

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE latest of the 'Westminster Books' bears the title *Why Did Jesus Die?* and is written by Professor J. G. RIDDELL of the Chair of Systematic Theology in the University of Glasgow (Hodder & Stoughton; 3s. 6d. net). It is difficult at this late date to say anything new about the Atonement. And indeed Professor RIDDELL does not profess to have a new or original theory of the Atonement or anything of the kind. What he has done in this little book is to state afresh the main explanations that have been offered of the Cross, and re-emphasize the contribution which each of them makes to our understanding of the saving work of Christ.

He makes certain points clear to begin with. The Cross is unique and central in the faith and also for evangelism. There is no one orthodox theory of it which could be proclaimed as the message of the Church. And finally, it is not the sufferings of the Cross that are to be considered in any theory of the Atonement. We must also take into view the earthly ministry of Jesus and His Resurrection life. Not Calvary alone but Bethlehem and Galilee are part of the same problem. The Cross is not an isolated fact. With these things assumed, the writer proceeds to expound the five great theories of the Atonement, which may be briefly comprehended in these five words: *Revelation, Satisfaction, Sacrifice, Victory, and Life*.

The Cross is a *revelation* of God's love. That is  
VOL. XLIX.—No. 7.—APRIL 1938.

the first answer given to the question: Why did Jesus die? The two names most closely associated with this view are those of McLeod Campbell (in 'The Nature of the Atonement') and Horace Bushnell (in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'). The sufferings of Christ, said Campbell, were the perfecting of the Son's witnessing for the Father, 'being the perfected manifestation of the life of love as sonship towards God and brotherhood towards man.' The Cross, said Bushnell, signifies that 'such a God in love, must be such a Saviour in suffering.' The work of Christ, as Redeemer and Reconciler, was to bring believers to share His own awareness of God and His nearness to the Father, and to enable them to partake in the blessedness of such fellowship. This is so obviously true, or part of the truth, that it need not be elaborated.

The second theory is that Christ offered *satisfaction* to God and through His death forgiveness was purchased for man. 'He died that we might be forgiven.' This has been the answer to our question most common for seven hundred years. Christ came not only, or mainly, to reveal God's love, but by His death to bring forgiveness to sinful men. Scripture dwells on the fact that Christ came into the world to save sinners—that man's desperate need drew Him from heaven to earth. The assertion that the Cross is a revelation of love is true, but it does not represent what the Bible means by Reconciliation.

Dr. Vincent Taylor in his study of the Passionsayings of our Lord holds that in all Jesus said and taught 'there is nothing to suggest that His object in dying was so to confront men with the untiring love of God that through penitence and contrition they should be brought to love and trust Him in return.' The Cross is redemptive in the sense that the pardon of our sins depends upon Christ's death. If God and man are to be reconciled it cannot be by the simple expedient of ignoring sin but only by overcoming it. The Cross is not merely a revelation, it is a mighty work. This view has been so fully and repeatedly presented in Dr. Denney's well-known books that it is not necessary to expound it further.

The third answer is *sacrifice*. This thought is no less important than those of revelation and satisfaction. It has been maintained that during the first four or five centuries, till Augustine, the Church remained true to the Biblical view of sacrifice as fundamental in Atonement, and that only misunderstandings of this doctrine have prevented its wider acceptance. Brunner is among those who agree that 'the ritual idea' of the Cross as an expiatory sacrifice intended to remove some obstacle which has come between God and man is necessary. It is also contended that only in the conception of sacrifice can the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension be truly linked together in their inseparable unity. We must not be guilty of 'the fatal identification between sacrifice and death.'

It is to be remembered that the sufferings of Christ—the anguish borne in His death—are not themselves a sufficient clue to the meaning of the Cross. The sufferings are not the Atonement. The sacrifice of Jesus is obedience vested in that act, at once inward and outward, in which He gave the life needed by the Father's reconciling will. It is not the shedding of blood at Calvary but the spirit underlying and expressed in the sacrifice that gave it all its worth. And the sacrifice is the offering which Christ, as the representative of man, presents to the Father on his behalf. It is through this surrendered life, this offered sacrifice, that men

are perfectly reconciled to God and know that their every sin may be forgiven. And it is everywhere emphasized that the sacrifice is made by God. 'God was in Christ . . . God was behind the sacrifice ; indeed, He was within it.'

The fourth word is *victory*. It is a familiar fact that before Anselm the current idea of the death of Christ was that it was a ransom paid to the Devil. This was accepted unquestioningly for nine hundred years. It seemed a crude idea. At the same time nothing lasts for nine hundred years without containing some truth and substance. And Bishop Aulén in his recent book, 'Christus Victor,' asks us to return to what he calls the 'classic' view of the Atonement. Not in its bizarre form, of course, but to a view of the Cross as God's victory over evil. The question really is, what opposition to God's purpose had to be overcome in the redemption of mankind and how the divine victory was won. In other words, the primary concern is with the conflict fought out for the sake of humanity, in which Christ is the great protagonist, and only secondarily with the questions of revelation, satisfaction, or sacrifice.

This sense of a spiritual warfare, as the truest characteristic of the work of Christ, and of His achievement on man's behalf, was, it is held, the distinctive note of the Early Church's teaching, and ought never to be forgotten. The idea of a ransom paid to Satan was only an inadequate attempt to express the far-reaching truth that the doctrine of Atonement must be presented in dramatic form, and that conflict and victory are at the heart of reconciliation. Threatening the welfare of the human race there appears an array of hostile forces of all kinds, material and spiritual. From the tyranny of these Christ sets His followers free, and, in the triumph of the Cross, He vindicates the divine purpose and routs the enemies of God and man.

The final word is *life*. Ten years ago Nicolas Berdyaev, a Russian thinker exiled in Paris, dealt with the problem of 'Redemption and Evil' in a book translated under the title 'Freedom and the

Spirit,' in which he finds a clue to the meaning of Reconciliation in the indwelling and transforming presence of Christ with men. The main theme is that of a spiritual union between the believer and his Lord. The possibility of new life for men is the outcome of Christ's Incarnation, of His Death and Resurrection, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Instead of the yearning for deliverance, we should speak of the search after the higher life and the transfiguring of all creation.

Many are saved, it is said, not *by* Christ but *in* Christ, in the new spiritual race which Christ began, in the new nature, in the new spiritual life. That is the truth emphasized in the view quoted above. And its value is obvious. It is, for example, a safeguard against a tendency to regard the death of Jesus as a transaction, wrought out between the Father and the Son, of which men remain spectators, though their fate may depend on the issue. Even so orthodox a theologian as Professor H. R. Mackintosh could write: 'By making union with Christ central and determinative in this matter of forgiveness and its conditions, we do justice to a spiritual instinct which declares that by no possibility can we be saved outside ourselves.'

Professor RIDDELL's summing up is an interesting one. He points out that every one of these theories contains part of the truth, though he does not attempt to put them together into a whole! Nor does he say clearly *what* is the gospel of Christ's death that we are to present to men inside or outside the Church. He also points out, with some originality, that all these theories are found in Scripture, and that we find the same variousness in Christian piety—witness the hymns. There are many doorways into the Holy Place. 'We stand before a manifold, which nevertheless is a great, unity.'

Can the ideas associated with the kingdom of God, the Son of Man, and the Lord's Supper, be treated legitimately so as to form a uniform conception? This plainly was the belief of the late

Rudolf OTTO, and now that his great work, *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn* (1934), has been translated into English, it is possible for a much larger circle of readers to follow his arguments and estimate their importance.

The translation, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, is reviewed later in the present number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, and we take the opportunity of referring also to the review of the original German edition in Vol. XLVI. 282 f. Here, it is sufficient to illustrate OTTO's leading ideas.

OTTO maintains that the common belief that Jesus brings the kingdom is completely foreign to Jesus Himself. 'On the contrary,' he says, 'the kingdom brings him with it' (p. 103). His own activity lies in, and is carried forward by, the tidal wave of the victory of God Himself over Satan. This is implied in the words of Jesus: 'I saw Satan fall from Heaven like lightning,' a saying which has been preserved almost by a miracle, since 'it contradicts all the later Christology.' It is in the power of the divine victory that Jesus works by the finger of God, that is, 'with dynamis, exousia, charis, charisma,' and His charismatic activity is 'nothing other and nothing less than the coming of the kingdom itself' (p. 104).

'He does not bring the kingdom, but he himself, according to the most certain of his utterances, is in his actions the personal manifestation of the inbreaking divine power' (p. 104). 'His person and work were part of a comprehensive redemptive event, which broke in with him and which he called the coming and actual arrival of the kingdom of God.'

The bearing of such a view on the Person of Jesus is obviously close. In the submission of OTTO, He cannot be a rabbi who uttered maxims and gained disciples, and was only later elevated to the miraculous sphere. 'He knew himself to be a part and an organ of the eschatological order itself, which was pressing in to save. Thereby he was lifted above John and every one earlier. He was the eschatological saviour. Only thus understood are all his

deeds and words seen against their right background and in their true meaning' (p. 107). The clue to this belief is to be found in the Book of Enoch, for though Jesus was not an apocalypticist, He was dependent upon apocalyptic tradition.

It is an arresting suggestion to be told that the Son of Man in the Book of Enoch is a soteriological figure, and that, in this respect, he is like the Servant of God in Second Isaiah. 'Fundamentally different though this Servant of God is from Enoch they have it in common that, in both, a preacher of the approaching eschatological order walks upon earth and is himself predestined to eschatological dignity. A further common feature is that both determined Jesus' world of thought' (p. 218). OTTO is convinced that the belief which Jesus held concerning His Person is 'a clear synthesis of the Son of Man and Isaiah's Servant of God' (p. 252).

In discussions of this kind it is obviously impossible to stop short of the work of Christ. OTTO recognizes that Jesus offered no theory of atonement. 'He simply expressed the idea that, by the humble and voluntary surrender of life on the part of the Son of Man, the many would gain what the disciples of the Servant of God had gained by the suffering of their master, viz. the possibility of entering as reconciled individuals into a *berith* of God, which inheriting the kingdom of God made possible and assured to them' (p. 260). In this is revealed the significance of the procedure of Jesus at the Last Supper; 'it was an eschatological and regal act of the Son of Man, who was also the atoning, suffering Servant of God.'

Why is it that at the moment there is a marked tendency to emphasize the importance of the Supper in connexion with the Atonement? It is certainly not to be explained by a willingness to rest in the externals of religion rather than to press on into the inner courts. The very reverse is true; and it is significant that the emphasis is most marked in the contributions of New Testament scholars with reference to the sayings of Jesus. Christ's action at the Supper, as OTTO sees it, is more than a mere prediction of His suffering as the Son of

Man and Servant of God; 'it was an acted, anticipatory prediction by representation; even more was it the gift of a share in the power of the thing represented, viz. in the atoning power of the broken Christ' (p. 304). Naturally, to a Roman Catholic scholar, like August Arnold, this is not an adequate description of the Supper; since, while recognizing the One Sacrifice in the Death of Christ, he prefers to see in the Eucharist the sacrificial Passover Meal of the New Covenant. OTTO's conception is rather that of 'a feast upon a sacrifice,' although he emphasizes strongly, in view of Lk 22<sup>29</sup>, the Covenant-associations of the Supper, and the opportunity which it gives of entering into the redeeming act of Christ.

We have said enough to indicate the stimulating character of OTTO's work. It should be added, however, that it is a challenge as well as a stimulus. There are many places in the argument where the discerning reader will pause and ask questions. OTTO is very much on his guard against the spectre of later developments, and is ready to say: 'Here the theology of the Church is beginning to press in.' He thinks that the later Christology displaced that of Christ Himself, and that later sacramental teaching obscured the connexion of the Supper with the death of Christ. In the end, therefore, OTTO brings us to the vital question in present-day discussions: 'To what extent is later Christianity rooted in the teaching and action of Jesus Himself?' We believe that he leaves us with too sharp a breach between the beginnings and the end of the long process; but, in any case, and this is of the highest importance, the beginnings, in OTTO's discussion, are not the bleak colourless affirmations of the so-called Liberal Theology, but rich and productive regions out of which Pauline Christianity and the later Catholic Church arose as by an inevitable and legitimate process.

The new psychology is not generally regarded as an ally of religion, and least of all of the Christian faith. By its analysis of the low and brutish origin of human emotions and impulses it would seem to

deny the divine in man and to cut him off from contact with a higher world. Indeed, some of its chief exponents have expressly denied the reality of that higher world, and have explained away man's belief in it as sheer illusion.

On the other hand, however, the serious student of the new psychology is struck with curious resemblances to what one may call Biblical psychology. In its analysis of human nature the new psychology does not treat evil lightly. On the contrary, it finds a deep corruption which penetrates far down into the unconscious, and it uses language reminiscent of the doctrine of original sin. It also declares that man needs to be profoundly changed if he is to overcome his inhibitions and neuroses and attain to self-confidence and settled peace. It cannot tell by what power that change is to be wrought. Here it is weakest, but it does point, somewhat vaguely perhaps, in the direction of the Christian solution.

It is therefore possible to interpret the new psychology as, at least in a negative sort of way, a *preparatio evangelica*, and in wise Christian hands it may be made a schoolmaster leading men to Christ. This is a point of view which is taken in *The Achievement of Personality*, by Miss Grace STUART, M.A., B.Litt. (S.C.M. ; 5s. net), and is there set forth in an interesting and impressive way.

The three outstanding names in the field of the new psychology are Freud, Jung, and Adler. They differ in their diagnosis of the master passions, but they are at one in their view of the grave disorder within man's soul and of the general unsatisfactoriness of human behaviour. 'For Jung modern man has become merely neurotic. Freud sees men asking themselves whether this fragment (of progress in the regulation of human affairs) that has been acquired by culture is indeed worth defending at all. . . . It is hardly surprising that nervous breakdowns are common, and that neurasthenia, or nerve fatigue, is the most significant disease of the age.' The inner man, in a word, is a machine which has broken down, and needs repair if it is to work smoothly and efficiently. Some very thorough reorganization of the personality is

required, not only of the conscious mind and will, but also of the deep emotional forces which, untrained and unharnessed, may make havoc of mind and will and effort.

All the manifold powers and emotions of the soul must be built into a system, and brought under the control of some all-inclusive and master sentiment which shall maintain them in harmony and harness their energies to the highest uses. McDougall has described this supreme sentiment as 'a system of instinctive-emotional dispositions centred about one supreme object. . . . What should that object be? Clearly it should be the universe as a perfected system, as the full realization of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. Thinking in terms of personality, or on the analogy of personality, one would say that the object is a personal or super-personal God.'

In Freud's psychology the deepest instinct in man is a need for love. By his use of the term libido with its gross associations, and of sexual terminology in general, he has laid himself open to misunderstanding and to just criticism, but there is much truth in his view. He pictures the undisciplined ego as profoundly selfish, pursuing its ends with ruthless disregard for the good of others. Presently in its self-seeking it comes up against a hard world which will not give way, and then the bitterness of frustrated desire may lead to a neurosis. 'People fall ill of a neurosis when the possibility of satisfaction for the libido is removed from them—they fall in consequence of a frustration.' What way of escape is there from this unhappy clash of desires? Freud recognizes that the libido or craving for love has in itself a germ of hope. It is the sentiment which binds groups and communities into one. So the libido must somehow escape from the prison-house of self and go outwards in love to others. Turned in upon self in narcissism, or self-love, it is a death principle: turned out to an object beyond itself, it is a principle of life. 'The new psychology, discovering here a law of life, has perhaps reaffirmed an old statement that "the wages of sin is death," giving to the words sin and death a connotation intelligible to the modern

(2a) *Collective, passive ecstasy*, in which the external agency is a group or crowd.

We remember how Saul, as anointed king, was sent away by Samuel to meet a group of *nebi'im*, and how he became enthused and prophesied.<sup>1</sup> We are, presumably, to infer that Saul was a passive agent, acted upon by the group. Again, Euripides gives us a memorable picture of how Pentheus of Thebes went out to Cithaeron's glens to view the Bacchanalian orgies, and became gripped by the frenzy.<sup>2</sup> It is relevant to mention here the Tarantism of Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The belief evidently spread that the bite of the Tarantula spider was deadly. Many who were bitten actually died; and the others could be aroused from their torpor only by the playing of the flute, which made them rise up and dance furiously, as if in a state of enchantment.<sup>3</sup> Hecker also gives us interesting descriptions of the Dancing Mania of Germany of the fourteenth century, a mania which was liable to take possession of those who watched the delirious dancing of ones already affected.<sup>4</sup>

In this type of ecstasy we have been considering, we notice the effect of a group or a crowd upon an individual. Often the individual is pre-disposed to affection by his possessing some fear or illusion; when he is alone, reason and will may keep these in subjection; but when he comes into contact with an ecstatic group, the higher centres of control are relaxed.<sup>5</sup> Where there is no pre-disposition to affection in the individual who comes into contact with the ecstatic group, his initial mental state is often one of curiosity; that gives way to astonishment at the weird phenomena, to fascination by the rhythmic movements of those in ecstasy; then follows the relaxation of the inhibitions to emotion and action, the overshadowing of reason, and the paralysis of the will; and the individual becomes absorbed in the group.

(2b) *Collective, passive ecstasy*, in which the external agency is a group-leader. We recognize that in this type the influence of the group or crowd is operative, but the dominant influence is that of the leader. The main stimuli come from him, and are often deliberately applied by him. The expert leader develops a science of stimulation. We can find illustrations in almost every religious revival, for almost all revivals of the religious consciousness among a people are due to the work and

witness of individuals. Several interesting illustrations are to be found in John Wesley's *Journal*. Some tell of amazing scenes during his preaching, when scores fell before him as dead, and many cried out, wildly gesticulating.<sup>6</sup> It is Dimond who says: 'If we admit that the crowd is the primitive, biological herd, Wesley was an eminently skilful herd-leader.'<sup>7</sup> But such a herd-leader or group-leader has very definite methods of procedure. It is possible for a crowd to be so dull and unresponsive that he can achieve no results at all. He must use means such as music to get a 'psychological crowd.' The means used have often been described as 'affirmation, repetition, contagion.' The sermons of revivalist preachers usually consist of the affirmation of one or two truths strongly expressed, and their constant repetition. They choose hymns whose choruses are of value because they repeat a phrase over and over again. In this way the field of consciousness is narrowed for the listeners, and one thought may occupy the mind, and gain control of the motor-centres, apart from the will. Then the influence of the crowd does its work. In such revivals the personality of the leader is the dominant influence; he supplies the stimuli, and even if he can by no means control the results, yet he can, if he is a man of sanctified wisdom, be the mainspring of a movement which may do much good; if he is a charlatan, he can do incalculable harm.

(3) *Individual ecstasy*.—Even in ancient times we have examples of solitary ecstasies, as the Egyptian story of Wen Amon shows.<sup>8</sup> We know that the prophet Elisha became enthused by the influence of music (2 K 3<sup>15</sup>). And in 2 Co 12 we read of 'a man in Christ,' who was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words. Now it may be argued that such ecstasies are people of an abnormal variety, that they have an exceptionally high emotional sensibility, but they cannot be dismissed so summarily.

When, for example, we study the Sufis of Islam, and some of the great Christian mystics, we soon come to recognize that certain facts stand out clearly. The mystics' great claim is the immediacy of their awareness of God. But the mystical life has to be cultivated, and ecstasy is a stage on the journey which leads to the complete unification of the worshipper with God. The ecstatic experiences of the great mystics may not be of a demonstrative sort at all. They may be quiet and

<sup>1</sup> 1 S 9; cf. 1 S 19<sup>20-24</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Euripides, *Bacchae*.

<sup>3</sup> Hecker, *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, 117.

<sup>4</sup> Hecker, *op. cit.* 87 f.

<sup>5</sup> Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, 168.

<sup>6</sup> Wesley's *Journal*, ii. 203 f.

<sup>7</sup> *Psychology of the Methodist Revival*, 131.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. 'The Voyage of Wen Amon,' in Erman's *Literature of Ancient Egypt*.

contemplative, but none the less real; and they occur not usually at the beginning of the religious life, but at a developed stage of it.<sup>1</sup>

Such is a brief survey of various types of ecstasy. Let us try to arrive at an estimate of their religious value. Now we must first of all recognize that such ecstatic experience is often pleasant, and an intense craving for it has often been felt by a devotee.<sup>2</sup> And the state of ecstasy has often been sought as a pleasurable experience, as an end in itself, whose good is in its being experienced, and not in any results it may produce in the lives of the participants. And we bear in mind that the judgment has often been passed that collective ecstasy is a phenomenon which occurs at an early stage of religious development, and among primitive or uneducated people. We are in a position now to produce certain arguments in favour of that judgment.

(a) We have seen that the way is prepared for the experience of ecstasy by an individual within a group, when by the influence of rhythmic movements, of music, and other agents the inhibitions to emotion, action, and belief are relaxed in him, and one dominant idea takes possession of his mind, to the exclusion of all else. Naturally, in the case of an educated person, the rational and critical faculty will not so readily be lulled into quiescence, the field of consciousness will not so readily be narrowed, as in the case of an uneducated person. He will for a much longer time maintain his independence of mind against the influence of a crowd.

(b) We have quoted cases where a pre-condition to ecstasy was the possession on the part of the individual coming into contact with the group, of a fear or illusion which might be quite irrational, but had never been banished from the mind. And, of course, we cannot deny that such irrational fears and obsessions are commonest among uneducated people.

(c) It is a notable fact that the manifestations of ecstatic experience of a highly demonstrative sort which accompanied Wesley's preaching took place in two localities in particular, namely, around Bristol and Newcastle. And Wesley himself says that the population of these districts was among the most degraded and the most ignorant in all England.<sup>3</sup>

The question that confronts us now is this: 'Is there any religious value in such ecstatic experi-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. Rufus Jones in *Psychology and the Church*, 70.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *American Journal of Psychology*, xxviii. 584.

<sup>3</sup> *Psychology of the Methodist Revival*, 128.

ences? Or are they merely pleasant, and desired as an end in themselves? Often the value of the experience must depend upon the nature of the stimuli that have been used to induce it, and even more upon the mind-content of the experiencers. Where the former are dancing or drugs or music, and the experiencers are rude and uneducated, the ecstatic experience can be nothing but an emotional disturbance, which in its effects is definitely demoralizing. We must, however, make an exception in the case of that collective ecstasy which is induced in a group by a leader. The wise leader does not only try to play upon the emotions; he endeavours to convince the mind and to awaken the conscience. He affirms truths with persistency, so that in this case the stimuli to the ecstatic experience are different, are so different as to demand special treatment. The attention of an individual may be gained in the first instance by the fact that truths, more or less known to him, are presented in a new way and with a compelling power, so that he is made to think. Thought may afford cause for apprehension and disquiet; the energy of the leader's tones may make delay impossible, and so by the ministry of music and by the influence of the example of others in the group the individual is led on. But owing to the nature of the stimuli which have been used, ecstatic experience so induced may have a noetic quality, and so have real religious value. But that experience will be made fully fruitful in the life of the experient only when the will confirms the action which was taken during the period of emotional and mental stress, and an educative ministry follows. Therefore, we are led to conclude that, whereas a religious revival, generated by a shallow, scalp-hunting emotionalist, may mean only a temporary, and oftentimes pernicious, troubling of the waters of the religious life, yet one which is directed by a leader who is sincere and who knows Him whom he has believed, can issue in great good and spiritual gain for many.

When we pass to consider the religious value of ecstasy as it is found in the lives of the great mystics, *i.e.* individual ecstasy, we note certain facts to begin with:

(a) There is not here any influence from a group or from a group-leader.

(b) This type of ecstasy is a stage on the mystic path. Before he reaches it, the individual has had a long training in discipline, and has meditated much on the nature and the works of God. Thus the experience comes to those who are prepared for it, so that the dangers of that collective ecstasy

induced in a group of uneducated people are not here present.<sup>1</sup>

(c) We have already stressed the importance of the nature of the stimuli to ecstasy. Here these are such as have, in the lives of former experiencers, proved valid and trustworthy.

It is, therefore, with a degree of confidence that we go forward to the attempt to judge the religious value of individual ecstasy. Let us note here and now the individual mystic's own description of his experience. During the experience his awareness of God is so immediate, that, reflecting on it afterwards, he is moved to say: 'God and I were one.' The results for him are an unshakable assurance of God's being and an ineffable joy, which have, or may have, great value for the religious life.

But one big question at once emerges. Do such ecstatic experiences—which, in the case of the individual, are more often quiet and passive than demonstrative—give to the experiencer not only an assurance of God's being, but a revelation of His nature? That is a question which it is extremely difficult to answer. Only the mystic himself can supply the main evidence which must be examined and used in coming to a finding, and he is not always able to supply it. Pratt sets forth in this connexion quite a definite conclusion: 'Mysticism is in part emotional, in part ideational and cognitive. . . . Feeling there is, usually in great richness; but this feeling is invariably crystallized about some central idea, some intellectual certainty, which comes to the mystic as a revelation of truth, and which he usually has no difficulty in defining and communicating.'<sup>2</sup> But the final part of that conclusion at least is very questionable. St. Teresa always protested against being asked to describe such experiences: "I would not, and I could not, tell all," she would say, "One's innermost thoughts cannot be translated into earthly words without instantly losing their deep and heavenly meaning."<sup>3</sup> And St. John of the Cross and the Sadhu Sundar Singh express themselves to the same effect.<sup>4</sup> In the case of many of the great mystics their ecstatic or mystical experiences are not communicable, and they have no direct social value. The real value of them is for the experiencer alone. The influence he exerts upon the community is not that of illuminating words, but the witness of a radiant countenance, and

of a joyfully peaceful life, which proclaim the reality of the spiritual experiences. The experiencers become energized by the Spirit of God. But the question must now be asked: What place do such ecstatic or mystical experiences occupy in the lives of the great mystics? At once we come face to face with a great distinction. On the one hand, there are those who have travelled the mystic way, who are 'in Christ,' and who deliberately seek ecstatic experience as an end in itself. They abstract themselves from the world of men, with all its needs, and, remaining at the shrine, they cultivate their souls. Theirs is a self-centred discipline, which is open to condemnation; it is utterly regardless of the missionary aspect of religion. But on the other hand, there are those who seek ecstatic experience, in order that they may arrive at a new appreciation of spiritual truths, and communicate the result to their fellow-men. But do not those who, by searching, try to find out God, dispense with the Incarnation, and forget that their primary duty as Christians is to proclaim the riches of God in Jesus Christ? Some may answer that they do not. So far from neglecting the revelation which is in Jesus Christ, they live by it; and their sole purpose in seeking ecstatic experience is the hope that thereby some of the great truths taught by Jesus Christ may come home to them with compelling power, so that they shall subsequently be able to proclaim them to men with deeper insight into their meaning, and with greater authority.<sup>5</sup>

But even if pure and worthy motives can be put forward for seeking ecstatic experience, nevertheless we must remember that some of the great mystics warned their disciples against such a practice. St. Paul was compelled to reprove the Corinthian Church because of the strife and contention which had been aroused in it by the unseemly conduct of those who claimed that they had had ecstatic experiences, and babbled incoherently in an attempt to communicate what they had seen to others.<sup>6</sup> And we have sufficient evidence to warrant us in believing that St. Paul rejoiced much more to know the power of Christ in the everyday experiences of life than to be received up in spirit into the third heaven, and to hear unspeakable words which it is not possible for a man to utter.<sup>7</sup> And the Sadhu Sundar Singh, when asked if he would recommend the ordinary Christian to try to attain to ecstatic

<sup>1</sup> Jones, *Spiritual Energies*, 143.

<sup>2</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, 348.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Francis Younghusband, *Modern Mystics*, 163.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. L. W. Grensted, *Psychology and God*, 203, and Streeter and Appasamy, *The Sadhu*, 140 f.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, *Religious Thought in Islam*, 118.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Co 14<sup>4, 19, 23, 24</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Co 12<sup>1-7</sup>; cf. Gal 2<sup>20</sup>.



experiences, said: 'I never try to go into ecstasy; nor do I advise other people to try. It is a gift to be accepted, but not to be sought. Prayer is for every man, and so is meditation. If it is God's will that he go further, God will lead him that way.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Streeter and Appasamy, *The Sadhu*, 109, 150.

Many may not be led further of God, but they can, by God's grace, become men in Christ; they may not, in the awful hush of a visionary hour, come into the presence of the *mysterium tremendum*, but they can know the power of God in the experiences of common day.

## Literature.

### THE KINGDOM, THE SON OF MAN, AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.

RUDOLF OTTO'S *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn* (1934) has already influenced deeply some of our New Testament scholars, and now that it has been translated into English under the title, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (Lutterworth Press; 15s. net), by Floyd V. Filson and Professor Bertram Lee Woolf, it may safely be prophesied that its repercussions will be even more far-reaching.

The first part of Book I. traces the antecedents of the idea of the kingdom of God as far back as the prehistoric period of Aryan religion; the second part discusses the kingdom as Jesus preached it; and the third compares the original element in His teaching with the message and person of John the Baptist. Jesus, Otto maintains, first worked as a disciple of the Baptist, but later abandoned Baptism and proclaimed a kingdom which was actually breaking in upon the world in Himself and His mighty works. The fourth section supplies the necessary detailed examination of sayings and parables, and, in particular, contains a most valuable exposition of such key passages as Mt 12<sup>25-9</sup> 11<sup>12</sup>, Mk 4<sup>26-9</sup>, and Lk 17<sup>20f.</sup>

In Book II. the discussion is extended to the idea of the Son of Man in relation to the kingdom, and includes a careful study of the doctrine of the Son of Man in the Book of Enoch, of the Messianic utterances of Jesus, and of those sayings of His which introduce the thought of suffering and death. There is a particularly interesting note on the meaning of *λύτρον* which is sure to arouse interest, and perhaps controversy. Book III. treats the question of Christ's Last Supper as the consecration of the disciples for entrance into the kingdom of God; and Book IV. discusses the Kingdom and the Charisma, and seeks to present Jesus as a 'Charismatic Person.' It is in this last section that the argument of the book is most open to question, but it contains valuable sections on such themes as

Healing and Exorcism, Charismatic Preaching, the Charisma of Prophecy, and Charismatic Apparition as illustrated by Christ's Walking on the Sea. The point for doubt is whether in this section of the work an adequate Christology is found, which is capable of supporting the claims made in Books I.-III. Since this suggestive volume is sure to be widely read and debated, it is perhaps desirable to add that it rests on a very doubtful foundation in respect of the literary criticism of the Gospels. It is greatly to be regretted that Otto, whose distinctive work lay in the fields of Comparative Religion, should have accepted the scholarly, but unsatisfactory views of W. Bussmann, instead of the generally received Two Document Hypothesis. Happily, this disability does not seriously mar the work of exposition or undermine the main contentions of the book. It leads, however, to a one-sided treatment of the narratives of the Last Supper in Book III.

There can be no doubt that Otto's volume is one of the big books of the decade, since it leads the reader to the central questions of New Testament Theology. In view of the lamented author's comparatively recent death, it comes to us as a kind of legacy, different as it is in many respects from his well-known earlier work, 'The Idea of the Holy.' Whether the later work will exert the same influence upon contemporary thought, we cannot tell; but it certainly has the same atmosphere of fascination and sets the mind racing in the most fruitful directions.

### THE QUR'ĀN.

The Rev. Richard Bell, B.D., D.D., has made a notable contribution to Islamic studies in *The Qur'ān, Translated with a Critical Re-arrangement of the Surahs*, Vol. I. (T. & T. Clark; 12s. 6d. net). This volume contains a translation of the first twenty-four surahs of the Qur'ān, but it is much more than a mere translation. Dr. Bell works