

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

IN January 1917 there was formed a Society for Old Testament Study which included in its membership many Hebrew scholars of international repute. During the twenty-one years of its existence it has done much useful work, and now to celebrate its coming of age it has issued a volume of essays on the Old Testament, entitled *Record and Revelation* (Milford; 10s. 6d. net), under the editorship of Principal H. WHEELER ROBINSON, M.A., D.D.

The volume covers the whole field of Old Testament study and gives an up-to-date account of the work done in each department—Literature and History, Religion and Theology, Archæology, Language, and Exegesis. There are about twenty essays, each by an acknowledged authority, and it would not be possible to find within the same compass a more comprehensive and reliable survey of the whole field. The work deserves the heartiest commendation. It is well planned, and despite the diversity of authorship it makes a coherent whole.

The last two essays stand somewhat apart from the rest and are of quite peculiar interest. The former deals with the Old Testament and Judaism. It was written by the well-known Jewish scholar, Dr. C. G. Montefiore, whose death in July of this year is a great loss to Hebrew scholarship. He points out that until modern times Judaism has been hampered in its development by having regarded the Old Testament as the perfect word of God, as homogeneous and on one supreme level of moral

and religious excellence. 'Nevertheless it is no less a fact that, impelled or induced by its genius or by the divine will, or by good fortune (however the fact be interpreted), Judaism has largely fastened on the great things in the Old Testament, and neglected, or explained away, the cheap and crude and undesirable things.' Again, 'for them God was what He is depicted as being in the best passages and in the highest teachings of the Old Testament; the others were ignored.'

Dr. Montefiore remarks that this selective reading of the Old Testament is just what Christians also practice, even though as Fundamentalists they may theoretically maintain the plenary inspiration of the whole. He gives, however, no indication of where the Jew finds the moral and religious standard by which he judges and selects. For the Christian, of course, this standard is given in Christ and the gospel, and it would be an interesting subject of inquiry how far modern Judaism has been unconsciously influenced in its selective reading of the Old Testament by the Christian standard.

The last essay in the volume, written by Principal W. F. Lofthouse, is on the Old Testament and Christianity. It is a singularly suggestive and helpful bit of work. The writer has no sympathy with those who in many quarters discount or deny the value of the Old Testament, who would cast it aside as 'Hebrew old clothes,' outworn and useless

because superseded by the Gospel. It is his conviction that 'the New Testament is properly intelligible only in the light of the Old, that the Old Testament is only fully intelligible in the light of the New; and also that, so understood, the Old Testament contains the record of a revelation of divine will and purpose, without which life cannot be rightly lived on this earth, or peace, justice, and goodwill among men attained.'

The religion of every part of the Old Testament is the religion of promise. 'With their feet firmly set on a track that leads back to certain indubitable events, and with keen attention to all that is happening around them, the best of the Hebrews fix their eyes on what lies in front, and even, by a daring and heroic venture, on what is hidden on the other side of the horizon.' What is to come they can only dimly see, and how it will come they can only guess, but their faith is never daunted, nor do hope and courage fail. The writers of the New Testament had all this in view, for they had been brought up on the Old Testament and were steeped in its language and thought. Yet now a striking difference of tone emerges. 'If the Old Testament looks from the present to the future, the New looks from the future to the past, or rather, as the grammarian would say, to the perfect tense. The promise is fulfilled; the grace of God has been manifested; the deliverer has appeared; we have seen Him, heard Him, known Him.' But the end is not yet, there is more to come. The Christian looks for the consummation; Jesus Himself waits till all His enemies are put under His feet.

At first reading, the words of Jesus suggest something wholly new. If the vocabulary is that of the Old Testament, the spirit is fresh. Jesus Himself recognizes this when He contrasts His words with what was said by them of old time. Yet He knew Himself to be in line with the prophets. As He said, He came not to destroy but to fulfil. 'Are Law and Gospel opposed? Did Jesus remove the first to establish the second? Properly speaking, there is no opposition between the two. Paul might allow himself sometimes to speak of the

Law as if it were merely a catalogue of burdensome and senseless duties. But he was too good a Jew not to know that it was more than this. It was God's instruction to men, revealing to them how they could enjoy His favour. It was more. It was a promise, though a conditional one. "If you do this, you shall live and be blessed." But through sin the promise was continually deferred. The heart was sick. Hence the Gospel; a second promise, and this time not conditional.'

Between the thought and language of the Old Testament and the New there is thus a profound harmony of which Christian theology must take full account. The theologian neglects the Old Testament at his peril. It is not too much to say that many strange divergencies in Christian theology might have been avoided 'if the theologians had taken the trouble to read their New Testament texts with eyes that had grown familiar with what they might have seen in the Old.'

Take, for example, the doctrine of God. How variously it has been presented. God has been held to be the Supreme Being whose existence, but not His grace, can be demonstrated by reason. Or He has been conceived as the stern Judge, the outraged potentate, or by contrast, the loving Father too kind and lenient ever to punish. Now it is not to be denied that such conceptions are to be found in the Old Testament, but each of them is only part of the picture. 'If we put the picture together, we have a jealous will, intense and passionate, who, lord of the whole world which His providential care has created, uses it and every event which takes place within it to draw men, once created in His image, to Himself. Could any portrayal of God help to keep the theologian nearer to the New Testament presentation than this?'

Or take the doctrine of sin. It is variously spoken of as an infringement of law, or as a weakness of the will, or an inherited taint, a relic of the beast, or as a physical poison springing from the unclean desires of sex. Its effect upon the will is hotly disputed. Man, no matter how grave and prolonged his sin, is still unconditionally free, or, on

the contrary, his will is totally enslaved. 'The Old Testament writers are not interested in the discussion of these subjects; they leave it for later Jewish and Christian theologians. But they are aware that sin is a condition, partly no doubt of the body, certainly of the mind and will; a disease; a contamination. But even when the whole heart is sick God will call for repentance; and God's will cannot be for the impossible. Once man responds, in God's appointed way, God is ready with His grace. There is more in the New Testament than this; but there is more here than in much of our theology.'

So in regard to the Atonement the number of theories advanced is notorious. Of these, of course, the writers of the Old Testament are wholly ignorant. But the Old Testament has a doctrine of personal reconciliation, and if some of our theories of the Atonement had been tested by it their inadequacy would have been exposed. In the Old Testament 'the devil, in the theologian's sense, has no influence on God's dealings with men; nor does God demand so much suffering as a penalty for so much sin; He is neither desirous of the death of a sinner, nor is He moved by anything except the return of the sinner from his own wickedness, that he may live. But is not blood demanded that He may be appeased? Is not vicarious sacrifice at the centre of Israel's thought of man's approach to God? This view we have already seen reason to doubt. But even were it true, the animal that is sacrificed for man's sin is in no sense being *punished*, nor are its sufferings dwelt upon. Its blood is regarded as shed in order that by that pure offering the offerer may be purified and enabled to come into the presence of God. Even if the Servant Songs had never been composed, the Old Testament might have protected us from the misconceptions of a thousand years of Christian speculation.'

Hence we can see how profoundly true is Augustine's dictum that the Old Testament is *patent* in the New, and that the New Testament is *latent* in the Old. In the Old Testament veil after veil that covers the face of truth is withdrawn, and men are bidden look for the perfect unveiling.

That perfect unveiling is given in the New Testament in the Person of Him who is the Word incarnate. Is this a baseless assumption, then our hope is vain, our belief in a divine revelation is but a dream. The Old and New Testaments stand or fall together. 'If the Christian's faith in the Son of God is an error or a delusion, the Old Testament will fall with it. For its record will be no more than a record of old unhappy, far-off things; and its expectation will be as the vanishing glamour of a mirage. But if God has indeed been declared by the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father (and to whom else should we go? has He not the words of eternal life?), then the Old Testament also is a revelation, and a revelation, it is not too much to say, of permanent and priceless worth.'

Yet another book from Professor C. H. DODD'S busy pen! This time it is *History and the Gospel* (Nisbet; 6s. net), being five Lectures delivered in March, 1938, at the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Union Theological Seminary, New York; and the Andover-Newton Seminary. They reveal once more the author's power of clear and suggestive exposition.

In nineteenth-century criticism the aim was by analysis of the Gospels and assessment of them as historical documents to reach the historical Jesus. But in modern criticism the Gospels are recognized as emphatically religious documents, and the tendency is to decry the significance of mere facts of history, supposing they could be ascertained. It is part of the revolt against 'historicism' and the renewed interest in the dogmatic aspect of the Gospels, as conveying a divine revelation.

While this shift of emphasis is all to the good, we must still ask the historical question. Christianity cannot be indifferent to historical fact. The Gospels are religious documents, but their witness to faith is bound up with their witness to certain events that happened in history. It therefore remains a question of acute interest to the Christian theologian

whether their witness to historical events is in fact true.

But what is implied in the description of Christianity as an historical religion? The mystical type of religion concerns itself with man's inner life, rejecting the things which are temporal and aspiring to the eternal. For it, history is at best irrelevant and at worst a hindrance to the soul's union with God. Nature-religion, on the other hand, looks upon the world of time and sense as a medium of divinity, being a response to the 'numinous' or awe-inspiring quality of natural phenomena, whether regular or exceptional. But for it also history as such is irrelevant.

While Christianity does not reject the idea of the revelation of God in mystical experience or in the sphere of Nature, but takes up both modes of revelation into its own scheme, it finds in history the primary field of divine revelation. 'It is from the vantage point of a historical revelation that we can look both inwards upon the life of the spirit and outwards upon the world of Nature and discern in both the vestiges of the Creator.'

When it is said that for Christianity the eternal God is revealed in history, it does not mean that any striking episode in history may be regarded as the self-revealing act of God, such as the re-emergence of the German nation under Adolf Hitler; nor that the truth about God can be discovered by a synthesis of the observed facts of history, as in the 'organic' or the 'cyclic' theory put forward by the philosopher of history.

History, as the field of the self-revealing activity of God, does not consist of bare events, nor of any casual event, but of a particular series of events to which a unique intensity of meaning belongs. 'The particular, even the unique, is a category entirely appropriate to the understanding of history; and since one particular event exceeds another in significance, there may well be an event which is uniquely significant, and this event may give a unique character to the whole series to which it belongs.'

It is the claim of Christianity that a unique significance attaches to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as revealing the purpose of God in history, and that this supreme event gives a unique character to the whole series of events recorded in the Bible from the call of Abraham to the emergence of the Christian Church. The purpose is never conceived to be completely revealed in the history of Israel, but it is conceived as to be revealed in the great consummation, the Day of the Lord. In Christianity the coming of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, are represented as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, as eschatological events in the full sense.

Thus the story of the Gospels is a narrative of events whose meaning is eschatological, that is, 'events in which is to be discerned the mighty act of the transcendent God which brings history to its fulfilment.' Accordingly, the question of the historicity of the Gospels is one which cannot be set aside. The Gospels are both historical and religious documents.

Professor Cecil John CADOUX, M.A., D.D., has written a book—*The Case for Evangelical Modernism: A Study of the Relation between Christian Faith and Traditional Theology* (Hodder & Stoughton; 7s. 6d. net)—which will no doubt arouse considerable discussion. We are aware of many sporadic utterances from the Modernist side on certain points of traditional belief. But in this book we have, not only a criticism of 'Orthodoxy,' but a definite attempt to relate the Modernist position to the Christian facts and to rationalize it, in short, to give it a doctrinal form.

The term 'Modernist' is a very elastic one. It would include extreme left-wing Unitarians, and might even embrace thinkers on the other wing like Dr. A. J. Rawlinson. Dr. CADOUX qualifies the word by 'Evangelical,' and this implies (what indeed his book confirms) that his Modernism accepts fully the results of modern criticism and at the same time adheres faithfully to the gospel of

the grace of God in Jesus Christ. 'Christians are essentially those for whom God in Christ has wrought great things whereof they are glad, those who through Christ have found God, have tasted His love, and experienced His saving, cleansing, and uplifting power.'

In seeking for truth, however, we must proceed as the scientist does—there is no difference between science and religion in this respect. And when we do so we find certain principles involved. One is that the basis of operations is the world of objective reality, and for the Christian that means God. The human counterpart to this objective reality is the faith, intelligence, and conscience of man. But the seeker after God also (like the student of science) needs the guidance of experienced and therefore authoritative teachers, whom he finds in the Bible and elsewhere. The decision as to which teachers he will trust, however, is the act of his own private judgment. No teacher, however much trusted, is ever rightly regarded as infallible. His authority is provisional.

And finally, if we raise the question: How is the seeker to *know* what is true, how are we to be safeguarded against error? the answer lies, not in any established body of doctrine, however venerable, but in the records and experiences of God's dealings with us. 'If, as we believe, God really exists and works through His Holy Spirit in the minds and consciences of men, then, so long as man remains a truth-loving animal, our orthodoxy [in the sense of ascertained truth] is secure, whatever errors may from time to time attend our efforts to reach it.'

These principles, summarized in the last two paragraphs, may be taken to be the essential content of modernism, evangelical or not. And in the light of them Dr. CADOUX examines the conclusions and methods of what he calls Traditionalism (we may pass over his criticisms of the left-wing and of Barthianism, both of which he designates 'blind alleys,' as they are on familiar lines). The traditional Christology, as embodied in the Chalcedonian formula, he rejects mainly on two grounds. One

is that it locates the Divinity of Jesus in the metaphysical composition of His Person rather than in the spiritual and moral quality of His character. The other is that this metaphysical construction is in flagrant contradiction with the recorded facts of our Saviour's life. Dr. CADOUX admits that the traditional Christology has safeguarded a precious truth, that God was truly and uniquely in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. But that does not justify its other errors. And indeed does not justify the position, to which all Modernism objects, that authoritative truth lies in a closed body of doctrine rather than in the experience of the believer.

We are waiting patiently for Dr. CADOUX's own reconstruction. But he keeps us waiting a little longer while he clears out of his way certain 'unhistorical elements.' The first step in a reconstruction is to dispose of these. They are no fewer than nine. And only a bare list of them can be given here. They are as follows: the Virgin Birth, the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, that Jesus was omniscient, that He performed any of the 'Nature miracles,' that Jesus was conscious of pre-existence, that He claimed to have authority to forgive sins, that He claimed to be sinless, that the discourses in the Fourth Gospel are from His lips (or most of them), and, finally, that His body left the tomb. That is a comprehensive, and a very serious, list of negatives. It does not seem to leave much ground for doctrinal reconstruction. But, in spite of that, no reader of this book will fail to be impressed by the brave attempt in it to preserve all that is precious in our Christian faith.

Dr. CADOUX wishes to be true to the data given us in Scripture and experience. And he sees clearly that the difficulty in the way of a working theory is our need of somehow unifying the humanity which Jesus shares with us and the uniqueness wherein He differs from us. 'All men, we often say—at least all good men—are in some sense divine; but Jesus is divine in a unique sense.' The traditional Christology failed because, though it admirably safeguarded the unique character

of His Divinity, it virtually denied His real humanity.

Dr. CADOUX believes that, in endeavouring to solve the problem, we have to take seriously what he boldly calls the divinity of man. There is, he says, a striking similarity between the assertion that God is in some sense *in* men and the great Pauline affirmation that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.' And Conservatives and Modernists meet to-day on common ground in affirming that the goodness and self-sacrifice of Jesus are, in some real and mysterious sense, the goodness and self-sacrifice of God Himself. 'Why, therefore, should we not, tentatively at least, affirm that "God's presence and His very Self"—the Presence and Self manifested with unique clarity and fulness in the overwhelming goodness of Jesus—is after the same fashion though with less clarity and fulness manifested in those in whom Jesus Himself has called forth a longing to follow Him?'

Dr. CADOUX is fond of Paul's phrase 'the first-born among many brethren,' and it seems to sum up his Christology. Dr. CADOUX sees clearly that his position falls far short of the precision attempted in the traditional creeds. It is at least exposed to other criticisms, as he admits, and especially two; that it is pantheistic, and that it is unitarian. Both these criticisms he rejects. He quotes with approval Dr. Wheeler Robinson's words, that 'for the modern man earnestly seeking the confirmation of his faith in Jesus and not blind to all the difficulties of the day . . . the only way is to face Jesus in His humanity and resolutely to seek God in and through the human values of the personality of Jesus. . . . Perhaps the most helpful thought may be to ask ourselves the question: "What other expression

of the Godhead could there be than through such a humanity as this?'"'

And as to Unitarianism, Dr. CADOUX by no means denies the doctrine of the Trinity. He has his difficulties about it, like all of us, but he accepts it. 'The Trinitarian assertion of the existence from all eternity of "God the Son" who became incarnate in the human Jesus I accept as a method of affirming that the forth-going divine life manifestly present in Him for the salvation of us men was as divine and eternal as that of the Father Himself.' And Dr. CADOUX earnestly asserts that his immanent Christology does not ignore or omit that vital Christian belief for which more traditionalist language is often asserted to be the only safeguard.

We do not propose to criticise the conclusions of this book. That is not in the scope of these notes. But in the minds of many readers who sympathize with the writer's aim and admire his courageous attempt to preserve what is essential in real Christianity, there will remain an uneasy feeling, due to two things. One is the suspicion that with the removal of the 'unhistorical elements' referred to, the basis of the Divinity of Christ is seriously compromised. And the other is the query that persists as to whether Dr. CADOUX's position really does safeguard the uniqueness of Christ. It should, however, be added that the author earnestly contends that in this Evangelical Modernism there is a gospel for sinful and suffering humanity, and that the message of the redeeming grace of God in Christ can be as efficiently conveyed to men in Evangelical Modernism as in traditional ways. That is his last word, and it is, of course, the all-important issue.

