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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

IN his second volume of *Outspoken Essays*, just published, Dean INGE discusses frankly his own faith. It is the most interesting essay in the book, and one of the most interesting parts of it deals with the belief in a future existence.

The attitude of the average church-goer on this question is described by the Dean in caustic language. 'Our contemporaries desire a religion without a hell; and they even seem to prefer a religion without a heaven . . . these people, as a class, have hopes in Christ, but in this life only. Christianity for them is mainly an instrument of social reform.' The attempt to realize an earthly millennium has been tried in Russia, and the result has been an Inferno such as the world has never seen before.

But the popular traditional notions of the future are not much better, ideas of a geographical heaven and hell, and of rewards in a city with streets of gold or of punishment in a super-heated furnace. These ideas are condemned on two grounds. In the first place, they are not good enough to be true. The belief in a future which has self-regard as its motive is not religious at all. True faith is belief in the reality of absolute values, like Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, and that faith means that we have our part in the eternal life of God.

Again, the advance of science has made the old  
VOL. XXXIV.—No. 3.—DECEMBER 1922.

eschatological frame-work untenable. Curiously enough it was not Darwin or Lyell who struck the blow, but Copernicus and Galileo in the time of the Renaissance. If the earth is a planet revolving round the sun, and if the solar system is only a speck in infinite space, the old geographical heaven and hell must be abandoned. There is no religious topography; there is no particular place where God lives. 'Here then we have a plain case in which traditional teaching is flatly contradictory to the facts of science, and also ethically revolting. Can we be surprised that it has lost all power to influence conduct or command real credence?'

The curious thing is that these notions have persisted in spite of the fact that the New Testament gives no ground for them. Dean INGE thinks that Jesus really revived the prophetic tradition, and did not attach Himself to the recent apocalypticists. Christ dwelt very little on the future state, and His one argument for immortality is, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for we all live unto him.' And that is not an argument for resurrection or survival, but for eternal life. In Paul, too, the dominant idea is life according to the Spirit. This is a present experience, a higher state of being, exalted above time.

The 'unknown Fourth Evangelist' in his inspired interpretation of the Person and significance of

Christ, addressed to the third generation of Christians, gives us a sublimely idealized version of Paul's teaching. The Johannine writings are the best commentary we have on St. Paul's Epistles, and in them the great word is Life which is necessarily eternal. In the Fourth Gospel, the Way, the Truth, and the Life are an ascending scale of values. Such life, in Von Hügel's words, 'means for its possessor beatitude.' In its ethical relation it is an accompaniment of moral obedience. And with respect to knowing, it is enlightenment. The right to speak about eternal values—the right even to believe in them—must be earned by strict self-discipline. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

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Do you know Baron Friedrich von HÜGEL, who wrote *Eternal Life: A Study of its Implications and Applications* (T. & T. Clark), also *The Mystical Element of Religion*, and is soon, we hope, to issue an important work on religious fundamentals? If not, get his volume of *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion* (Dent). It is a revelation of many things, not least of the author, who is one of those most worth knowing in our time.

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Three points stand out. First, there is his amazing acquaintance with theological literature of all schools and in all its branches. He has Biblical Criticism at his finger-ends, and discriminates and selects with sure touch. He knows Troeltsch, about whom too many of us are shamefully ignorant; his fifty pages of exposition of that new force in Christian thought would alone make this book invaluable. In Scotland he knows such men as Robertson Smith, Pringle-Pattison, and Professor Cairns. Speaking generally, he knows everybody of any consequence in the sphere of philosophical and religious thought.

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Second, there are the massiveness, clearness, and suggestiveness of his own thinking.

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Third, there is the beautiful Christian character

revealed in the exquisite sympathy with which he expounds and evaluates views divergent from his own. Even when he has to be critical he remains courteous and kindly.

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He is a great scholar, a great thinker, and a great Christian. That he is a convinced Roman Catholic is an incident. Not altogether without importance. For you simply cannot dare to preach on such a topic as Purgatory unless you have considered his view of it.

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That the thought of Purgatory has in recent times been more favourably regarded among Protestants is undoubted. Not only did the War foster its growth by its suggestion of wistful anxieties as to the destiny of the multitude, not very definitely Christian either in faith or life, who at the opening of responsible manhood were in a moment hurled into eternity. But the break up of belief in Hell in favour of some sort of Purgatory was in operation before that. To a great number the alternative is no longer Heaven or Hell, but Heaven or Purgatory.

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Against that too easy solution of the problem as to destiny beyond this life our author cautions us by sober, arresting, and weighty argument. He believes in Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory.

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His argument for the necessity of a Purgatory is this. All acknowledge that very few men, if any, are at death quite fit for Heaven. The Protestant view is that by the Grace of God for Christ's sake the souls of believers are instantaneously made perfect in holiness. That, he argues, is contrary to all our experience of what the Grace of God does for a man in this life. The efficacy of Grace is undoubted, but it works according to ascertainable rule. Sanctification takes time, often a long time. Grace given in response to Faith and Repentance does not deliver a sinner from the necessity of a slow working out of his system of the physical consequences of vice. Nor does it deliver him at a stroke from a slow and

painful working out of his character of evil tendencies. There is thus absolutely nothing in our experience to suggest or to support a view of an instantaneous deliverance and perfecting. Final victory through Grace is sure: all the same the battle has to be fought out step by step. Hence the need of Purgatory.

But Purgatory is not Hell. On the latter topic our author's views deserve very serious consideration. Few preachers nowadays teach a clear doctrine of Hell. Preaching in consequence has lost a great deal of the note of poignant urgency. A sense of the tremendous issues of this life has been diminished. Von Hügel knows and takes account of all the arguments against the conceivability of eternal loss. But over against them all he would have us set two considerations. He asks only that we should weigh them well.

First, Heaven and Hell go together in the New Testament, and nowhere more impressively than in the teaching of Christ. Unless in this life men have to face a tremendous alternative, unless their choice involves the most solemnizing consequences, unless such consequences are abiding, a great part of our Lord's teaching is eviscerated and pointless. Further, this teaching of His is anything but limited to the last period, at which certain critics would have us regard Him as in some sense 'carried away' by apocalyptic. It runs all through His ministry. It is embedded in the fibre and texture of His preaching.

Second, the very essence of the notion of Hell is its endlessness. Conceptions of the details of existence in Hell are very unimportant. But as a place or state of exclusion from satisfaction, whatever be the nature or the degree of the dissatisfaction felt, what makes it Hell is nothing but its unendingness. Without that it is not Hell at all.

The Ninth Conference of Modern Churchmen was held in August this year at Somerville College,

Oxford, and it had for its theme 'Christianity as the World Religion.' The papers read at the Conference are published in the October number of *The Modern Churchman*, and they are worth publishing. But none is more worthy of its place than the brief essay by Professor W. R. MATTHEWS of King's College, London.

His subject was 'The Finality of Christianity,' and his treatment of it was not only able but in every sense satisfying and reassuring. We use the word 'reassuring,' because the suspicion has been widely entertained that the members of 'the Churchmen's union' are, not only 'liberal,' but uncertain on the vital question raised in this very paper. After all, the one thing that matters is whether Christianity is the absolute religion. 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?' Is Christ the Final Word, God's ultimatum?

There is no uncertainty in Dr. MATTHEWS' answer. He goes to the heart of the matter at once by discussing the suggestion that evolution negatives the claim of finality for Christ. He admits that we can never reach an absolute so long as our standpoint is purely evolutionary. But he denies that the evolutionary method can give us a final explanation of any reality. 'When we are dealing with spiritual activity . . . the thorough-going evolutionist is helpless or a prey to the most ludicrous illusions.'

This is evident if we look only at literature. We do not explain Shakespeare by any number of influences. The reality of Shakespeare lies in his insight into human nature and his interpretation of life. In these respects he stands by himself. The evolution of literature goes on but it does not transcend him. His insight and experience remain, in a sense, final.

The same is true of philosophy. Lord Haldane said in his Gifford Lectures that philosophy at the present day has not advanced beyond Aristotle.

But indeed every philosopher would make for himself the claim that Lord Haldane makes for Aristotle. He would in a real sense claim for his particular vision finality. But Aristotle will suffice. He stands out, a unique human fact not at the end of the human process but in the midst of it. The evolutionary standpoint does not explain Aristotle.

In the light of such facts we can say that there is no inherent improbability in the occurrence of an absolute and normative religious experience in an historical person. That is enough as a background for the claim of Christianity. Dr. MATTHEWS goes on to consider the possibility in the light of more definitely theistic assumptions, and especially the assumption that a personal over-ruling God would reveal Himself to man through persons and in history. To suppose that this revelation would be wholly progressive, so as not to reach finality at any point, would involve the absurdity of believing that the revelation would be complete only when there were no human minds left to receive it.

But the argument is not complete. The final step is taken when we see that Christianity is the culmination and completion of ethical monotheism, which is the true line of religious evolution. The highest form of religion must be some form of ethical monotheism, because this not only enables the mind to think of the universe as one, but satisfies the ideal of righteousness and finds in the unseen the ground and sanction of moral values. It needs no argument to show that Christianity satisfies this test. It is not only the culmination but the consummation of ethical monotheism. There can be no advance in this religious achievement which would lead us away from the Christian affirmations, for the simple reason that nothing higher can be conceived than that Holy Love which the Incarnation reveals.

The task of the future, then, is not to transcend Christianity, but to understand it and to interpret it. 'I am very sure that we have much to learn from other faiths and from philosophy and science.

But when all is learnt and said we may be confident that it will be clearer than ever that it is in the Gospel that He has spoken to us through His Son.'

'Anybody might say, "Very few men are really manly." Nobody would say, "Very few whales are really whaley." If you wanted to dissuade a man from drinking his tenth whisky, you would slap him on the back and say, "Be a man." No one who wished to dissuade a crocodile from eating his tenth explorer would slap it on the back and say, "Be a crocodile." For we have no notion of a perfect crocodile, no allegory of a whale expelled from his whaley Eden.'

These words of Mr. G. K. Chesterton are aptly quoted by Hubert L. SIMPSON in *Altars of Earth* (when discussing the vexed question of the Fall). They imply that there is an ideal of manhood below which man has fallen, and a standard above him to which by common consent he ought to conform.

Does Evolution contradict Genesis? Must we cease to speak of the Fall, and proclaim only the Ascent of Man. Evolutionists said so in the first flush of triumphant acceptance of the new theory, and weak-kneed preachers have been known to speak of a 'Fall upwards.' But this position is now seen to be untenable. Logically it implies that man is all that he might have been. He has not failed to achieve his destiny, and this is the best possible world, or if it be not, the fault at any rate does not lie with man. History refuses to assent to such a doctrine, and the present world-chaos has shattered belief in the unbroken Ascent of Man.

The truth is that there has been both a fall and a rise. An intellectual rise may accompany a spiritual fall. The knowledge of good and evil may come by an act of moral disobedience, and human history be a record of learning and sinning. 'The man who flies at a hundred miles an hour in

an aeroplane has demonstrated the ascent of man in intellectual capacity, but when he comes down and indulges too freely in a champagne dinner he has equally strikingly demonstrated the fall from grace in which Adam spoke with the Lord God in the garden in the cool of the evening.'

So the moral history of the race is still a tragedy, darkly shadowed with all the pathos of what might have been. As J. H. Bernard says (*H.D.B.* i. 844): 'Had primeval man been strong when evil presented itself, we know not to what heights of intellectual, as of spiritual excellence, the race might not have attained.'

Amos 5<sup>25</sup> presents a problem. It seems to shut us up to a dilemma, and on neither horn can we sit with any comfort. Amos seems to be going astray either in his history or in his doctrine. 'Did ye bring me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?' What does that mean? Are we to infer that in the view of Amos the wilderness period was a golden age of purely spiritual worship, when the whole machinery of priest and smoking altar was not devised? If so, he is clearly wrong. The spiritual condition of Israel wandering like Bedawin cannot conceivably have been a high-water mark. Still more incredible would it be that, while all their contemporaries practised sacrifice, Israel had none of it.

Does it mean, did ye bring me *only* sacrifice, did

not your spirit correspond to the outward acts of devotion? One may say so, but one will have difficulty in proving that anything like that is in the mind of Amos. Does the whole passage mean that Amos would abolish all external forms of worship, and attach no value to anything except a true life, personal and social righteousness? If so, he is wrong there too. For, says Dr. W. E. ORCHARD, in *The Oracles of God* (Clarke & Co. ; 6s.), 'it is a proposal that will not work. It is a proposal which, carried to its logical conclusion, would dispense not only with every symbolical, but any verbal expression of the worship of God; there would soon be nothing to remind us of our social duties; a wholly immanent religion would soon cease to be a religion at all, but become a pure ethic, and in time not much of an ethic at that. . . . History has tried this way too, and a remedy it certainly is not.'

Dr. ORCHARD'S view is that Amos's fiery indignation has carried him too far, and we must just correct him by the other prophets. Yet we must pay heed to his indignant protest as 'we must listen to the same condemnation to-day, when men coming straight from simpler life and confronted with the ignorance, the misery, the luxury, and the vice of our time, ask in anger what the churches are doing beside their elaborate services and their perpetual hymn-singing.' 'If it is an exaggeration we must honour the indignation that creates it.'