

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

IN Dr. CAIRNS's notable book, *The Riddle of the World*, reviewed elsewhere, the decisive chapter is that on 'Science and Religion.' It is decisive because, in 'the human situation' which is before us to-day, we are faced with a purely naturalistic system, Humanism, which bases itself on the claim that science alone is the way to reality. Dr. CAIRNS in the chapter referred to examines this claim, and his argument here is the foundation of much that he has to urge against Humanism.

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Science consists of two processes, Description and Prediction. On the one hand it is the classification of facts, and on the other the recognition of their sequence and relative significance. Religion is the belief in a Divine Personality, with a purpose which He realizes through natural processes, creating other personalities, caring for them and educating them for ever fuller communion with Himself. Are these two compatible? Does the first exclude the second? Or make the second unnecessary? And if not, which is the deeper and more inclusive?

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Dr. CAIRNS's argument is that in the very nature of the case, because of its self-imposed limitations, the scientific method can never give us a full and adequate interpretation of Nature and of human life. Science is like a razor, which for one purpose is excellent, but if applied to other purposes, such as cutting wood, is useless. Or, to take another figure, science is a net framed to catch certain kinds

of fish and to let other fish through. There is that in its very nature which prevents it from ever giving anything but a very defective account of the whole. The best scientific thought is moving to a conclusion of this kind. There has been a critical movement within science itself which has altered the attitude characteristic of the older Victorian scientists.

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For one thing there has been a recognition of the *abstract* nature of all inductive science. It is important to note what this abstractness is. It is a thing we all practise, and means that we attend to those things that for our immediate purpose are essential, and ignore, or 'abstract from,' those things that for the moment and for our purposes are not essential. But it is every whit as necessary to remember that, though for the time we have ignored these other things, they are there all the time, and when their time comes will certainly demand that we take account of them. And remember that they are real also.

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Science does the same. It lets things through the net. And one of these things is Individuality. Science for the most part is not interested in individual beings but in generalizations, concepts (*i.e.* common terms), and laws. And the reason why it so largely ignores individual beings is that it would otherwise be choked and overwhelmed by the multitude of the individual things in the world. It knows that it must practise economy

of thought. It is always seeking concepts, common terms, like man, cloud, tree. It deals with schemes and laws. It has to ignore a great deal that is real in the world, or it would not get on with its business of description, classification, and prediction. Here is a fact which of itself refutes the idea that science is the only pathway to reality.

Another of the things that escape through the net is history. It is clear that human history is a part of reality. The experiences and achievements of human beings are, to say the least, as real as the movements of the planets. Yet it is equally plain that if a purely scientific history of any people were written in which the aim of the writer was what is here stated, namely, the disclosure of uniform laws with a view to prediction of the future, the result would be a grotesque failure, utterly unlike the living and breathing tragi-comedy of human life. It would be only one degree more absurd to try to describe a day in the life of a man in the formula of algebra.

We are utterly unable to predict accurately the future of human action. We can predict and reckon upon the path of an asteroid, but who can predict the pathway of a man? What would not the Cabinets of the great Powers and the little Ententes of to-day, what would not the Stock Exchanges of the world, give for such knowledge? Yet all the economists and psychologists of the earth cannot give them such knowledge. Science can never give such knowledge because in the very centre of his personality every human being is free and individual, and so eludes all the meshes of the classifying and generalizing methods of science.

It is worth underlining this fact. Individual men and women are unquestionably great and potent factors in the course of history. They are, moreover, creative figures. They bring something new into the field. They cannot be explained as instances of general laws. Muhammad, Joan, Luther, Napoleon, Lincoln, what general laws can explain any one of them? Yet, if science gives us the final and all-determining word, how are we to evade this preposterous conclusion? They pass

easily through the meshes of all merely generalizing thought, and by so doing each one of them is a demonstration of the inability of science to penetrate to the heart of reality. It is not too much to say, then, that the whole theory of the sufficiency of science breaks down on this fact alone, and that it cannot adequately explain human history.

Once more, another thing that escapes through the meshes of the net is human freedom. Scientific men of the naturalistic type deny its existence. They hold that every thought and feeling and volition is determined by the mechanism of our brains and bodies, and that these are simply so many cogs in the wheels of the great world-machine. But Dr. CAIRNS, in a passage of great interest and cogency, points out that recent science, by its 'quantum' theory, is revealing a contingent element in Nature herself. It is being realized that her laws are not so much causal laws as statistical laws, like the principles on which insurance is based, certitude with a great mass but contingency in individual cases. And this fact only emphasizes the moral conviction universally held by men and women of the possession of personal freedom and responsibility. It may therefore be said with confidence that mechanical determinism can no longer claim the support of physical science.

There is, of course, much more that science cannot include in its review of the world. And that is dealt with in later chapters, particularly in that entitled 'The Moral Pathway to Reality.' But Dr. CAIRNS in the section on 'Science and Religion' has given us a piece of analytic criticism which is a real contribution to a sound apologetic. He admits that religion needs science, but the conclusion of his analysis at this point is that just as much science needs religion. 'For its stability and honour' it needs either God or 'something very like Him.'

Dr. W. A. Visser 'T Hooft is making a great name for himself in the student world. Having succeeded Dr. John R. Mott as General Secretary of the World's Student Christian Federation, he has revealed him-

self, both in his speeches and writings, as an ecclesiastical statesman of the front rank and a Christian thinker of distinction.

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His most recent book, *None Other Gods* (S.C.M. ; 5s. net), gives a singularly penetrating diagnosis of the maladies of the modern world and a convincing statement of the Christian cure.

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The book falls into two parts. In the first six chapters we have a discussion of the basis and content of the Christian way, with emphasis laid on the momentous choice which becomes inevitable when we are met by the challenge of Christ. The second part of the book deals with 'the Christian approach to modern civilization, to the totalitarian movements, to the intellectual world, and to one of the main contemporary philosophies of life.'

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It is impossible to give here any adequate summary of a book which is packed full of thought and is written with a remarkable sanity and breadth of view. The fact that Dr. 'T Hooft views the religious situation from a continental standpoint makes his analysis all the more illuminating and instructive to the English reader. It may be of service to give some account of a striking chapter in the book which is entitled 'God or Religion.'

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'Why does the modern man use the word "God" as little as possible and the word "Religion" as much as possible?' We have grown so used to the terminology that many do not realize that there is any difference between the two. But the difference is very real. For religion is a human affair, having to do with our thoughts and feelings. But God is 'precisely that one reality which is beyond us, and which is not in our power or at our disposal.' Accordingly this emphasis on religion and this shyness about God is very significant and points to a shifting of our outlook on life. It indicates that 'there has arisen a profound uncertainty among us about the ultimate and objective realities of life, and a corresponding tendency to cling to the less elusive realities of subjective human experience.'

What is religion? We find, on looking at the question closely, that the word has two different connotations. In the first place it is used as a 'vague but convenient conception which embraces a complex group of phenomena which have no other point of similarity except that they have something to do with man's attitude to the deeper things of life.' Thus religion may include such utterly diverse things as temple-prostitution, cannibalism, and Augustine's Confessions. But in the second place men have sought to unify these experiences, or to discover some common denominator among them. The consequence is that there has grown up the idea that 'behind the weird, incoherent mass of religious phenomena there is to be found a religion in which all men agree, a unity, not only of form, but also of content.' The two conceptions may be distinguished by speaking of religion with a small 'r' (which implies no more than the formal similarity of a group of phenomena), and Religion with a big 'R' (which means the supposed common substance underlying all religions).

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It is Religion with the big 'R' which has come to usurp the place of God, and has covered the modern mind with clouds of confusion. We speak of the Philosophy of Religion, the Psychology of Religion, of Religious Education, and Religious Socialism, and we take for granted that we all know exactly what is meant. But do we *really* know? Can we define this pretentious entity? Of course we cannot. 'We have as many conceptions and definitions as we have professors who write and talk on the subject. We have definitions which are so comprehensive that there is absolutely nothing in human life which escapes being called religious, and we have definitions which are so narrow that only one single historic religion can claim to be a religion at all.'

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The fact is that Religion with a big 'R' does not really exist. The only actually existing religions stubbornly refuse to be run into any such mould. If we try to unify them we immediately find that the things they count most vital are the things in which they differ, and they all with one voice repudiate this attempted amalgamation. 'A synthesis of a

Mohammedanism which has ceased to consider Mohammed as the one standard of faith and life, a Hinduism which has made the doctrine of Karma optional, and a Christianity which has given up its faith that Christ is the unique revelation of God, is not a synthesis of these real and historic religions, but merely a synthesis of their pale shadows.' Religion, then, in this sense does not and cannot exist. For it is the very genius of all religions to cling to that which they consider to be the ultimate or the absolute. And so, when they are invited to amalgamate, they are invited to treat their absolutes as relative, which to them is unthinkable, as being simply suicide.

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There is, however, something very definite indicated by the modern man's use of the word Religion, something which very urgently needs to be elucidated and kept clearly in view. 'Modern Religion is a most real thing. Only it is neither *the* common Religion of mankind, nor the common denominator of all positive religions, but rather *another* religion, which must, willy-nilly, take its place alongside of the already far too many existing faiths.' Many, of course, when they speak of Religion, mean the Christian Religion, others use the term through mental vagueness, but what most moderns mean when they prefer being called 'religious' to being called 'Christian,' 'Jewish,' 'Mohammedan,' or something else, is that they have no faith in the ultimates for which these historic religions stand. They would probably say that for them Religion is a matter of accepting such realities as can be scientifically proved to exist and to be truly useful to mankind. In so doing they imagine they are standing on solid ground, basing themselves on scientific proof instead of the nebulosities of faith. If they would only go to the root of the matter they would find that their position rests on faith as really as that of any other religion, faith in the validity of the assumptions and methods of natural science. Consequently 'the seemingly unshakable foundation of their Religion is in reality as open to attack as the orthodoxies of historical religion.'

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When Religion is thus understood we find that

we are faced with a very definite choice between God and Religion. The difference really comes to this that in the one case man looks for help from on high, in the other case he looks for help from himself and his kind. In the one case he depends on a revelation of the grace and truth of God whereby he is saved, in the other case he expects no help or guidance beyond what comes through the insights and discoveries of man himself. There is a world of difference between revelation and discovery. They are not to be taken as two aspects of the same thing. 'Revelation means that something which I did not know beforehand, and which I cannot find out by myself, is communicated to me. It presupposes that there is something to be unveiled, or, to speak more precisely, that God is hidden. Nature and history, reason and the human soul, give us contradictory evidence about God. If I base myself upon one or more of these, I shall have to fashion for myself a God to believe in. And that is precisely what Religion does. But if I take the Biblical view that in Jesus Christ I come to know God Himself, then I have found something more than religion. I know then the way in which I may learn to distinguish, in Nature, in history, in reason and in my soul, that which is of God and that which is not.'

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Christianity, therefore, is much more than just 'interest in religion.' What Jesus felt about religion as a purely human product may be seen from all He said about the Pharisees, whose main fault was that they were so extremely religious that they had no place left for God. Even Christians need to fight against the temptation to be interested more in Christianity as a religion than in Christianity as service of God. 'God is not only *more than* the Christian religion, but even *opposed to* the Christian religion whenever that religion begins to be self-centred.' In our day there is a most healthy reaction against all sorts of piousness. But the crusaders for sincerity should clearly realize that their opponent is man-made religion and not God. 'If they do not, they are simply paving the way for a no less pious paganism, which will substitute the empty words of secularist orthodoxies for the empty words of cheap religion, and the sentimental-

ism of political cults for the sentimentalism of the Sunday School.'

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Finally, it is only when the emphasis is laid on God and not on Religion that we get the right attitude to all the historic religions, and dare to go out into the world as missionaries. We have confidence to embark on the missionary enterprise, and indeed feel bound to become a missionary Church because we have something to pass on which is no mere invention or achievement of our own. 'We do not go in order to spread our Religion, or our values, nor even to share our best. For it would indeed be preposterous if we thought that *our* religion and culture would necessarily be of benefit to the whole wide world. And those to whom we come would rightly object to our superiority complex if we came because *our* religion was better than theirs. The whole situation is changed, however, if we go to speak of the God whom we have not invented or created, but whom we have come to know as the Lord of life and whose Reign we announce, because it has been announced to us.'

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The Rev. Edward SHILLITO contributes the seventh volume to the 'Needs of To-day' Series, published by Messrs. Rich & Cowan at the price of 3s. 6d. net. The title of his volume is *You Can Find God*. The treatment, as one has learned to expect of this popular writer, is simple, direct, graphic, and rich in spiritual quality. Let us weave together some of his thoughts and words.

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We may or may not seek for God, but we must seek for something, or cease to be human. The world is for man a place where he asks, seeks, knocks; and the asking, seeking, knocking are not optional but essential. The men who are most clearly men go out, not knowing whither they go, but sure that there is a City, with foundations, and they must not rest till they find it.

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If man is a seeker so long as he fulfils his proper life, and if all his seekings are gathered up in one—the search for God—what roads are open to him?

It must be said to those who are seeking God that they must not pass by the door of the Church. We are too swift to condemn the very imperfect societies which do at least keep before the eyes of men the Light of God. They may do this most faultily, but they are the only societies that do it at all. We shall be foolish if in our search for God we neglect a Society which exists for this very thing, to perpetuate and to offer to mankind a way to God. We must not turn away from it because it may happen to be the home of a motley crowd of people, who fall far short of their calling.

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It must also be said to those who are seeking God that they may find Him even in the darkness. Sometimes He will have us go by green pastures and still waters, but sometimes He will lead us into the valley of the shadow. There may come an hour in which, for the sake of his loyalty to truth, a man has to enter into the darkness of doubt, and even of complete unbelief. Romanes knew the eclipse of faith, but in his patience he won his soul. We need not think as we leave the sunlit ways that we are leaving the God in whom we believed. Perhaps there may come times in which we can find God in the darkness and nowhere else.

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But if we are to find God, we must be ready to face the fact of sin and to listen to the call for repentance. From this serious call we cannot escape. We shall not find God except as sinners find their Saviour. Let us not think that this is old and outworn language, something that is the mere dialect of a Church. If we cease to know the meaning of sin and judgment, vast areas of our human inheritance will be lost to us. Nor is there any reason why we should treat sin as a word descriptive only of the individual life. We should not only confess, 'I am the man who must know God's judgment and receive His mercy,' but also, 'I am the social problem. I am the problem of war.'

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While we cannot find God without seeking, must not something more be said? The seeker is also the sought. If we belong to a race that seeks, we belong also to a race that is sought. Upon this we rest our hope. Through all things in the heavens and in the

earth, the Mighty Lover is in quest of us. It is a conviction that lies at the very heart of Christian truth. If we put it in the language of theology, it is the doctrine of Grace. It is the very secret of the Incarnation, that God sought man and gave His Son. We love because He first loved us.

To seek, if that were all, would be a hard and un-

profitable task. To be sought, if that were all, would be an experience but little worth. The Christian truth is that man is sought, but that he must also seek as earnestly and diligently as if all depended upon him. There is only one better experience than to be sought; it is to be found. And if we are seeking and He is seeking, that must follow soon or late.

## The Best Books on Comparative Religion.

BY PROFESSOR JOHN MURPHY, D.LITT., D.D., MANCHESTER.

COMPARATIVE Religion is a somewhat ambiguous title which is accepted as a convenient abbreviation for the Comparative Study of Religion. As in other sciences of the kind, such as Comparative Anatomy, there are two methods of comparison. There is what might be called the ethnographical method, that is, the comparison of existing religions with each other by recording their common features and their differences; and there is the evolutionary or historical method, which treats religion as the subject of evolution or development analogous to growth, and makes comparison of at least the most important stages in that development; and since these stages are in historical sequence, this method amounts to a history of religion in general or a history of a particular religion. Some of the most important works on our subject are written under the title, The History of Religions; and there is little to distinguish them; but there is much value in retaining the idea of comparison. One may remark at the outset that Biblical scholars easily recognize these two methods as present in the Bible—as indeed, perhaps learned from the Bible—which is therefore the greatest of our Best Books. It is almost sad to think for how many centuries the Church lost what might be called the charter of Comparative Religion in St. Paul's great speech at Athens—not at once, for men like Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria kept the wider charity, but for long ages, only to recover it chiefly through the great foreign missionaries of the last and the present century. It is poetic justice that the works of these, as I shall remark later, are among our Best Books.

### General Histories.

In this series the writers have taken a variety of ways in presenting the literature of their subjects;

and it has seemed to me that, since Comparative Religion is a somewhat new study and requires some explanation, I should set the books, as it were, within the matrix of an account of the chief stages of the evolution of religion. I shall, therefore, postpone the application of the first method of comparison of existing religions with each other to a later stage when it can be fitted into the scheme; but I shall at this point mention two or three general histories of religion which cover the whole field. G. F. Moore's *History of Religions* is competent and thorough, if a little dry in style. The book of E. Washburn Hopkins of Yale with the same title is the work of a great authority on Indian religions (his *The Religions of India* is a Best Book in that sphere), but one who treats the faiths of the world with wide knowledge and with freshness and originality. There are many short works, but I may refer to only one by another great scholar in Indian language and literature, *Comparative Religion*, a course of lectures on the chief types of religion, including the primitive, by A. A. Macdonell, published by Calcutta University. Finally, it is a curious fact that one of the best shorter works on Comparative Religion is the late A. S. Pringle-Pattison's *The Philosophy of Religion*.

### The Primitive Horizon.

In turning, then, to our second method of comparison, and to giving a description of the chief stages in the evolution of religion, we shall find the metaphor of 'horizons' useful, and outline four horizons, the Primitive, the Tribal, the Civilized, and the Prophetic. It is in the study of the first stage—the Primitive Horizon upon which the simple folk looked out and look out still who are hunters and collectors of their food, and know no higher culture—that Comparative Religion is in close