

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

It is only a few months since Canon SIMPSON prophesied a return to the doctrine of the Atonement. One book on the Atonement does not fulfil the prophecy, as one swallow does not make a summer. But the return of a single swallow tells us that summer will come again. And a single book, written by a Cambridge doctor of medicine, and written to offer the world a new theory of the Atonement, proves that the doctrine of the Atonement is not one of the things which a progressive age has forever passed away from.

It is true that of the word 'Atonement' Dr. Douglas WHITE is a little shy. He does not use it in his title. His title is *Forgiveness and Suffering* (Cambridge Press; 3s. net). And he uses it in his book only when he cannot help it. More than that, his very purpose is to make as little as possible of what is understood by 'Atonement.' Still, the book contains a new theory of the Atonement. Dr. Douglas WHITE cannot get away from it. And just in the degree in which he is successful in doing without it is the book which he has written unsuccessful.

It is a modern book. All the ancient theories of the Atonement are described in it and found wanting. The theory which Dr. WHITE advocates is later than Origen's theory of a deal with the Devil, and later than Anselm's theory of satisfac-

tion to the offended honour of a mediæval baron God; it is later than the theory of Grotius, that Divine justice must be vindicated; and it is later than the scheme of Luther (which Dr. WHITE is amazed at the more, the more difficult he finds the answer to it), that Christ offers Himself simply as the sinner's substitute. More than all that, it is later than McLeod CAMPBELL'S, even as modified by Dr. R. C. MOBERLY, and restated by his son, Mr. W. H. MOBERLY—the theory that what Christ offered was a vicarious penitence. Dr. Douglas WHITE believes that he has arrived at a wholly new conception of the Atonement. He offers his theory in the belief that it has never been offered before.

Now in making an attempt to express the theory in a few words, we may begin with the statement, firmly made, that sin creates antagonism, not only in man to God but also in God to man. The common way of expressing it is that God has to be reconciled to man as well as man to God. Dr. WHITE prefers to speak of the removal of antagonism. For that word 'antagonism' has, so far, not been appropriated by theology. It belongs to one school no more than to another. It is, moreover, better than such a word as hatred, because hatred is difficult for the modern mind to apply to God. The modern mind has taken refuge in the saying that 'God hates the sin but loves the

sinner'—than which, says Dr. WHITE, 'there is no more misleading catchword.' Sin does not exist apart from the sinner. Then again hatred is open to the retort, 'Does God love and hate the same person at the same time?' So he prefers antagonism. And he says that, just as a father may love his son, and love him always, yet be antagonistic to him because of a lie that he has told, so is it with God. He loves us all the time, but He is antagonistic to us because we have sinned against Him.

How, then, is the antagonism of God to be removed? Dr. WHITE's answer is, By repentance. If we can be induced to repent of our sin, he says, God will forgive it. And of course, when God forgives, He forgives freely and fully. There is an end of God's antagonism to the sinner.

Is there anything new in that? Not much. What is new in Dr. WHITE's theory is found when he proceeds to tell us the means which God has devised for leading us to repentance.

The means which God has devised is to send His Son into the world to suffer and to die. Is it then the sight of the sufferings of Christ that leads us to repentance? Yes, it is that. But what is the sight of the sufferings of Christ? It is the sight of the sufferings of God.

Here is the originality of Dr. WHITE. He holds that in each sin of which the sinner is guilty God suffers. It is this that gives value to forgiveness. The father's pardon of his returning prodigal has value because it represents love which has lived through pain. 'The worth of forgiveness is measured exactly by the intensity of the suffering inflicted by the offender. That is the cost of forgiveness. And in the nature of the case, it is a cost borne by the injured person, and not by the wrongdoer.'

When, therefore, we see Christ upon the Cross, we see what God is passing through at all times on

account of sin. And we repent. The sight of this sorrow—is there any sorrow like it?—leads us to repentance. And the moment that we repent we obtain forgiveness. The act of forgiveness is as great a joy to God as it is to us. But the Cross tells us what it has cost Him to forgive.

Now this conception of the cost of forgiveness is a great conception. And it is as true as it is great. Dr. WHITE guards himself against anthropomorphism on the one hand and patripassianism on the other. He need not fear. To the truth of it the conscience responds at once. The only question that remains is whether this is all. In the Cross of Christ there is a demonstration of the pain which God feels on account of sin. Is there anything more in the Cross of Christ than that?

We have used the word 'demonstration.' Do not let us use it unjustly. There is no suggestion of theatrical display in this theory. The death of Christ was a real death as the life of Christ was a real life. But the possibility of using such a word suggests the doubt whether a demonstration or an exhibition of what it costs God to forgive is enough to warrant the Word made flesh; and, in particular, whether it is enough to satisfy the Redeemer's own explanation of His presence on earth, that 'the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.'

Dr. WHITE has not altogether forgotten the explanation. He offers an interpretation of that text. Hitherto, he says, it has been understood that a ransom must be paid to somebody. The Patristic theology said it had to be paid to the devil; the Mediæval and Reformation theology said it had to be paid to God. Both conclusions 'sat on the back of an overworked metaphor.' The ransom had not to be paid to any one. 'The forgiving, suffering love of a wife may redeem her husband, or the husband's his wife; the cost of reclaiming the one falls on the other; yet who shall say to whom the price is paid? Every noble

action is a thing of cost ; but by "cost" we only mean the expenditure of spiritual energy towards a noble purpose. And the cost of our forgiveness is that suffering within the heart of God which alone made it possible.

That is scarcely sufficient. If that is all, the word was ill-chosen. But let it pass. Dr. WHITE does not claim to satisfy all that is said about the death of Christ in the New Testament. In particular he does not claim to satisfy all that is said by St. Paul. There is a more serious matter than that. From first to last Dr. WHITE has made no reference whatever to that great group of ideas which occupy so much of the New Testament, so much of the Gospels and the Epistles alike, and which was so dominant in the mind of our Lord as to lead Him to use the title 'Son of Man' as especially interpretative of His mission on earth. He makes no reference, we say, to the unity of the human race, or to the place which Christ has taken within it. In Gospels and Epistles alike the Cross is not a demonstration *to* men of God's suffering for sin; it is an experience of that suffering *among* men. The vision of the Cross may lead to repentance ; but the cry on the Cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' is more than a demonstration of the cost of forgiveness.

'In my Father's house are many mansions' (Jn 14²). What is the house? Where are the mansions? Professor H. B. SWETE has given his answer. It is the most obvious, and perhaps the most acceptable, of all.

Professor SWETE has written an exposition of *The Last Discourse and Prayer of our Lord* (Macmillan; 2s. 6d. net). There are many expositions in English, and some of them are by masters in the art. But in Professor SWETE'S exposition there is a nicety of scholarship which marks it out from the rest.

In the verse immediately following that one

which we are to look at, there is a fine grammatical touch, most difficult to turn into English. Dr. SWETE translates, 'And if I should go and make ready a place for you.' There is no suggestion of a doubt in the 'if.' It is used rather than 'when' to avoid the note of time. For time is no matter at the moment.

But what is the house? The Temple, says Professor SWETE, affords the figure. The first saying of His childhood was about His Father's House. So also was the first saying of His ministry in Jerusalem. The disciples could not miss the allusion, though they might not know the meaning.

And the mansions? 'The Father's earthly house was not merely a sanctuary with its surrounding courts for worshippers; attached to it were chambers, some for the storing of things necessary for Divine service, some for the convenience of the priests or of the Sanhedrin.' The disciples were acquainted with these chambers. He would have them think of the Father's heavenly house, not as a sanctuary where none could dwell but the Divine Majesty, rather as a vast palace which could give shelter and rest to as many as the Lord willed. 'In its chambers, in close proximity to the Presence-Chamber of God, many, when their time for the great journey has come, will find rest and refreshment.'

Take another note. The note on 'the Way' carries us further. 'I am the way' (Jn 14⁶). 'You know the Way, since you know Me. I that speak, I who have been with you these three years, who am with you here and now, am myself the Way to the Father, and the only Way.'

The conception, Dr. SWETE admits, is not easy. We can think with less effort, he says, of our Lord as the Guide or the Example of life. The Way is more than Guide or Example. It is the primary condition of approach. It is that without which Guide and Example would avail little.

The word was not new. A way of God is found in the Old Testament. 'The meek,' says the Psalmist, 'will he teach his way'; 'teach me thy way,' he or another psalmist prays. The Way of God is the 'way of righteousness,' the 'way of life'; the opposite of man's own way, which is that 'of death.' All this was familiar to Israel before the Incarnation. But no prophet, no righteous man in Israel had dared to say, 'I am the way; in me all God's purpose is revealed, and all His will is fulfilled. Not only have I in all things followed the Way of God; I am myself that Way; in me it finds perfect expression, and in me alone.'

'But there is more than this in our Lord's claim to be the Way. The Way of God is also in Him the Way to God. Across the infinite gulf which parts the human from the Divine, the creature from the Creator, the sinner from the Holy One, Jesus has thrown a permanent Way in His own Incarnate Life and Death. By that Way He Himself passed into the Presence of God; by the same will pass all who come to God through Him. He goes to the Father in right of His Sonship, His sinless obedience, His fulfilment of all righteousness; His disciples go in virtue of their union with Him; He is their way, as He was His own.'

There is no man in our time who has done more for 'progressive orthodoxy' than Theodore HAERING, Professor of Theology in the University of Tübingen; and an accurate and intelligible translation of his great dogmatic work *The Christian Faith* is welcome (Hodder & Stoughton; 2 vols., 21s. net). The translation has been made from the second revised and enlarged German edition of 1912. The translators are the Rev. John DICKIE, M.A., Professor of Systematic Theology in Knox College, Dunedin, and the Rev. George FERRIES, D.D., author of *The Growth of Christian Faith*.

The doctrine of the Devil is now regarded as

outside the range of effective apologetic or even of any reliable system of dogmatic. Professor HAERING discusses it, but he discusses it briefly and even in an 'addendum.' Yet his discussion of a personal Devil is as good an example of his general manner as will be found, and at the same time it drives us to the conclusion that we may have dismissed the doctrine too precipitately.

The arguments against the idea of a Devil have never been formulated with precision. There is room for doubt if arguments have had much to do with its discredit. As with the doctrine of Angels generally, so with that of the Devil in particular, a little clumsy ridicule seems to have been sufficient. For the doctrine of the Devil left the safe ground of Scripture and loaded itself with material elements, which a very moderate knowledge of actual fact was able to turn into self-contradiction. Nevertheless there are arguments.

In the first place it is asserted that intelligence and evil cannot go together without destroying one another; and the very idea of an embodiment of evil is self-contradictory. Next, the notion of a Devil as the author of sin is attributed to the fact that our own sin is often such a surprise to us. It is easy to suggest that it came from without as the work of a malicious foe. Especially will this explanation be given by the lower religions, from which the whole idea of a Devil has probably come. In the third place it is pointed out that it is highly dangerous to believe in a Devil. It either furnishes an excuse for indolent self-justification, or it is the occasion of the most harrowing self-torture. Lastly, it is asserted that the belief in a Devil is untrue because it is useless. It makes no difference to the Christian judgment on sin; it is simply an encumbrance in theology.

Are these objections to the existence of the Devil unanswerable? Professor HAERING says they are not. He answers every one of them. He answers the first objection by saying that actual experience testifies both to the union of

much intelligence with great maliciousness, and also to sin's mastery of the art of embodying itself in visible form. He answers the second by showing that it has no foundation in fact. It has not been proved, and it cannot be proved, that the Devil is the product either of surprise or of the lower religions. The third objection he answers by pointing to the words of Eph 6¹¹, 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' Is there any excuse for indolence there? Is there any occasion for self-torture? Always it is necessary to see to it that our doctrine of the Devil is Scripture doctrine. He answers the last objection by saying that a doctrine cannot be called useless which was used by our Lord Jesus Christ.

And thus Professor HAERING arrives at the most significant matter in the whole discussion. Jesus Christ had a doctrine of the Devil. More frequently and more pointedly than any New Testament writer, He spoke of the Devil as a person and of the deeds he did. How are His words to be understood?

Is it possible to understand them figuratively? It is possible to understand some of them so. In Mt 13³⁹ Jesus says that the enemy that sowed the tares is the Devil. Dr. HAERING thinks it is possible to take the Devil figuratively there. But in other places it is not possible. It is not possible, he says, to take the Devil figuratively in the passage about the unforgivable sin. And it is not possible to take the word figuratively when Christ says (Lk 10¹⁸), 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.'

Can we say then that in speaking of the Devil in this way Jesus was accommodating Himself to ideas that were prevalent around Him? 'Certainly not,' says Professor HAERING. 'Accommodation at this point would be incompatible with His truthfulness as well as with His wisdom as a teacher.'

So we come to the *decisive* question. May we assume that His knowledge was limited? Now

Dr. HAERING refuses 'for reasons of faith' to attribute to Jesus perfect knowledge of everything. On secular things, as the sun and the earth, He shared the ideas of His people and His time. He will not say that the words of Jesus bind us regarding the facts of history, as the authorship of the 110th Psalm. Less still does he feel bound by what He said about His Return in the course of the generation then alive. But the existence of the Devil seems to him to belong to a different class.

For there are circles in the consciousness of Jesus, and some circles are closer to the centre than others. In the first place, things religious were closer to His consciousness than things secular. But even among things religious He had a nearer experience of some than of others. Of the Father He had an experience that was direct, and all that He says is acceptable and authoritative. Now the Evil One could not be the object of His personal religious experience. Whereupon Dr. HAERING concludes that, even though it belongs to the circle of things religious, the doctrine of a personal Devil is not forced upon us by the words of our Lord. If we believe it we must see that we have reasons for believing it. If we deny it we are not disloyal to His teaching or authority.

Professor HAERING warns those who 'in no spirit of levity dispense with this doctrine.' He warns them to make sure that their doctrine of sin does not suffer by the dispensation. And he points out that they must reckon with the fact, not only that Jesus speaks frequently of the Devil, but also that His words 'ring out in their purity through the musty sultry atmosphere of contemporary superstition.'

And he warns those who accept the doctrine not to count it a part of saving faith in the strictest sense. It is not to be placed, for example, beside the sinlessness of Jesus. The sinlessness of Jesus is a fact of history as well as an element in His redemption; the doctrine of the Devil is outside both His personality and His work.

Then Dr. HAERING puts into words the doctrine of the Devil which it is evident he holds himself. He says: 'The Kingdom of human sin is integrally connected with evil found outside of man, which comes to a climax in a personal evil will. As regards his nature, he is the perfect embodiment of what is the inmost *nature* of sin generally—lack of religion, enmity to God, because "wishing to be God" of the creation: "If there were a God I myself would desire to be such, and therefore I hate God" (Nietzsche). Compare the way in which the incarnation of the spirit opposed to Christ in a person is described in 2 Thes. 2, while in 1 John denial of the unique relation of the Son to the Father constitutes the character of the Antichrist or Antichrists. In ordinary speech we naturally give the name of devilish to deliberate opposition to the good and consummate pleasure in what is evil, in all its principal manifestations, the most thoroughgoing of which is just such opposition to God. The *work* of this evil being consists in temptation, that is in deliberate and intentional giving of offence. Inasmuch as temptation always consists in offering counterfeit good, while moreover evil itself in the last resort as compared with good is mere pretence and falsehood, the evil one is called the Liar; and because the counterfeit, or lie as such, is the opposite of life, is fatal to life and is death, he is called the murderer of men.'

Turning from HAERING to look into a book by an Englishman, we came upon a discussion of the same subject. The author is the Rev. Thomas J. HARDY, M.A. The book is a plea for the recognition of *The Religious Instinct* (that is its title as a universal attribute of man, and then for the things which the religious instinct demands (Longmans; 5s. net).

Now in order that we may grant the demands of the religious instinct, they must be in harmony with that stage of evolutionary progress which we have reached. There was a time when the

religious instinct demanded human sacrifice. The conscience now refuses that demand. But the conscience, says Mr. HARDY, agrees with the religious instinct in still demanding a Devil.

The religious instinct demands a Devil to-day more than ever. For two reasons. First, because 'the tendency of our conceptions is to become more and more "personal."' And, secondly, because 'such facts as the solidarity of the race and the reality of free response are prominently before us.' And there are other reasons than these.

There is the potent reason that Jesus took the Devil for granted. For Mr. HARDY is as deeply impressed with that fact as is Professor HAERING. 'The conception is interwoven with the Lord's Prayer, with the Temptation, with the works of healing, the parables, the discourses, the incidental expressions of Christ's mind.'

And there is the demand of the religious instinct. The Catholic instinct demands the aid of saints. Mr. HARDY counts it a sound instinct. But if the aid of the good is real, the aid of the evil must be real also. 'Let us suppose that at death a man's spirit goes forth into the wider activities of a sphere unfettered by bodily conditions, but is still moving self-centred, and bent on frustrating the Love of God, what is to hinder this spirit from drawing near, a restless, spiteful, malignant influence, tempting and perhaps ruining the souls that still have their portion in this life?'

And then—for Mr. HARDY does not suggest that the Devil may be the disembodied spirit of a bad man—then there is the further possibility that the human race is but a part of a vast spiritual organism, the struggle and destiny of which is hidden from the eye of sense. And if that also is so, 'then surely the belief in the personal agency of both good and evil is reasonable and almost inevitable.'