.' The Kingdom is not an inner spiritual reality but a new community, already present in Jesus and His disciples. But what of βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ? It is tolerably clear, says MR. NOEL, that the common people generally would have understood the phrase as describing a tangible commonwealth that was coming here on this earth, and that therefore no teacher who used the phrase would have expected the peasants,

artisans, craftsmen, to have understood anything different by it. If Jesus had meant something different He would have explained such a departure from the current popular belief.

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Further, the current literature which created prevailing conceptions speaks of the expected commonwealth as a kingdom that is coming on this earth. Some of the Psalms of Solomon, for example, ring with this hope of a Utopia of justice and mercy. So the Book of Enoch, and generally almost all contemporary literature. The Kingdom is outward and political, in the true sense of political, public. MR. NOEL's point is apparently that Jesus would naturally use the term in the same sense. But (though we are expounding MR. NOEL not criticising him) a caveat may be briefly stated at this point. It must not be forgotten that it was this very traditional hope of Israel that Jesus rejected in His wilderness temptation. He felt its appeal, but finally broke with it.

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But MR. NOEL goes on to grapple with βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. Is it 'reign' or 'commonwealth'? There are those who maintain that it can mean nothing but 'reign.' But MR. NOEL contends that only a study of the leading motifs of the Old Testament can decide. Community is the keynote of the Old Testament. Even the 'I' of the Psalms and Prophets generally refers to the nation. The religion of the Old Testament may be summed up in Jeremiah's phrase, 'they shall be my people, and I will be their God.' If, then, the main theme of the Gospels is God's majesty, sovereignty, or reign, it is odd that the rock from which the New Testament was hewn is this rock of community, and that the very first interpretation of what Jesus meant should again be in terms of community, and not merely of the individual soul. It might, perhaps, be suggested to MR. NOEL that the infinite value of the individual soul was just the supreme truth about man that Jesus asserted.

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It seems clear, to continue MR. NOEL's argument, that βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ may mean either reign or commonwealth. Its predominant meaning is sovereignty, according to A. C. Headlam, but he finds in

it also the idea of an universal people acknowledging God's rule. And even the late Canon Streeter, who held that ἐντός ὑμῶν can only mean 'within you,' spoke of our Lord's conception as including the idea of a corporate national regeneration of this earth. The conclusion of scholars seems to be that our Lord's use of 'the Kingdom of Heaven,' will include the idea of community, and that such an idea is compatible with the use of the Greek phrase as current in His times.

Mr. NOEL goes on to examine the text of the Gospels themselves, and their evidence on the main question. He admits that many of the parables suggest God reigning, though he does not deal with the parables that emphasize most strongly the idea of spiritual inner experience, those of the leaven and mustard seed. But he has no difficulty in finding many passages that cannot very well bear any other meaning than that of a renewed community. And towards the end of his essay Mr. NOEL seems to reach a conclusion which common sense will regard as harmonizing both views, outer and inner.

'Even if "within you" be the right rendering,' he says, 'there need be no contradiction, for the ideal of a commonwealth, in which God's own justice and mercy should be made paramount, must first be an idea within the heart—not only in God's heart, but in many hearts inspired by Him—before

it becomes actualized and takes shape and dwells among us. Socialism is a collective idea, but it is first the dream of many hearts for which they will give their lives. . . . Home Rule was the dream held sacred within the hearts of many Irish folk. If it had not been within them, it would never have been realized "without" in the outside world of affairs. So that even if "within you" be the correct interpretation, there is here no contradiction.'

And Mr. NOEL concludes: 'People may say, what, after all, is the difference? Is this not only another controversy between theorists? What practical effect can it have on life? Reign or commonwealth—what does it matter? Do not many of the advocates hold that if individual after individual accepted God as the ruler of his life, events of a world-shaking nature would be bound to happen? Would not the very face of the world be changed? Is it not, after all, by the conversion of the individual to God that the world will at last be redeemed?' Mr. NOEL thinks there is real and vital importance in his insistence on community as prominent in the mind of Jesus. For sheer religious individualism, and the conception of religion as a purely interior affair, carry in them serious dangers. It is urgent for us to realize that Jesus meant to change *this world*, and change it so radically that God's justice would, and will, prevail over the individualism that keeps so many of our neighbours from the life God designed them to have.

## The Basis of Worship.

BY THE REVEREND DAVID H. HISLOP, D.D., ARDWELL, STRANRAER.

ONE characteristic of the age in which we live is a great interest in, if not a heightened sense of, worship. This may arise in part from a leading trait of our era that it is religious though obviously not Christian. For to-day there is the tendency for every one to turn his attitude to life, be it political or scientific, æsthetic or moral, into a religion which dominates his life, thrills his heart, and claims his obedience and allegiance. The atmosphere of this

time is one in which men bend their views and thoughts to the demands of a mystical intuition, for not alone in Russia or in Germany does every appeal of politics, art, or science engage those dispositions which are primarily religious in their nature. It is thus not unimportant that men's thoughts should be directed to that act of the soul in which the religious spirit finds expression.

Alongside this temper of to-day there is also found