

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

ONE of the 'Papers for War Time,' issued from the Oxford University Press, has been written by Professor A. G. HOGG. In that paper, under the title of *Christianity and Force*, Mr. HOGG deals with the teaching of our Lord on the right way to treat evil-doers. Many papers have been published on that subject since the war began, but Mr. HOGG is worth reading after them all.

He begins by making it quite clear that he is not going to set Christ's teaching about non-resistance aside as 'an inconvenient mystery.' On the contrary, he holds it to be 'one of the luminous centres of all our thought about the meaning of the Christian Gospel.' And then he relieves alarm by adding that, when it is understood, we shall feel it our duty to support our country wholeheartedly in the present struggle, 'though we shall hate war, and a good many other things, with a more perfect hatred than ever we felt before.'

Why is it that so many Christian people explain away, if they do not openly reject, Christ's teaching on turning the other cheek? Professor HOGG says it is due to two quite healthy instincts. The first instinct calls it sentimental weakness to single out physical violence as a specially hateful thing. The other instinct encourages a man—any man of healthy moral nature—to fight to the death against every form of evil.

But, in response to the first instinct, Christ does not confine His prohibition to the resistance of physical evil. He forbids meeting violence with violence, but He also and equally forbids meeting litigation with litigation, and oppression by government with passive resistance. The words are: 'Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall impress thee to go one mile, go with him twain' (Mt 5<sup>39-41</sup>). So the real issue is not whether violence should be met by force, but whether force should be used in any manner whatever.

The second instinct—the instinct to fight against evil in any form—Christ not only does not discourage, He encourages it beyond all the teachers that were before Him. The difference is that, while they dealt with the act, He deals with the will. Do *not* resist the evil act, He says. But why? In order that you may effectively resist, and conquer and kill, the evil will.

There is no way of conquering the evil will, and making it a good will, but by not resisting the evil act. Or rather, by meeting the evil act with a good act. For the moment that we speak of not resisting, we remember that Christ's precepts are never negative but always positive. This also was

a difference, and a marvellous great one, between Him and the teachers who went before Him. 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink.' When, therefore, we speak of Christ's doctrine of *non-resistance*, we are keeping out of sight that which seems at first to make the teaching more difficult, but in the end gives it all its ease and victory.

Thus it comes to pass that for Professor HOGG the whole problem is a question of justice. There is a lower justice and there is a higher. The lower justice says, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' And to Professor HOGG it is quite plain that when the higher justice cannot be reached the lower must assert itself. It cannot be reached by any of the nations of Europe at the present time. They are not Christian enough. Even this country is not Christian enough. Therefore if any man should deny the application of the lower justice to this war, he is not ascending to the higher; he is doing great and far-reaching injustice. But let every man who has had a vision of a justice that is higher than 'an eye for an eye,' do what in him lies to enable this whole nation, and all the nations of the earth, to enjoy that vision. Then (and only then) will it come to pass that they shall learn war no more.

The discovery of the Fatherhood of God is the great theological achievement of the nineteenth century. Where was it found? It was found in the teaching of Jesus.

But when we study the teaching of Jesus, when we study it as carefully as the Rev. E. G. SELWYN, Warden of Radley, has studied it, we do not find that the Fatherhood of God has a prominent place in it. We do not find that it has any deliberate place at all. What we find is that Jesus took God's Fatherhood for granted. We do not find that He laid Himself out to teach it.

How could He? Mr. SELWYN, in his book on

*The Teaching of Christ* (Longmans; 2s. 6d. net), shows very clearly that in the lifetime of our Lord on earth the Fatherhood of God was an accepted doctrine in Judaism. No doubt to the Israelites of the Old Testament the Fatherhood was a national rather than an individual fact. But the belief in God as Father of each individual Israelite comes to full expression in the sayings of the Jewish rabbis. 'Be bold as a leopard,' says one rabbi, 'be bold as a leopard, and swift as an eagle, and fleet as a hart, and strong as a lion, to do the will of thy Father which is in heaven.'

Jesus does not teach it as if it were a novelty. It was no novelty. He does not directly teach it at all, but takes it for granted. And yet, it is just in taking it for granted that all the significance of His use of it lies, and all the originality. For He never takes for granted that God is the Father of all men. He takes for granted that God is the Father of those who have accepted Him as Saviour.

There is one exception. It is found in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. But because it is in a parable it is an exception, Mr. SELWYN says, that cannot be pressed. Accordingly, he lays down the rule that the teaching of Jesus on the Fatherhood of God is given to those who have already responded to His preaching.

Even to them He does not teach the Fatherhood of God directly. He assumes that they do not need such teaching. 'The distinctive factor in Christianity,' says Dr. MOFFATT, whom Mr. SELWYN quotes approvingly, 'is not that Christ taught that God was the Father of men, but that God was *His* Father.' And even this He taught rather by example than by precept. He lived within the Fatherhood of God. All His acts were directed by that consciousness. And thus it was, and not by direct instruction, that the disciples learned to think of God as *their* Father.

Now this is rather disconcerting to the soft

theology and the sentimental preaching which have been so popular in our day. Jesus shows that the universal Fatherhood of God is of no value to the man who does not make God his Father. And the only way to make God his Father is to take Jesus Christ as his Saviour. It is of less than no value. For it gives the impression that there is something comfortable and safe in the universal Fatherhood when there is not, just as the Jews thought there was something safe in their having Abraham to their father though the axe was already lying at the root of the tree.

There is a fine example in the Fourth Gospel. In the eighth chapter, in His controversy with the leaders of the Jews, Jesus denies their right to speak of God as their Father. For, he says, 'if God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God.' Mr. SELWYN admits that the passage may be coloured by the Jewish controversy in which the Evangelist was engaged when the Fourth Gospel was written. But the Gospel was written by one who was deeply imbued with the Master's spirit, and was expressing the spirit of the Church. Jesus shows the Jews how useless it is to rest upon the universal Fatherhood. More than that, He denies them the right. And such a passage, says Mr. SELWYN, could never have been written if Jesus had taught that God's Fatherhood was a truth independent of the believer's relation to Himself.

A great scholar and textual critic, Mr. E. S. BUCHANAN, issuing his translation of an Irish manuscript of the Gospels, which often differs in its readings from the text with which we are familiar, is driven to the conclusion that we have no infallible Bible to lean upon. He had already come to the conclusion that we have no infallible Church. What have we then? We have, he says, 'an infallible and perfect Christ, the Saviour and Hope of the World.'

We have 'an' infallible and perfect Christ.'

Have we? While Mr. BUCHANAN is writing the words, Professor KIRSOPP LAKE is sending to press his volume of lectures on *The Stewardship of Faith* (Christophers; 5s. net). 'If we go back a little,' says Professor LAKE, 'we find that men believed in an infallible Bible, and that belief has been forced from us by the undeniable proof of fallibility. The same may be said of the belief in an infallible Church. But Liberal Protestantism in the nineteenth century thought that historical criticism would remove all the misrepresentations of later tradition and reveal the figure of the historic Jesus as infallible. Is that hope also to go? Yes, I fear so.'

He does not 'fear' it. His 'Yes, I fear so,' is merely a phrase of conventionality. For on the very next page he tells us that we do not need an infallible Christ. He tells us that we are better without Him. What we need is communion with God.

Now no one will deny that what we need is communion with God. But the question is how we are to obtain it. And when we see the answer which Professor LAKE gives to that question we understand what it means to us when he denies the infallibility of Jesus. He says that we obtain communion with God 'by the striving of the Spirit in personal religion.' It is a well-chosen expression. 'The striving of the Spirit' has a fine Pauline flavour about it. But there is a difference between St. Paul's meaning when he speaks of the striving of the Spirit and Professor LAKE's. There is the difference between Christianity and Judaism. Professor LAKE does not mean the striving of the Spirit at all. He means the striving of our own spirit. The capital letter is a misprint. In the next sentence he calls it plainly 'personal effort.' He says that what we need is 'a living religion of communion with God, without the intervention of any other guide claiming to be an infallible substitute for personal effort.'

Why does Professor LAKE say that Christ is not

infallible? Simply and solely because He expected that the end of the world was at hand. Let us see then what that means.

No writer on the Gospels can at present disregard the eschatological element in them. If he disregards it, he is set down as almost ten years behind the time. Professor KIRSOPP LAKE is not behind the time. He makes much of the eschatological element in the Gospels. He makes so much of it that it is simply on account of that element in the teaching of Jesus that he says: 'We are driven back to a living religion of communion with God, without the intervention of any other guide claiming to be an infallible substitute for personal effort.'

In order to tell us what is meant by the eschatology in the Gospels, Professor LAKE carries us all the way back to the Babylonians. He bids us find a Babylonian statesman of the heyday of Babylonian supremacy, and ask him what progress the empire is making, and what policy her statesmen are pursuing. His answer is that the empire is doing well. Uncivilized tribes are being continually brought within it and offered the blessings of civilization, which is good for them and for the world. And the policy that is adopted is to break up a smaller nation and transplant it into other parts of the empire.

Were the Babylonians justified in doing that? They were altogether justified, says Professor LAKE. It is true that the prophets of Israel were of another mind—but we shall look at that in a moment. Professor LAKE says that in transplanting a nation the Babylonians were doing the work of the world. It is the policy of one of the great nations at the present time. 'With one important exception,' the United States of America are doing now just what the Babylonian empire did so long ago—the exception being that the transplantation is not effected against the will of the small nations, but at their own desire.

Now pass to the Roman Empire, and ask a Roman official how the Empire is doing and what policy is being pursued. It is doing well, he answers. The whole inhabited world seems likely to be incorporated in it. But he says that the policy of the Romans is quite different from that of the Babylonians. They do not transplant the conquered nations. They leave them in their own land, offering them the advantages of Roman citizenship, and teaching them to look up to Rome with respect and obedience.

And again Professor LAKE says that the Roman official is right. He is carrying on the work of civilization. It is precisely the policy that is pursued by another of the great nations at the present time. When the British empire annexed the Transvaal, civil rights were at once conferred upon the Boers, and they learned, not without pride, to speak of themselves as a portion of a great empire and to be ready to lay down their lives for it. 'The British empire is the natural inheritor of the Roman experiment, because it is trying to do what the Romans did—to develop an organization in which it is possible for various nations to preserve their identity, and yet to feel that there is a higher unity of Empire above them.'

Now this is all very well for the great empires. But what did the little nations say? How did the Israelites look upon the Babylonian policy of transplantation? Oh, how they hated it! We have no sooner asked the question than there rings in our ears the bitter cry of the captive son of Jacob away there in the low-lying lands of the Euphrates, when his captors asked him for a song, and said, Sing us one of the songs of Zion: 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.'

The whole world went wrong with the Israelites when they were carried captive. Disaster had succeeded disaster before. But this was the crowning catastrophe. What was the result of their bitter-

experience? Out of their experience they developed a new conception of the course of history. They came to look upon it as a succession of dramatic catastrophes. And this series of catastrophes was to end in one great catastrophe. For though they suffered, yet they were never overwhelmed by their sufferings. On the contrary, the hope that never died within them led them to look forward to one grand final cataclysm which was to overtake the world, after which the tyranny of the nations would be trodden under foot. Then the children of Israel, as the chosen of God, would recover their independence. They would live under God's direct governance with His anointed King as His representative on earth.

Of this catastrophic view of the universe Professor LAKE offers an example from the Apocalypse of Baruch:

Before therefore judgement exact its own,  
 And truth demand that which is due,  
 Let us prepare our soul,  
 That we may have hope, and be not put to  
 shame,  
 That we may rest with our Fathers, and be  
 not punished with our foes.  
 For the youth of the world is past, and the  
 strength of creation is exhausted,  
 And the coming of the time is at hand,  
 And the ship is nigh unto the harbour, and  
 the pilgrim reaches the city,  
 And life is close unto its end.  
 So then prepare your souls, that,  
 When you rise up, and leave the ship of your  
 pilgrimage,  
 You may rest, and pass not into condemna-  
 tion.

Well, this was the expectation of the pious Israelite when Christ was born. This was the atmosphere that He was born to breathe. Was He content to breathe it? Professor KIRSOPP LAKE says He was content. As soon as He began to preach, He preached the coming of the

Kingdom. And the Kingdom was to come with catastrophe.

It is true that He soon found Himself out of touch with the leaders of religion in Israel. But the cause of discord was not that He differed from them as to the catastrophic nature of the future. He differed only as to the best way of bringing the catastrophe about.

There were two ways. The Scribes said that the best way is to keep the Law. You are hindering the coming of the Kingdom by your transgressions, they said. The Kingdom will come when the whole Law is observed down to the last letter.

Jesus also said, Keep the Law. When they came to Him with the question, What must I do that I may have eternal life? His answer was, Keep the commandments. No doubt He made them feel that the keeping of the commandments was beyond them, and invited them to ask, What then? Still, it was not there that He fell out with the Scribes.

It was in His treatment of those who did not keep the commandments. Instead of saying, as the Scribes said, that there was no hope for the publicans and sinners when the crash came, He set them on a level with, He even set them sometimes above, the Pharisees and Scribes—above the most punctilious of the observers of the Law. No praised and privileged caste could appreciate that. It was inevitable that their relations should become strained. And the disagreement widened when the Scribes discovered that Jesus laid so much stress on the motive and so little on the outward observance.

The other way of bringing about the catastrophe was that of the Zealots. We see very little of the Zealots in the Gospels. But Professor LAKE believes that they are always there. Much of the teaching of Jesus becomes intelligible, he thinks,

only when we place it in contrast to that of the Zealots. For the Zealots taught that the way to bring the present system to an end and inaugurate the new was to do as much mischief as possible to the enemies of God. 'Fight against them,' said the Zealots; 'resist them; rebel; destroy.'

Jesus taught the very opposite. The Kingdom will come, He said, not by fighting, but by suffering. And He offered Himself as an example.

Thus Jesus differed from both parties as to the method by which the end was to be hastened. But as to the form in which it would come He and they, says Professor LAKE, were entirely at one. The Scribes and the Zealots believed that it would be, not slow but sudden. So did He. They believed that the future would show, not a development of forces and tendencies, but a more or less rapid rush towards a great catastrophic upturn. So did He.

And He and they were wrong. That is Professor LAKE's conclusion. He does not think it is a serious thing to be wrong. Strange to say, he thinks it better than to be right. The eschatological hope was an illusion. It was not going to happen. 'But can we,' he asks in his persuasive way, 'can we be quite sure that illusions are not very often the source of progress? Let me take an example. What was the intention of Columbus when he discovered America? It was to find a way to India, and if he had not been under a complete illusion as to the geography of the world he would not have troubled to find what was then a wild and savage country.'

This is true of great men, he says, all through the history of the world. We need not dispute it.

The point is: because Jesus was under an illusion He is not infallible. That is Professor LAKE's own conclusion. And so, simply because, in Professor LAKE's opinion, Jesus expected the end suddenly and soon, He is better out of the way. For it is impossible, he says, 'to find our Saviour in one who conditioned his teaching by Jewish apocalypticism, and believed in what was, after all, an illusory expectation of the coming of the Kingdom of God.'

Has Professor KIRSOPP LAKE any conception of what he is trying to do? He shows no single sign of it. He is quite well aware of the difficulty of the study of apocalyptic. He recognizes the variety of opinion among scholars. He knows that it is not possible for any man to be sure that he has come to the right conclusion upon the eschatological teaching of Jesus. And yet he says that the Christ in whom we have believed, we are to believe in no more. He imagines and calmly assures us that we can get along very well without Him.

We turn to the words of another Oxford scholar and we read: 'In a sense which is true of no other personality in history, Jesus Christ still lives and still speaks to the hearts of men. The truth of His message each man may test for himself, not by the process of historical inquiry and criticism alone, but by those deeper and more subtle processes, obedience and faith. There is a charm about His demeanour and a simplicity about His words that will always appeal to the student. But to know Him in all His power and beauty it is necessary to become not merely a student, but a disciple. To the inner Sanctuary of His presence there is only one password—My Lord and my God.'