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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It was a bold venture on the part of President E. Y. Mullins, D.D., LL.D., to challenge comparison with one of the greatest religious controversialists of our time by giving his recent book the title *Christianity at the Cross Roads* (Hodder & Stoughton; 7s. 6d. net). It is just fifteen years since Father Tyrrell published his famous book, and President Mullins thinks Christianity is still, or once more, at the Cross Roads. No doubt he is right, and his discussion is an able and comprehensive defence of evangelical Christianity.

Of evangelical Christianity, as he understands it; and, on the whole, as the late Principal Denney (whose name he always spells Denny) understood it. But there are others who would not be prepared to accept every argument of this book, and who would yet vigorously maintain that they too were evangelicals. We think, for example, of the late Professor A. B. Bruce who, in certain moods, would not have been inclined to endorse unhesitatingly what Dr. Mullins says about the Virgin Birth; and yet Professor Bruce did as much as any man in recent times to create for the Church a living picture of Jesus, which has warmed and gladdened the hearts of the best of evangelicals.

But this, after all, is a side-issue. One merit of Dr. Mullins' book is that he sees so clearly and proclaims so unambiguously where the real issue lies. It is not a case of verbal inspiration or the infallibility of the Bible. Important as these things are to those who can accept them, they are as the small dust of the balance when weighed against the real interests that are at stake in the discussion. The question is, whether Jesus is merely the example or also the object of our faith: nay, the question is as to the very existence and possibility of religion itself. For the argument is that much of our current science and philosophy, if it were true, would leave room for nothing that the average sincere religious man would think it worth his while to identify with religion as he experiences it.

In the modern as in the ancient world Christianity has enemies: its enemies to-day are 'Science, Philosophy, Historical Criticism, and Comparative Religion.' It must not, however, for a moment be supposed that Dr. Mullins is an obscurantist. He does not in the least object to these expressions of the human mind. He is too clear and sound a thinker not to see that they are inevitable, and that, in important respects, *e.g.* in their devotion to facts, and in their honest and patient endeavour to reach truth, their spirit and temper are admirable. He objects to them only when they go beyond their beat, and make dogmatic pronouncements on the subject of Religion, which, he justly argues, has an equal right with them to have its phenomena sympathetically treated.

Religious phenomena can only be adequately judged by those who have religious experience; and the error made by so many modern thinkers is, that the evidence is prejudged in advance on the basis of categories derived from some other field of experience and therefore strictly inapplicable here. A scientist, *e.g.*, whose investigations have led him to believe that the system of nature is closed, is pretty sure to apply this conception to his interpretation of extra-physical facts, with the result that he frequently leaves us with a God (if with a God at all) who is immanent but not transcendent, and with a human personality which has no freedom in the present, and no outlook for any future beyond death. Such science is hardly likely to do justice to the deep self-certifying experiences of religion.

Nor can Philosophy pronounce the final word: for the voices of Philosophy are too conflicting. 'What, after all, is Philosophy?' asks Professor Pratt in a passage quoted by Dr. MULLINS. 'Does it mean Hegel or Hume, Thomas Aquinas or Thomas Huxley? . . . If it come to a question of definite results, of problems surely solved and perplexing questions forever laid to rest, one must feel indeed somewhat chagrined. . . . We are about as far from knowing what Reality is as we ever were.'

No more can Historical Criticism by itself lead us into the deepest secret of the Christian Religion. That criticism is often conducted with a bias which deliberately ignores part of the evidence; as, *e.g.*, by Harnack when he makes the ethical element the thing of exclusive importance in the teaching of Jesus, or by Schweitzer who stresses the apocalyptic element in it, or by the champions of Comparative Religion, who would explain Christianity in terms of the religions contemporary with its origin. These all attempt 'to reduce Jesus Christ and the New Testament to smaller proportions than appear on the face of the record.'

And this leads Dr. MULLINS to the positive part of his discussion, with which he concludes. Here he presents 'the irreducible Christ' under four aspects—as revealed in Christian experience, in the Jesus of the New Testament, in the larger spiritual life of the world, and in Christian history—and each phase of the argument goes to illustrate the incomparable place of Jesus as Revealer of God and Redeemer of men. God is indeed unchangeable—not unchangeable Law, but the unchangeable Father. Jesus is 'the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance'; and man's deepest need is not education, but redemption through Him.

One of the biggest problems for the Church in our land is how to secure for a religious life and for the service of the Kingdom young men and women between the ages of fourteen and twenty. The importance of this problem lies on the surface of the facts. The future of the Church itself is bound up with it. If the Church goes on losing very many of the youth whom she has had in her Sunday schools, she thereby cripples herself and limits her influence. In addition to that, however, she is failing to solve the problem of the Outsider in the only way in which it can be solved. If the Church could keep the boys and girls she has in her schools, the question of the great outside 'lapsed mass' would solve itself.

The importance of the matter is, then, obvious. But its magnitude, or the magnitude of the facts, is not realized as it should be. It is difficult to secure statistics of a definite and reliable kind as to the actual numbers who lapse from Church ordinances after leaving Sunday school. It has been put as high as eighty per cent! That must be a decided exaggeration. But competent and sober observers put the number at about thirty per cent. And that is bad enough. It is probably under the truth, but let us take it at that. A steady loss of about a third of the boys and girls who are under the Church's care for nine years is a serious reflection on her methods.

What is the Church doing to provide a remedy?

There is a great deal of writing about the Church and the young just now. A few months ago, we reviewed here two books professing to deal with all the problems affecting this subject. As we pointed out, this special problem was very nearly ignored. Nearly all the writing and thinking are about the conduct of the Sunday school. And, of course, the Sunday school has its own contribution to make to the solution. A good Sunday school would lessen the pressure of the problem. But it would not solve it. If the school were ideal it would not prevent wholly, or nearly wholly, the drift away after school age.

After fourteen years of age (and often before it) forces and influences, physical and social, begin to play upon the youth with tremendous power. And these cannot be countered merely by preparation beforehand, though preparation is a great safeguard and a great help. But there must be more. There must be a definite concentration on this period by the right person and in the right way.

First of all the Church must realize that *this* is her most urgent task. That is not realized at present, and the fact accounts for the feeble way in which the matter is tackled. What is done for this critical age at present? For those below fourteen there is the school. For those of older years there is the Bible class. But for those from fourteen to eighteen or nineteen there is, at the best, what is called the 'Junior Bible Class.' This fills what is usually called the 'gap' between the school and the Bible class. This junior class is conducted by more or less competent people.

But it does not appeal to the adolescent youth. It is not *the* thing. The real thing is the Bible class conducted by the minister. And the junior class smacks still of the Sunday school. The minister, good man, is engaged in delivering to a motley class of all ages his second-hand impressions of Browning, or Dante, or 'the religion of the great poets,' or something else of the same momentous nature. And so the 'gap' is not really filled, not always at least, and the fish slip through the meshes of the net.

What, then, is the real solution? It can be put in a few sentences, though the details have to be worked out in each case. The cure, or prevention, of the evil can be put in different ways. One way is to say that there should be no 'gap.' Another way of saying the same thing is that the minister ought to give up lecturing on Browning and Dante and address himself to his proper business, which is to keep hold of the young people who are emerging from the Sunday school. In other words, the Bible class should be, not for a miscellaneous collection of all sorts of people, but for the young people who are needing it most.

They are needing it most because they are at the age which needs guidance and control. They need it most because their minds and hearts are at the sensitive stage when good influences bite deep as well as bad. They need it most because it is just at this time they tend to drift away. Their need is great and (speaking generally) the minister is the only one who can meet it. They are prepared to be handled by him when they would not attend any one else. For them he is 'it,' and if he gives himself to them they will respond.

This means, of course, the construction of a scheme and also a great deal of personal pastoral care. As to the scheme, it means a careful organization of effort which will secure that no boy or girl is overlooked and that every one is personally followed up *by the minister*. This pastoral and careful tending will keep the fish from swimming off. And it will appeal to the young people themselves if it is done in a human way. The solution of the 'youth problem,' then, is the construction of a ladder from the Font to the Holy Table, or from the Font to the Altar, at every rung of which the young soul is carefully and lovingly shepherded.

But, supposing the young people are safely

shepherded into the Bible class, and the minister gives himself to this as his chief work, not allowing on any account any older people near his class, what then? It is then his business to give these young people a real course of instruction which will prepare them for Church membership. It ought to extend to four or five years and to include a year on the Old Testament (dealing with the big facts), a year on the New Testament, a year on the big facts of religion, and a year on the Church and the Sacraments.

These two things, the personal and human relation of the minister to the young at a sensitive and malleable age, and the definite instruction on proper lines, will solve the great problem if anything will. We plead for the recognition of the adolescent as the real task of the Church and for the concentration on him, with kindness and humanity, of the best the Church has to offer of pastoral care and mental interest and enrichment.

Readers of the *Hibbert Journal* for October will turn at once to the first article—'Jesus,' by Professor Kirsopp LAKE. Dr. LAKE's critical standpoint is sufficiently familiar from 'The Beginnings of Christianity.' It is what is generally known as 'negative.' He belongs to the extreme left wing of criticism. For this reason many who have read the work just referred to, as well as the 'Landmarks,' will naturally be interested to find out what the writer has to say constructively, or in the way of interpretation, about Jesus.

The article is disappointing. It is lacking in grip and in clear thinking. The writer is also too much inclined to undervalue both the character and the intelligence of those who hold views which he has rejected. There is a kind of arrogant dogmatism, also, on points about which the writer's judgment is at least open to question. 'Son of Man' he dismisses in a brief parenthesis ('which only means "Man"'). And Mark, we learn with surprise, 'only shows that Jesus was believed to have become a "Son of God," possibly at the Baptism'—a quite extraordinary opinion.

Dr. LAKE begins by setting forth two propositions which contain the Catholic faith about Jesus. (1) God has a 'Son' or 'Logos' or 'Word' who is a definite person, distinct from the Father, but not another God. (2) This Son became human in Jesus. The evidence for both statements is St. John.

They are unsupported by the Synoptic Gospels. The Synoptists hold that Jesus *became* a Son of God at some period in His ministry. Their Christology is Adoptionism. Thus there are two conceptions of Jesus in the Gospels, that of St. John, which is the Incarnation doctrine, and that of the first three Gospels. But the historical character of St. John is now given up. Hence 'in plain language,' the central doctrine of the Catholic theology was unknown to Jesus and those disciples of Jesus who first recorded His life. 'I greatly doubt whether the youth of the next generation will be willing to accept the proposition that "the central doctrine of Christianity" is, and always must be, something which Jesus did not teach himself.'

The Logos doctrine was current in Greek circles, just as the Messiah doctrine was current in Jewish circles. That fact negatives the statement that the Johannine view was an inevitable inference made directly from Jesus' teaching and personality. The substance of the Logos doctrine came from Plato, and it was only used by those who were influenced by Greek thought.

There are only two alternatives. One is the Fundamentalist position about Scripture. If you accept that it settles the question. The other is the 'experimentalist' position. If the Church accepts this it will not require, as a condition of membership, that we should accept any opinion about Jesus, even His own. 'But it will certainly study what Jesus thought of himself, and if that appear doubtful, will regard with interest the possi-

bilities which critical judgment of the documents may suggest.'

What are these possibilities? Three are Jewish. (1) He was a prophet, (2) He was the Davidic Messiah, (3) He was the Son of Man who would come at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. Two others are 'Gentile.' (4) He was the Lord of a sacramental cult which conferred Regeneration and Life through its Sacraments, and (5) He was the Incarnate Logos.

The first view was certainly held by Jesus. The fourth and fifth were not. He *may* have held the second or the third, though Dr. LAKE's judgment is against this conclusion. As to the Jewish views, whatever conclusion we come to is really unimportant. It does not matter at all what is the truth about them. They will rank with questions of Homeric theology to the student.

As to the 'Gentile' views, the sacramental doctrine is really Græco-Oriental. All these sacramental religions had a 'myth' or story of their own. And the distinction of the Christian myth, which tells of the Incarnation and Passion of a Divine Son of God, is that it contains far the nearest approach to history. But it belongs to a form of thought which is alien to that of the world to-day. It is different with the idea of Jesus as a prophet. The experimentalist will certainly rank Jesus among the great prophets of all history. He will not think that teaching is true because it is that of Jesus, but he will reverence Him because His teaching was in the main true and stands the test of experiment.

'In the main.' There is much in Jesus' teaching that we must discard. His eschatology, for example, and also His non-resistance doctrine. And, indeed, speaking generally, the experimentalist will give up the idea that modern problems are to be solved by the simple application of the teaching of Jesus. The religion of to-morrow will have to work out its problems in its own way without trying to find a short cut in the teaching of Jesus or of any one else.

Such is the substance of this extraordinary essay. We have not much in hand by the end of it. Neither the religious nor the moral authority of Jesus is left to us. He is *un quantité négligeable.* The most amazing thing in the whole article is the writer's entire unconsciousness of anything out of the way in Jesus. He is evidently entirely and honestly oblivious of anything august or sublime in Jesus. Indeed, the annihilating criticism of Dr. LAKE's account of Jesus is that there is nothing left in Him to account in the least degree for the effects which notoriously He produced. Dr. LAKE's Jesus would not have stirred the waters in a provincial pond.

Further, Dr. LAKE does not see that to discard the term 'Logos' is not to discard the estimate of Jesus which St. John put in that intellectual form because it lay to his hand. St. John and St. Paul and St. Luke, as well as St. Mark (*pace* Dr. LAKE), came to their estimate of Jesus because of the facts. We do the same. We look at Himself. We read His tremendous claims—to forgive sin, to be the Judge of men, to be the object of the entire devotion of men's whole lives. We see His influence in history. We look at the testimony of Christian experience. These are the facts. The true experimentalist is the man who faces facts like these and does justice to them. And the Christian Church has, through the ages, found in the Catholic doctrine the only sufficient explanation of the facts.

The Bible is in some real sense a rule of faith and life, and in another sense it is not and cannot be a rule at all; for in it there are found conflicting rules. 'Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.' And that sage advice is immediately countered by 'Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.' Which is right? Though in formal

contradiction, they are both right; and we must make room in our conduct for the application of both principles.

Again, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Right on the heels of that command comes the statement of the other law that 'each man shall bear his own burden.' Which is right? They are both right, and the second, no less than the first, is a 'law of Christ,' who bore His own burden as surely as He bore the burdens of other people.

Again, 'Enter into thy chamber, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father who is in secret.' Religion is here a private transaction between the soul and God, and a man is to go about it almost as if he were doing a guilty thing. But on the other hand, we are not to 'forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is,' for there is a stimulus in religious companionship which cannot come from religious isolation. Which is right? They are both right: the one duty is as obligatory as the other.

Even in the words of our Lord such contradictory injunctions occur. For 'I say unto you, Love your enemies.' But it was He who also said, 'If any man cometh unto me, and *hateth* not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, he cannot be my disciple.' What a paradox—that we should love our enemies, and yet hate our parents and children!

The existence of such contradictions and paradoxes in Holy Scripture has a profound religious value, for they drive us, if we think at all, beyond the letter to the spirit. They show us how impossible it is for us to rest in isolated words which may only be half-truths or rather truths which, if our life and thinking are to be conducted in a large and generous way, have to be complemented and balanced by other truths. They make us think of life in a big way, as not to be interpreted by any single formula, or indeed by a formula at all, but by a principle which seeks to express itself now in this way, now in that, but always inadequately. Life is too big a thing to be compassed by any single law, except it be the royal law of love which, well considered, is strictly not a law at all.

When we thus rise from the letter to the spirit, we shall be the less perturbed by the contradictions — and they are not few — among the historical statements of the Bible. The Lord, we are told in Samuel, moved David to number Israel; but we are just as explicitly told by the Chronicler that it was Satan who moved him. Doubtless these are just two different interpretations of the same act: they are not so much contradictory statements of fact as contradictory interpretations of fact. Still, they *are* contradictory: and nothing is gained by closing our eyes to a thing so obvious. The contradiction is there, whether we refuse to look at it or not.

Sometimes, indeed, the contradictions extend to statements of fact: sometimes even a writer contradicts his own statements. The historian who tells us that Asa removed the high places (2 Ch 14^{5}) tells us in the very next chapter that he did not remove them (15^{17}), and he gives us the same conflicting accounts of Jehoshaphat's attitude to the high places (17^{6} 20^{33}). Criticism has a simple solution of these contradictions, but though it can explain them, it cannot remove or explain them away.

The Gospels themselves are full of such perplexities. Mark tells of the healing of a blind man, as Jesus was leaving Jericho, but according to Luke he is approaching Jericho, and according to Matthew there are two blind men. Even in words so important and, one would imagine, so well known as the superscription on the Cross, the tradition is not uniform.

What does it all mean? Does it not mean that we must learn to think of the Bible, as of life, in a big way? The literary facts are such that the

doctrine of verbal inspiration is simply untenable. God will not have us rest in any worship of the letter. But is that a loss? Nay, rather, it is a glorious gain. For we are driven by these discrepancies into the region of the spirit, where such things matter nothing at all.

They matter, of course, to the historian and the literary critic. In certain cases they may even matter immensely to them. It is through patient and vigilant attention to such things that it has become possible to detect the sources underlying our present narratives, to trace the reaction upon them of varying types of mind, and so to understand, better than ever before, the real course of events and the real development of mind alike in Israel and in the early Church.

But most of us are neither historians nor literary critics. We are, or strive to be, religious men, whose business is to walk not by the letter which killeth, but by the spirit which giveth life. What we are concerned with is to capture, if we can, the faith by which those men of the olden times lived —their faith in God's gracious purpose for the world and for themselves, that faith which shines through all they wrote for those who have eyes to look beyond possible historical inaccuracies to the radiant purpose which inspired and controlled their story.

In the paradoxes and contradictions of Scripture there lies, as we have said, a positive religious value. They bring us out of the stifling atmosphere of barren logomachies into a 'large place' where there is room to breathe. They oblige us to shake off our bondage to the letter, and to stand upon our feet, emancipated men, who rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ made us free.

A St. Andrew's Day Sermon.[1]

By the Reverend Professor J. F. McFadyen, M.A., Kingston, Ont., Canada.

'Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation.'—Gn 12[1].

1. Our text tells us that this Abraham was an emigrant, one who had been called by God to leave his country. The new drama required a new stage. A new chapter in the training of mankind, a chapter big with import, was about to begin. Abraham and his descendants were to pass through a long and stern course of discipline. But first there must be an absolute break from the old associations. The new teaching cannot flourish in the old soil. The new wine requires new bottles.

The writer 'to the Hebrews' draws a beautiful and touching picture of Abraham's great act of faith: how, when God's call came to him, he obeyed and went out from his native land, not knowing whither he went, knowing nothing save that God was calling him. Though he was living in the land of promise, yet he lived in it as a foreigner and a stranger. He and his might have gone back to their old home; yet they saw the glory dimly and afar off, and believed they were where they were because God so willed it. They lived the weary, restless life of the dweller in tents, here to-day and gone to-morrow, now pitching and now striking their tents; yet all the time they were looking for a city, a city where they might rest, a city with houses and walls and solid foundations, all planned and built by God. The Hebrews believed it was at a great price, the price of exile, that the fathers of their race had won for them their inheritance. The Old Testament is in large measure a book of exiles. Think for a moment of the precious treasure of story and of psalm, of prophecy and prayer, of which the world would have been robbed had there been no exile in Egypt, no exile in Babylon. In the story of Israel it was true, as it is so often true, that they learned in suffering what they taught in song.

[1] Preached in St. Andrew's Church, Toronto.