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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

Mr. F. R. Barry, M.A., D.S.O., Principal of the Ordination Test School, Knutsford, has written a remarkable little book on the Epistle to the Ephesians—*St. Paul and Social Psychology* (Milford; 4s. net). It is not a commentary in the narrow sense or an exposition in the homiletic sense. He calls it an 'Introduction' and a 'line of approach' to Ephesians. But it is far more than that. It is a study of the outstanding regulative thoughts of the Epistle in their application to the civilization of to-day. The book is remarkable for its intellectual strength and for its penetrative suggestiveness.

The key to the Epistle is the idea of Fellowship. The purpose that controls the world is a Will to fellowship. And the ground of this is to be found in the nature of God. God wills fellowship because ultimately fellowship is the life of God. 'I bow my knees to the Father, from whom every family derives.' The explanation of human society is to be sought in a higher Order. It is the manifestation of God's life in the relationships of finite spirits. Christianity denies that civilization can be built upon a merely natural foundation because the power of living together is something which only the Spirit of God makes possible.

Any sound philosophy of the State will find the real ground of society in the social character of personality. But we cannot stop there. Just in so far as human personality is the expression of the Divine Spirit, so far the social nature of personality has its roots in the social nature of God.

Just here Christianity comes into opposition with a tendency in the modern world which operates with what is called 'the gregarious instinct.' It is taken for granted that this instinct will gradually widen in its operation till it passes from nationalism to internationalism. But this is a fallacy. History does not lend any countenance to it, nor does common experience.

As a matter of fact this instinct works often for evil. It is the foe of originality. It makes for reaction. Resistance to any form of new ideas is a marked feature of all human 'herds.' Besides, the crude operation of this instinct divides rather than unites men. It organizes groups which display intense hostility to one another. When it is left to itself its automatic operation proves rather a foe to progress than an ally. Indeed it may be mentioned that what Christian thought calls 'fellowship' and what psychology calls 'group-loyalty' are at bottom incompatible terms. No addition of particulars can ever result in a universal.

This is true even of the Church. The times when the Church has been most strongly actuated by group-loyalty have not been those in which the

Spirit of Christ has been conspicuously present in her. The distinction between group-loyalty and fellowship is at bottom the distinction between proselytizing and evangelization. Christian fellowship starts not with the thought of local groups, adding them together into a world-group, but with God, whose life is perfect fellowship, manifesting Himself in and through all the relationships of human fellowship.

The natural basis of each is the same. Fellowship no less than group-loyalty operates in and through the herd-instinct. Nor need we deny that God is at work in the tendency to associate which runs through progressive life on the natural level. But instinct leads man home to God just in proportion as it is 'sublimated' in spiritual satisfaction. So we should say that what makes Fellowship is man's innate social disposition when it is consciously evoked in response to a conscious recognition of God.

It is clear then that, so far from the operation of the social instinct resulting necessarily in wider fellowship, in point of fact it often cuts directly across it. Jesus broke the ties of mere gregariousness (as expressed in caste, sectarianism, etc.) in order that Fellowship might become possible. Churches and the clerical profession need to be on their guard lest they should dignify as Christian Fellowship actions and attitudes to which psychology would give another and less complimentary name. It is clear, also, why the unity of the Church is necessarily a unity in variety. It is the outcome of a supernatural life in which all its members share, but appropriated in different ways and organized according to time, temperament, and opinion.

The title of Mr. BERRY'S new volume of sermons is *Revealing Light*. He says in his preface to it that the aim which underlies all the addresses is 'to show something of what the Christian revelation means in relation to the great historic facts of the Faith, and the response which those facts must awaken in the minds and hearts of men to-day.'

It is a great aim. And the degree of attainment is great. The addresses cannot be too widely read, and fortunately the volume is published by Messrs. Nisbet at a price which brings them within the reach of most of us (5s. net).

In one of the addresses Mr. BERRY deals with ways of losing Christ. He sees that there are two ways. Christ may be lost 'among the humanities.' It is the way in which we are most likely to lose Him to-day. We idealize Him 'as a figure among His fellows,' but lose all grasp of Him as 'a living presence.' We 'see the breadth of His human sympathies, our hearts respond at once to that part of the story, but for the rest we are not sure that we can turn with any confidence to Him to-day. Instead of being lost in the machinery of a theological scheme, He is lost in centuries old, and our modern cry is that of Palgrave's verse:

> Comes faint and far Thy voice
> From vales of Galilee,
> Thy vision fades in ancient shades,
> How can we follow Thee?'

But there is another way in which Christ may be lost. He may be lost 'among the divinities.' There is a tendency so to lose Him to-day, and He has been lost in this way in history not once only.

What does it mean when we say that Christ is lost among the divinities? It means that the sense of human value is lost. 'Christ is shorn of all the qualities which made Him what He was. He is a theological figment in the centre of a vast scheme, splendid perhaps, but not recognizable as having any relationship with the Christ of Nazareth and Galilee. The sense of His human nearness vanishes, and for an answer to that side of human need men turn from Christ to the Virgin and to the saints.'

Mr. BERRY has a message both for those who lose Christ among the divinities and for those who lose

Him among the humanities. It is the Gospel of the Connections.

He finds the Gospel of the Connections in the two passages which mark the beginning and the end of the story which the New Testament has to tell about Jesus. The passages are Luke 2^{7} and Revelation $1^{14.15}$. 'And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn': 'His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.'

The note of the first passage is the human one. The picture conveys all the romance of the Christmas spirit. For centuries the imagination of the world has played about that manger. Around that theme all our carols have been written, artists have dwelt upon the scene, and legend has surrounded it. There is a creed in the carols and poems, but the creed is in the background. 'The note of our carols and poems is the human note, the picture of weakness and helplessness, the conditions of our human lot, the strange romance of it, the mysterious blendings, the beauty which is always near to the elemental facts of life. Then as the story continues the same thing is true, the facts are near enough to our experience—the growing boy, the first conflict between independence and parental wishes, the carpenter's shop, the slow way in which knowledge accumulates and truth is learned.'

There is a world of difference when we turn to the second passage. No longer a child of Bethlehem but a mystic figure standing among golden candlesticks with hair as white as snow and feet like burnished brass and eyes of fire and a voice like the music of falling waters. No longer human weakness but a power Divine.

But however different they may be, there is a similarity between these two passages; both have the spirit of poetry in them. Do not imagine, Mr. BERRY says, that the latter passage is to be read too literally. 'Every feature in the wonderful description is closely related to some discovery which men made about Jesus as they walked the earth in His company. Just as in the simple story of the early days there is a great divine background, so in these later ideas which sometimes seem remote from the Jesus of the Gospels there is a human background. Does not the hair white as snow express men's feeling that Jesus cannot be understood unless the mind goes very far back in time? Are not the feet of fine brass a symbol of the tireless and swift journeyings of love which Jesus took at the bidding of human need? Are not the eyes like a flame of fire, pictured memories of a look which was sometimes like a tender light and sometimes like a blaze, and the voice like the sound of many waters, the recalled music of His speech?'

But not only is there a spirit of similarity between the passages. They are linked together in fact. Men's minds did travel this distance in relation to Jesus. Some who were already living when He was born did, before they died, think about Him after the manner of this Book of the Revelation.

And Mr. BERRY is convinced of the importance to-day of keeping the connection between the lowly beginning and the lofty climax. 'When we are thinking of the human life, of the way in which Christ came into the world, and of the unfolding incidents of His youth and His later ministry, we only see it partially and imperfectly unless there is somewhere in our minds a sense of the divine meaning of it—that these facts do not merely form one little isolated romance of beauty, but that they spring out of the purpose and the love of God, and breathe a note which is as true to-day as when the stars looked down on the fields of Bethlehem. The reverse is just as true. When we have before our minds these pictures of a Christ who is enthroned in heaven, majestic and awful, the Saviour and the Judge of men, we are set upon false tracks at once, unless all the time we see the

connexion between those pictures and the human story. The images may be different but Christ does not change with our changing thoughts, and He is the same whether earth or heaven be the stage He walks.'

'The whole spirit and inspiration of our faith depends upon making the connexion, so that we neither lose Christ amid the clouds nor among the centuries, but on the firm basis of history build our confidence that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."'

The current number of *The London Quarterly Review* contains an interesting study of the social teaching of Jesus and of the Apostolic Church by the Rev. Wilbert F. HOWARD, M.A., B.D., which marks a reaction from the over-emphasis which it has been common to lay upon that element in New Testament teaching. The writer begins with a *caveat*. It might seem a simple matter to summarize the recorded sayings of Jesus on wealth and poverty and on the relation of the individual to the social fabric, and then to go on to discover how far, in actual practice, the Master's precepts were applied to the various conditions of life throughout the Græco-Roman world in which the Apostolic Church worked.

There are two difficulties in the way, however. There is a literary difficulty: How far has editorial interpretation modified the transmitted oral tradition? And there is an historical difficulty: What was the actual background of social conditions presupposed by any given passage cited in the New Testament?

An illustration will serve to show how these two difficulties sometimes merge into one problem. It will also reveal something of the true mind of Jesus on social duty. The Beatitudes are given in two of the Gospels. But whereas in Matthew poverty is poverty of spirit and hunger and thirst are for righteousness, in Luke the terms are literal and practical. A comparison of the Gospels has led most students to the conclusion that, as a rule, Luke holds most closely to the words of his sources, while Matthew exercises considerable freedom of interpretation. Matthew's tendency is to heighten the colour or to give a specific application to the sayings of our Lord. There is reason to think that we have here an example of these tendencies.

But the question arises: Was Matthew entitled to interpret the words in that way? This question carries us from the literary aspect of the problem to the historical. Who were 'the poor'? The history of the word is this. At first it meant needy. In the time of the prophets it meant those who suffered oppression at the hands of a cruel aristocracy. With the Exile it came to describe suffering Israel regarded as ideally righteous. Then, as time went on, probably because piety was to be found much more among the humbler classes than among the wealthy, the word received a religious colouring, and in the later period it stood for the faithful and God-fearing Jews in contrast with the worldly and indifferent majority who were ready to accept pagan innovations.

'The social and religious persecution of the poor, in the sense of the pious, is one of the most clearly marked features of the later Psalms, so that when Jesus came to announce the kingdom of heaven there was a class of people ready for His message. They were all potential disciples. Their thoughts were not preoccupied with worldly ambitions. . . . "Matthew" is therefore right in recognizing that Jesus is not prescribing a *minus* property qualification, but is making His appeal to those whose spiritual temper is congenial to that Kingdom which is not of this world.'

It is true that the teaching of Jesus is closely related to the background of life in His time, in which wealth and poverty were present side by side. But, generally speaking, Jesus had little to say about the conditions of life in themselves. It is

the purely personal question of spiritual efficiency that lies behind His warnings against wealth. This was the case, *e.g.*, in such incidents as the Rich Fool, Dives and Lazarus, and the Young Ruler. What damns Dives is not his wealth but his lovelessness. It was equally the case in the Cleansing of the Temple.

Jesus was not an economist laying down laws which, if applicable to the simple conditions of His own time, would be irrelevant to the vastly more complex commercial situation with which we have to deal. And the same may be said of the Apostolic Church. The great achievement of the Church in that age was the creation of a Christian conscience. It taught the supreme value of the human personality. The brother for whom Christ died has first claim, before any convenience or advantage of our own. This is the truth which lies at the heart of the Christian Revolution.

The problem of evil is of perennial interest, if anything that is so painful can rightly be said to be 'interesting.' Over it thinking men of all ages have racked their brains and well-nigh broken their hearts. *Unde malum?* is the question which many systems of thought, some of them apparently fantastic enough—witness Gnosticism—have been constructed to answer. *Unde?* you may set aside if you will. *Quare?* however, will not be dismissed. No man can have any reasoned view of God, man, or the world, and ignore this *why? or to what end?*

Answers have often been attempted. Probably no new answer can be suggested. Old answers, however, admit of being re-stated. Every new statement is worth consideration, for this age-old problem comes home with all the startling force of novelty in the experience of every generation and of most individuals.

A brief but noteworthy treatment of the subject will be found in *The Personalist* for April from the pen of the Editor. Mr. Flewelling's solution is clearly enough indicated in the title of the article, 'Schoolmaster Pain.' Only he does not limit himself to that one aspect of the problem. Error, pain, and moral evil are, as he points out, the three forms which the question assumes, and on each he has wise and weighty words to say.

Error, he points out—and it is well worth pointing out—is the rock on which all materialistic epistemologies are shattered. If, as the realists tell us, things really are just as they appear to be; if, as naturalism holds, the mind is simply a mirror of external facts, then there can be no such thing as error—*Quod est absurdum.* That error proves a good schoolmaster needs no demonstration. 'Mankind would seem to owe its mental equipment very largely to the possibility of error.'

'As the possibility of error is the source of man's mental activity, the possibility of pain is fundamental to his physical and social well-being. . . . If physical violence were unattended by pain, we should most of us go through life maimed and deformed by acts done in ignorance and before our minds had arrived at the possibility of knowledge. Nerves are absolutely necessary to save us from self-destruction. The possibility of pain is thus seen to be necessary to physical existence. Has it any effect of a social nature?'

'Here we hit upon a use of pain which goes outside of individual well-being into the wider reaches of social welfare. The recognition of the possibility of pain is one of the strongest impulses making for social welfare. Any teaching that pain is an unreality is fundamentally anti-social. Out of the possibility of pain have grown the ameliorative agencies of society, and the successive stages of civilization may be marked exactly by growth in these agencies. It is moral sensitiveness to pain in others that has abolished slavery and ended peonage and led the path of every social reform.'

As to moral evil our author takes practically the line which is adopted in the art. 'Good and Evil'

in the ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS. He distinguishes between evil action and the possibility of evil. While the latter is a necessity for moral life, the former is not. 'We need not "sin that grace may abound." It is quite sufficient evidence of grace and of character that the sin is not entered into. One is quite as much saved from sins never committed as from those once actually entered into.' 'Out of temptation we can gather to ourselves the moral power of continuously right decisions; and when all men have truly learned that lesson we shall have a heavenly society not because from us has been taken away the possibility, but we have conquered the will to sin.'

'Just why error, pain and evil should have been permitted, we do not know and cannot say. But it may be that to God the final mental, social and moral outcome was worth the venture, and to His eye there may be a goal far off of such supreme worth for every son of man as to far outweigh every distress. It is the part of religion to live as if this were true.'

Sin, Hell, and Salvation.

BY WILLIAM E. WILSON, B.D., PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN THE SELLY OAK COLLEGES.

A FEW years ago the saying was often quoted with satisfaction that the modern man is not 'worrying' about his sins, but is actively engaged in trying to make the world better. If the emphasis had been on the word 'worrying,' and the saying had meant that the modern man had resolutely turned from his sins and was seeking a new life of righteousness relying on God's forgiveness, there would be nothing to criticize in the quotation. Unfortunately, it is pretty certain that this was not its meaning. The thought rather was that 'sin' was an out-of-date category and that, by earnest endeavour to set circumstances (and other people) right, each man would be doing his part towards making a happy world. The war and the so-called peace which has followed it show that the modern man has not achieved success, and at any rate convey the suggestion that perhaps in disregarding his own sin he made a cardinal error.

No doubt he had excuse. The doctrine of sin has often been stated in forms that seem unreal. But the fact of sin cannot be denied and is overlooked only at great peril. It is therefore important for us to seek the truth about sin, its consequences and the possibilities of its removal. That is the subject of this essay, which is intended rather to suggest a method of approach and a line of treatment that may appeal to people at the present day, than to be a systematic treatment of so great a subject.

If any one looks at the ills that life has brought him, he will certainly acknowledge that a large proportion of them could have been avoided by more understanding, foresight, or goodwill on his own part or on the part of other people. Some may have been directly caused by his own misdeeds. He may, for example, have injured his health by excess. Others may have been caused by the misdeeds of other people. He may have been robbed, cheated, or his character defamed. Others, again, have been due to accident, carelessness, or lack of easily attainable knowledge. A careless person throws orange peel on the pavement. Some one slips and breaks his leg. Some one's incompetence or negligence brings to others great business embarrassments. The folly, ambition, and untruthfulness of statesmen involve the world in war, and the innocent suffer all the world over. As the last instance shows, it is not only individuals who thus suffer from the misdoings of themselves and others, the whole world suffers. In fact, the world of mankind is like a vast and complicated machine, which if kept properly in order is quite capable of providing the material, and much of the spiritual, basis of a good and happy life for all men. If, however, as the Americans put it, 'some one throws a monkey-