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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

WHAT is the cause of the failure of Christianity?

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Now it is no use arresting one here and saying that Christianity has not failed. No doubt it may be said that it is the Church and not Christianity that has failed. But that distinction is imperceptible. The ordinary individual says that Christianity has failed. And it would do no good either to him or to Christianity to say that it is not Christianity but the Church.

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No doubt, again, 'failure' is a word open to definition. There may be absolute failure or there may be comparative failure. Nobody who is worth considering says that Christianity has failed utterly. Ever so many persons say that it has failed partially. And by partially they mean very seriously. Nor can any one easily deny that. The evidence is this world war.

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What is the cause of the failure? There are three answers. They are all given by the Rev. Richard Henry MALDEN, M.A., in a book which he wrote on shipboard (for he is Acting-Chaplain to H.M.S. *Valiant*) and which he has now published with the title of *Watchman, What of the Night?* (Macmillan; 5s. net).

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The first answer is that Christianity is *not good*.  
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*enough.* Christianity is civilization. And Christian civilization is selfish and tyrannical. It is greedy of gain and merciless in competing for it. Its most boasted products have been weapons of war. 'It is not long since I read in a popular magazine an article which professed to describe the 15-inch gun carried by some ships in our Navy. After dwelling at some length upon its destructive powers the author asserted triumphantly that it is "the supreme product of modern civilization." No doubt his admiration was perfectly genuine and was shared by the majority of his readers.' Thus Christianity is a failure. It has only made its real character known as it went down to perdition in this awful avalanche.

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What does Mr. MALDEN say to that? He says, of course, that Christianity and civilization, like wisdom and knowledge, 'far from being one, have oftentimes no connexion.' The civilization which makes a 15-inch gun its supreme product is not Christian civilization. It is a civilization (if that word can be applied to it at all) which ignores Christianity. Give Christianity the chance and it will produce a civilization which will send guns of every calibre into antiquarian museums. Only give it the chance.

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Another reason for the failure of Christianity is

that it is *too good*. It is a religion of ideals, and the ideals are impracticable.

Now it is certain that you cannot have it both ways. If Christianity is the origin of the civilization which boasts of a 15-inch gun as its supreme product, it cannot also be so impracticable as to have no influence on civilization. But although both reasons are impossible at once, one answer applies to both. How does any one know that the Christian ideals are impracticable? The only way is to put them to practice. Those who have done that believe that they are practicable. They have tried them and they have found them work. It is only those who have never given them a chance who say that they are impracticable.

Christianity has failed because it has not had a chance. It has never been tried. It has never been tried as it is, or on a large enough scale, or long enough. Why has it not been tried? No doubt because of the sinfulness of the human heart. But that is not an answer. Why has it not overcome the sinfulness of the human heart?

What answer is to be given to that? It is a serious question. It is even a momentous question. It goes right to the root of the matter. The Church of Christ ought to have brought the world by this time so completely under the dominion of Christ that a world's war would have been impossible—would have been even unthinkable. Why has it not done so?

MR. MALDEN knows why. He is a scholar. He has had experience—'three years in an industrial parish in Lancashire, three as a College Lecturer at Cambridge, five as Principal of the Leeds Clergy School and Lecturer of Leeds Parish Church, and finally eighteen months afloat have obliged me to consider many questions from more than one angle.' What answer does a naval chaplain with all that experience and thought behind him give to the question? His answer is, 'Our neglect of the Holy Spirit.'

Is it a surprise? It is quite as surprising when one comes upon it in the book.

Who could have thought, when the war began, that one of the issues of it would be a new conception of the character of God? Yet it is so. We see it already. Some men are seeing it so clearly that they write about it with an audacity which takes other men's breath away. From the East Coast of Africa and from the Philippine Islands two books have reached us this month, the very inspiration of which is the new conception of God. And there is no hesitation in the expression of it.

Are they the work of irresponsible young theologians? The Right Rev. Frank WESTON, D.D., Bishop of Zanzibar, is the author of one of the books; the Right Rev. Charles H. BRENT, D.D., Bishop of the Philippines, is the author of the other. And they feel their responsibility. The Bishop of Zanzibar sends his manuscript hot haste home to England with a note, 'Foreword by the Bishop of London.' There was no letter (or it went down on the way); there was simply the manuscript and the demand. But the Bishop of London wrote the Foreword. He must have seen the revolution that the book would lend itself to. He must have felt the old idea of God shattering within him as he read. But he wrote the Foreword.

And he said: 'I am glad the Bishop has written it. So many people think of him as a hard controversialist, whereas we who know him, know him for a man of singular kindness of heart, and absolutely devoted in his fervent ministry to others. This book will be a revelation to many with regard to the Bishop himself, and far more than that, it will help them to believe in the Love of God in spite of the war and its iniquities and its sufferings.' That is a good deal to say, but it is the least that the Bishop of London could have said. The title of the book is *Conquering and to Conquer* (S.P.C.K.; 1s. net).

A greater book is *The Mount of Vision* (Long-

mans; 3s. net), by the Bishop of the Philippine Islands. It is not more original. Dr. BRENT has made the discovery of a book on Mysticism (Mrs. E. Herman's *The Meaning, and Value of Mysticism*—some of us at home have probably not discovered it yet), from which he has drawn inspiration, and acknowledges it. It is not more original. But it is deeper in its thinking, surer (we may allow) in its reasoning; it is in sight of a wider intellectual horizon, and has in its offer a richer gospel of reconciliation. But both books have made the grand discovery, and both make everything of it.

It is the discovery that the Almighty God is the victim of the German Emperor. We put it at once in its baldest, boldest form. The form is nearly ludicrous. For it is the nearness of the ludicrous that makes the amazement of the discovery. What is it? It is—not that God has the Kaiser in the hollow of His hand, but that the Kaiser has God there. It is that the Kaiser is holding down God, tormenting Him, torturing Him, causing Him unutterable sorrow and unutterable suffering. And it is that, until the Kaiser is ready to repent, God must remain in his hand, suffering and sorrowing, and a victim.

Is it not a revolution? Is there any heresy that to our fathers seemed more horrible than Patripassianism—a suffering God? Now we have the authority of these Bishops, not only that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, but that God was in Christ suffering on the Cross. And not only so. We have it on the same authority that God has been on the Cross from all eternity. We have it that God is on the Cross to-day.

How did our fathers teach us to think about God? As a God of might, as a God of holiness unapproachable, as a God of great severity of judgment. When our Lord hung upon the Cross it was in weakness. He had divested Himself of the attributes of Godhead. And so far was He from hanging there as God that it was to satisfy Divine

justice that He was crucified. They taught us, or we understood them to teach, that the gentle and loving Jesus was made a sacrifice on the Cross to the righteous wrath of God—a sacrifice 'to satisfy Divine justice.'

And now? Let the Bishop of Zanzibar teach us now. 'Our Lord Jesus Christ knew the bitterness of tears over a loved friend's grave. He wept over the coming fate of sinful Jerusalem. He went through terrible temptations to sin, even the temptation not to trust His Father. When He died He had to leave His much-loved mother homeless, but for the care of her nephew. He knew the heavy grief of being deserted and betrayed. And the pains of His sufferings before and in His death on the Cross pass our imagination—He even knew for a few moments the meaning of shrinking from this battle with sin. Why did He bear all this? Because of His real sympathy with us. Because He made our sorrows His very own. Now if we ask who He is, and where He came from, what shall we answer? We can only reply as did the once doubtful apostle, St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God."'

And then? It is still the Bishop of Zanzibar: 'Why, we have reached the most startling and most wonderful fact that man can ever be told. It is God who wept, God who suffered, God who sympathized, and God who shared our sorrows. What I mean is this. If Jesus Christ be God, then all His love, sympathy, and sorrow for us was not a new thing in Him when He came to us on earth. It was *always* in Him. It is part of His nature to feel sympathy and sorrow. Eternal Love is perfect love. And perfect love is so rich in self-sacrifice that it can always feel for others and sorrow with them fully, sharing their griefs and carrying their burdens.'

God has *always* sorrowed and suffered so. Turn to the Bishop of the Philippine Islands: 'Some one [this is Mrs. Herman] has finely, and, as it would seem, truly intimated that the groundwork

of God's character is the Cross. Thinking, as is our custom, in terms of time, we may have reached the conclusion that it eventually became so, rather than that it was always so. A moment's reflexion shows us that this could not be. We human beings are, or ought to be, becoming that which we as yet are not. God is only what He ever was. Revelation is never the taking on by God of some fresh attribute. It is the unveiling to our eyes of that which He always was, but which hitherto we have been unable to see. God lives in the present tense, so that it is always fitting to declare of Him that which is to be in the language of now. His completeness is not fluid. When once He has declared Himself there is no mistake to be corrected, no false expression to be recalled.'

Well, what then? The life of God 'is in the form of the Cross. "The Cross [this again is Mrs. Herman] is not an afterthought of God—a heroic remedy for a desperate emergency—but the cornerstone of creation." Consequently when the Word speaks in language intelligible to the human race He speaks according to this unvarying pattern. The Cross is the chief eternal symbol in time. Like the Chinese ideograph it always presents the one idea under whatever terminology the human tongue may give it voice. God is, in the deepest foundations of His being, a servant. Whenever and however He speaks the accents of service are in His voice. Even in the fragmentary utterances caught by the dimmest religions, there is a faint murmur at least of His inmost self. Nothing that history has produced casts doubt on what St. Paul said: The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity. And what the same Apostle said to the men of Athens could be said to any untutored and unevangelized people with some measure of appropriateness. If men live and move and have their being in Him, He is their perpetual servant.'

Now 'suffering is always and everywhere

necessary to service.' It may not be always the suffering that is hard to bear. 'In that self-giving which is the chief law of God's being, suffering may be His supreme bliss. Though suffering has its roots and origin in God, it may be only as a process of love, so that—

Love's very pain is sweet.

The Cross as the groundwork of God's character is no doubt painless so far as it is the expression of His inmost desire and purpose. It has doubtless no more pain in it than the surrender of a bride to the encompassing love of her betrothed, than the outpouring of a mother's love upon a reciprocating child. But there is suffering with God that may be felt as pain. It is suffering imported into God's self-giving by the sin and sorrow of man. Self-will; that is, the power of our free choice exercised away from self-giving or service, is erected as a barrier to the fulfilment of God's purpose for and in and with us, and the floodgates of suffering and tragedy are thereby opened on God and the race. It is our rejection and repudiation of Him that makes the Cross a torturing thing.'

'We can now sum up'—this is the Bishop of Zanzibar again—'we can now sum up all we have been saying in one most startling sentence. So untrue is it that we men are the objects of God's punishments; so false is it that He heaps sorrows on us, and keeps His distance from us while we bear them; that in strict fact God is the victim of the world.'

What does he mean? 'It is no more,' he says, 'than plain truth that God is in everyone who in any way is the victim of man's sin, greed, wrath, lust, injustice, and the like. He has, therefore, to endure the sin of the whole world as it is daily carried out in His very presence; in spite of all He has done to save us from it and make us hate it. He cannot get rid of it unless He first endure it. Patiently He bears it, all the while working with His whole divine power to undo the harm done, to modify the consequences, and finally to

turn our wills from sin to Him. The world's victim, then, He really is. The world could not make Him its victim if it were not for His love. So deep is His love that He still leaves us our freedom of choice. And He Himself accepts, and bears, all the results of our bad choices, until the day that bad choice will stop for ever.'

Now one of the worst of all our bad choices is the choice of this war. Why does God not stop it? You may as ignorantly ask, Why did He begin it? The German Emperor began it, and the German Emperor will carry it on until we co-operate with God so zealously and unitedly that he is beaten. Until then God is in the German Emperor's hands. He is the Kaiser's victim. 'Yes,' says Dr. WESTON. 'Just as Christ was Pilate's victim long ago on earth, so to-day the Kaiser, in the name of all that is sinful in our civilization, has fixed on no one less than divine Love as the victim of his German hopes and aims.'

But is the victim really God? Yes. 'It is no one else but He. In the girls German lust has robbed, first of honour, then of life, God, really was. In Him they endured what they endured; and their cries rose, not up into His ears, but within His heart. He sorrowed with their sorrow. In the multitude of Europeans and Africans, heathen and Christian, whom Germans have done to death out of mere frightful cruelty, God really was. In Him, although many hardly knew Him, they bravely bore the torture and died inhuman deaths: and their groans reach Him, not as from outside, but as within Him. He sorrowed with their sorrows. In the broken and wounded, lying painfully on fields of battle, in Europe and Africa, God really is. In Him they suffer. Their weary longing for relief is within Him, not apart from Him. And He sorrows with them, and when they will let Him, comforts them.'

Yes, comforts them. Ah, there is the good of the new idea of God. He is the victim of a human being's lust of empire—that is awful and alarming.

He is a present help in every time of need—that is rest and peace. But it is because He is the victim that He is the Comforter. For the reason of both is Love. 'In Christ Jesus,' says the Bishop of Zanzibar, 'He actually tasted the whole round of man's sorrow, pain, and suffering; in Christ Jesus He was bereaved, in Christ Jesus He gave up His mother's earthly love that He might fight the battle against sin. And He is God: God able to be inside our heart.' So He becomes the victim of our sin.

And so He becomes our Comforter. For 'there, deep down within us, He makes our sorrows His own; carries them with us; helps us to take our share of the load; comforts us; fills us with hope that all will come right; and in His Love joins us with all whom we love, even though they are gone from our sight.'

And so also, and most of all, He makes us comforters of others. It is a matter of co-operation. Do we ask God to help us in every time of need? Every time we ask 'we really ask that Christ will do in us what we cannot do by ourselves. And because we are Christ's, and Christ is in us, it is as if we asked Him to *be* in us the virtue we are praying for: "*Be* purity in me"; "*Be* gentleness in me"; "*Be* love in me"; "*Be* comfort in me." And He becomes so, side by side with our weakness. We co-operate with Him. Little by little, with many a slip on our side, He makes us what He is.'

And the end? The end is certain victory. Victory over the Kaiser? Yes, certain victory. Take the end from Bishop BRENT. 'We have neither reason nor right to allow ourselves to suppose that God's plans can suffer ultimate defeat. It is a species of doubt to which the Incarnation, the greatest fact in history, gives flat and emphatic denial. Delay is nothing but a salutary discipline for us men of the moment. Reverses stimulate courage and give occasion to furbish ideals and simplify motives. Bondage, the

defeat of a generation, treachery within, do not mean victory for the enemy where God's cause is concerned. God's plans are indestructible, and His purpose cannot be deflected, for He is Almighty, and is the Master of all force. He is well experienced in wars, and knows how to distil the red flood of tragedy into a perpetual dew of benediction.'

'At a grave crisis in the slow working out of personal freedom in America for herself and for the world, James Russell Lowell wrote in terms peculiarly suited to the crisis of to-day—

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's  
pages but record  
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old  
systems and the Word;  
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on  
the throne,—  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind  
the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch  
above His own.'

Is this suffering God the helpless, negligible God of Mr. H. G. Wells? God forbid! It is the Lord God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, the God who will by no means clear the guilty, the living God into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall.

They who think that the God whom the German Emperor has made the victim of his ambitious cruelty is not now judging the German Emperor wholly mistake the meaning of all that has been said. 'God's austerities,' says Bishop BRENT, 'are as inflexible and immutable as His patience and meekness and forbearance. If the Old Testament is presented too frequently as portraying a cruel God, the New Testament is too often presented as portraying an effeminized God whose gentleness is mere amiability and whose meekness is nothing but weakness. The Fatherhood of God during the past half-century has tended toward becoming a

reflection in theology of the self-indulgent, easy-going temper of our age. The effect of this on morals has been and still is disastrous. We must have a God who hates as passionately as the God of the Old Testament hates—who hates evil with consuming force wherever it is and in whomsoever. Such a God we have.'

Now this is not another God than the God of the Cross. Let that heresy be forsaken for ever. God is not divided. You do not have Him in heaven while Jesus is hanging on the Tree, and you do not have Him sorrowing and suffering on earth while Jesus is in the City of God manifesting the Wrath of the Lamb. I and my Father are one—one always and one everywhere.

It is a noticeable circumstance that each of the writers whose books have been considered has a chapter on the Wrath of the Lamb. Are they afraid that their suffering God will be despised and rejected of men? Hardly. They know that He has been and is despised and rejected of men, and never, no never, more than now. They have a chapter on the Wrath of the Lamb because the Wrath of the Lamb is essential to the completeness of the character of God.

And they both assert that the Wrath of the Lamb is anger. It is not *human* anger. Dr. WESTON especially is urgent to tell us that. 'The wrath of God is not man's wrath. St. James, who lived many years with Jesus Christ, and wrote down much that he heard Jesus say, tells us: "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Truly, human wrath is chiefly remarkable for its external signs of emotion, of a man's nature stirred to its depths and tending to get out of his control. Not so is this wrath of Christ and God. It is based upon a calm, steady hatred of sin, and an almost gentle sternness in the presence of sinners.'

An almost gentle sternness—why almost gentle? Because it is the anger of love, and love is always

gentle. It is the anger of a God who is Love eternal. And being the anger of love it is a recovering anger. 'I dimly conceive of it'—this is the Bishop of the Philippines—as being a fury of forbearance, to use a paradox as legitimate as the one which it aims to elucidate. The emphasis is thrown on the last rather than the first member of the phrase. After all, it is the fixed character of the agent which determines the quality of his temper, and not vice versa. Was it not the wrath of the Lamb that looked upon Peter so that he went out and wept bitterly? Was it not the same wrath that later said, Feed My lambs: tend My sheep, so that the rebuke of his sin struck into the quick of the penitent disciple's soul as it would never have done had austerity been substituted for understanding gentleness?'

We will not then—it is the Bishop of Zanzibar now—we will not worry, he says, 'over our loved

ones who have gone. We leave them in the keeping of Love. He will make the best possible of them all. He desires richly to compensate them for all that self-sacrifice has lost them here. Nearer to eternal Love, the nearer are they to their perfect stature, to the fullness of their life in Christ. If they could like Jesus when they saw Him, all will yet be well. And let no one say: "But my boy, or my husband, never went to church, and he would not listen to the priest or minister, or to any good teachers." I am a bishop. And I say, with all the seriousness I hope I attach to my great office, that it is very possible your man, or your son, did not catch the real likeness of Jesus in any of those who preached or spoke to him, or in the services he used to attend. For we are all human, and we misrepresent Jesus very often. But in the hour of his death your loved one met Jesus Himself, Who loves him more even than you do.'

## The Mystical Interpretation of the Psalms.

A MODERN ADAPTATION.

BY THE REV. G. C. BINYON, M.A., OXFORD.

### I.

THE Psalter may be considered to be the authentic hymn-book of the Christian Church. For a time, indeed, it was also the only written Prayer Book. Although the Church was not slow to produce a Liturgy, the earliest Christian hymns are later, and hymn-books still later; and none of these latter has been elevated to anything like the same position as the Psalms. Among the inspired canonical books of the New Testament there is no collection of Christian songs and hymns to replace those of the Old Covenant. The Psalter remains unsuperseeded.

This is the more remarkable when we remember how large a part of the Psalms is occupied with the Messianic Hope, with the longing and praying for that Messianic Age which the prophets of Israel looked to, and which the Christian Church recognized as having been inaugurated by the

Incarnation of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet the Psalter continues to be recited. What this bears witness to is the fact that the Christian Church has taken over, in its main outlines, that hope of a coming kingdom which we find in the Old Testament. This fact has often been lost sight of; Christianity has, in the minds of some, been individualized, so that its social and moral content has been reduced simply to the day-by-day behaviour of individuals in their immediate circumstances; or the Church has been identified with the Kingdom of heaven, the world outside being thought of as a region from which souls are rescued rather than as the scene of Christ's extending dominion. In one way or another it has often been forgotten that while we are inheritors of the kingdom of heaven we are also heirs, and that Christ's Kingdom is not only inward and spiritual, but is also destined to have an outward and visible manifestation; the Holy