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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'SURSUM CORDA'—lift up your hearts—is an excellent motto. It is an excellent motto for any time, but very especially for such a time as this. We are all depressed, disillusioned, disappointed: the last five years, for all the high hopes with which we embarked upon the post-war period, have not yet brought us within sight of the millennium.

It was indeed hardly to be expected that they should. For the world, despite the unity towards which we are moving, or at least hope and believe that we are moving, however slowly, is complex, with a complexity which has never been seen in history before. The human brain has not advanced commensurately with the problems with which it has now to grapple. Statesmen and churchmen alike are facing a tangle more intricate than any that has ever had to be unravelled before: and the most hopeful and the most courageous are saying in their hearts, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'

It is in such a mood that 'Sursum corda' comes back upon us with its inspiriting power to shame and rebuke our despondency. For that motto is a Christian motto; it represents a mood inalienable to the genius of Christianity; and when we find it difficult to believe in it or to cherish it, perhaps we should regard ourselves for the moment as sub-Christian. For as Christians we must believe that God and His purpose are not to be defeated, but that in the end He will be all in all.

Sometimes it is forgotten, however, that this inextinguishable hope is not the duty and the privilege of Christian men only; it is native to Judaism as well. It sheds its mellow light over the whole range of Old Testament history and thought, and, but for the almost impenetrable gloom of Ecclesiastes, it brightens the darkest places and gladdens the saddest hearts. And it does this, because it is not a vague hope, but a hope towards God.

A recent book, noticed in this issue, has put this well—*The Old Testament and To-day*, by J. A. CHAPMAN, M.A., and L. D. WEATHERHEAD. The Old Testament, these writers remind us, 'is essentially a forward-looking book. It has often been pointed out that the golden age of Greece and Rome was in the past, whilst that of Israel was in the future. The Old Testament was always struggling with its incompleteness, and looks forward to some transcendent happening in which its long-cherished expectations, its burning hopes, and its large visions are to find their triumphant realization. Its writers felt that the ways of God could not end in a big disappointment.'

There it is—the connexion of their hope with

their God: 'the ways *of God* could not end in a big disappointment.' The ways of men are tortuous enough, and often enough lead to chaos and misery. But that is not the end, and that is not all; for besides the ways of men, there is the spirit of the Lord brooding over the great dark deep. History is not a chaos, because over it there presides a good and gracious Spirit who wishes us all well, and who overrules human sin and folly towards His own beneficent ends. 'Ye meant evil, but God meant it for good.'

This is the hope that inspired the prophets when, one after another, they introduced their brilliant visions of the future with the simple words, 'It shall come to pass in the latter days.' Preachers on the outlook for a fruitful series would do themselves and their congregations a good turn by taking these words where they occur and devoting a sermon to each of the ideals which these words introduce.

What a variety there would be—ideals as various as the temperaments which cherished them and as the times in which they came to birth. One prophet looks forward to the reign of universal justice, another to social brotherhood and political unity, another to world-peace secured by arbitration, another to the friendly co-operation of nations which had hated and feared and fought each other: and so on. One prophet sees the future in one way, and another in another; but they all alike believe in the future, because they believe in God. They refuse to be permanently disappointed; their eyes are fixed upon the glory of the latter days, which are to issue out of the perplexity and sorrow of the present.

They do not argue about this, they assert it; and they assert it because of their immovable confidence in God and in the triumph of His purpose. They felt that 'the ways of God could not end in a big disappointment.' Historically those ways issued in Jesus; and in Him, to those who trust Him, all things are possible.

All students of 'Acts' are aware of the unsolved problems that it raises. Why does it tell us of so few of the apostles, and why is our curiosity about the early spread of Christianity left in so large measure unsatisfied? The second part of the book is practically the story of the missionary activities of Paul, obviously written by a friend and admirer of the Apostle; but why is there so little of what we have come to regard as the characteristic theology of Paul? Why, too, does the history end so abruptly, without a hint of the outcome of Paul's trial before Cæsar's tribunal?

We can guess that these riddles might all find a very simple solution if we knew why the book was written at all. Mr. Blunt, the latest English editor of 'Acts,' thinks the author's main object is to describe 'the progress of the Church to a recognition of its universal position'; while he may have had as a secondary aim to 'commend Christianity as a religion which the Empire had precedent for treating tolerantly.' In his Introduction Dr. Moffatt says: 'The scope and aim of the book is the triumphant extension of the Christian faith from Jerusalem to Rome . . .,' while 'a subordinate aim is to exhibit the political inoffensiveness of Christianity.' May it be that not a subordinate aim but the primary object of the writer is to exhibit the political inoffensiveness, not of Christianity but of Paul?

That is the thesis of Dr. J. Ironside STILL in *St. Paul on Trial* (S.C.M.; 7s. 6d. net). His idea is that 'Acts' was composed for the information of readers who were somehow concerned with the decision in Paul's trial at Rome. Paul's defence before Festus suggests that while infringement of Jewish religious custom and desecration of the Temple may have been the primary charges against him, yet, as in the case of his Master, a political turn had been given to the accusation. Accordingly, before those responsible could form an intelligent opinion on Paul's case, it was necessary that they should know something of the origin of the Christian Church, and, at least in outline, the story of Paul's

missionary career. The facts so presented by Luke to some friend or friends who had influence with the imperial authorities might thus reach the proper quarters.

This theory of the origin of the book certainly helps to explain certain elements in it. It would shed light on the Christology of the early chapters, where stress is laid on the fact that Jesus is the Jews' 'Christ.' If that is so, then followers of Jesus have the same right as other Jews to the protection of the Empire officials in their worship. Rome's legal luminaries would certainly inquire whether this view of the Christians was officially accepted by the Jews. Accordingly 'Acts' records that while at first the heads of the Jewish community persecuted the Faith, they speedily, at the instigation of Gamaliel, changed their policy, and, presumably for a generation at least, offered little active opposition to Christian worship and preaching.

But a much more difficult question remained. What of the Gentile Christians who did not conform to Jewish regulations? Could it be claimed that the Faith as they practised it came under the sheltering ægis of Judaism and was therefore a *religio licita*? In answer we have Stephen's plea that neither Law nor Temple was an essential element in the Jewish religion, rightly understood, since Jehovah was worshipped acceptably long before the Law was given through Moses or Solomon's Temple was built. Further, while there was for a time among Jewish Christians some difference of opinion about the reception of non-conforming Gentile Christians, the liberal attitude to the question was based on the Jewish Scriptures and was accepted by the leaders of the Jewish Church.

On psychological grounds Dr. STILL puts Peter's vision at Joppa just after the scene with Paul at Antioch in which Paul dealt faithfully with Peter's 'hedging' in the matter of eating with uncircumcised Christians. The author of 'Acts' tactfully introduces Peter's preaching to Gentiles before Paul's, though the latter was earlier in time.

The theory fits the later part of 'Acts' better than it does the earlier. The later part is an account of the conversion and labours of the Apostle. His missionary activities led to frequent riots, arrests, and plots against his life; but in every case Paul's attitude was one of studied respect for the law, as indeed Roman officials repeatedly recognized. For example, in connexion with the disturbance at Ephesus which must have been known at Rome, certain friends of Paul who were also friends of Cæsar ('Asiarchs') could testify that Paul had broken no imperial law. Throughout the story it was Paul's enemies who practised unscrupulous illegality.

The theory would explain certain other phenomena of the book. It would account for the sketchiness and the tantalizing lacunæ of the earlier chapters (since nothing is inserted which does not bear directly or indirectly on the trial of Paul), and for the concentration on Paul in the later chapters. The account of Paul's address before the Areopagus becomes more intelligible if its main object is to show that, in addressing those who were not even 'God-fearers,' he avoided any approach to illegal proselytizing. Above all, it gives a very simple solution of the abrupt end of the book.

For the author one attraction of the theory is that it makes 61 the last possible year for the composition of 'Acts,' which was preceded by Luke's Gospel and, at an interval of at least several years, by Mark's Gospel. One point in favour of his theory Dr. STILL does not mention. The preface to Luke's Gospel is meant to cover 'Acts' as well as the Gospel. Professor Cadbury has shown that a careful study of the language of the preface suggests that the two volumes are of the nature of apologetic, correction of wrong impressions that had somehow got abroad, rather than a teacher's instruction to a catechumen. And

yet. . . . Dr. STILL writes with an engaging modesty, and except with regard to the last chapters of 'Acts' does not seem quite convinced by his own reasoning. But if his master-key does not fit every notch in the lock it slips with ease into a sufficient number of them to make us believe the 'fit' is not accidental.

Dr. HOSCHANDER, in his study of *The Book of Esther in the Light of History*, offers the following—to use his own words—'paradoxical statement.' 'The Christians,' he says, 'did more for the preservation of the Jewish religion by their persecutions than did the Prophets and the Talmudic literature.' And elsewhere he says, 'the Persians had not yet had the experiences of religious persecutors that blood is the best fertilizer for the growth of a religious creed. One martyr made numerous converts.'

These statements may be paradoxical, but they are true, and they are sobering. Persecution is one of the most futile methods of assailing a faith which it is proposed to destroy. The persecution which scatters the adherents of a faith inevitably extends the influence of that faith, and multiplies indefinitely the centres of propaganda: while the persecution which destroys the adherents of a faith only succeeds in creating in the breasts of all worthy survivors a more compelling appreciation of its value, and in kindling often in the hearts of the timid whatever spark of courage may still lurk there—kindling it into a flame of resolution to do and dare to the uttermost on behalf of that inestimable spiritual treasure for which their brethren died.

Over and over again this has been illustrated in history; but it is illustrated no less clearly in the Bible. In Dr. HOSCHANDER'S interesting and informing study he remarks that 'the prime minister was under the delusion that a number of executions in various sections of the empire would have the salutary effect of frightening the rest into obedience. But the effect of these executions was contrary to his expectations. As in former days, under Babylonian rule, the courage, devotion, and fervour of the martyrs reawakened the religious conscience slumbering in the hearts of many indifferent Jews. Many of the latter, who by their conduct had not even been recognized as Jews, now openly declared their adherence to the Jewish creed, protesting against the cruel treatment of their co-religionists, and denouncing the author of those persecutions.'

Some hundreds of years before and some hundreds of years after, the story is the same. In the seventh century B.C. we are told that 'Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.' It is practically certain that the blood he shed was the blood of the prophets who had protested against his idolatries; and it is as good as certain that it was the kinsmen of these prophets who, reduced for the moment to silence, drew up the programme which, in its elaborated and expanded form, we now know as the Book of Deuteronomy—a book which had an immeasurable influence on subsequent religious history. For that great book, which was manifestly dear to our Lord, we have probably in large measure to thank the persecution of Manasseh.

The early story of the Christian religion furnishes eloquent illustration of the same point—the certainty with which persecution promotes the truth which it was designed to extinguish. After the death of Stephen, to which Saul consented, 'there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria . . . and they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.'

And a little later, 'they who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word.' The word which was to have been silenced for ever still continued to be preached, and to be preached in

regions far beyond its original home. Its triumph was accelerated, and its beneficent influence was extended and assured by the very means which were taken to crush it. The persecutors were advancing the purpose of God in a way they little dreamed.

In the January number of *The Pilgrim*, edited by Bishop Temple, there is a very able article on 'The Ethics of Jesus,' by Mr. A. E. BAKER. Renewed study of the ethical teaching of Jesus has, more than once, led to a moral and religious revival within the Christian society. And this has been so because a healthy faith rests on what He did and was, and on what He taught. What, then, was the moral teaching of Jesus?

There are two outstanding features of it. One is that the content and motive of all human activity is to be found in God. Life is to be lived for God's sake, not for mankind, primarily. Its pattern is God. Its inspiration is God. And this means that morality is a means to a religious end, all service and helpfulness and love finding their meaning as part of our fellowship with the life of God. Contemplation, prayer, the vision of God, are more than a means to good action—they are themselves the best thing in life, the crown of goodness.

A good instance of this God-centred ethic is the true conception of humility. This does not mean a careful estimate of ourselves and our own character as inferior to that of others. It has not, primarily, a reference to other people at all. Its immediate reference is to God, and our relation to Him. It is a product of contact between the actual and the ideal. He who emphasized His own complete dependence upon the Father was entirely fearless towards men.

The other feature of the ethic of Jesus is that it presents a social ideal. He came not to snatch individuals as brands from the burning, but to found a perfect society. This is a kingdom which is also a family where the relationships are intensely personal. The bond is love, and the authority is more absolute than any legal code because it rests on the loyalty of a son to his father, of a brother to the family.

A large part of the meaning of becoming a Christian, then, is that you become a member of a society of free men, a society whose method and ideal is that perfect inner freedom whose only sufficient ground is a perfectly wise love. There is no word of any kind of privilege in such a society, and none of wealth or social position, except so far as these are the ways of more complete service. The good life for the individual is the life which will do most to bring in the Kingdom.

Mr. BAKER finds the ideal of Jesus embodied in three forms. The first is the Beatitudes, of which he gives an excellent summary. The second, curiously enough, is St. Paul's beautiful chapter on love in 1 Corinthians. And the third is the life and character of Jesus Himself. The true principle of interpretation in reading the words of Jesus is that His ethics must be understood in the light of His character. This is the clue, *e.g.*, to the parables of Judgment. The reward of faithfulness is service. 'God rewards the righteous by showing them how much He loves them, and God punishes the wicked by showing them how much He loves them.'

It will be seen that this is a suggestive study of the ethical teaching of Jesus. It suffers, however, from one-sidedness, as many such studies do. There is no hint in it of the severity of Jesus. There is no reference, for example, to the cleansing of the Temple. The impression produced on the mind by the words of Jesus about the wicked is certainly not that 'God punishes the wicked by showing them that He loves them.'

The whole subject of the relation of Christ's teaching to the state is discussed in a few words which surely give a false impression of what

Christian citizenship is. 'Jesus has little to say about the state. . . . This may be because the state only touched His life when it ended it, but it may be because He neither needed nor wanted the state, that the methods of the state are inevitably opposed to His methods.' That is misleading. But in spite of these defects, we draw attention to this article as a very capable and helpful summary of one side of the teaching of Jesus.

Can mathematics help to solve any theological problems? The question will provoke mirth everywhere except among those who know something of both of these sciences. Mr. A. S. PERCIVAL, M.A., M.B.(Camb.), one of our leading experts in the science of optics, is a mathematician who is also deeply interested in theological questions. And Mr. PERCIVAL has no doubt at all that mathematics does eminent service to theology.

Mr. PERCIVAL read a Paper at a meeting of the Churchmen's Union at Durham, and some of his friends compelled him to have it published. Its title is *Science, Materialism, and Determinism.* If this Paper were read and understood by everybody, the world would contain far fewer materialists, of the intellectual type at all events. Two illustrations from the Paper will suffice to show how mathematics comes to the aid of theology.

Mr. PERCIVAL finds that physiologists and biologists are as a class more opposed to religion than any other variety of scientific men. The reason is that biology has hardly advanced beyond the descriptive stage. Were physiologists to give close attention to the higher physics their outlook upon the universe would be transformed.

Physical science has recently been busy upon the electron. For example, the β rays of radium are negative electrons, projected from radium with a speed almost as great as that of light, and experiments have been made to determine how much of their 'inertia' is mechanical, *i.e.* due to mass, and how much is due simply to the velocity of the charge. The experiments have been repeated over and over by the most skilful experts, and all go to prove that the electron has no mass in the ordinary sense. All its 'inertia' is electro-magnetic and is due to velocity. That is to say, matter, which is made up of electrons, is in the last resort immaterial.

What comes, then, of materialism? Mr. PERCIVAL'S conclusion is that in dealing with a materialist it is sufficient to show him how very little science he really knows. 'Get him to study physical science more deeply, and he will discover that materialism is a pure illusion.' There are other independent lines by which the same conclusion is reached. Any one weapon in the armoury of physical science can slay materialism.

Theologians will say that they can deal effectively with materialism without any aid from mathematical physics. Very well, but they will welcome light on the subject of predestination, come from what quarter it may. Mr. PERCIVAL shows how true science helps to solve the problem of predestination, and he knows what he is talking about.

Lotze the philosopher proved that space was in us, and not we in space. Now Einstein, Fitzgerald, and Lorentz have proved experimentally that time is in us, and not we in time. Space and time, that is to say, are only human conventions, convenient abstractions from the four-dimensional, space-time continuum in which we live. They are entirely relative. 'Each person according to his own velocity carries about his own private space and private time.' All our accurate measurements would seem at the moment to have gone by the board. But we are saved from chaos by the fact, brought to light by Minkowski, that there is a certain combination of *space and time* which is constant.

But what has this to do with predestination? Much every way. We cannot do better than quote

Mr. PERCIVAL's conclusion. 'God the I AM exists in a timeless now. To God all things are equally present, so although we cannot understand the difficulty, we can apprehend it.'

It cannot be doubted that physical science has now come to aid theology far more than it has ever done, and it is for theology to rearrange its furniture in the larger room in which it finds itself.

Is religion fundamental to man and a universal necessity to our race? This is one of the problems dealt with by the Rev. W. E. ORCHARD, D.D., in his *Foundations of Faith* (Allen & Unwin; 5s. net).

'Religion is certainly a need of which many persons are acutely aware. On the other hand, there are many persons, and among civilized peoples they are now perhaps approximating to a majority, who have no such consciousness of either the reality or the need of religion.' It might naturally, therefore, be thought to be a matter of temperament, and in that case we could only settle down to an attempt at mutual toleration. 'But this is the one thing that the religious person will not do; not so much because he is naturally intolerant or aggressive, he is often nothing of the kind, but the acceptance of such a position would cast doubt upon the reality and truth of religion.'

Is religion a primitive instinct, destined to be replaced by something more rational as man advances in consciousness? It must certainly be admitted that it is in primitive communities that we find religious customs most universally observed, whereas in civilized communities these are often dropped, and for many people religion ceases to exist. Yet 'evidence is not wanting that, despite the undisputed decline in public worship and in private religious belief, modern man is showing symptoms that he will not be able to do without religion much longer. Without a common religion it is found increasingly impossible to live a common life. . . . Moreover the sense of personal misery is mounting ever higher amongst civilized and educated people, as life lived without religion manifests its utter lack of guidance, purpose, and hope. . . . Strange, vague fears invade the consciousness of man, and at length threaten him with paralysing panic. Personality develops what are known as "complexes," in which dissociated centres of feeling and thought set up what seems like a life of their own, defy all rational control, and manifest their unhealthy nature in nervous habits, in a dangerous diminution of vitality believed to be due to their repressed conflicts, and may even threaten the mind with what is called double personality or with the more radical disorders of insanity.'

Modern clinical psychology, setting itself to relieve minds so affected, has discovered afresh how profoundly religion enters into the mental structure of mankind. 'It is often operative where a man thinks he is entirely beyond its influence. In some cases religion may form a complex in the mind, which a man is unwilling to submit to rational inquiry, or which he keeps separate from all his other concerns, as it were, in a water-tight compartment, but the apparent absence of religious concern is often due to the fact that it has been repressed, while a violent anti-religious attitude is often due to a conflict with irrepressible religious elements within.' In no case can religion be disregarded without the risk of dangerous mental disorder.

By some schools of psychologists it is looked upon as an undesirable complex, requiring to be dispersed before mental peace can be found. In that case it is traced back to one or other of the fundamental instincts. Is it the instinct of sex? But it is found that 'if the sex instinct is to be properly regulated, it must be not by repression, but by sublimation, and for that religion is most effective.' Is it the instinct of fear? But 'it is being discovered that when definite religious beliefs have been abandoned under the pressure of modern

scepticism, the old fears still remain. . . . Only in the belief that there is an Eternal Being who is the anchorage of all our aspirations, not only for personal existence, but for moral progress and satisfaction, can man get rid of his fears.'

Is it the acquisitive instinct? But man, with the whole world in his possession, would still be unsatisfied. 'Therefore the modern psychologist is almost bound to recognise religion as the only compensation for desires in man which cannot be allowed their unlimited satisfaction; not only because other people have the same desires, and all cannot be satisfied alike, but because there is no unlimited satisfaction save in God.'

'We may conclude, therefore, that modern psychology has established the reality of religion as a craving of the human mind, and that this can only be satisfied by the belief that some reality answers to it. . . . Religion is deeper than man's consciousness, and may often be at work when man is quite unaware of it and has not yet awakened to his need. The more conscious he becomes, the more he will realise what his fundamental craving is, and when he makes the satisfaction of this the chief end of life, his instincts will fall into their right place, and even contribute to the harmony of his nature and its resultant tendency towards God.'

Church Union.

By Professor W. A. Curtis, D.D., D.Litt., The University, Edinburgh.

The Christian world to-day furnishes many evidences that the age of Schism is past. Re-union of the Churches, re-construction of the Church, has become a haunting vision, one is fain to say an urgent necessity, throughout Christendom. Articles in the magazines, speeches on public platforms and in ecclesiastical assemblies, conferences of churchmen drawn from the ends of the earth, volumes slender or substantial, incessantly explore the problem and promote the cause.

It is not difficult to recognize the reasons for this change. Take first the human side. Historical studies have cleared up with increasing certainty and dispassionateness the story of past divisions. Tolerance has grown and intercourse increased among the Churches. The world has become more compact. Men of all shades of opinion and conviction cherish a livelier and more charitable curiosity about one another and see that the outstanding types of ecclesiastical organization and fellowship have made good and have proved their power and right to stay. Differences in theology and usage have inevitably shrunk in presence of the great common menaces of modern life, hostile systems of thought, perilous instincts and habits of life, non-Christian religions, and, perhaps we should add, the encroachments of the secular arm. And on the Divine side, can it be doubted that a tide of the Spirit is responsible for the growing sense of obligation of which men in all the Churches are conscious? Just as in the political sphere nationalism has experienced a world-wide shock and the spirit of patriotic loyalty which bore the brunt of war with fortitude and even cheerfulness has reached out wistfully towards a wider horizon, a new order of law and equity and brotherhood which shall embrace all nations, so in Church and Religion the Christian spirit is yearning and groping after a new solidarity, prompted by a disinterested and honourable desire to end old feuds, to remove all causes of friction, to secure by willing sacrifice even of distinctive details in our various traditions a united testimony and a compact influence in the name of Christ. We speak of the wastefulness of our overlapping, the unseemliness of our rivalries, the accretions of prejudice and misunderstanding which are inseparable from partisan enthusiasms, but beneath these altogether we are sensible of the plain demands of our fundamental identity and of our missionary responsibility. 'Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' 'When one saith, I am of