

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE Danish thinker, Søren Kierkegaard (A.D. 1813-1855) takes his place in history as an opponent of philosophical idealism as a setting for Christian faith. The smoothness of the Hegelian dialectic obliterated for him the authentic witness of the Christian consciousness. In recent years a new interest has been awakened in his work by reason of the debt to him which has been acknowledged by Karl Barth and other representatives of the neo-Evangelical movement. And it is symptomatic of this new interest that his writings are being rapidly made accessible to the English reader.

In 1937 the C. W. Daniel Company, London, published an English version of the first of three 'Edifying Discourses in a Different Vein.' It is entitled, 'Purify Your Hearts,' and emphasizes the absoluteness of the individual as distinguished from the mass-man (so glorified in our day!). The second of the Discourses above-named has now appeared under the title *Consider the Lilies*. The translation has been made by A. S. Aldworth and W. S. Ferrie. The price of the volume is 4s. 6d. net. The translators remark that in this volume we are introduced to the Christian answer to anxiety, which is the portion of so many to-day.

In this Discourse it is not so much Kierkegaard the religious philosopher we meet with as Kierkegaard the expositor and the poet. On the poetical or creative side he has a certain affinity with his fellow-countryman and contemporary, Hans Andersen. As witness his two parables of the anxious lily and the wood-pigeon, with which he enriches his exposition of the passage, Mt 6<sup>24ff.</sup>

The whole exposition is an admirable illustration of what we may call the Barthian emphasis on the need of letting God speak to us through the Word. It may appear long-drawn-out by the standards of our day; but it repays quiet and unhurried reading, and there is about it a certain cumulative impressiveness.

We shall not summarize the contents of the Discourse but shall be content to offer a few quotations from it. The first points out how the silence of the lilies of the field and the birds of heaven enhances the value of the gospel for the anxious: 'With these free masters, exacting no fee either of money or of humiliation, there is no misunderstanding possible, for they keep silence—in consideration for the anxious soul. And truly all misunderstanding does arise from speech, or, more precisely, speech, especially when we speak to one another, involves the making of comparisons, as when the happy man says to the anxious, Be glad—and the word spoken implies the addition, Like me. Or as when the strong man says, Be strong—and you understand, Like me. But silence shows deference to anxiety.'

Here is how the thought of 'divine distraction' is illustrated from the passage under consideration: 'When the eye has a fixed stare, it looks steadily into space and always sees one thing, and yet does not see, because, as science explains, it sees its own vision. But then the doctor says, Get the eye to move. And so says the gospel, Distract your mind, look down at the lily and give up staring at your anxiety; look up at the bird and stop staring at your anxiety. And when the eye looks down at

the lily and the tear no longer flows, is it not as if it were the lily that had wiped away the tears? When the eye follows the flight of the bird and the air dries the tear from the eye, is it not as if it were the bird that wiped away the tears?'

Here is how the eminence of man as compared with the lower creation is illustrated: 'In working, man resembles God, who also is in truth a worker. And so when a man works for his food we shall not foolishly say that he is maintaining himself; but more precisely shall we say—and just that we may remind ourselves how glorious it is to be a man!—that he is working for his food along with God. He is working along with God, and so he is God's fellow-worker. Mark, this the bird is not; the bird surely gets its food, but it is not God's fellow-worker. The bird gets its food as a vagabond out in the country gets sustenance, but the farmhand who works for his food speaks of the farmer as his fellow-worker.'

The translation is usually clear in meaning, but sometimes it might have been in more felicitous language. Here is yet another passage, in which it is taught that to seek the Kingdom of God is not to fare forth on a venture of discovery: 'In that place where thou art, there thou remainest, for that is the place appointed thee, and every seeking away from it is, verily, unrighteousness. . . . From an earthquake man flees to safer places, a forest fire drives him to refuge in the open, from the flood he seeks the heights; but should it be that the whole world of things seen sank into decay, then man had in it no other place to which to fly, and for that very reason he remains in his place and seeks first the Kingdom of God.'

Ever since Bergson gave currency to the idea of creative evolution the word 'creative' has been used and abused unsparingly. Anything constructive or vital is sure to be called creative, and beyond that the word has come to be applied to patent medicines and the productions of millinery. The distinction between creation proper, the giving of existence to the non-existent, and constructive work

or the giving of new shape to material already existent tends to be quite forgotten. After all, there is only one Creator, and modern man's insistent claim to be 'creative' may be taken as a symptom of that primeval ambition to 'be as gods' which lies at the root of all irreligion.

These reflections are prompted by the title of a book, *Springs of Creative Living*, by Mr. Rollo MAY (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press; \$2.00). The writer is a psychotherapist of experience, and his book deals in the main with psycho-analysis. The book is Christian both in intention and in effect. At the same time the continual use of the word 'creative' tends to convey the idea that every one is or may become a self-contained centre of life and power, an idea which is, of course, profoundly unchristian.

The writer's aim is to supplement the work of psychotherapy with the Christian gospel. The psychotherapist is not really a soul-healer, as the word might indicate. His work is rather to diagnose than to heal. It is, of course, helpful and puts one in the way of healing to have the symptoms of soul-trouble interpreted and the seat of the ailment discovered. But, as Adler was never weary of pointing out, the patient must become his own physician, must summon to his aid spiritual forces strong enough to overcome his weakness.

But from what source can these healing forces be drawn? Freud is frankly pessimistic. He rules religion contemptuously out of court, and he does not believe that reason and scientific progress can prevail to control human passions. Adler bids his patients get out of the prison-house of self and find deliverance in social interest and service. Jung recognized that the want of religion lay at the root of much of the trouble. His words have often been quoted and are very significant. 'Among all my patients in the second half of life—that is to say over thirty-five—there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed

who did not regain his religious outlook.' At the same time Jung could give no definite religious guidance to his patients for his own religion was of the most nebulous kind, amounting to nothing more than 'the reaching out of the human soul for basic meaning by which it can live.'

That does not carry us very far. It leaves an obvious gap waiting to be filled. Before attempting to show how Christian faith comes in to fill the gap, the present writer gives a sketch of the problems which the psychotherapist encounters in his work. Freud's system is here represented as a rebellion against the Puritanism of the Victorian age. It may seem so to an American, but we who live nearer have never heard that Vienna was touched with Victorian Puritanism. On the contrary, we had always supposed that Freud's cult of the *libido* was a reflection of the moral looseness of Viennese society. The picture of Victorian man, here given, is exaggerated to the point of caricature, as such pictures usually are. We had understood that Victorian man gave due obedience to the primitive command to 'be fruitful and multiply,' but now we learn with astonishment that in that gloomy age there were men 'married for months or years without a sexual experience because it was their "duty" not to force themselves on their wives.' Such, it seems, was the Victorian age, 'the most unhealthy system of repression which history, perhaps, has ever known,' which gave ample material for the liberating work of the psychotherapist.

The pendulum, however, has now swung to the opposite extreme. An exaggerated worship of freedom and an absolute claim to the right of self-expression have become the watchwords of the post-war years and have led to mental disorders. 'Persons become disintegrated in personality by too much freedom as well as by too little, and so the further contribution of psychotherapy in helping people to find structure for their living is more and more indicated in the present decade.' In other words 'this unchartered freedom tires,' as Wordsworth found, and brings unutterable weariness upon the soul. Then life becomes empty and tasteless. Nothing is of value, nothing is worth doing, vitality

simply oozes away. In such a case it is the work of the psychotherapist to endeavour to integrate the personality, to re-collect its energies and direct them into some definite and purposeful channel.

How is this to be accomplished? Here we reach the crux of the whole matter, the point at which the psychotherapist recognizes that he is faced with his most difficult problem. It is usually found that the patient under treatment develops a sense of dependence on the therapist which may become very passionate and unhealthy. Indeed, without some degree of such faith little can be done in the way of healing. It becomes then the task of the therapist to induce his patient to transfer his faith to some more stable and enduring form of reality. 'Secular therapists have a difficult question to answer here: to what or whom shall this emotional force now be attached? The therapist often tells the patient that he must hereafter depend upon "reality" or something to that effect. But what is reality? The person may be instructed to depend upon himself rather than the therapist, but he knows that he must have something more absolute than himself as his frame of reference. He is told, perhaps, to fall in love with humanity by developing social interest, or to find some "big affirmation" which will furnish him with a reality. Such suggestions may work temporarily, but unless the patient finds some reality more adequate his transference will be left hanging in the air.'

Here, then, the Christian therapist can give real help, pointing the sick soul to Christ. 'Christ is that aspect of the creative flow of life upon which one places unconditional trust. Christ is the ultimate one assumes in personality. . . . It is impossible for the counsellor or therapist to prescribe just what form the belief in Christ will take for each and every person. But it is the faith of Christians that this absolute in personality is best exemplified in Jesus Christ. And it is experimentally true that countless persons through the ages have found such a faith to be what they needed as the answer to their disunited selves. It is to this fact that Menninger has reference when he says that religion has been the world's psychiatrist throughout the centuries.'

From this it would appear that the psycho-therapist at the best can only do what the Christian Church is always striving to do in her cure of souls. And it may be doubted whether for this purpose the terminology of psycho-analysis is more effective than the language of Scripture. There is always a danger that when words and modes of expression are changed some change is at the same time inevitably made in the ideas to be expressed. And so, even granted that some of the ancient hallowed words of salvation have become meaningless to many, granted also that the gospel must be preached to every age in its own tongue, we must see to it that we offer men for their salvation, not some mystical Neo-Platonic Christ, but the incarnate Son of God, crucified and risen.

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There is much and wide discussion at present about our aims—war aims and peace aims. Should we state our objective plainly? What kind of 'order' are we planning? Is this the time to deal with such matters? There are many who say: 'What is the good of talk about all this when there is only one thing that matters at present—to win the war?' There are others who contend that we cannot leave things that are vital to our welfare and the welfare of the world till the end of the war, to be settled at the time when there will be much confusion and when what will be needed is just a clearly thought out scheme of life.

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The Archbishop of York belongs to the latter school. He has been saying a good deal about the question all over the country, and now he has published his thoughts in a little book with the title *The Hope of a New World* (S.C.M.; 3s. 6d. net). It contains six broadcast addresses which have already been printed, and a number of other talks and essays. The most interesting of the latter is one, 'Principles of Reconstruction,' which bears closely on the problem mentioned above, and contains some interesting suggestions about the 'new world' of Dr. TEMPLE's hopes.

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He lays down certain principles to begin with, which are relevant to his theme. The first is that

every man is a child of God and as such has a status and dignity independent of his membership in any earthly state. The second is that, consequently, personality is sacred, and freedom in whatever is personal (worship, thought, expression) is to be safeguarded as among the primary ends for which the State exists.

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These two principles give strong support to some form of democracy as the constitution best suited for developing and expressing the quality of 'personality' in its citizens. We cannot say they *demand* this, for the primary function of a political constitution is to ensure good order without which free personal life is almost impossible. No nation can be coerced into democracy, but it must be open to every nation to adopt it.

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The third principle is that, as children of God, men are members of one family, and life should be ordered as far as possible with a view to the promotion of brotherly fellowship among all men. This points to an organization of life which draws together in relations of mutual support the largest practicable number of persons. Emphasis is laid on 'practicable,' because it must not be inferred that a large State is preferable to a small one, or that, if any system of federation be adopted, the more States to be federated the better.

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But the principle will at once put us on our guard against the notion of a State founded on and bounded by racial homogeneity; for such a State will be subject in a quite special degree to the temptations of self-centred acquisitiveness and aggression. On the whole, the balance of advantage seems to lie with a federation of States, each small enough to give to the citizens a sense of individual responsibility for its welfare, while the whole group is large enough to combine many peoples of rather diverse traditions and interests, so that these may balance and check one another.

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The fourth principle is that men are not dutiful children of God. They are self-centred, and need to be delivered from this by the grace of God. So far as this has not happened, they need to be

restrained in their self-assertiveness and induced by appeals to their self-interest to respect justice in their mutual dealings. The fifth principle follows. Nations exist by God's providential guidance of history and have their part to play in His purpose. But through man's self-centredness national loyalty may be perverted and the nation be made the object of that absolute allegiance which is due to God alone. Thus, if there is to be any approach to a brotherly fellowship of nations, it must be by the same method of so organizing their relationship to one another that national self-interest will itself urge justice in action.

But Dr. TEMPLE attaches the greatest importance (for this purpose) to the growing strength of the conviction and feeling among all Christians that they are united, in and through Christ, in a perfect fellowship. 'Without this I do not expect to see any living and enduring sense of fellowship between the nations. As yet this "ecumenical sense" is feeble; but it is growing fast.' It is a main ground of hope for the Rebirth of Christendom in the future.

But, short of this, the cure for the 'demoniac' national egotism lies (according to the fourth and fifth principles) in a profitable union and organized co-operation of peoples sufficiently close in tradition and interest for this to be voluntarily accepted, yet sufficiently disparate to introduce some efficient checks and balances. Dr. TEMPLE, therefore, does not look to one big federation of peoples but to a number of small ones, and he diffidently names such groups: (a) the Danubian group; (b) Germany, freed from Prussian domination; (c) the Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles; (d) the Scandinavian countries; (e) Great Britain and France, with, perhaps, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Holland. [No mention of America.]

Within each federal or confederate unit which is established the federal parliament or council, and the executive responsible to it, will, of course, take over the control of all matters of common interest, including foreign policy, and secession would be forbidden. Abraham Lincoln was right in insisting that to permit the secession of the southern States

was to approve the dissolution of the United States into its component elements.

There will, therefore, be all the greater need of the more comprehensive League of Nations which shall include the various local federations. What is its authority to be—moral only or coercive? If the League has an effective International Air Force, and if the nations agree to abandon military aviation as part of their own equipment, the League would have the force necessary to carry out its awards. But if not, then all mention of 'sanctions' should be struck out of the Covenant. We should have learnt the lesson of the past—Japan and Manchuria, and Italy and Abyssinia. The conclusions are clear: (1) No sanctions except under the authority of the League; and (2) a new loyalty towards the League in the States-members of it.

Dr. TEMPLE concludes with a reference to the applications of these principles to the economic field. This subject raises some keenly contested issues—Tariffs, Finance, and the Profit motive. It is indispensable that States should consent to submit their Tariffs to the League. There are sound reasons for this, among them the probability that it would undermine the economic nationalism which is an active part of the disease of Europe to-day. It is indispensable also to prevent Finance having positive control in the life of nations. And, finally, it is essential that the Profit-motive (as distinct from a secure but limited return on capital invested) must go.

These points Dr. TEMPLE discusses, not fully but sufficiently to make his purpose clear. Production, he urges, exists for the sake of consumption. The hungry and needy public ought to be the controlling group. We have reached a stage where the grip of Finance and Profit has become intolerable. The principles Dr. TEMPLE lays down should, if carried out, remove the anomalies and disasters of the present system. It is for specialists to turn them into constructive policy and action. The duty of the Christian teacher is discharged when he defines the principles which are implicit in the gospel, and which are essential to the welfare, material as well as spiritual, of mankind.