

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

OUR series 'After Fifty Years,' we may be permitted to remark, shows quite clearly that, within the limited field of study with which it is concerned, while undoubted progress has been made, that progress has consisted to no inconsiderable extent in the discovery and frank acknowledgment of the fact that the problems are more complicated than half a century ago they were thought to be.

Within a much wider area of thought than that series contemplates the same thing has happened. Men have become chary of speaking of 'assured results.' Since Einstein, does even the Multiplication Table stand unscatheable?

Those remarks are suggested by one of the interesting articles which Mr. Bernard Lord MANNING has collected and published as *Essays in Orthodox Dissent* (Independent Press; 5s. net). They were 'written for many divers sorts of people on many different sorts of occasions'; and were well worth this more permanent form. The essay we have in view is the one entitled 'The Witness of History to the Power of Christ.'

Mr. MANNING begins by warning of the danger of an appeal to history of the kind that used to be so common and was so unconvincing. 'All history shows,' 'the verdict of history is'—something that on quite insufficient grounds the speaker is anxious to demonstrate. How often we have all heard it, and been sometimes amazed, sometimes amused,

most frequently irritated. Such speakers put history into the witness-box and ask it leading questions. Mr. MANNING has no difficulty in showing that on many questions very different answers could be extorted from the badgered witness 'history' by a cross-examining counsel whose aim was contrary.

What our author is concerned to warn us against is the facile optimistic view of history as fitted to prove our own pet theories or too easily justify the ways of God. We have to recognize that it is not historically true that everything that happened has been for the best, or that it is always the case that 'Truth like a torch the more 'tis shaken, shines.' History bears witness to the defeats of Christianity, as well as its triumphs.

If we agree with that, and disagreement is unthinkable, what follows? Does history confront us with the same kind of problem about God as a review of Nature which sometimes seems to be friendly to man, sometimes hostile, and often indifferent? Does history bear any clear witness to the power of Christ?

Of course it does. Like Lord Acton Mr. MANNING would say that history is the surest evidence of religion in general, a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Only we must learn to understand and not look to history for what it cannot give, and beware of finding in specific happenings which we only imperfectly understand evidence of some pet theory.

A study of history induces a humility which is the prerequisite of expressing judgments on contemporary people and contemporary movements. 'It provides a standard of values and a sense of proportion.' 'To every generation its own problems are unprecedented and its own novelties new. But, if you have listened to Lucretius, you do not jump out of your skin when Sir Arthur Keith speaks out.' If this reduces the proportions of the critics of Christianity, admittedly it reduces those of contemporary Christianity also. Yet 'history deals more unkindly with the fads of our contemporaries than with the historic forces against which they hurl themselves.'

The historian cannot but perceive the magnitude and importance of Christian civilization. He may like or dislike it but he cannot ignore it. It is fashionable to criticise and censure it. The exotic, the remote are praised in contrast. But Mr. MANNING is convinced that a full review of Christian civilization with all its admitted blots and those exotic paradises far away with all their admitted merits will clearly demonstrate that in reality there is no worth-while comparison between the two, but much more glaring contrast. Communism may be better than Capitalism—Mr. MANNING has an open mind on the subject, but he is sure that if Communism comes to a Christian civilization it will make the non-Christian Russian experiment 'look silly.'

History shows us Western Europe and America as one of the greatest human attempts at living in society; when all deductions are made, the most successful, the most human, the most kindly yet known. 'And history shows us the power of Christ as one of the most characteristic, most potent, most essential features of this society.' It is Christianity that has begotten and fostered whatever is best and kindest in Western civilization. It is worked inextricably into its very fabric.

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In the Spring number of the Christian quarterly, *Religion in Life* (published by the

Abingdon Press, New York), there is an article by Emil BRUNNER on 'The Present-Day Task of Theology.' It bears the marks of being an address delivered by him at Princeton in the course of his recent sojourn there as a visiting professor. It should be at once interesting and useful to see what one of the most distinguished of contemporary theologians has to say about his own professional task.

He begins by saying that the task of theology is essentially the same in all ages. The reason being that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ once for all. As there is but one God, so there is also but one Mediator between God and man, Himself man, Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all. And there is none other salvation.

This does not mean that God is not a living God who works in our time as well as when He became flesh in Jesus Christ. But what He does in our time is not the same as what He did then. 'What He does since the day of Pentecost is that through His Holy Spirit He brings men to this Cross, to this His own Son, as to the place where the fountain of life has been once for all opened, so that every one who drinks of it is filled with that new life which is in kind eternal life.'

Here is sound evangelical doctrine, with the Barthian emphasis (if the epithet may be allowed) on the uniqueness and finality of the Christian religion. In Jesus Christ God speaks to us in the final way. He is the Word of God. And in this phrase there is embedded a theology, which is an intellectual elaboration of the knowledge of God and His Word which is inherent in Christian faith.

Why should we need this intellectual elaboration? Because theology has a necessary service to render to the Church and to humanity. In the first place, the Church has to keep watch that the Word of God in Jesus Christ be not falsified, that indeed it be better understood. It took much theological work to save the Christian message from the Arians and the Pelagians in the ancient Church, and to bring

about that vindication of its truth which we call the Reformation. In the second place, if there were no theology the educated part of a given society would probably never be reached by the truth of the Christian gospel. BRUNNER confesses that he himself would probably never have become a Christian without the help of theological thought both on the part of others and on his own part. He knows from experience that theology is a means of evangelism.

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But if theology, as stated at the outset, has essentially the same task in all ages, it has to do its work in every age anew. The Word of God is not a given system of doctrines, in which case the work of theology could be done at a certain time once and for all. The Word of God is God in His self-revelation in Jesus Christ. And, as the apostles knew and show, there is a mystery here which escapes anything like a final expression. Luther knew it too, and that is why he attacked the Catholic doctrine of the infallible dogma and the infallible Church.

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Not only is no theology final, and the limitations of every age call for the corrections of the next, but its task of teaching how to preach necessitates that the theologian should know his time and adapt his formulas accordingly. And the characteristics of the modern world are secularism, which is virtually atheism, and paganism, which is the divinization of the world and of man. Even the Christian Church takes an unconvincing stand for the gospel truth.

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BRUNNER sees two main features akin to secularism and paganism in which the predicament of the Church presents itself. On the one hand, the Church's message is secularized in a rationalist or naturalist theology: it is not the gospel of God's grace in Christ that many teach and preach but some philosophical or mystical or moralistic substitute for it. On the other hand, the Church's profession is belied by its example: professing Christians do not win personal confidence by their way of living. Before the Church can convert the world she must herself be converted.

BRUNNER appears to us to take a somewhat dark view of the state both of the world and of the Church, but here are his conclusions: (1) Theology has to make a fresh endeavour to interpret for our time what the Word of God in Jesus Christ means. (2) Theology must be in its own character an evangelizing agency, breaking down the barrier between scientific knowledge and Christian doctrine. (3) Theology must be capable of awakening a missionary evangelistic zeal in the ministers of the Word in showing them that Christian faith is primarily concerned not with doctrines but with the living Christ, who died for our sins and is risen for our sanctification. (4) Theology should lead to a real prayer life, for prayer is faith in action.

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If it were not for the critical international situation we should all be deeply interested in Palestine and its future, in the question of a National Home for the Jews and all the questions that gather round this. And even in spite of the international situation many will find room in their minds for interest in a question like *What Are the Jews?* This is the title of a book on the significance and position of the Jews in the modern world. It is written by a Jewish Rabbi, Israel I. MATTUCK, A.M., D.H.L., and published by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton at 5s. net. One cannot but admire two things about this book: its high intellectual quality, and its amazing tranquillity. Dealing with matters that rouse hot passion and hot words the author is always calm, tolerant, and generous.

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The book states the non-Zionist or anti-Zionist view of the history and future of the Jews. But in order to present his anti-Zionist case with success the author has to consider the past of the Jew and his present position and claims. What are the Jews? Are they a race? Are they a nation? Are they a religion? There are 15,000,000 or 16,000,000 of them in the world. Russia has about 3,000,000; Poland the same number; the United States has four and a half millions, the largest of any nation; and in the British Isles there are about 300,000. The Jews have been Europeans for twenty centuries. They are divided nationally. There are

French Jews, German Jews, Russian Jews. They are divided religiously. Liberal Judaism has departed far from Orthodox Judaism. It rejects the hope of a personal Messiah and the traditional Jewish attitude to the Bible. But in spite of these divisions the Jews are a unity. What is it ?

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Are they a *Race* ? The answer is 'no.' Certainly not biologically. 'There are no racial traits that belong to the Jews universally. . . .' The Jews of Abyssinia are black ; in China they are yellow ; in India they are brown. The Jews in Arabia and Egypt are like the Arabs. Biologically, the Jews approximate everywhere to the non-Jewish people among whom they live. And the psychological differences are as great as the biological. In their general outlook upon life, in their mode of thinking, the native Jews of India differ from the native Jews of England as much almost as the other Indians differ from other Englishmen. Even the physical appearance, which is regarded as 'Jewish,' is characteristic of the Jews of Eastern Europe and came from them as they migrated westward. We must not be deceived by such terms as 'Semitic' and 'Aryan' which, as has often been shown, are names not of races but of languages. Yet there is a Jewish unity. What is it ?

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Are they a *Nation* ? The answer is 'no.' They were once a nation in Biblical times. But since A.D. 70 they have ceased to be a nation—indeed since 538 B.C. Since that date they have never been a political unit. Dispersion has been their permanent condition. And they have come to belong wholly to the nationality in which they have found their resting-place. The British Jew is as British as any other Briton. The German Jew has been loyal to Germany. He has regarded himself as a German and loved Germany. It is part of his purgatory that he has been driven out of the land and home he loves. For twenty centuries the Jews have not been a nation. And therefore Jewish Nationalism, or Zionism, is a purely modern development.

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Dr. MATTUCK is a convinced opponent of Jewish Nationalism. But he states the case for Zionism

and the demand for a 'National Home for the Jews' in Palestine fairly. The burden on the Jews, so the argument runs, is that everywhere they are a minority. Politically they are subject to the will of a majority that is not always friendly. Spiritually they suffer under the pressure of an environment dominated by non-Jewish influences which prevent them from expressing their inner life. Palestine suited specially those who felt the 'spiritual' impulse to Jewish nationalism. There they might express themselves and develop a purely Jewish 'culture.' Only in a national homeland of their own can the Jews be spiritually effective and culturally creative.

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Dr. MATTUCK's answer is this. Jewish nationalism, which is modern nationalism talking Hebrew, is not the same as the historic unity of the Jews. That is purely religious. Except for a short period there never has been a Jewish nation. There is no such thing as a Jewish 'culture.' What in the arts is described as 'Jewish' is simply Russian or Polish. There is no Jewish sculpture or painting. There is not even any Jewish music. So called Jewish melodies turn out on investigation to be folk-songs of the countries in which the Jews live. The melody used by the Zionists for their 'National' Anthem is a Slavic folk-song.

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As to a National Home in which to develop the peculiar contribution of the Jew, Dr. MATTUCK points out a decisive fact. There are fifteen or sixteen million Jews in the world. Palestine can absorb at the most one million. In the fifteen or sixteen years since the Mandate about 300,000 Jews have settled in Palestine. This is a small number in comparison with the number that needs a refuge. The 'return of the Jews to Palestine' is a fiction. Actually, one-quarter of one per cent. have gone there. Of Jews in Germany only a mere fraction have gone to Palestine. How can Palestine be regarded as a 'Land of Refuge' for the Jew and a 'National Home' when such a minute fragment could alone be received there ?

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It would be much better for the Jews in Palestine, for their economic welfare, if the idea of the National

Home were dropped. A Palestine under England's protection and control would have been a safe place for Jews without a Jewish *national* homeland, much safer than with nationalist politics. The Arab's opposition to Jewish immigration has been caused by political fears. If the fears had not been roused, a large difficulty in the way of immigration would have been avoided. There is good ground for believing that, if the coming of Jews to Palestine were freed from political significance and from the declared Zionist political nationalism, more Jews could settle in the land.

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What, then, of the future of the Jew? The key to that lies in the fact that the significance of the Jew lies in his religion. That is what gives him distinctiveness. That is what explains his unity and his endurance. The Jews are a *people of religion*. They are a people, a group, a community, but the essence of their collective existence is to be found in their religion. A 'people of religion' means a group with its corporate feeling rooted in religion and its collective life directed to religious ends. It means, too, that religion is the nexus between it and its individual members. This is the real mission of the Jews, to witness by their collective existence to the faith of their fathers and their own faith.

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You ask, why do not the Jews send out missionaries, if their witness is religious? The answer is that in the Jewish conception their mission is a

collective one, attaching to the Jewish people as a whole. Individual Jews contribute to it by their lives which show the power of the Jewish religion. That means that all Jews are missionaries. The mission does not require that individual Jews should devote themselves separately to missionary activity, aiming to convert non-Jews to Judaism. That belongs to the collective life of the Jews. Not upon Jews individually, but upon the Jews collectively, lies primarily the task of making the Jews' contribution to the religious life of humanity. And this means that the mission of the Jew is to humanity not to individuals, to influence the religious life and spiritual development of mankind.

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What, then, is the future of the Jews? Not certainly in a National Home in Palestine. Their future lies in two things—separation and distinctiveness in religion, assimilation in everything else. They will always be a dispersion. And in all matters except one they will identify themselves with the nations among whom they live. In one matter they will always be separate. They are a people of religion who, because of their history and circumstances, are conducting an experiment in spiritual power. Their future history will solve the question whether a people can live by religion. That is their first value to the world. The second lies in their distinctive religious ideas, which, because they are distinctive, would bring enrichment to the spiritual life of humanity. This is their future and their supreme witness.

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