

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

WITH this number begins the fiftieth year of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. Our readers will doubtless share our feeling that it should not pass without special notice. We have no desire to indulge in mere self-congratulation, but the half-century of the existence of the magazine has been a very diversified one, and the maintenance of a large circulation, in an age in which literary struggle for bare existence has been specially keen, is a matter for gratification.

The completion of this our fiftieth volume will be more appropriate for some review of the history of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, with reference to its distinguished contributors, and articles, and so on. Meanwhile a brief note as to its origin may be of interest.

When James Hastings had been a few years in the quiet charge of Kinneff he found himself with leisure on his hands. In his own words, 'After I had visited all the congregation as often as it was reasonable to expect, I wondered what I might do now. I might have begun gardening, but I was much more interested in books, so I made up my mind to be an editor.'

So the first number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES appeared in October 1889. The first few numbers were printed at the University Press, Aberdeen, and published by William Diack, Schoolhill, in the same city. His illness, however, led to changes.

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The magazine was taken over by Messrs. T. & T. Clark, of Edinburgh, and from the fourth number onwards they have been our publishers. From the seventh number Messrs. Morrison & Gibb have been their printers.

The profound change in the field of thought during the past half-century has suggested the desirability of making this our fiftieth volume a medium of summarizing the progress of view in various departments of study. We intend to have a series of articles entitled 'After Fifty Years' in each of which, month by month, a competent scholar will deal with the outstanding and interesting developments that have taken place in various important fields. In the present number Principal Vincent Taylor starts the series with 'The Gospel and the Gospels.' Among others to follow we may mention 'The Text of the Greek New Testament,' by Sir F. G. Kenyon; 'Higher Criticism and the Prophetic Literature,' by Professor T. H. Robinson; and 'Aspects of Sacrifice in the Old Testament,' by Professor E. O. James.

Further, we mean to give bimonthly a series entitled 'Great Texts Reconsidered.' The texts in view have been the subject of theological controversy in the past, and each will be discussed by a scholar with a view to discover, if possible, how far more modern interpretations can be regarded as of permanent value, or how much in the older views needs to be recovered.

profound. For good *and* for evil. Every one must have seen films that 'feature' prominent names which have left a nasty taste in the mouth. Consider also the effect on young minds of the habit which certain film stars have of repeatedly opening a cupboard and producing a bottle and glass for a drink. It is anti-temperance propaganda, all the more deadly because it is not labelled as such.

It is unnecessary here to labour this point. Every one must realize that an art which plays constantly on the minds of receptive people must leave nearly indelible marks, and have a large part in forming the thought, the manners, and the attitude to life of those who expose themselves to it. In these circumstances is the Church to stand idly by and allow such a mighty instrument to be completely secularized and lose a priceless opportunity for teaching and evangelism?

Other bodies are taking advantage of this new instrument. Education authorities are using it to a large extent. They realize that visual teaching is more permanent than aural. In Glasgow twenty-four day schools are equipped with projectors. Trials were made of lessons given with, and without, the aid of films. Two months later retention tests were made, and it was found that 'in every case, no matter whether the cinema had seemed detrimental or beneficial in the original lessons, the children who had been taught by it retained more of the lessons than was retained without the cinema.' A leading educationist, dealing with the same point of visual teaching, says that he has never forgotten the 'Life of Christ' which he saw as a small boy, and how real it made everything seem to him. Business houses are learning the same lesson, and are using the cinema more and more largely to advertise their wares.

There is a curious feeling in the minds of many people that it is beneath the dignity of the Church to employ a film in Church. But surely common sense provides a sufficient answer to this scruple. The Church at present uses many aids in its service besides the verbal presentation of the gospel. As Mr. WING points out, when we think of the environ-

ment in which the message is usually given, 'we see such substances as glass, stone, wood, paper, and cloth all doing their part in helping the preacher in his message.' All the arts—music, painting, sculpture, architecture—have been used by the Church. All human skill that has been touched by the Divine fire of the Holy Spirit has been purified and ennobled. And the Church's central service, Holy Communion, is its most powerful instrument in the presentation of its gospel. Few Christians will fail to witness that the simple, visual symbols of the Holy Supper offer a more profoundly moving presentation of Christ than the most eloquent sermon.

These are the two most convincing facts which Mr. WING cites in urging his case for a definite move on the part of the Church. One is the enormous potentialities in the film for moulding the thought and conduct of people. The other is the fact that the Church already, by its buildings, its sacraments, its pictures, does make use of appeals to the eye. Art may be, and is, a powerful instrument of the Spirit, and there is no doubt that the film is not only one of the scientific marvels of the age but expression through the medium of the film has become an art. The Church is a very conservative body, necessarily and perhaps in some ways rightly, so. In any case, it moves slowly, but it would be a tragic failure if the Church in face of this great opportunity were to neglect an instrument which is ready to its hand.

But, when we have made out a clear case of duty, there are two other questions that present themselves at once. One is: How can the Church use the film? The other is concerned with the cost. Is it not too expensive for ordinary congregations? Mr. WING deals with both these matters in his book. With regard to the first, he suggests the subjects with which the film should deal. The first films that are needed are those showing quite simply the scene of the gospel story with illustrations of contemporary life. Mr. WING put certain questions to two classes of children in a school in an industrial centre. Half of them, by the way, preferred silent films to talkies. But the

interesting thing he discovered was that the children clamoured for 'real' scenes of Palestinian places and life. If you can make the story of Jesus real to people, you have gone a long way towards finding an entrance for the gospel message. Every one who has been at the Passion Play at Oberammergau will confirm this.

To take a very concrete case of what the film achieves, Mr. WING cites the first film made in the diocese of Manchester in 1936. It was intended to drive home the appeal of the Bishop for £50,000 in connexion with the need for churches in new housing areas. Hundreds of people in the diocese did not know what such a new area was like, and many asked why such an amount of money was needed. Accordingly, the film began with showing the need for re-housing some of the population, and the observer was shown street after street of the immense area. Houses and shops were filmed, but churches could only be shown as sign-boards on the sites for future buildings. The human interest was presented by showing boys playing in slum streets. The gradual building of a temporary church was exhibited, with a crowded service being held in the completed building. The film showed the need, the local effort being made, and the great work being done with the children—all under heart-breaking conditions. Who could resist such a concrete appeal?

But the same thing applies to all the work of the Church. In a Scottish city recently a film was made of home mission work done by women—by church sisters among fisher-girls and in other ways. And it was found that everywhere this film was in demand by local churches whose members wanted to see what is being done. It is obvious that missionary work abroad lends itself to this form of illustration. And many films have already been made of the missionary work of the Church. But Mr. WING suggests as a subject for film treatment Church finance! Here it would be an invaluable ally. It can take congregations behind the scenes and show them such items as the lack of coke, new hymn books, salaries, insurance, and the hundreds of little items that go to swell the parish

expenses. Such a film can give a coin of the realm a sacramental meaning.

'A simple and easily made film that will prove of great interest and value is the Church News Reel. Based on the same principle as the ordinary News Reel in the cinemas, it is a collection of short interesting scenes of things going on throughout the country. The material is collected by a central editor, and the complete reel gives a news picture of current Church events.' And, of course, there are other lines of development nearly as important. Mr. WING has special sections which must be read on Devotional and Evangelistic Films. But the question that will naturally be put is: All this is true, but can the Church face the cost? The writer deals with this matter in detail, and those who are practically interested are referred to his book for details. But a general statement may be made. The cost is not nearly so great as is assumed. Indeed, the thing can be done comparatively cheaply. The financial barrier is not at all a serious one. But the challenge to the Church is. 'The future of the English religious film,' says Mr. WING, 'will depend upon our action in the next two or three years. The Church of England has an opportunity waiting which will not come again. May our action be clear-cut in policy and definite in aim.'

The Beckly Social Service Lectureship was founded 'to bring the convinced support of the Church, and of Methodism in particular, to aid the cause of constructive social reform in all its manifold concerns,' and under it several notable lectures have in recent years been delivered.

Not the least notable is the 1938 lecture on *The Idea of God and Social Ideals*, by the Rev. J. Scott LIDGETT, C.H., D.D. (Epworth Press; 2s. 6d. net). The treatment is both expository and historical. Dr. LIDGETT traces the development of the idea of God and of His Kingdom in the Old Testament and in the New. Then, in the second part of the lecture, he shows in what ways and to what extent

in Christian history this revelation has affected the ideals of the Church and the Social Service by which our present civilization has been brought into being. It may be useful to give some notes on the former part.

The Christian Church, while united in inculcating the moral standards of the New Testament in regard to the personal character and conduct of Christians, has shown serious divergences of thought and activity in regard to the wider implications of these standards. On the one hand, we find a type which is pietistic, and mystical, setting its hope upon a heavenly Kingdom; on the other hand, a type which is practical and activist, bent on bringing in the Kingdom here and now. This divergence was revealed acutely at the Ecumenical Conference at Stockholm, where British, and especially American, speakers seemed at times to equate the Kingdom of God with social reform, while Continental delegates, opening their eyes in amazement, replied in effect, 'That is not the Kingdom of God as we understand it. The Kingdom is not of this world, but is spiritual and heavenly. And, moreover, it is *God's* Kingdom, not to be brought in by human effort but by the gracious outpouring of His Holy Spirit.' These divergences can only be overcome and the balance duly maintained by a careful study and exposition of the teaching of Scripture in regard to the Kingdom of God.

This is of importance for two reasons. The social ideals of to-day, even as held by those who reject the Christian faith, are based upon the recognition of the supreme value of human personalities, the worth of human society, and the vital connexion between these two. And in point of historic fact this value judgment is of Christian origin. So with the idea of progress. The Christian religion does not accept it in the secularist sense of a mechanical, inevitable upward movement, for it is too deeply conscious of the downward pull of sin. But it supplies the only stable foundation for what is essential in the idea of progress, and the most powerful urge towards progress, through its faith in the eternal purpose of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Hebrew religion in its early stages has been depreciated as mere tribalism, because God was set forth as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But 'the emphasis it laid upon the personality both of God and of the patriarchs, upon His comradely leadership over them and their concerns, and upon the living bond that united Him and them under His directive and fostering Providence, laid the indispensable foundation of religious faith, not as cosmic explanation—the result of a primitive philosophy—but as living experience of a personal relationship, in which the Self-giving of God made Him not only supreme over, but deeply interfused with, individual men and with their society, if only tribal.'

This pre-eminent emphasis on personality in God and man, and in their moral relationship, is fully maintained in the Mosaic Law and in the prophets. 'Israel as a people becomes a social unit bound together by the common will of consentient personalities.' The intrinsic worth of human personality, springing as it does from the Divine, is further emphasized by the obligations to care for the poor, the widows, and the fatherless, again and again insisted upon by the prophets. This care is treated both as an individual duty and a civic responsibility. It is the human expression of the compassionate concern of Jahweh. The value of religion is measured by the fulfilment of this social responsibility.

The sense of nationhood, when it dawned upon Israel, led to the conception of God as King who claimed a loyalty greater than might be given to an earthly king, and against whose perfect law the imperfections of earthly rulers might be judged. 'The Kingship of God is revealed as consisting not so much in the might and majesty of His Creatorship as in the adorable perfection of His character, and in His gracious relationship to His universe, especially to men who, made in His image, are capable of fellowship with Himself.' In the light of this revelation the supreme task of statesmanship and of patriotism is to secure the safety and well-being of the commonwealth by faithfully applying the values of divine perfection to the

ordering of the common life, alike in its internal affairs and in its foreign relations.

The character of God as thus revealed in His dealings with men gives the key to the conception of His Kingdom. It is not to be regarded as a political or social order, as any external constitution or degree of material well-being. It is 'the establishment of the effective rule of God in the hearts of men, with all the beneficent effects which that rule can alone bring about. Everything depends, for the prophets, upon the knowledge of Jahweh and upon walking in His light. The divine illumination is given in order that men, in their personal conduct and their social relations, may apprehend, in all its fullness, the character of God, and may reproduce it throughout the life of the city and the State by reverent and ready response to Him, in the fellowship of complete oneness with Him, in heart, mind, and will.' Obviously this ideal was far from being attained on account of the sinfulness of men, and so in later days Jeremiah was led to emphasize the need for a complete change of heart and to announce a new covenant based on the forgiveness of sins.

These Old Testament ideals Jesus both fulfilled and transformed through His immediate consciousness of God as Father and of Himself as Son. His revelation of the nature of the Kingdom of God is perfectly conveyed in the Lord's Prayer. The kingship of God is a fatherly rule, and everything depends on the hallowing of His name, that is on the loving apprehension of His character as revealed and the response of His children to that revelation. It is in full view of the Fatherhood of God and the hallowing of His name that the petition follows, 'Thy Kingdom come.' It is a prayer for 'the eventual triumph in human history of what is already being realized in the spiritual experience of God's children. This can only come about

when, and in so far as, God's will is done in earth as it is in heaven. Herein there can be no distinction between sacred and secular, between spiritual and social, for the will of God as our Father is His will to all goodness.

The Kingdom is essentially spiritual, as is evidenced by our Lord's insistence on the new birth, which is conclusive evidence that He was no mere social reformer or facile optimist. All His teaching about the Kingdom embodies both the eternal and the apocalyptic. 'The Kingdom is not set forth by Him as an earthly paradise, however spiritually and ethically conditioned. It is the Kingdom "of heaven." In coming to earth it does not lose its transcendence as alike the origin, the centre, and the goal of its earthly and imperfect manifestation. Eternal life cannot be limited by a transient earthly existence. The blessedness of the Kingdom is not that of any terrestrial order. . . . So an eternal order adequate to be the home of the sons of God is implicit as well as promised, since they are His heirs.'

At the same time, though the existing material order is not adequate to be the abiding home of God's children, and is waiting transformation, yet our Lord, especially in His Nature parables, finds everywhere suggestions and links of connexion between the earthly and the heavenly, the material and the spiritual. 'Thus there is a sacramental significance in Nature. Its affinity with the spiritual and eternal makes it a means both of the approach of God to men and of exercising human personalities for their eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God. This truth gives sanction to such efforts of men in using and transforming the natural order as may make it increasingly a fitting instrument and environment for spiritual and ethical life. And this without denying, or neglecting, the truth that our Lord's Kingdom is not of this world.'