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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

Out of a multitude of proposals that have been made for the rehabilitation of religion after the war there are two that stand out prominently. They are made by nearly every one and they are made with emphasis. The one is a simplification of the Christian creed. The other is the end, once for all and absolutely, of all ecclesiastical divisions and ecclesiastical pride.

A volume comes from Cambridge wholly occupied with the subject of *Religious Reconstruction after the War*. That is its title (Scott; 2s. 6d. net). It is called 'a Cambridge programme.' It contains contributions by fourteen prominent Cambridge scholars. 'One of them is Mr. C. T. Wood, Fellow and Dean of Queens' College, whose subject is 'The Message of the War to the Clergy.' His article ends in this way:

'And lastly, we *must* have reunion in Christendom. It is surely no longer tolerable that bodies of Christians, equally devout, equally effective in missionary work (which is the supreme test), loving the Father, serving one Lord and Saviour, inspired by one Holy Spirit, should go on thwarting each other while the tide of unbelief and wickedness rises unchecked. We *must* have reunion, or the world will find a larger Christianity without us: we *can* have it, giving up nothing that we hold dear except our exclusiveness, if we are equally ready to allow others to give up nothing which they in their turn hold dear; if we admit, what the facts of history have proved, that our distinctive beliefs are of the "*bene esse*" of Christianity, not of its "*esse*"; if we allow the Church of England to stand on the basis of its own sweet-reasonableness and not on the basis of medieval compulsion. We can have unity on such terms—not uniformity—as the family of God: "Sirs, ye are all brethren." "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."'

That strong word 'must,' which Mr. Wood himself has cast into italics, we hear on every hand. We hear it at last from a bishop.

In the *Spectator* of the 17th of February there is a letter from the Bishop of Down on 'The Church after the War.' The Bishop of Down is not only one of the most scholarly men in the country, he is also a sane administrator. That he is greatly concerned about the prospects of religion and of the Church this letter is sufficient to show. 'What is to be the position of the Church after the war?' he asks. 'This great human catastrophe cannot leave her as it found her.' Again he asks, 'Is she to come forth from it with new life and power, or is she to perish?' And then he says, 'If the old conventions, the old complications, the old divisions and antagonisms pass on unchecked into

the new age, nothing can save the Church from a most pitiful failure.'

Dr. D'ARCY does not refer solely to the Church of England. That is right. For the Church of England has no monopoly of the pride of position. An eminent bishop went down to Scotland recently to give an address. The building was well filled, mainly with Presbyterians. What did the bishop say to them? He told them that if they would compose their domestic differences speedily he could promise them a hearty welcome into the Anglican Church.

A hearty welcome into the Anglican Church! He did not know those Presbyterians. He did not know that for centuries they had been trusting in themselves that they were right and despising others. He did not know that the others whom they despised were Romans, Anglicans, Baptists—all indiscriminately who had not the privileged position in Scotland of Presbyterians. Dr. D'ARCY does not refer solely to Anglicans. He includes organized Christianity in all its forms, as it exists in these islands, and he is right.

But the Bishop of Down refuses to denounce ecclesiastical arrogance or priestly assumption. Not, he says, because they are not there. But because something more potent than they lie behind them. He calls it the principle of territorial exclusiveness. 'The old proprietor,' he says, 'resents the intrusion of the newcomer who secures a share of his privileges. In the case of a Church this resentment is strengthened and apparently justified by the consciousness of a Divine Mission. Just as the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings seemed to make rebellion impious, so the Divine Mission of the Church seems to make Nonconformity a sin. Logic takes sides with prejudice and makes prescription sacrosanct.'

The combination is potent enough. What are we to do with it? The Bishop of Down courageously and clearly tells us that we must consider God's ways of working. Now we cannot hide it from us, for history affords abundant evidence, that God 'very often makes the Nonconformist His messenger.' And there ought to be no surprise in that. The Nonconformist is not a priest? 'In the history of Israel the prophet is a grander figure and a more potent spiritual force than the priest. The call of God came to the prophet as a voice from above speaking to his heart and conscience, and imposing a mission by direct inspiration. It took Amos from the herds, it brought Elijah from the desert, it found Isaiah as he worshipped in the Temple. The prophet broke in upon the settled order of the Church, and sometimes paid for his intrusion with his life. "O Jerusalem," cried our Lord, "thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee."'

'The prophet alone was not the saviour of Israel, nor the priest. It was the intermingling of the prophetic strain with the priestly that gave to Hebrew religion its spiritual greatness. And the reason why British Christianity has never been able to realize its higher possibilities is because it has failed to combine these two elements. There have been times in the history of the Church of England when she cultivated exclusiveness as if it were a Christian virtue. Impenetrability was regarded as a spiritual excellence.'

'But impenetrability is the mark of the material, the mechanical. Not until British Christianity is able to blend into one life, by a complete interpenetration, all the spiritual elements which are alive and potent in the social system, shall we see the Anglican Communion fit for the great task which God has entrusted to her. What madness to turn away to the alien Communion of Rome, or the remote Church of the East, while excluding the great Christian forces which represent so many mighty prophetic ministries and which have shown so much splendid vitality!' What Dr. D'ARCY pleads for is the recognition of the principle of interpenetrability.

And to that end he has a great and promising proposal to make.

As soon as possible after the war he would establish in this land a Christian Parliament representing all the Christian forces of the Empire. He would have it called together by Royal authority, and he would have given to it power to advise the State on such questions, affecting moral issues, as might be referred to it. Above all, he would have it encouraged to consider the co-ordination of spiritual efforts. And he would have that Parliament become a permanent Imperial Institution meeting at regular periods.

What would be the effect of it? 'It would most assuredly lead to a greater degree of mutual understanding and to a consequent economizing of force. There would be less overlapping and less competition in the religious world. There would emerge a clearer view of the true end of Christian activity and a surer aim. And, above all, there would be attained a real effective unity in some departments at all events of our national religious life.'

The demand for interpenetration after the war seems to be a very simple demand. But it will not be easily fulfilled. The other demand is for a simplification of the Christian creed. It seems to be a tremendous demand to make. But the danger is that it will be fulfilled too easily.

For as soon as men begin to simplify the Christian creed they leave out just the two doctrines that are essential to it. They leave out the Incarnation and the Atonement. And without the Incarnation and the Atonement Christianity is no better than any other religion. It has no power to forgive sin. It has no authority to bring forth Soberness, Righteousness, and Godliness. It is not Christianity.

The Christian creed may very well be simplified. There is probably no Church in the Empire that could not drop some of its statements of belief without disadvantage. Let them by all means be dropped if they are in anybody's way. It might be well worth while for every one of the Churches to take the occasion, when the war is over, of setting its house in order dogmatically. But to do away with the doctrine of the Deity of Christ and His Atonement for sin is a demand which no Church should for a moment give ear to.

And yet, even in regard to these two essential doctrines of the Christian faith, a simplification may well take place. They may be stated in simpler, more modern, and more sympathetic language. If it is true, and no doubt it is true enough of some pulpits, that the preacher has been running away from the proclamation of the doctrines of the New Testament, it is not because the people would not listen to the preaching of doctrine. It is because he himself would not take the trouble to preach it properly. Two things are necessary. Both demand effort. But he must give it. The first is an intelligent understanding and apprehension of what is meant by the mercy of God in Christ; the next is the announcement of that discovery in language that the people can understand.

Is that too much to expect of the preacher? Even a philosopher can accomplish it. A book has been written by Mr. R. G. Collingwood, Fellow and Lecturer of Pembroke College, Oxford, and one of our most accomplished philosophical thinkers, to which he has given the title *Religion and Philosophy* (Macmillan; 5s. net).

After much controversy there has come a reconciliation, or at least a truce, between religion and science. Mr. Collingwood's purpose is to show that between religion and philosophy there ought to be more than a truce, though even that would be something. There ought to be a reconciliation that would be both perfect and permanent. He goes so far as to say that true philosophy and true religion are identical. But what we are concerned

with at present is this. When at last he comes to a philosophical explanation of the Incarnation and the Atonement, he gives us an exposition of those doctrines that is not only theologically quite acceptable, but also quite charmingly simple and attractive.

Wherein lies the difficulty to the modern mind of accepting the doctrine of the Incarnation? We pass the vulgar objection, which science itself is beginning to ridicule, that the Incarnation is a miracle and that miracles do not occur. The difficulty is to understand how one person can be both God and man. That difficulty Mr. COLLINGWOOD deals with. He is not concerned, as he constantly reminds us, to prove that *Jesus* was both God and man. He is a philosopher, not a historian. But this difficulty is philosophical and falls within his province.

The difficulty has to do with the will. Mr. COLLINGWOOD thinks that the makers of our creed were not well advised when they spoke of 'two natures in one person.' For we immediately think of human nature as one definite thing and Divine nature as another. And then there is no language in existence that can intelligibly express the union of the two. It is a question of the will. For now we know enough, both of God and of man, to know that if any man makes the will of God his own perfectly, that man is also God. Godhead is not a matter of omnipotence or omniscience (though these attributes may belong to a God-man as well as to God); it is a matter of willing and doing. And the moment that a man takes the will of God and makes it his perfectly and eternally, that man is God as well as man, and the title of God-man is quite appropriate to him.

And yet the framers of our creed were not altogether wrong when they spoke of two natures in one person. For when the will of man becomes the will of God it is the man's will still. Do you remember the distinction between mysticism and quietism? This is how Mr. COLLINGWOOD expresses it. 'Mysticism asserts the union of my will with the will of God, the total and complete fusion of the two into one. Quietism asserts that my will is negated, that it has simply disappeared and the will of God has taken its place. I am utterly lost in the infinity of God. The two things are really quite distinct; the former asserts a union of two wills in one person, the latter asserts that the person has only one will, and that not his own but God's.'

In a word, and to pass now beyond Mr. COLLINGWOOD into historical Christianity, the Jesus of Nazareth whom we know had a will which was in perfect harmony with the will of God, and yet it was the will of Jesus of Nazareth. No other man has had a will in perfect harmony with the will of God, and we believe that no other man will ever have it. How He came to have the will of a God-man the New Testament tells us in its doctrine of the Incarnation. In its final utterance it opens with the will of God, 'and the Word was God'; and passes to the will of man, 'and the Word was made flesh.'

One of the things which the war will restore to us, says the Rev. J. WESTBURY-JONES, is the doctrine of the Descent into Hell.

Mr. WESTBURY-JONES delivered an address at the Conference of the Countess of Huntingdon's Churches on 'The Influence of the War on our Theology.' The address will be found in the new volume of *The Christian World Pulpit* (James Clarke & Co.; 4s. 6d. net). He does not believe in war. He does not believe that it is 'in the plan of God.' But he believes that it is to be the occasion of the recovery of some doctrines which we had lost.

One doctrine is the supremacy of the New Testament. Mr. WESTBURY-JONES does not repeat the words of Professor Bigg, that the greatest mistake the Church ever made was to bind up the

Old Testament with the New. But he thinks that at least we have been giving the Old Testament a determining voice over our life and conduct to which it is not entitled. Take war itself. 'If,' he says, 'it should be proved that the Old Testament justifies the method of war, while the New Testament entirely condemns it, the result will be that the older book will lose some of its ethical value, and the New Testament will become the one and absolute text-book of the Christian Church.'

Another recovery will be the doctrine of God. The chief mistake we made in our doctrine of God before the war was to exaggerate the value of His immanence. God was becoming everything, and everything was becoming God. After the war we shall make less of the immanence of God and more of His transcendence. For by that time we shall see that God is not responsible for war or any other evil thing, but only for the creation of free personalities.

Then we shall recover—have we not already recovered?—a belief in the life to come. And with that, greatly daring, Mr. WESTBURY-JONES is convinced that we shall recover the practice of praying for the departed. And finally, with prayer for the departed, as soon as it becomes general, we shall recapture, he says, our belief in the Descent into Hell.

For, those of us to whom prayer for the dear departed is new will find the need of encouragement in the practice of it. And he thinks we shall find the encouragement in that 'oft-neglected part of the Apostles' Creed.' That article will send us to the words of St. Peter upon which it is based: 'Put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, in which he also went and preached to the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient.'

'Does Christ still preach to spirits in prison?' we shall ask. And answering by faith affirmatively, we shall add, 'Why then may not we lift up our heart to Him in prayer on their behalf?'

In our approach to God, whether in public or in private, what ought the first act to be? Ought it to be an act of sorrow or an act of joy? Should we begin with sorrowful confession of sin, or should we begin with joyful confidence in the love of God?

The Rev. F. A. IREMONGER, Rector of Quarley, and formerly Head of the Oxford House in Bethnal Green, says that we ought to begin with the confession of sin. Mr. IREMONGER says so in a book which he has just published, entitled *Before the Morning Watch* (Longmans; 2s. 6d. net). This, he says, is the order in the public worship of the Church of England, and this order is scrupulously observed. 'In Morning and Evening Prayer, penitence has the first place, not only in the exhortation and confession, but in each one of the sentences with the reading of which the Service opens. In the Litany, the great Intercession of the Church, we begin by praying four times that God will "have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"; and it is only when we have pleaded with Him not to remember our offences, nor to take vengeance of our sins, that we lay before Him the needs of our Church and realm. Both in the Church Catechism, moreover, and in the Communion Service itself, repentance is brought to our notice as an essential condition of rightly receiving the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood.'

Those are Mr. IREMONGER'S words. And he adds, 'We dare not say that this order is accidental.'

The Rev. Neville S. TALBOT, formerly Fellow and Chaplain of Balliol College, Oxford, does not say that the order is accidental. But he says it is all wrong. He admits that in hymns and liturgies the *prima facie* and predominant emphasis rests

rather on our sinfulness than on God's goodness. But he believes that it was not always so. In the course of the history of Christianity an inversion has come about. And he holds that it is a mistake to ask men, as the Prayer Book now asks them, to 'embark on the overloaded phrases of the General Confession' before they do anything else in their approach to God.

Is it possible that these two men are thinking of two different classes of worshippers? Mr. TALBOT at any rate is thinking of the men at the front, and of them only. He is himself Assistant Chaplain-General, and the title he gives his book is *Thoughts on Religion at the Front* (Macmillan; 2s. net). He admits that the order of the Prayer Book may be justified by arguing that it is there for the use of 'the faithful' members of the Church. But then, he says, we keep on inviting those who are not faithful members of the Church to come to church and engage in its worship. We invite our soldiers to come. And as regards the mass of soldiers he is convinced that it is quite useless to invite them to begin their worship with the general confession of their sins.

Even in the Eucharist, when we come to it, a preponderating stress, he believes, is laid upon the Cross as an offering for sin. He says that everything can be found in the Eucharist, but what we ought to find in it first is the declaration of the love of God. It is only the love of God that can evoke sorrow for sin. What is the use of calling for confession before the heart has been touched to penitence? 'The great wonder-compelling revelation of God has been overlaid and disguised. He seems in the Eucharist—mainly and *prima facie*—to be the Father sitting back in reception of placation, and we hardly see Him, in the "precious death and Passion," as the Father who, while we are a great way off, runs out to fall on our neck and bring us home.'

Mr. TALBOT is thinking of the 'flying boys' who, more than any one else,' he says, 'are winning our battles (I have been chaplain to a squadron of them for a little time). They are far from unsinful, but they will nevertheless, I am sure, not *begin* with the avowal "that there is no health in them"; they will not sing "that they are weary of earth and laden with their sins." For as they live gaily and unconcernedly on the edge of things, they know that that is not the primary truth about themselves.'

Here then is a situation of utmost interest and urgency—not for the Church of England alone but for the whole Church of God throughout the world. It is no longer a question merely of the approach to God in public worship. It is a question of the approach to God itself, whether in public or in private, whether when we have entered with the assembly into the house of God or have entered into our own closet and have shut to the door. Is our approach to God to be in the consciousness that we are miserable sinners who have done evil in His sight and ask His forgiveness for Christ's sake; or is it to be in the consciousness that our record of life is a reasonably good one until now, and so counting on His glad and loving reception of us?

Mr. TALBOT has this advantage over Mr. IREMONGER, that if true penitence is demanded of every worshipper in his approach to God, very few will be the number of sincere worshippers. Mr. IREMONGER recognizes that advantage. He has not seen Mr. TALBOT's book, for they have been published within a few days of each other, but he recognizes the difficulty which Mr. TALBOT's book is written to express. The invitation, he says, is to every one that thirsteth. But what of those who do not thirst?

He sees the difficulty and the magnitude of it. There are times when he feels that it is almost overwhelming. 'As we look out upon the world,' he says, 'we see great streams of life going by and leaving the Church altogether on one side, in a spirit of ignorance, hostility, or indifference. How

many, for instance, of those whose names are famous in literature, science, art, and economics, the great constructive and creative spheres, are in direct communion with the Church? Is it not clear that for them the Church, as we understand it, simply does not count? This would be generally admitted. Nor is it material for the present purpose that a long list has been published of eminent scientists who believe in God. This only makes the problem more difficult than ever. The longer the list, the more serious becomes the outlook for the Church. For if such be their faith, why have they not joined "the great congregation"? Why is it that there is so little of anything which is dynamic or corporate in their faith, and how can we explain the infinitely small percentage of those admitting their belief in God, who are open and professed communicants of the Church? It is not altogether surprising that those who deliberately sin against the light, either in faith or conduct, will have little to do with the Church: but it should give us reason for serious thought, that we know men and women who would call themselves God-fearing, even Christian, who can recognise no resemblance between the faith which they hold and that of the Church which was intended to include and to inspire them.'

Mr. TALBOT meets the difficulty by saying that we must take such men as they are. But Mr. IREMONGER will have none of that. On the contrary, he holds that all these men are guilty of sin and that nothing can be done with them until they are brought to a sense of it. They are not only guilty of sin in general; they are guilty of two sins in particular. And they are all guilty of them, whatever their private lives may be. These two sins—Mr. IREMONGER calls them 'great sins of condition'—are the sin of independence of God and the sin of self-satisfaction.

The first is the sin of independence of God. Our Lord had much to say about that sin. We shall search the New Testament in vain for the actual word, but the idea is everywhere. It is the beginning of the Prodigal's history—'Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.' It was the sin of the unbelieving Jews—'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.' It was the danger of which even the disciples were warned—'without me ye can do nothing.' It is the Great Refusal, says Mr. IREMONGER. It is to shut and bolt and bar the door in the face of God. It is to boast that without Him we can do everything, that we recognize no claim of His upon our lives. Every man who is guilty of the sin of independence of God must be brought to a knowledge of it.

The other sin is self-satisfaction. It is the particular sin of the Pharisees. The typical Pharisee who went up to the Temple to pray prayed the prayer and sinned the sin of self-satisfaction. It was the sin of the unbelieving Jews generally. 'If ye were blind,' said our Lord to them, 'ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth.' It is the sin of Sir Oliver Lodge, and of all those for whom he spoke when he said that in the present day men are thinking of nothing so little as of their sins. Did not even Professor J. H. Muirhead, who is no theologian, rebuke this sin and call for repentance when he said, 'There can be no deep religious sense in a soul which does not bear about with it the marks of a life and death struggle, which has not had its vision of the Holy Grail, and been surprised thereby into a sense of the distance between the ordinary level of feeling and achievement, and the height to which it has been called.'

And yet, who is it that has our sympathy to-day? Is it Mr. IREMONGER, demanding a general confession of sins, or Mr. TALBOT, imploring that his flying boys be accepted as they are? Is it not Mr. TALBOT? And has not Mr. TALBOT even the right of it theologically? Does not the recognition of the love of God in Christ precede all sense of sorrow for sin? Is it not the cause of it?