

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE recent death of Dr. Sigmund Freud has called forth appreciations of his greatness and originality from psychological thinkers of all schools. Nor is it surprising that his name fills a large place in recent works on the Psychology of Religion, despite his negative attitude towards religion. Two such works have appeared very recently. A review of one, *Religion and the Growing Mind*, will be found in another column. In that work Dr. Basil A. YEAXLEE has much to say both on the positive merits and the defects and limitations (as these appear to him) of the Freudian psychology.

The other work to which we refer is Dr. Sydney Herbert MELLONE's *The Bearings of Psychology on Religion* (Blackwell; 12s. 6d. net). We are not sure that the author is altogether happy in his title. The book might be better entitled, 'Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion.' For it falls into two distinct parts.

The first part virtually consists of studies in the religions of Primitive Peoples, the Ancient Greeks, the Ancient Romans, and Ancient Israel, with an account of the dissolution of the Græco-Roman Paganism. They are interesting and up-to-date studies, and we are grateful for them. The second part is psychological rather than historical, as the titles of the chapters indicate: The Unconscious Mind; The Religion of the Child and of the

Adolescent; Conversion and Revivals; Religious Experience, Mysticism, and Faith; Symbolism in Religion.

To the first of these later chapters, that on The Unconscious Mind, we would here direct attention. For the subject is closely associated with the psychological discoveries of Dr. Sigmund Freud. Not that Freud was the first to use the conception of the unconscious mind. Leibniz and Von Hartmann made use of it in the context of speculative philosophy. William James employed it in the context of the psychology of religion, finding in it a clue to a constructive explanation of the varieties of religious experience.

But the results of the psychological theories of the unconscious put forward by Freud and his school have been, in relation to religion, mainly negative and destructive; and it is Dr. MELLONE's contention that the theories in question are speculations, not demonstrated facts. This contention he would support with reference to the work of Freud himself.

Reminding us that Freud generalizes from a wide experience of treatment of pathological mental conditions, he draws attention to the postulates on which Psycho-analysis rests. They are (1) that the most fundamental impulsive forces in human

life are certain instincts or 'drives' whose primary seat is in the unconscious; (2) that the conflicts of these drives, among themselves, and with the acquired tendencies of the conscious mind, lead to 'repressions' which create 'complexes,' mostly of an injurious character; and (3) that the most prominent and powerful of these drives are sexual. Though in his later writings Freud modified his view of the unconscious mind, the doctrine of 'infantile sexuality,' with its centre in the 'Oedipus Complex,' is uncompromisingly maintained.

We must not pause to consider Dr. MELLONE's comments on these three postulates. It may suffice to say that while acknowledging the value of the doctrine of 'repression,' he rejects the theory of 'infantile sexuality' as a wrong interpretation of the facts. We hasten to his final point, that the over-emphasis in Freud on the pathological leads to failure to understand religious experience.

In his work 'The Future of an Illusion' Freud claims that Psycho-analysis has 'traced the origin of religion to the helplessness of childhood, and its content to the persistence of the wishes and needs of childhood into maturity.' He sees clearly and feels deeply, as Dr. MELLONE allows, the enigma of human frustration. But his argument virtually is that because human nature naturally forms religious beliefs, therefore religious beliefs are illusory. That is surely a fallacious argument. The same argument would with equal cogency lead to the conclusion that all science is illusory.

'Finally, we observe that the author appears to have in view only the external (the ceremonial and traditional) elements in religion. He completely ignores the higher elements, such as disinterested altruism, creative vision, personal idealism, intuitive valuations. A friendly critic of Psycho-analysis has said that in this book Freud does not attempt to explain religion but only that "superstitious mixture of selfishness, credulity, and cowardice miscalled religion."''

In his remarkable book *Love for a Country: Contemplations and Conversations* (reviewed in another column) Mr. Rom LANDAU devotes a considerable section to religion and the Church in Britain. It is headed 'Religion on Trial.' Mr. LANDAU is himself a deeply religious man. He is the author of 'God is My Adventure.' And his attitude to the Church is definitely sympathetic. He appreciates the great work it is doing. He does not undervalue the influence and competence of its leaders. But his aim is to find and state the facts of the religious situation, and this aim he pursues 'without fear or favour' in his book.

It is interesting to find him beginning his survey with an assertion that there is in this country a definite religious awakening. This he attributes partly to a widespread recognition of the value of liberty, a recognition due to the muzzling of freedom in other countries; and partly to a strong reaction against materialism. The men who have had a predominant influence on Western thought in the last fifty years are Darwin, Nietzsche, and Marx. In their different ways each of them preached the sanctity of matter. Darwin's 'essential materialism' was the basis of evolution. Nietzsche's materialism was that of individual power. Marx's 'social materialism' was the root of Communist doctrine.

The true heroes of this period became the scientists, inventors, industrialists, financiers, and the various political doctrinaires. For the things of the Spirit little room was left. Then came the years of war. Science lent its full support to the slaughtering, politicians failed to create peace, and economists material stability. Is it to be wondered at that people's faith in materialistic philosophies was shaken? Slowly individual men and women are beginning to turn to the supernatural forces as implied in the idea of God, and to acknowledge a morality rooted in theism. Many of those who formerly would have turned to science look for guidance to religion. Can the churches provide such guidance?

Before an answer can be given the attitude of the churches to various important matters must be examined. Because what we find to-day is the paradoxical situation of a growing religious urge on the one hand and a declining influence of the churches on the other. Both the foundation and the weapons of the Church are spiritual. And yet for the last fifty years or so the Church has often acted as if she were ashamed of her spiritual character.

And this is Mr. LANDAU'S first criticism, that, instead of relying on what are her especial prerogatives—the power of the Spirit, the power of faith, miracle—she has tried to arm herself with the weapons of materialism. Intellectual and semi-scientific explanations have been given to explain away miracle. But if we deny the miracle we deny Christianity. The whole of Christianity is a miracle. Christ's entire life as well as His resurrection are miracles. Only by acknowledging the miraculous quality of Christianity are we able to place ourselves within the magic sphere in which miracles take place. The business of the Church is not to explain a miracle away but to do the opposite and emphasize the fact that no rational science can explain the mysterious ways through which the Deity can manifest itself, and that miracles belong to the sphere of the Spirit and not to the one limited by reason.

Passing over lesser matters we note next a very practical point. In religion, as in everything else, advice has creative power if it is born of practical experience and supported by a living example. But Mr. LANDAU thinks that many of the Church leaders lead lives which are too far removed from the ordinary economic, social, sexual, and other problems of those whom they are in a position to lead to afford opportunities for first-hand knowledge of those problems.

This applies to two things. First to the position of dignitaries which removes the holders from some of the spiritual sources of religion. 'Only a genius or a saint can remain unaffected by the distorting influence of rank.' Do not the real

answers to the questions which perturb the nation reveal themselves in tranquil meditation and to those who lead lives of simplicity and humility?'

But this aloofness is created also by the over-organization of the churches that burdens the members of the clergy themselves. Bishop Gore wrote once: 'This is an awful mind- and soul-destroying life. I really do not know how to live it. The arrears of important work accumulate and crush.' The Archbishop of Canterbury complained on one occasion that he had no time to read anything but minutes and reports. And Mr. LANDAU, who quotes this, adds that if the head of the nation's chief spiritual organization has no time to read the books in which the genius of the nation finds its most articulate expression, there is something wrong in the structure of that organization. Almost every bishop, dean, canon complains of the burden of organization which undermines the spiritual side of his work.

In one of the commonest forms of criticism of the Church Mr. LANDAU partly concurs. Many Christians with a strong sense of social justice feel unable to collaborate with the Church because she appears to them to identify herself more with those in power than with people in real need of her support. This applies not only to the dire poverty and social injustice at home but to the terrible conditions in many of the country's colonial possessions. The examples cited are West Africa and Jamaica, where the native population has been dwindling through exploitation and tuberculosis while the representatives of the powers-that-be were enriching themselves. Is it not true that, while the gravest social evils persist among us, the Church pursues its way, placid and unalarmed, and absorbed in things that are of small importance? So Mr. LANDAU suggests.

We go deeper when we visit the Dean of St. Paul's with Mr. LANDAU. 'What would you consider the reasons for the decline of the spiritual influence of the Church?' he was asked. And Dr.

Matthews replied: 'The main reason, in so far as it is a fact, is that many people feel uncertain about the foundation truth of religion, *i.e.* belief in God. I think it is probably due to the fact that there seems to be a contradiction between what they learn at school and the manner in which religion is often presented by the Church. It is of great importance that the fundamental truths of Christianity should be re-stated in such a manner as to make them harmonize with the standpoint of people more or less educated on modern scientific lines.'

Dean Matthews, with his usual insight, put his finger at this point on a real difficulty. One of the great obstacles to the Church's success in thus 'modernizing' her message, is, he said, that the Church, like all other ancient institutions, has to carry a large number of very conservative and even reactionary people, who are afraid of anything that seems at all novel. And also, the Church has an obligation to the past. We must not forget the claims of tradition and traditional ways of acting in a religious organization. The religious experience of the past has been expressed in doctrines, forms of worship and liturgy. These must be modified with great care, so that the eternally valuable elements in them are not lost.

We have summarized the main points of Mr. LANDAU's criticism of the Church. And perhaps we could not end this account better than by emphasizing Dr. Matthews' caveat, suggested in his words, 'in so far as the decline of the spiritual influence of the Church is a fact.' Dr. Matthews thinks that the efforts which are being made by and in the Church to meet the modern situation have not received sufficient notice by those who blame the Church for not realizing the condition of the modern world. He cites utterances of Church leaders, and the recent Report of the Archbishop's Commission on Doctrine in the Church of England, as well as the Conferences at Oxford on Church, Community, and State. And he concludes: 'Thus I feel that, though there is much to depress us in the condition of the Church and its relation with the mass of the people, it

would be quite untrue to say there are no hopeful movements, and I think that the Church will come out of the present crisis stronger than before, always assuming that we have courage to act on our belief in the power of the Holy Spirit.'

A book has recently been published which deserves, and indeed has already begun to receive, the attention of Christian thinkers. Its title is *On to Orthodoxy*, by Mr. D. R. DAVIES (Hodder and Stoughton; 6s. net).

Its purpose is, in the writer's words, 'to give a plain record of how one man, a Modernist, a Humanist, suffered shipwreck in the disasters of modern life; and, further, of how he has gained security of mind and peace of soul.' It should be understood, however, that the book is much more than this. It is not predominantly autobiographical. It is in the main a formidable and impassioned attack on the liberal theology of the nineteenth century, which was in great measure a surrender to the dominant secularist mentality of the age and which would have robbed Christianity of its transcendent significance.

The writer, it can readily be gathered, is essentially an enthusiast, holding his beliefs with passionate conviction and liable to profound fluctuations of feeling. Brought up in conditions of wretched poverty he was set to work in a South Wales coal pit before he was thirteen. He early became an ardent socialist and preacher of a social gospel. He practically identified Socialism with the Kingdom of God, and believed—so ran the promise of Christian Liberalism—that by working for society he could achieve personal fulfilment and happiness. The result was a growing disillusionment. 'My own personal difficulties remained—my spiritual nostalgia, my disintegration, my weaknesses and inconsistencies, my consciousness of futility. Always I returned to the rock-bottom of an inner, personal dissatisfaction.'

The tragedy of the last war brought this disillusionment to a head. It caught Liberal Christianity unawares. It was an event the possibility of which had not been provided for in the current view of things. 'It broke in on it like a gangster in a drawing-room full of old maids sipping their afternoon tea. It took the lid off that human nature of supposed fundamental goodness, and there emerged something which could not be squared with the roseate dream of an inevitable progress into perfection.' For a time the writer took refuge in Pacifism, but presently he came to see that Pacifism also is based upon the 'humanist illusion that it is possible to convince men in the mass of the iniquity of war, and that a different behaviour will follow from an argument.' In short, Pacifism is not sufficiently tragic in its view of human nature; it rests on the assumption that man is fundamentally a rational being.

Modernism has had serious consequences in deflecting Christian thought into wrong channels. For one thing it is based on a false estimate of human nature. It has developed a tendency to idealize human nature, and in consequence to deny or minimize the reality and power of sin. 'The idea that there was in human nature an element of deliberate defiance and rebellion against God, against the good, fell out of the scheme of modern life.' This has led to a very superficial view of the character and seriousness of the social problem. It has failed to fathom its depths and enormity, creating the illusion that a change of environment would bring about a fundamental change in human nature. 'Changed conditions will most certainly contribute to historic development, and are most necessary. But they will not root out the sin of man.'

Modernism also fostered the idea that the Kingdom of God could find its fulfilment within the realms of history. 'Man is evolving. From the slime he has climbed to civilization. Along the same road he will come to super-civilization, and after a further trek he will finally land in the Kingdom of God.' This comes to mean in practice

that the New Testament teaching of the Kingdom has been emptied of its other-worldly content. The emphasis laid on achievement in this world has tended to rule out all thought of another world. Indeed, the promise of a life to come has been scoffed at as dope, and scornfully rejected as the enemy of social progress.

Another result has been the practical denial of the uniqueness of Christianity. 'The whole concept of an "Absolute" of any kind in history is an offence, a rock of stumbling to the modern mind. To a world which has been educated to believe that *everything* is relative and in flux, the idea that there can be in history something which is itself not conditioned by historic processes, nor arisen out of them, is almost inconceivable, just as the Cross was inconceivable by the Greek mind. It is a contradiction and an irrationality.' Hence the tendency was strong to see in Jesus only a product, it might be the finest product, of human development. Parallels to His teaching were diligently sought for, and their production—for they could be discovered in plenty—was taken as evidence that there was no generic difference between Jesus and other great teachers of mankind.

A further charge against Modernism is that it has intensified the secularization of life and thought. In previous ages men, for all their corruptions, kept alive the element of an over-ruling sanction in human life. The consciousness of the supernatural and of man's subordination to it was quick and powerful in men's minds. 'But with the Renaissance and the rise of modern philosophy, there emerged the idea of man's sovereignty, and history became self-contained. This life was gradually transformed into an arena for the achievement of perfection.' Thus, when the absolute claim of Christianity was denied and the supernatural thrust into the background of human thought, there remained no effective check upon the natural arrogance and pride of collective man. He came to regard himself as the measure of all things, the arbiter of his own destiny. Intoxicated with his own power and achievements he wildly dreamed

that no limits have been set by the Universe to what he may do and what he may in his own strength become.

The tragedy of the last war dealt a fatal blow to this naturalistic optimism, and the events that have followed the war have only tended to complete the ruin. Nobody wanted war, yet all the nations have gone on preparing for war on a more gigantic scale than ever. Everybody is acutely aware of the insanity of piling up armaments, yet war has again been forced upon the world. 'What deep fatality is it that drives society to an unwanted destruction? Why is society cursed by some Satanic impotence? To these questions Humanism can give no answer.'

The only answer which seems to be adequate is given in the Biblical doctrine of sin. There is something profoundly wrong with human nature. There is something in the heart of man which is at enmity with God and goodness. Human nature is not essentially pure and wholesome, but is tainted by an all-pervasive corruption. 'In our loftiest idealism, the devil finds some footing. Man is something similar to the lotus flower. Its petals, which are so tender and beautiful, lie open to the sun; its roots are in the slime. Man can be credited with wonderful and beautiful artistic and spiritual creation: literature, art, philosophy! But be they ever so beautiful, their roots are in the slime of sin.' Therefore Browning was right when he declared that Christianity—

launched its dart at the head of a lie,
Taught original sin, the corruption of man's
heart.

The writer, while vehemently urging the necessity of preaching this doctrine of original sin, represents it as being different from the doctrine of 'total depravity.' But this is simply because he, like so many others, does not understand what total depravity means. It is not, and never was, an assertion that human nature had no redeeming feature, but only that all man's faculties without exception have suffered from the taint of sin. In the writer's own words, 'Man's devil accompanies him to whatever secret shrine at which he offers up his adoration and worship.' Nobody expressed a higher appreciation than Calvin did of man's wonderful artistic and spiritual creations.

We cannot follow the writer into the more positive exposition of the Christian faith which he has regained. He lays the greatest stress on recovering the other-worldly point of view. Life must be seen and interpreted in the light of eternity. 'I do not think it is a matter without significance that a period of serious Church decline coincided with the greatest neglect of eschatology. . . . I am convinced that a re-emergence of eschatology is the greatest need of our world to-day. The collapse of the humanist theory of progress makes the need for eschatology most urgent.'

Readers will no doubt differ upon various points of doctrine, but there can be no doubt that this is a book deserving to be read and pondered. Besides being an interesting and valuable record of spiritual experience, it is a fearless and upstanding challenge to the spirit of the age.

