

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It is a long time since we have had the offer of a new system of theology. We have it now. It is a system of theology. It is new. And it is expected to last. The title of the comparatively small book in which it is contained is *The Ultimate Belief* (Constable; 2s. 6d. net).

The author is a layman. There is no surprise now in that. He is also a journalist. Until quite recently there would have been some surprise in that. But one of the things which we have witnessed of late, sometimes with hope and sometimes with fear, is the easy way in which the journalist slips into the language of religion. The author of the new system of theology is Mr. ARTHUR CLUTTON-BROCK, B.A., Art Critic of the *Times*.

Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK does not seem to have been sure, as he wrote his book, that he would call his system a theology. Throughout the book he speaks of it only as a philosophy. It seems to have been when he completed his system and had to find a title for it that he called it a theology. But a theology it is. We may just as well understand once for all that when Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK speaks of philosophy he means theology.

Why did he begin by speaking of a philosophy? Possibly because the very first thing he had to do

was to distinguish between the flesh and the spirit. His theology is of course a theology of the spirit. But he could not well speak of a theology of the flesh. So he began at once by saying that there is a philosophy of the spirit and there is a philosophy of the flesh, and the philosophy which is to become 'the ultimate belief' is a philosophy of the spirit.

But we are not away yet. How do we know the spirit, and how do we know the flesh? Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK says that we know them both by their desires. And that is all that he says about it. St. Paul said something of the same kind, but he said also that we know the one from the other by their fruits. Probably Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK would agree. His business, however, is to offer us a new theology, the theology of the spirit, and he leaves the flesh alone.

Well, the theology of the spirit tells us that the spirit desires three things. It desires to do what is right; it desires to know the truth; and it desires to appreciate beauty. Moreover, it desires all these things for their own sake. If it should desire any of them for some other end, then it is not them that it desires but that end. If, for instance, I aim at goodness so that I may profit by it, it is no longer goodness that I aim at, but profit.

Now St. Paul tells us that they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit. Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK says the same, but in his own way. He says that no life is worth living if it is lived for its own sake. The life that is worth living is lived for something higher than life itself. It is lived for the right, for truth, and for beauty. For the spirit has three activities and only three—the moral, the intellectual, and the æsthetic. And the man who lives as he ought lives that he may exercise these three activities, and for no other reason.

Is this really new? For a moment Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK hesitates. 'All this, perhaps, will seem commonplace to the reader.' But immediately he proceeds to show that hitherto both theology and philosophy have recognized only one activity of the spirit—that we must do good for the sake of doing good. The originality of his own theology lies in adding to that the activities that are intellectual and æsthetic. Or, if theology has not hitherto ignored these activities, it has, at least, made them subordinate to the moral activity. Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK makes them co-ordinate. We must realize, he says, and we must teach, that the value of truth is absolute no less than the value of goodness, and that the value of beauty is as absolute as the value of the other two.

Look at it as a matter of conscience. There is in all of us, says Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK, an intellectual and an æsthetic conscience, as well as a moral conscience. The demand is made upon us—made upon us by the spirit—to be right intellectually and æsthetically as well as morally. And we can be so only as we obey the intellectual and the æsthetic as well as the moral conscience. Not only so; we cannot obey the moral conscience unless we also obey the other two. For the universe is one, and we cannot turn away our eyes from its beauty while we are enjoying its righteousness or its truth. The moral faculty works rightly only when it is enriched and directed by the other

two faculties of the spirit, each exercised for its own sake.

There is surely originality in this. For we have been taught, and experience has appeared to confirm the teaching, that goodness and intellectual ability are often in direct disproportion. The clever man is the bad man. But Mr. CLUTTON-BROCK holds that they agree together much more frequently than we think. He reminds us that it was the man of the one talent who did no good with it.

That, however, is not the point. The point is that the intellectual ability we have, be it great or small, is to be used just as our moral ability is to be used, and in utmost harmony with it.

For there is a real kinship between goodness, truth, and beauty. 'The philosophy which insists upon that kinship is not mere empty theorising; it is based upon the universal experience of mankind, and attempts to emphasise and explain a fact of that experience. We do feel always that there is something good in truth, something beautiful in goodness, something true in beauty. And the reason is that all three are the aim of spiritual activities, all three are desired for their own sake and not as means to something else. Directly we attempt to desire any of them as means to something else, we cease to desire them and cease to be aware of their true nature.'

This is 'the ultimate belief.'

The sum of all the commandments is this: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.' But if we were using modern language we should alter one word. We do not now speak of one another as 'neighbours,' unless we really live beside one another. A modern Pharisee, putting the question to our Lord, would say, 'And who is my brother?'

Why have we changed 'neighbour' into 'brother'? No doubt because we have discovered that we are all indiscriminately the sons of one Father. No doubt also it is a friendlier word. A generation or more ago they could say 'neighbour' and be very friendly indeed. Look into 'Silas Marner' for it. But they had not discovered the universal Father then. Mrs. Dolly Winthrop could not make a nearer approach than 'them as are above us.' She would have been utterly shocked at the suggestion that she might call God Father. We are not shocked at all. But Mrs. Winthrop was right.

The BISHOP OF NORWICH says so. He does not say so in so many words. He is concerned with the word 'brother.' He is quite convinced that we are using brother, and have been using it for a long time, in a way that we have no right to use it. We have been using it of all men indiscriminately. And it is clear enough that we have taken to that use of the word 'brother' because we have taken to the indiscriminate use of the word 'Father.'

What is the harm in speaking of God as if He were the Father of us all, and of men as if they were all our brothers? The chief harm is that it is not true. For it is not Christian, and what is not Christian is certainly not true. The BISHOP OF NORWICH has gone through the New Testament, and he has found the word 'brother' used quite frequently, but he has not once found it used indiscriminately for all men. He has written a book about it—*The Brotherhood of Man* (S.P.C.K.; 1s. 3d. net). It is not a large book, but it is enough. Dr. Bertram POLLOCK shows quite clearly in that book that when we say 'brother' to any man we meet we are contradicting the New Testament.

Who would have prophesied that the war would offer us a great argument for the Christian doctrine of Atonement? Yet there it is. And the men who have discovered it are not those who went out in search of it. They are the men to whom it

has brought a great surprise; and not only a great surprise but, for the moment, something like theological consternation. For they did not believe in the doctrine of Atonement.

A volume of addresses on *Ethical and Religious Problems of the War* has been edited by Dr. J. Estlin CARPENTER (Lindsey Press; 2s. 6d. net). The author of the first address is Professor Gilbert MURRAY. This is what Professor MURRAY says: 'As for me personally, there is one thought that is always with me as it is with us all I expect—the thought that other men are dying for me, better men, younger, with more hope in their lives, many of them men whom I have taught and loved. I hope you will allow me to say something that is in my mind, and will not be in any way offended by it. Some of you will be orthodox Christians, and will be familiar with the thought of One who loved you dying for you. I would like to say that now I seem to be familiar with the feeling that something innocent, something great, something that loves me, has died, and is dying daily for me. That is the sort of community that we now are—a community in which one man dies for his brother, and underneath all our hatreds, all our little angers and quarrels, we are brothers who are ready to seal our brotherhood with blood. It is for us that these men are dying, for us the women, the old men and the rejected men, and to preserve the civilization and the common life which we are keeping alive and reshaping, towards wisdom or unwisdom, towards unity or discord. Well, ladies and gentlemen, let us be worthy of these men, let us be ready each one with our sacrifice when it is asked. Let us try as citizens to live a life which shall not be a mockery to the faith these men have placed in us. Let us build up an England for which these men lying in their scattered graves over the face of the green world would have been proud to die.'

It is not merely vicarious suffering that has been discovered. It is the suffering of the innocent for the guilty. And it is not merely the suffering of

the innocent for the guilty. It is the redeeming power of such suffering. Another of the authors in this volume is Professor J. H. MUIRHEAD. This is what Professor MUIRHEAD says: 'It is the suffering of the innocent far more than of the guilty that is the redeeming power in the world as we thus learn to know it. It is not merely that the sufferings of the innocent as in the present case awaken in others the sense of an outraged moral order, but they have the power of touching if anything can the conscience of the guilty themselves.' Again he says: 'In speaking of Christianity Hegel makes use of the phrase the "guilt of innocence" to point to the impossibility of complete withdrawal from the strivings and the errors of the world without thereby incurring a new form of guilt. This may suggest to us to ask whether the dogma of vicarious suffering which to so many has been a stumbling-block to the acceptance of Christianity in any form is not in reality the one central and vital truth which it is fitted to teach us.' And again: 'There are thousands at the present moment as innocent of the war as you or I (probably enough far more innocent) who are facing wounds and death and making them splendid for themselves and the world by conceiving of them as for the defence or redemption of their country. Is it an arm-chair philosophy that leads some to go a step deeper still into the meaning of present hardship and suffering by conceiving of it as for the redemption of mankind?'

These men do not claim absolute stainlessness for the innocent who have given their lives for the guilty. 'The innocent themselves,' says Professor MUIRHEAD, 'are not without their share of responsibility.' Between Christ and them the difference is incommunicable. All that these authors do is to express their frank surprise that vicarious suffering is so sure and so regenerating a fact of life.

When we turn to the men who have given their lives vicariously, we do not forget that they also must 'lean on our fair father Christ.' But that does not weaken the argument for the Atonement.

For it was as one of us that He made it. And it seems that He could not have made it otherwise. We take their sacrifice therefore as a proof, not of vicariousness only, but of oneness also, that spiritual, that sacrificial oneness which gives us our hope in Him, our pride in them, and our own responsibility.

Mother, with unbowed head,
Hear thou across the sea
The farewell of the dead,
The dead who died for thee.
Greet them again with tender words and grave,
For, saving thee, themselves they could not save.

To keep the house unharmed
Their fathers built so fair,
Deeming endurance armed
Better than brute despair,
They found the secret of the word that saith,
'Service is sweet, for all true life is death.'

So greet thou well thy dead
Across the homeless sea,
And be thou comforted
Because they died for thee.
Far off they served, but now their deed is done;
For evermore their life and thine are one.

The twenty-sixth chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles is one of the most dramatic chapters in the Old Testament. It contains the complete history of Uzziah, king of Judah. If we may follow it—and, in spite of the edifying aim of the Books of Chronicles, the history in this chapter has been accepted as reliable—we can see that Uzziah was one of the greatest of the kings who ever reigned in Jerusalem.

He was a successful general. He defeated the Philistines and laid low the walls of three of their best cities, Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. He raised and maintained a powerful army. He strengthened the defences of Jerusalem, and made use of 'engines,' the invention of 'cunning men,' to shoot

‘arrows and great stones withal’ from its towers and battlements. He encouraged agriculture also, hewing out cisterns in the wilderness and planting vines in the mountains, for ‘he loved husbandry.’ His fame went far and wide, ‘even to the entering in of Egypt.’

But just when his glory was greatest the blow fell. He was suddenly smitten with leprosy. The report was that one day he had gone into the Temple and had insisted on offering incense, and that there and then, with the censer in his hand, the leprosy broke out upon his forehead. He had been hurried out of the Temple, it was said; ‘Yea, himself hasted also to go out.’ And for the rest of his life he lived, in ‘a several house,’ the living death of a leper.

The calamity made a great impression throughout the kingdom. It was all the more mysterious and unexpected that Uzziah had never been a Godless warrior. Even the Chronicler, with the tragedy before him, says that ‘he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord,’ and attributes his greatness to his having been ‘marvellously helped.’

Isaiah was approaching manhood. He had spent his youth in Jerusalem and in close association with the court. A hero-worshipper, it is easy to see how readily Uzziah took the place of hero with him. The blow fell upon him as well as upon Uzziah. It did not destroy his hero-worship. The sin was too incomprehensible; the punishment was too unmerciful. Was it possible that Uzziah would die with his leprosy on him? Day after day we may see Isaiah pass that separate house and look up at its dark walls concealing the darker tragedy within. It must have been impossible for him to believe that Uzziah would die there.

But Uzziah died there. The word came one day that he was dead. All hope was at an end. Isaiah did not blame Uzziah. How could he

blame the dead who had suffered so? He blamed the living God. Openly and outrageously, we may be sure, for Isaiah was not the man to hide his feelings in his heart or to be content with some commonplace expression of them; openly and outrageously he called God to account for an event of incredible and now irreparable cruelty. It was with a keen memory of what he had been guilty of that he afterwards said, ‘I am a man of unclean lips!’

You are thinking of the death of Lord Kitchener? Do so. The parallel is most striking. Not that Lord Kitchener was ever guilty of Uzziah’s sin. They who knew him best are most emphatic in freeing him from all presumptuous pride. But he was a nation’s hero, like Uzziah. He was the hero of every generous-hearted young man among us. And he seemed so indispensable. When his death came, suddenly, mercilessly, mysteriously, we had our dark thoughts of the providence of God, and some of us uttered them aloud outrageously.

Let us think of Lord Kitchener. Let us think also of any one who has been taken from us by this cruel war, at a time when his life seemed so necessary to us, and when perhaps it had only just begun.

Is it so? Yester-eve, did you say,
He was taken away,
Without semblance of mercy or ruth,
In the bloom of his youth,
Away from the hopes and the fears
Of young passionate years,
And the promise of strength as he grew
To his prime—is it true?
And to you who are not narrow-brained
Does it seem unexplained,
Unsolved, like a riddle, this end,
This death of our friend?

Now such an experience as this is often the turning-point in a man’s life. It was the turning-point in the life of Isaiah. His ‘call,’ he tells us, took place ‘in the year that King Uzziah died,’

and every expositor has understood that he connected the two together—the death and the call. It was the turning-point in his life. Did he turn to the right hand or the left? What is it that will cause a man to turn to the right hand or the left? It is often his upbringing. It is the home in which he has lived. When the blow fell, Isaiah cast the blame upon God. His bitter disappointment expressed itself in bitter resentment. But when the perplexity remained, he went to God Himself for its solution. That is how family life tells.

Isaiah went to God. The way he went to God is not our way; nor is the way God's answer came to him ours. We should go in thought, in reading, in private prayer perhaps; and the answer would come to us along such quiet and 'Western' avenues as these. Isaiah went up to the Temple.

The sacrifice was offered. The prayers were ended. The people departed. Isaiah was left alone. The earthly Temple became the heavenly. He saw God sitting upon His throne, high and lifted up. His train filled the Temple. The Seraphim stood above, each one with six wings. He heard their song: 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.' The foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

The imagery is not ours. But it is marvellously suggestive even to us. God is on His throne, in active sovereignty over all the events that are taking place on the earth. The Seraphim describe Him as the Lord of hosts, which is not merely to claim Him as the Leader of the armies of Israel, but Ruler of all principalities and powers, and of all the forces of nature. And His train fills the Temple—fills it—there is no part un-reached by its folds; it overflows even into the court of the Gentiles. So, wherever and whoever they are,

God's children cannot wander beyond reach
Of the sweep of His white raiment. Touch and
hold.

And if you weep, still weep where John was
laid

While Jesus loved him.

Isaiah had learned his lesson. There is a God. Probably Isaiah had never doubted that. That lesson is for us. There is a God, and He is forever working out His will on earth. Nothing occurs beyond His knowledge, nothing occurs in spite of His will. And His will is good. There is no creature who escapes His loving care. It is the lesson learned by Whittier:

I have no answer for myself or thee,
Save that I learned beside my mother's knee;
'All is of God that is, and is to be;
And God is good.' Let this suffice us still,
Resting in childlike trust upon His will,
Who moves to His great ends unthwarted by
the ill.

Is it enough? It is enough for resignation, but is resignation enough? When Job's calamities came upon him, he said, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' That was Job's resignation to the will of God. But he had many an argument after that, both with his friends and with God. It is something to be resigned to the providence of God. When Carlyle was told that a certain clever lady had resolved to accept the universe, his remark was, 'Gad! she'd better!' It is something to rest in childlike trust upon God's will, but it will not 'suffice us.' We must get into harmony with His will. We must stand beside Him and see what He is doing. We must rejoice with Him over every act of His providence. We must see that He does all things well, as heartily as they saw and said it about Jesus.

We must stand beside Him. Now He is high and lifted up. He stands upon the mountain of His holiness. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of

the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? The answer is not 'He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.' That is not the first answer. Job put that answer first and suffered for it. He demanded an opportunity to reason with God in order to prove his uprightness. He would bring the widow and the orphan into the council chamber of the Most High to plead for him. But Job learned better. He learned to say, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? The first answer is, 'He that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' We must come down before we go up. Isaiah's first thought, as soon as he saw that God is great and good, was of his own impurity. 'Woe is me!' he said, 'for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.' Such repentance as this is more than resignation. It is abasement. And just because it is abasement it is to take the place where God dwells. For God not only dwells in the high and holy place, He dwells 'with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.'

Then the second answer comes. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? 'He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.' Isaiah mounts to that place beside God. 'Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.'

And now, as Isaiah stands beside God, what does he see? He sees that there is far more sorrow and suffering in the world than he ever knew. His sympathy is no longer confined to the narrow circle of his own interests. The range of his understanding is wider. And what he sees he feels.

What is the effect of it? There are a few

persons who see and feel the suffering of the world, and it makes them bitter. Omar Khayyám was one of these:

Ah love! could you and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the heart's desire?

It had not this effect upon Isaiah. He stood beside God and saw. He saw that in spite of the sorrow and the suffering God had not let the world out of hand. He saw that the sorrow and the suffering were His own creatures, the instruments of His hand for the salvation of the world. He saw that sorrow and suffering, even death itself, were together working for good. And he had a strong desire to work with them.

Isaiah saw that even death itself is no calamity, but a messenger of God for our good. It was good for Uzziah. Did he see that clearly? Not so clearly as John saw it. Not so triumphantly. How do we see it?

'He died unnoticed, in the muddy trench?'

Nay, God was with him, and he did not blench;
Filled him with holy fires that naught could
quench;

And when He saw his work below was done,
He gently called to him: 'My son! my son!

I need thee for a greater work than this:

Thy faith, thy zeal, thy fine activities,

Are worthy of My larger liberties.'

Then drew him with the hand of welcoming
grace

And, side by side, they climbed the heavenly
ways.

Isaiah did not see clearly that it was good for Uzziah that he was chastised and then taken. But he saw very clearly that it was good for himself. For now he had work to do. And he was ready to do it. 'Also'—observe that word 'also'; it is more than addition, it is consequence; it is

the righteous outcome of the repentance and the understanding—'Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.'

The work may be the very work that Uzziah was doing. At the beginning of the war, when one brother was taken another stepped into his place. We saw it again and again. At every stage of the war, when one mother lost her son she gave herself to the comforting of other mothers, and the healing of other mothers' sons. It was good for Isaiah that Uzziah was taken. For it is work that makes us. It is service for others that creates character. The work—God will see to that. But

we must have our share of the work, otherwise it is not well with us.

He serves his country best
Who lives pure life and doeth righteous deed,
And walks straight paths, however others stray,
And leaves his sons as uttermost bequest
A stainless record which all men may read.
This is the better way.

No drop but serves the slowly lifting tide;
No dew but has an errand to some flower;
No smallest star but sheds some helpful ray:
And, man by man, each helping all the rest,
Makes the firm bulwark of the country's power.
There is no better way.

Providence and the War.

BY THE REV. W. P. PATERSON, D.D., LL.D., PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

THE General Assembly of the Church of Scotland recently appointed a Commission on the spiritual and moral issues of the war. The instructions given to the Commission were wide and far-reaching, and its labours are destined to issue in a national mission with a comprehensive religious and ethical programme. Among other directions the Assembly has advised that steps be taken to forward the understanding of the things which God has been speaking from heaven through the visitation of the war, and it has suggested that the Presbyteries of the Church should meet in conference and seek for more light upon this deep and solemn subject. The writer was present, as a representative of the Commission, at the first of these Presbyterial conferences; and the present paper represents the way in which, after interchange of thought with his brethren, the field of debate was mapped out in his mind, and it also makes the attempt to state and weigh the chief contributions which have been offered towards the solution of the great Providential problem.

The scene of the conference was well suited to a meditation on war and peace. The place of meeting was a sequestered village which nestles

at the foot of a range of hills bordering the upper valley of the Forth, and which looks across a broad plain to the towering masses of the Grampians. The panorama that spread out before us reminded us how much of the story of Scotland has been the chronicle of wars. The distant Bens that guard the region of the Trossachs, and Stirling with its river that 'bridled the wild Highlanders,' recalled the ancient feud and the bloody reprisals of the Gael and the Sassenach. There were the landmarks also, in the Wallace Monument and the castled crag of Stirling, of the more famous conflict in which Lowlander and Highlander were comrades in arms, and threw off the yoke of the English kingdom. A mansion in the neighbourhood, in which Prince Charlie once dined and slept, brought back the year in which Scotland last knew the tumult and the agony of civil war. Of the present struggle there was a reminder in the aircraft which hovered like giant birds over the Carse, and exulting in their wings (as Homer says), rose and dipped in the air, and headed for their nests. But there, too, were evidences that war is an episode in the history of nations, and that their settled habit is peace. The broad strath which