

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'We are learning by degrees to think of Christianity not as something entirely isolated in the history of the world, but as the climax and crown of other religions.'

These words are Professor Sanday's. How many of us does his 'we' cover? Not very many yet. Most of us are still ignorant of any claim that other religions have on our attention. Some of us are still passionately denying that there are more religions than one.

Very well, there are *not* more religions than one. A new start is necessary; suppose we all start with that. But what do we mean by one religion? Do we mean the Christian? Then the statement is absurd. For if we restrict the name of religion to Christianity, what have we to call the creed and worship of others by? Let us start with the statement that there is but one religion in the world. Let us say that all the so-called religions, ancient and modern, cultured and savage, are manifestations of one great human interest, and let us call it religion. Then we shall be ready to go forward. And if we find, as most certainly we shall find, that there are things in Christianity which prove its kinship with other expressions of the spirit of religion, we shall not be in any danger of losing our faith in Christ, we shall see that we have

obtained an unexpected but most powerful reason for cherishing it as we never did before.

For convenience sake we may use the word in the plural still. But now we shall know what we mean by it. And having discovered that religion is that one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, we shall be ready to follow the steps by which men in all the generations have 'sought the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him.' And when beliefs or practices of religion arise in our path which seem a reflexion, if not even a caricature, of the things which are most sacred to us in Christianity, we shall not start away with fear. We shall the more eagerly follow their course till they reach that purification, that new birth (if it may be so called) which they obtain in Christianity, where everything rose so utterly beyond the commonplace in religion that the first disciples could not repress their astonishment, but declared that, behold, *all* things had become new.

The study of religion is upon us. And it is better that we should go out to meet it than that we should flee from it. No one will deny that on first acquaintance it is a disconcerting study. That is due partly to our past neglect of it. To some extent it has got into wrong hands. It has got into the hands of the narrow believer, who

dresses it up as a scarecrow; or into the hands of the narrow unbeliever, who waves it as a tattered flag, pretending that he has captured the very standard of the Christian army. It is disconcerting at first. But if we neglect it longer, it will become a serious menace to the Gospel.

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe.

Is Milton right? Poetically he is nearly perfect, but theologically? Is all our woe to be traced back to a Fall? And especially—for that is the matter we want to look at for a moment—did sin bring death into the world?

The Rev. H. W. Holden, Vicar of North Grimston, York, says emphatically *no*. He wrote a book and died, leaving his son to publish it. His son has published it with the title of *Pro Christo: an Examination of Foundations* (Skeffingtons; 2s.). The book contains seven propositions, each of which is unhesitatingly declared 'untenable.' The third proposition is, 'That if there had been no sin in the world, there would have been no death.'

Mr. Holden says that that proposition is now untenable. 'It has long passed current as a very article of faith. How fertile it has been in the production of doubt is simply incalculable. No one possessed of even a smattering of knowledge can any longer hold to such a dictum.' So says Mr. Holden.

But Professor James Orr believes it. Surely Professor Orr is possessed of at least a smattering of knowledge. Yet he still believes that if there had come no sin into the world there would have been no death.

Professor Orr has been in America, delivering, at the Princeton Theological Seminary, the Lectures on the L. P. Stone Foundation. His subject

was *God's Image in Man and its Defacement, in the Light of Modern Denials*, and under that title he has now published the lectures which he delivered (Hodder & Stoughton; 6s.). In the sixth lecture, which is also the last, he affirms the *physical* consequence of sin in suffering and death, in the light of modern denials. 'The idea,' he says, 'that physical death is not a part of man's natural lot, but has entered the world through sin, is scouted now as an absurdity.' But he asks seriously, Is it so? And he concludes that it is not so.

What are his arguments? His first argument is that animals need not die. Mr. Holden says that beyond any possibility of denial or doubt there was death in the world ages before there was a man upon the earth. 'Embedded in the oldest stratified rocks the bones and forms of God's creatures lie, an unerring witness to the fact.' He adds that we cannot put a foot down, we cannot drink a draught of water from the spring, we cannot draw in one breath of air, without compassing the death of some of the innumerable creatures to which God has granted life.

Professor Orr has not Mr. Holden's book before him, and he does not touch the geological difficulty. He has not forgotten the animals, however. He says they need not die. He does not deny that animals have died, but he sees no reason, apart from injury and violence, why they should die. He quotes Weismann. In point of fact, writes Weismann, some animals do not die. Not only the Amœbæ and the low unicellular Algæ, but also the far more highly organized Infusoria, do not die. They may be easily destroyed, but 'as long as the conditions which are necessary for their life are fulfilled, they continue to live, and they thus carry the potentiality of unending life in themselves.' And Dr. Orr reminds us that to express that fact Professor Weismann has coined the phrase 'the immortality of the Protozoa.'

Now Dr. Orr knows very well that it is a long way from the Protozoa to man. But in travelling that long way, he still has Weismann with him. For Weismann shows that death is not due to size or complexity of organization. On the contrary, 'Of all organisms in the world large trees have the longest lives. The Andansonias of the Cape Verd Islands are said to live for 6000 years. The largest animals also attain the greatest age. Thus there is no doubt that whales live for some hundreds of years. Elephants live 200 years.'

Weismann is a powerful friend, so far as his friendship goes. But Dr. Orr is conscious that it stops short of the end of the journey. All that can be proved by Weismann's aid is that 'death is not an inherent necessity in the animal organism.' Dr. Orr does not claim immortality for the lower animals. He says that the Scriptures do not claim it. He lets the animals go. They have died; he would not of course deny that they died long before sin entered into the world; and they will continue to die. He lets the animals go and turns to man. He has shown that the mere fact of man being an animal does not make his death a necessity. His second argument is that man is quite different from the animals. And it is that difference that brings death and sin together.

For man is a rational being and responsible to his Maker. In Scripture, says Dr. Orr, and not in Genesis only, but throughout the whole Scripture doctrine of the nature and destiny of man, and on the character of his redemption, it is taken for granted that physical death is due to sin. Whether man would have lived for ever on the earth, and how he could, are matters 'which lie beyond our ken.' We do not need even to discuss them. For sin *has* entered into the world. Still it would be more satisfying if we had been told, or been allowed to make the discovery. Dr. Orr feels it would, and he does discuss the matter a little. Perhaps, he says, men would have enjoyed translation like Enoch and Elijah. Or, perhaps, like the body of the risen Lord, the bodies of all men would have

undergone transformation. We cannot tell. But though Professor Orr cannot tell how the situation would have been met, which, alas, never had to be met, yet of one thing he seems to be sure. He seems to be sure that, just as the body of our Lord was transformed so that it did not see corruption, so also, but for the necessities of man's redemption, He would never even have died.

Under the simple title of *Essays and Addresses* (Headley Brothers; 5s. net) a volume has been prepared in memory of the late John Wilhelm Rowntree. Mr. Rowntree seems to have been more to those who knew him intimately than they have any means now of expressing. There was little in his life to indicate greatness. There is little in this thick volume. Yet his influence is unmistakable. And it is easy to believe that what he says on the Atonement, for example, though it is but a fragment, has a significance beyond its originality or its profundity. It is easy to believe that it is representative. For, among uncertainties, this is clear even to an outsider, that John Wilhelm Rowntree was looked up to by the younger men of his Communion in a way that suggested a certain sympathetic ability in him, an ability to interpret for them the thoughts which they were thinking.

What is his theory, then, of the Atonement? Unfortunately, as we have said, his writing on the Atonement is a fragment. It consists of two short papers. It was meant to consist of three, but the third was never written. But it is possible, out of what we have, to see clearly enough what Mr. Rowntree's theory of the Atonement was. It was no theory at all. It was the absence of all theory or of the need of theory. It was the faith that God can and does pardon the repenting sinner the moment he repents of his sin, and that no atonement whatever has to be made for it, either by the sinner himself or by Another.

Mr. Rowntree does not deny the need of resti-

tution. With an almost abnormally sensitive conscience (with the conscience of a Quaker, perhaps we should have said), he is not likely to dispute the necessity of restitution. But restitution is not atonement. It has nothing to do with atonement. Mr. Rowntree believed that whatever the sinner might do after his forgiveness, before it he had nothing to do, except to repent of his sin, and nobody had anything to do for him.

Will that theory, will that want of theory, work? Mr. Rowntree himself, in the articles before us, says it is the theory of the New Testament. He says it is the theory of the story of the Prodigal Son, and the story of the Prodigal Son is the gospel. He admits that theologians call the Parable of the Prodigal Son theologically incomplete, but he contends that they have a preconceived theory to defend when they say so. He holds that it is at any rate 'absolutely harmonious' with the whole spirit of the Gospel; that its meaning is unmistakable; and that it is 'neither an isolated fragment, like an uprooted text, nor an erratic boulder out of place in its environment,' but that it expresses the spirit of the Gospel 'with rare tenderness and force, and with an application deeply practical, intimate, and real.'

Now, says Mr. Rowntree, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, there is no talk of a ransom, of an account to be balanced between love and justice, of the need for punishment, or for a substitute upon whom punishment must fall. There is nothing of the kind. 'The father clasps the prodigal to his breast, a feast is prepared; and, as if to throw into deliberate prominence the unconditional acceptance of the returned penitent, we have the episode of the elder brother.'

This is not the first time that the Gospel, and the whole of it, has been found in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The significance of the articles does not lie in their originality. It lies in their representativeness. They seem to indicate an approaching revolt on the part of the younger men

against the penal theories of the Atonement, one and all. Mr. Rowntree does not stand alone; he seems to stand for the younger scholarly men of his Communion.

But if no atonement is needed, why then did Jesus die? Mr. Rowntree does not tell us that. He meant to tell us in the third article, but he did not live to write it. There has, however, been published at the same time as Mr. Rowntree's *Essays and Addresses*, a volume of chapters on the fundamental things in theology, by Mr. John Boyd Kinnear, which tells us why Christ died. The title of the book is *The Foundations of Religion* (Smith, Elder, & Co.; 3s. 6d.). The title of one of the chapters is 'Sacrifice.' It is in that chapter that we read the reason of Christ's death.

Mr. Boyd Kinnear calls himself a Protestant. As a Protestant he believes that in the Eucharist the bread symbolizes Christ's body, and the wine His blood. But he is particular not to condemn any of his fellow-men who 'find comfort in imagining that there is an actual presence of our Lord in the outward symbols which He authorized, and in surrounding them with more or less distinct adjuncts of reverence or even worship.' As a Protestant, again, he rejects the display of the crucifix, the image of Christ nailed to the cross, because he deems it comes too close to the worshipping of gold or silver or wood. But he warns those who are with him in this to beware lest they set up in place of the crucifix 'a mere idea, conceived in their own minds, and based on Jewish ritualism, that the death of Christ was a sacrifice offered to appease a relentless God.' No wrath, he says, was on Calvary. And then he gives his reason for the death of Christ. The life of Jesus, he says, was yielded as the proof of deathless love.

Is this new? No, this is not new either. Its significance is not in its novelty. And Mr. Boyd Kinnear uses no argument to give it new credibility. Its significance lies in its coincidence.

And there is yet another. Professor Swete has edited a handsome volume of essays, which has been published by Messrs. Macmillan. The title is *Cambridge Theological Essays* (12s. net); for all the writers are Cambridge men, and every man is a scholar. One of the essays has been written by Dr. E. H. Askwith, chaplain of Trinity College. Its topic is 'Sin, and the Need of Atonement.'

It is a difficult essay to read. It is the most difficult essay in the volume. For with the subject of sin, so familiar a thing to most of us, Dr. Askwith runs away into the fastnesses of philosophy. But when the first half of the essay is over, and Dr. Askwith comes to the need of an atonement, his manner alters. He becomes clear and practical. There is no risk of mistaking what he means by atonement. There is no possibility of denying that he means the same as the Quaker John Wilhelm Rowntree and the layman John Boyd Kinnear.

'By atonement,' says Dr. Askwith, 'we understand reconciliation; and this reconciliation is the reconciliation of man to God, not that of God to man.' And then to make the matter clearer by contrast, he states the view of the Atonement which he rejects. What is the view which he rejects? It is this: 'Man by his sin has forfeited the Divine favour and incurred the Divine displeasure; some offering then is necessary to turn away the Divine wrath, and to make the forgiveness, that is in this connexion the Divine overlooking, of sin a possibility; the Divine justice must be satisfied before the Divine love can forgive; the penalty of sin must be paid, just as crime in a well-governed state must be punished; Christ on the Cross bore the penalty of all human sin, and for His merits God forgives the sins which men have committed; they are restored to the Divine favour for Christ's sake.'

Dr. Askwith rejects that view. He does not deny that it 'contains elements of truth.' But, after some interesting but mild concessions, he comes to the root of his objection, and says quite frankly that he objects to 'any view of the Atonement

which puts Christ outside God, and regards Him as paying the penalty of sin to God.'

What, then, did Christ do? He 'enabled man to see sin in its true light and to desire a deliverance from it.' This is what had to be done. To enable God to forgive sin is both to misapprehend God and to misunderstand sin. The forgiveness of the past is not all that man needs. It is not the greater part of what he needs. He needs the removal of present sin. And that removal is not possible without the co-operation of the will of man. Here, it must be confessed, Dr. Askwith runs away again into a discussion of the freedom of the will. But he returns. And when he returns this is what his doctrine of the Atonement is found to be. God in Christ reveals to man what love is; and when once man has seen what love is, he finds no peace until he has yielded himself to it, until he loves God who first loved him.

Is Christ on the Cross, then, simply an evidence of the love of God to men? Yes, simply that. But what is the love of God? We fancy for a moment that we have here the easy-going theory of the Atonement which gives the sinner forgiveness before he has felt the burden of his sin. Now, it is true that all that man needs for a full repentance is to see the love of God in Christ. But what is the love of God? It is His holiness. God is not divided. You cannot say that His holiness demands the Cross and His love grants it. His holiness and His love are one.

Remember that Jesus lived as well as died. And while He lived He taught men what righteousness is. He taught them that the demands of righteousness are greater far than the most righteous Israelite had ever conceived them to be. As is the righteousness required of man, so is the holiness that belongs to God. We have to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

So when He went to die He carried this sense of God's holiness with Him. His followers had it

in their hearts as they saw Him die. It had not yet reached its fulness within them. But it was there. And it was impossible for them, as it is impossible for us, to see Him die without knowing that love and holiness were indivisible upon the Tree.

Therefore they knew, and we too know, that forgiveness is restoration. They knew that to be forgiven the past was not possible, nor even credible, without the recovery of fellowship. They cared but little to have the past forgiven. It was the present that distressed them. And they got rid of that distress only when, seeing Love, they loved it, and had their fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

‘Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth’ (Mt 6¹⁰). As in heaven. That is information. We might have guessed that the will of God was done in heaven, but we could not have been sure. Now we know. Jesus has made it certain. He has lifted the veil for a moment, and, looking into heaven with Him, we see that God’s will is done there.

How rarely He lifts the veil. He knew heaven well. Quite recently He had come from heaven, and He had not forgotten. Some think that we too have come from heaven. But when they say so, they have to add that we have forgotten about heaven—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.

Jesus *had* come from heaven, and He had not forgotten. Yet how rarely does He tell us anything about heaven that we did not know already.

What does He tell us? One thing He tells us is, that in heaven we shall neither marry nor be given in marriage (Mk 12²⁵).

It is certainly a curious item of information about heaven. It is not quite agreeable just at first. Marrying and giving in marriage—if it means no new husbands and no new wives, there is nothing disconcerting in that. But we have a

suspicion that it means more than that. Was it not told for the very purpose of showing that the husband and the wife who have loved here will not know or love one another as husband and wife there? For He told it to the Sadducees in answer to their ridiculous story of the woman who had had seven husbands. No marrying nor giving in marriage? It is all very well for the deliverance from such difficulties of relationship. It is altogether a matter of indifference to those who have never known the joy of saying ‘husband’ or ‘wife.’ But what of this world’s Kingsleys, who are suddenly separated in the full flood of that enjoyment?

‘They neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven.’ Is it a loss then? It can scarcely be a loss to be as angels. It would be more immediately comforting, no doubt, if we had a little more knowledge of angels, and a little more faith. But it cannot be a loss for men or women to be as angels. They surround the throne. They do Him service. They go in and out before Him. Occasionally at least they shout for joy.

Is it a loss? No, it is a gain. It is all gain. For it does not mean that in heaven they are less to one another than they were on earth. It only means that they are more to others. It does not mean that when the family breaks up the members of it are scattered abroad, friendless and forlorn. It means that they find themselves in a new family, in a larger family, whose members are not less loving. It has broken down all those family barriers that are self-contained and selfish, that the family love may flow forth in a full tide to all the children of God.

They neither marry nor are given in marriage. No, no. There are no husbands and wives, no parents and children, no brothers and sisters. For all these relationships are limiting and incomplete. Their very intimacy is earthly. In the atmosphere of heaven love may love and be loved again with utter abandonment, and yet without the exclusiveness of choice or the narrowness of family tie.