
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

MESSRS. HEADLEY BROTHERS have undertaken yet another series of books on Reconstruction. This series, to be entitled the Christian Revolution Series, is to deal with the reconstruction of religion. The first volume, of which the title is *Lay Religion* (3s. 6d. net) and the author Mr. Henry T. HODGKIN, shows us what has to be done in the reconstruction of religion. The subsequent volumes will show us how to do it.

Well, what has to be done? If you asked what has not to be done the answer would be easier. The truth is, everything has to be done. Our present practice of religion, in the churches and out of them, is wrong from the foundation throughout the whole structure to the weather-cock at the top of the spire. We must simply sweep the whole thing away and begin again. For there are two kinds of religion—material and spiritual. The religion we profess at present is material. We must be rid of it and put a spiritual religion in its place.

Mr. HODGKIN writes for the layman. Now there is no word that is less intelligible to the layman than spirituality. And the less intelligible it is the more offensive is it. For it seems to him to signify something esoteric. And to the uninitiated the most objectionable of all kinds of caste is the mystery caste. But Mr. HODGKIN explains. In the name of the layman himself he makes his demands for the reconstruction of religion. And the layman, when he reads these demands, must be a fool indeed if he does not see that they are quite intelligible, and yet, taken together, make up a spiritual religion. What are these demands? They are the demand for Reality, for Adventure, for Freedom, for Fellowship, for a Purpose, for Harmony, for Righteousness, for Power, for a Leader, and for a Knowledge of God.

If there is perplexity in so many demands it is removed by the discovery that everything gathers round the one central demand for Adventure. The demand for Adventure—that is spiritual religion. The opposite demand is for Safety. That is material religion. And Mr. HODGKIN very properly points out that we have played into the hands of the materialist by our careless use of the word 'salvation.' Why, we have even made it possible for a man to imagine that religion, the Christian religion, was some method of making himself safe from the due reward of his deeds, if not in this life, at any rate in the life to come—but with careful management, in both. Now that is material religion in its most undiluted, pernicious, and poisonous form. Spiritual religion is an adventure, and the adventure is to go out with the deliberate purpose of losing one's life, not of saving it.

But more than that, our careless use of the word 'salvation' has made it possible for the churches to organize themselves and all their forces on the side of safety, that is to say, on the side of materialism. Some churches openly support the individual as he seeks his own soul's salvation; some openly throw scorn upon him. But the churches which are most severe upon the man who is trying to 'save his own little miserable soul' are all the while, and with all their might, trying to save themselves. And it really does not matter one farthing whether it is the individual saving himself or the Church encouraging the multitude to save themselves within it. In both cases it is material religion. And material religion is not religion at all. What has to be done then? We know quite well what has to be done. If we think we do not, Mr. HODGKIN will tell us. We have to do what Abraham did. 'By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.' It was an adventure. And perhaps it never was surpassed in beaconlike clearness of example until Christ came.

Christ when He came ran a long way beyond Abraham. But He ran in the same direction. By faith Jesus also, when He was called to go out into a place which He should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed. It was on the same lines. The difference was in the cost of it. And so, when He calls us to our adventure, He calls us to follow Abraham and Himself, not laying a greater burden upon us than we are able to bear, but demanding always the Adventure, without which our religion is not religion.

May we touch again the matter of Reward? We have come upon another and a rather fine thought about it. We have found it in a volume of sermons entitled *Sin and Redemption*, by the Rev. H. L. GOUDGE, D.D., Canon of Ely (Skeffington; 6s. net).

The volume has all that scholar's accuracy, together with a certain fertility of suggestion which passes beyond scholarship. Both the scholarship and the suggestiveness are apparent even in the first nine sermons, although they are written to form a simple course in Lent and Easter for the use of the Parochial clergy. But they find fuller scope in the rest of the book, where the sermons deal for the most part with subjects of particular difficulty—prayer, the resurrection of the body, our Lord's miracles, the development of Christian doctrine, the Christian view of wealth. It is in a sermon on the Labourers in the Vineyard that Canon GOUDGE finds occasion to speak of Reward.

One of the longest omissions of the Revised Version occurs in this Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Mt 20^7). The words omitted are, 'And whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.' They are omitted because there is no proper authority for them. What is left? There is left the simple statement, 'Go ye also into the vineyard.'

So the Reward is not even mentioned. 'Nothing is said about payment at all. There is only one short hour for work; the work itself is so light in the cool of the evening that it hardly seems to deserve any wage. The householder says but this, "Go ye also into the vineyard," and the men go simply to work with nothing to rely upon but their Master's character.'

And what does Canon GOUDGE make of that? The point he makes is that here is encouragement for those who are unable to realize the hope of a future reward. He finds himself face to face with a difficulty in daily life. Men and women in increasing numbers are losing their hold of the life to come. Even Christian men, he finds, are becoming content with what is before them in this life. He does not approve of such contentment. But he finds consolation here for those who cannot do better. Does the thought of reward grow dim? 'We are left with the character of God revealed in

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Christ, and the thought of a great secret that one day we shall know.

Not from the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward;
But as Thyself hast loved me,
O ever-living Lord.
So would I love Thee, dearest Lord,
And in Thy praise will sing;
Solely because Thou art my God,
And my most loving King.'

A remarkable book has been published by Messrs. Constable under the title of *The Justification of the Good* (15s. net). It is a translation from the Russian by Nathalie A. DUDDINGTON, M.A., of an essay on Moral Philosophy by Vladimir Solovyof.

Until Messrs. Constable published (a few months ago) a small volume on *War and Christianity*, how many of us had ever heard the name of Solovyof? Yet Mr. Stephen GRAHAM, who writes an editorial note to this volume, tells us that all that is positive in Modern Russian thought springs from the teaching of Solovyof, and ends his note with the emphatic words: 'Tolstoy we know; Dostoievsky we know; and now comes a new force into our life, Solovyof, the greatest of the three.'

If Mr. GRAHAM knows, and weighs his words, that is sufficient to send us to the book with expectation. But not even emphatic words like these are enough to prepare us for the pleasure that we find in the reading of it. Perhaps we have become too ready to ask, 'Can any good thing come out of Russia?' Certain it is at any rate that not the most intimate acquaintance with the writings of Dostoievsky, no, nor even a consuming admiration for the genius of Tolstoy, can have taught us to expect the breadth of scholarship, the sympathy and wholeness of outlook, or the sanity of devotion which we find in this book.

We take it that any exposition, even such as we have room for here, must recognize three things. There is, first, the foundation or starting-point of morality. Next, there is the means by which morality expresses itself or comes into actual exercise. And then, thirdly, there is the aim and end of it all, that 'Good' of which this book is the 'Justification.'

Now, according to Solovyof, the foundation of all morality consists of three gifts of God to men—shame, pity, and reverence. You may call them instincts if you choose. Solovyof will not quarrel with you at this stage. But he himself prefers to speak of them at once as given by God. For he holds that the hand of God is in all morality from the very foundation. Not, however, by some creational feat independently of evolution, but through evolution itself. Only let it be understood that wherever man is found, and as soon as man in the progress of evolution can be called man, are found also these three primary feelings—shame, pity, and reverence.

'The true beginning of moral progress,' he says, 'is contained in the three fundamental feelings which are inherent in human nature and constitute natural virtue: the feeling of *shame* which safeguards our higher dignity against the encroachments of the animal desires, the feeling of *pity* which establishes an inner equality between ourselves and others, and, finally, the *religious* feeling which expresses our recognition of the supreme good.' Again he says, 'The fundamental feelings of *shame*, *pity*, and *reverence* exhaust the sphere of man's possible moral relations to that which is below him, that which is on a level with him, and that which is above him. *Mastery* over the material senses, *solidarity* with other living beings, and inward voluntary *submission* to the superhuman principle—these are the eternal and permanent foundations of the moral life of humanity.'

But the possession of these three fundamental feelings do not make a man moral. They have to be put in exercise. And they may be exercised in

a right direction or in a wrong. It is from their exercise in a right direction that all those qualities proceed which in ancient and modern times have been called virtues. And all the vices proceed from their exercise in a wrong direction. Take examples. '*Abstinence* or *temperance* has the dignity of virtue only when it refers to *shameful* states or actions. Virtue does not require that we should be abstinent or temperate *in general* or in everything, but only that we should abstain from that which is *below* our human dignity, and from the things in which it would be a shame to indulge ourselves unchecked. But if a person is moderate in seeking after truth, or abstains from goodwill to his neighbours, no one would consider or call him virtuous on that account; he would, on the contrary, be condemned as lacking in generous impulses. It follows from this that temperance is not in itself or essentially a virtue, but becomes or does not become one according to its right or wrong application to objects.'

Again, '*courage* or *fortitude* is only a virtue in so far as it expresses the right relation of the rational human being to his lower material nature, the relation, namely, of mastery and power, the supremacy of the spirit over the animal instinct of self-preservation. Praiseworthy courage is shown by the man who does not tremble at accidental misfortunes, who keeps his self-control in the midst of external dangers, and bravely risks his life and material goods for the sake of things that are higher and more worthy. But the *bravest* unruliness, the most *daring* aggressiveness, and the most *fearless* blaspheming are not praised as virtues; nor is the horror of sin or the fear of God reckoned as shameful cowardice. In this case then, again, the quality of being virtuous or vicious depends upon a certain relation to the object and not on the psychological nature of the emotional and volitional states.'

Finally, '*wisdom, i.e.* the knowledge of the best ways and means for attaining the purpose before us, and the capacity to apply these means aright, owes its significance as a virtue not to this formal capacity for the most expedient action as such, but necessarily depends upon the moral worth of the purpose itself. Wisdom as a virtue is the faculty of attaining the *best* purposes in the *best* possible way, or the knowledge of applying in the most expedient way one's intellectual forces to objects of the greatest worth. There may be wisdom apart from this condition, but such wisdom would not be a virtue. The Biblical "serpent" had certainly justified its reputation as the wisest of earthly creatures by the understanding he showed of human nature, and the skill with which he used this understanding for the attainment of his purpose. Since however the purpose was an evil one, the serpent's admirable wisdom was not recognized as a virtue, but was cursed as the source of evil; and the wisest creature has remained the symbol of an immoral creeping mind, absorbed in what is low and unworthy. Even in everyday life we do not recognize as virtue that worldly wisdom which goes no further than understanding human weaknesses and arranging its own affairs in accordance with selfish ends.'

These examples do more than illustrate the all-pervading influence of the three fundamental feelings of shame, pity, and reverence. They also illustrate Solovyof's method of exposition. It is one of the most pleasing and prominent merits of the book that at every step in his argument he offers an example or illustration. And with that we come to the second stage in our exposition. How are the fundamental feelings of shame, pity, and reverence to be exercised so that they may attain to the highest good?

Now, it is a little disconcerting to find that for the answer to this question we must return to the preface. We have never been of those who disregarded prefaces; we have too often found the very heart and soul of the book in them. But it is quite unusual to find that what seems to be an essential step in the whole argument of a book is thrown into the preface, as if the writer had discovered

after the book was written that that step was wanting. It may be that Solovyof did not consider that that step was essential. He may have thought it enough to pass directly from the fact of these fundamental feelings to that Good which they are finally to attain to. But it is significant that near the end of the book he tells us that certain actions are necessary as the expression of the three general foundations of morality—piety, pity, and shame. 'The first concentrated active expression of the religious feeling or piety—its chief *work*—is *prayer*; in the same way, the work of pity is *almsgiving*, and the work of shame is abstinence or *fasting*.'

As usual Solovyof gives an illustration. He says: 'This is depicted with wonderful clearness and simplicity in the holy narrative about the devout centurion Cornelius, "which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." In his own words, "I was fasting until this hour: and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house; and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, *thy prayer* is heard, and *thine alms* are had in remembrance in the sight of God" (then follows the command to send for Simon, who has the words of salvation).'

We turn, then, to the preface. What steps are we to take in order that the fundamental feelings which are common to all mankind may reach that highest good of which mankind is capable? We have seen that it will not do to lie low and let them exercise themselves. Their uncontrolled expression is sure to lead to mischief, not because this world is under mischievous government, but because self-control is part of the very order of the world.

Three ways are open. One way is to give our feelings over into the keeping and direction of others. Solovyof puts it in this form: '"God," they argue, "manifests His will to man externally through the authority of the Church; the only true Church is our Church, its voice is the voice of God; the true representatives of our Church are the clergy, hence their voice is the voice of God; the true representative of the clergy for each individual is his confessor; therefore all questions of faith and conscience ought in the last resort to be decided for each by his confessor."'

'It all seems clear and simple. The only thing to be arranged is that all confessors should say the same thing, or that there should be one confessor only—omnipresent and immortal. Otherwise, the difference of opinion among many changing confessors may lead to the obviously impious view that the voice of God contradicts itself.'

There is another way. 'The good of life cannot be accepted as something ready made or taken on trust from some external authority. It must be understood by the man himself and be made his own through faith, reason, and experience. This is the necessary condition of a morally-worthy existence.'

But neither with this condition is Solovyof satisfied, if it is made the only condition, as it so often is. For it involves the rejection of all historical and collective manifestations of the good, of everything except the inner moral activities and states of the individual. The result is a new moral error. Solovyof calls it 'moral amorphism.' And he says that 'in recognizing the good meaning of life but rejecting all its objective forms, moral amorphism must regard as senseless the whole history of the world and humanity, since it entirely consists in evolving new forms of life and making them more perfect. There is sense in rejecting one form of life for the sake of another and a more perfect one, but there is no meaning in rejecting form as such. Yet such rejection is the logical consequence of the anti-historical view.'

So there is a third way. It is found as usual by accepting the affirmations of both the other methods and disregarding their denials. 'The first maintains that the will of God is revealed to us through the priest *only*; the second affirms that this never

happens, that the Supreme will *cannot* speak to us through the priest, but is revealed solely and entirely in our own consciousness. It is obvious, however, that in both cases the will of God has been left out of account and replaced, in the first instance, by the priest, and in the second by the self-affirming ego. And yet one would think there could be no difficulty in understanding that once the will of God is admitted its expression ought not to be restricted to or exhausted by the deliverances either of the inner consciousness or of the priest. The will of God may speak both in us and in him, and its only absolute and necessary demand is that we should inwardly conform to it and take up a good or right attitude to everything, including the priest, and indeed putting him before other things for the sake of what he represents.'

The third and last step in our exposition of this book is to discover what Solovyof means by that 'supreme good' which is to be the end and aim of all our moral endeavour.

And here we notice that he is not very fond of using the phrase 'the supreme good.' He prefers the word 'perfection,' which gives him at once an advantage. For the supreme good may be God and it may be anything else. But perfection can be attributed to God alone.

Nor has Solovyof any hesitation in attributing perfection to God. That feeling of reverence with which we are endowed is unsatisfied short of God. As Augustine says, it finds no rest until it finds its rest in Him. There is an ideal of perfection to which our own imperfection for ever points. It is an ideal which demands actual realization in God, and it is at the same time an ideal which remains ever unrealized by us.

Let us listen to Solovyof himself. 'The religious attitude necessarily involves discriminating and comparing. We can stand in a religious relation to the higher only if we are aware of it as such, only if we are conscious of its superiority to us, and consequently of our own unworthiness. But we cannot be conscious of our unworthiness or imperfection unless we have an idea of its opposite, *i.e.* an idea of perfection. Further, the consciousness of our own imperfection and of the divine perfection cannot, if it be genuine, stop at this opposition. It necessarily results in a desire to banish it by making our reality conform to the highest ideal, that is, to the image and likeness of God. Thus the religious attitude as a whole logically involves three moral categories: (1) *imperfection* (in us); (2) *perfection* (in God); and (3) the process of *becoming perfect* or of establishing a harmony between the first and the second as the task of our life.'

Did we say that this ideal perfection is for ever unattainable by us? Solovyof says so, but only when his 'for ever' is bounded by the meaning of time. When he takes the larger measure of the Kingdom of God he recognizes the possibility of perfection being reached even by us. He makes a distinction between the *image* and the *likeness* of God. He does not say directly that we shall become as God. He says that the consciousness which we have of the absolute ideal is the image of God, but when we realize that ideal completely we are made in the likeness of God.

This distinction may strike us as a little fanciful. But let it stand. The final truth is that the realization of our highest good, that perfection to which all our striving points, is impossible for us until, by the surrender of our will to the will of God, we find formed in us that redemptive manifestation of God which is found in the face of Jesus Christ. And it is never realized by the individual alone, but only in fellowship with others in the Kingdom of God.

For in the Kingdom of God, and only in the Kingdom of God, does each of the three fundamental facts of human nature find its perfect form and fulfilment. The lower nature becomes wholly subservient to the higher, and shame passes into glory. Pity for others is transfigured also and becomes that spiritual sympathy which makes men all one in the perfection of brotherly love in Christ Jesus. And reverence loses itself in the beatific vision, by which we are changed into the same 'likeness' from glory to glory.