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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

Is it all one whether we say 'the Descent into Hades' or 'the Descent into Hell'?

The Rev. Hugh Davis MURPHY, D.D., Rector of St. George's, Belfast, has published five lectures on *The State of the Soul between Death and the Resurrection* (Skeffingtons; 5s. net). And in these lectures he tells us that it makes all the difference whether we say Hades or Hell. To say Hell is to misapprehend the matter. Christ could not have descended into Hell. For there was no Hell. There never has been a Hell, and never will be, until the end of the world.

Not only is there no Hell, there is no Heaven. There is a Heaven where God dwells with the Angels, and where Christ went to dwell when He ascended up on high. But, says Dr. MURPHY, there is no Heaven for you or me, even when we die. There never has been a Heaven for any man or woman born, and never will be, until the end of the world. But at the end of the world there will be both a Heaven and a Hell.

Dr. MURPHY lectures by laying down propositions. His first proposition is this: 'Heaven is the state of the blessed after the General Resurrection, not before. This statement you can verify for yourselves. Search the Scriptures and you will find that the term "Heaven" is never used for the

dwelling-place of the Blessed between death and the Day of Judgment. Hence the earliest Christian author whose writings have come down to us after the writings of the New Testament says that they who say that a good man goes to Heaven when he dies are neither Jews nor Christians. He means that neither Jews nor Christians held the belief that the place to which good men go at death is Heaven—Heaven being the place reserved for them after the General Resurrection.'

So there are three states of being for 'us mortals.' 'There are three distinct and separate kinds of existence—(1) That here on this planet where body and soul are united; (2) That of the Intermediate State, where the soul shall exist apart from the body; (3) That of Heaven where the body, having been purified and made fit for immortality, shall once again be united to the soul.'

But 'if the name of Heaven is never given in the Bible to the Dwelling-place of the Blessed between death and the Resurrection, by what name is that place or state called in the Bible?' It is called Paradise. But first of all notice that there is a general name for the abode of all the dead, both bad and good. The name is Hades. Then notice that Hades is divided into two parts or states. Gehenna is the name for the state or abode of the bad. Paradise is the name for the

state or abode of the good. After the General Resurrection there will be the general Judgment. Then the good, clothed upon with the body, will be translated to Heaven, the bad will be sent to Hell. But until then there is no Heaven or Hell for any mere mortal; there is only the Intermediate state called Hades, with its Paradise and its Gehenna.

Christ descended into Hades. There was no Hell for Him to descend to.

Dr. Campbell MORGAN has written a book about preaching. *The Ministry of the Word* he calls it (Hodder & Stoughton; 6s. net). For in that phrase 'is included the whole conception of the work of preaching as distinguished from that of serving tables.' And it is preaching the gospel, not serving tables, that in Dr. Campbell MORGAN'S judgment is the supreme need of the hour.

What is this Gospel? Let us get into the heart of Dr. Campbell MORGAN'S book. He finds the best summary of it in 'those most familiar, but most sublime words: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." That,' he says, 'is the Gospel.'

And when he has quoted that 'perfect summary' of the Gospel, he proceeds to analyse it. What does it mean? He finds 'the most perfect analysis' of that perfect summary 'in the words of our Lord concerning the mission of the Spirit in the world, spoken to His disciples in the course of the paschal discourses: "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged" (Jn 16<sup>8-11</sup>).'

Sin, righteousness, judgement — why these

three? These three, and these only, because when the soul of a man is spiritually wakened these are the things of which it becomes conscious. The awakening may be no more than awakening. It may not result in any change of life. But whenever a spiritual awakening takes place these are the matters of which the soul is conscious—sin, righteousness, judgement.

First, of Sin. For sin is disobedience to God. And when a man is awakened to the fact of God he recognizes God's claim to his obedience and his personal responsibility for disobedience. God is sovereign, and His law is the true standard for human life: Man is capable of obeying God's law—these are the two facts which make disobedience sin. 'Sin fundamentally then is the wilful act of disobedience on the part of man, to the law of the Sovereign Lord to Whom man owes allegiance.'

Next, of Righteousness. Sin and righteousness are opposite. As sin is disobedience to the law of God, righteousness is obedience to it. Righteousness rests upon recognition of the same two facts as sin—the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Righteousness 'fundamentally then is the willing attitude of obedience on the part of man to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' The soul of man, spiritually awakened, is conscious at once of the ideal for his life and his failure to reach it. Righteousness is the ideal, sin is the failure.

Then Judgement. For God is not the God of Thomas Carlyle who 'does nothing.' It is of the very nature of God to be doing. And His action is either cursing or blessing. Still as of old are there the two high hills with the sons of men in the valley between—Ebal for cursing because of sin, Gerizim for blessing because of righteousness. Judgement is 'that activity whereby He realizes His purposes, establishes and maintains order. It marks therefore the centre of human responsibility. Righteousness in human life is right relationship with that judgement. Sin is rebellion

against it, which nevertheless cannot escape from its activity. Judgement then in the case of man is that activity of God, wherein He rewards the righteous, and punishes the wicked. The soul of man spiritually awakened comes to this consciousness. It knows that judgement is active.'

It is then that the Gospel comes. It comes to turn the spiritual awakening to sin, righteousness and judgement into loving fellowship with God. Now the Gospel comes by preaching. It is 'the word of the cross.' What is the contents of the preacher's message?

First it is the presentation of the Person of Christ. Not as a philosophical doctrine but as a religious fact. The Christ of the Gospel 'is God manifest, in His character, in His law, in His activity. He is also Man unveiled, in His capacity, in His obedience, in His realization. So also therefore He is the One Whose presence in human history has unmasked evil, as the opposite of all that is in God, and the secret of human undoing.' Men are convicted of sin, 'because they believe not on me.'

The message of the Gospel is, next, the story of the work of Christ. That includes the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. 'He not only died for our sins, He rose for our justification, and ascended to the right hand of the Father to receive gifts for men. Men, no longer beholding Him with the eyes of sense, may yet be brought into such living fellowship with Him, that in them may be fulfilled the ideal of righteousness. That is the second note of the Gospel.'

Last of all the contents of the preacher's message is the claim of Christ to sovereignty and judgement—the sovereignty of God, the judgement of the World in the victory over the prince of it. The claim of Christ is to complete victory. 'The Stronger than the strong has wrested the usurped sceptre from the enemy; and henceforth He exercises His executive authority, delivering those

that are bound, and moving ever triumphantly forward toward the consummation, when He shall deliver up the perfect Kingdom to His Father. This is the final and triumphant note of the Gospel.'

It is a surprise to find a man whose business in life is the Interpretation of the Old Testament challenging the right of the Old Testament to be our guide to God. It is a surprise to light upon the challenge in the introduction to a book on Prayer.

Mr. Conrad A. SKINNER, M.A., has written a small book on *Prayer in the Light of the Fatherhood of God* (Heffer), and has persuaded the Reverend Robert Hatch KENNETT, D.D., Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge, to write a Foreword to it. In that Foreword Professor KENNETT asserts that much 'in the Old Testament is not only incomplete, but altogether inconsistent with the character of God as revealed in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

'Incomplete' and 'inconsistent' — these are his adjectives. And he defends them. 'We must admit,' he says, 'that there are not a few passages of the Old Testament which imply not merely an incomplete, but an altogether wrong conception of God.' He offers one example 'to justify the assertion.'

It is the example of Elisha and the children. According to 2 Kings 2<sup>23, 24</sup> the prophet Elisha was derided by some little boys who called out after him, "Go up, bald head; go up, bald head." Even on the supposition that the baldness which the children mocked at was the artificial baldness of mourning for Elijah, and that in the cry, "Go up," they were making game of the story of Elijah's ascent to heaven, their ribaldry could scarcely have originated with them, but must have been derived from their elders. Yet we are told that Elisha "looked behind him, and saw them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came

forth two she-bears out of the woods, and tare forty and two children of them.'

It is an ancient obstacle. And it has a way of returning with every generation. Most of us have felt the difficulty of it and have done our best with it and our own conscience. But sometimes to us, handling it according to our several ability, there has come the question, whether it would not be better frankly to give it up, and deny that we were bound by the morality of any such incident in the Old Testament.

For it is only by forgetting Christ that we can make anything of Elisha's curse. Professor KENNETT refuses to forget Christ. He refuses to let us forget Him. 'Contrast with this,' he says, 'another story of One who took the little children up into His arms and blessed them.' He might have added the word on the cross: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' But taking together the two incidents as he does, Elisha cursing the children and Jesus blessing them, 'it is evident,' he says, 'that a perception of the fundamental difference in the ideas about God implied in these two stories must result in a radical change in our conception of religion.'

But what has all this to do with the doctrine of Prayer? It is in our Lord's doctrine of Prayer that Professor KENNETT finds the best expression of His revelation of God. He taught us to pray, 'Our Father which art in heaven.' The words sweep away that presentation of God 'of which the story of Elisha's cursing the children is an example.' 'I believe,' says Dr. KENNETT, "that the Fatherhood of God" is, as Bishop Moorhouse called it, "the master-thought of Christ's teaching," and that whatever is inconsistent with it should have no place in Christian teaching.'

Canon STREETER has edited another volume of essays. It is similar to 'Foundations,' 'Immortality' and 'Prayer'; and some of the authors are

the same. Its title is *The Spirit* (Macmillan; 10s. 6d. net).

Why is its title *The Spirit*? Why is it not 'The Holy Spirit'? The authors of the volume do not believe in the Holy Spirit.

Professor PRINGLE-PATTISON tells us so. And Professor PRINGLE-PATTISON is the author of the first essay in the volume. He says, 'It is, to my mind, a great misfortune that "the spirit of God," the *influence* of God in the human soul, or, as it is alternatively called in the New Testament, "Christ," "the spirit of Jesus," the mystic presence of the Lord in the hearts of His followers, a spirit of comfort and consolation in their loss, revealing the mind of the Master whom on earth they had often so ill understood, and so guiding them and the Church after them into all truth—it is, I say, a misfortune that expressions like these, and the spiritual fact for which they stand, should have been materialised so as to suggest the existence of a third personality or agency distinct from both the Father and the Son.'

It is a long sentence, but its meaning is unmistakable. There were Christians in Ephesus who had not so much as heard of the existence of a Holy Ghost. Professor PRINGLE-PATTISON has heard of His existence but denies it.

And the rest of the writers agree with him. Says Miss Lily DOUGALL: 'The "Holy Spirit" (observe the inverted commas) is the name given by Christians to *God in action in the world of men.*' The italics are her own.

One of the Persons in the Trinity is thus disposed of. It is true, the authors of the essays do not wholly agree. Dr. Anderson SCOTT speaks of the moment when the Holy Spirit was recognized by the Early Church as personal, and he seems to approve of the recognition. 'Previous to Pentecost it has been regarded as the divine energy in its operation especially upon men—invisible, potent,

somewhat unaccountable. Henceforward, through being discovered to have character, the Spirit is conceived as "personal." It, or as the writers of the New Testament now begin to call it, "He," operates along lines which can be foreseen, because they have been observed already as guiding the activities and the influence of Jesus.'

Shall we say that Dr. Anderson SCOTT is a theologian and cannot help himself? More significant is the fact that the medical man, Captain J. Arthur HADFIELD, M.A., M.B., who writes the purely psychological article on Power, feels the need of the Holy Spirit, and expresses it. His words are worth recording: 'Pentecost, the healing miracles of the Apostolic Age, the triumphant progress of the religion through the Roman Empire, the heroic deeds of saints and martyrs—all these point to the sense of a power newly discovered. In contrast, looking at the Church of to-day, one cannot but be struck with its powerlessness. It contains men of intellect; it produces a type of piety and devotion which one cannot but admire; it sacrifices itself in works of kindness and beneficence; but even its best friends would not claim that it inspires in the world the sense of power. What strikes one rather is its impotence and failure. This want of inspiration and power is associated with the fact that men no longer believe in the existence of the Spirit in any effective practical way. They believe in God the Father, and they are reverent; they believe in the Son, and the Church numbers amongst its members millions who humbly try to "follow in His steps"; but for all practical purposes they are like that little band at Ephesus who had "not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," and, lacking the inspiration of such a belief, they are weak and wonder why.'

This difference of opinion is unexpected. For we are told that 'a series of conference-retreats, which the majority of contributors were able to attend, supplemented by individual discussion for mutual criticism and information, has made it possible gradually to focus on a single point the results of a first-hand study, not only of Philosophy, Psychology, and the theory of Art, but of the relevant branches of modern scientific Theology.' The editor ignores the difference. But if there was a vote in any of the conference-retreats, he voted with the majority.

He goes further. The majority reduced the Trinity to two Persons, Canon STREETER reduces it to one. And that one is—Christ! He needs more than one sentence to do it, but he does it. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." If so, it must be no less true to say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Holy Ghost." The Divine which is immanent in man, which speaks to us in the watches of the night—"from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed"—is not other than the Divine which creates and sustains the universe; it is not other than the Divine revealed in Jesus Christ. Orthodox theology, no doubt, would not only admit, but vehemently assert this; but popular Christianity is Tritheism with reservations. The average Christian does not in the first place think of Christ as the "portrait of the Father," still less often does he think of Him as the portrait of the Spirit also. Yet if the fundamental question for religion is, What is God like? and if we are right in affirming that He is like Christ, then we must face all the implications of the statement, and we must apply it to our conception, not only of the Transcendent Divine which traditional theology has styled "the Father," but of the Immanent Divine which has been named the Holy Ghost.'