

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

Is it possible to teach theology to children? If it is possible, is it wise? Professor JOHNSTON ROSS believes that children may be taught even the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. That doctrine, he says, 'gathers round it ideas of the uttermost intellectual strain and of theological elaboration.' Yet he believes that if we do not endeavour to teach children the doctrine of the Holy Trinity we come very far short of our duty. The address or sermon in which the duty is urged will be found in the volume for January to June 1911 of the *Christian World Pulpit* (James Clarke & Co. ; 4s. 6d.).

Now it is well to say at once that Professor JOHNSTON ROSS is neither a Chesterton nor a Liddon. He does not think in paradox, and he does not live in dogma. If he says that it is both possible and profitable to teach children what he calls 'the Church's dogma of the Holy Trinity,' it is because he has found it both possible and profitable. His conviction is, that in addition to the education of a child's moral sympathies two things are necessary for its right equipment for life as a spiritual being. These are, first, some direction for its thoughts of God, and, secondly, some stimulation and direction of worship. He believes, you observe, that the child's moral

sympathies should be trained. In that he is at one with every earnest educator all the world over. He believes that the very first steps of a child's education should be the development of its moral sympathies by means of 'stories of instances of action or of passion of pronounced moral colour.' And he believes that the stories in the Old Testament can still be used successfully for that purpose, even although there may be grave doubt about their historical accuracy. 'It is felt,' he says, 'that whether the incidents happened or not, exactly as they are recorded, they are, exactly as recorded, morality-laden, and woo the child's sympathies over in the direction of right thinking and living.'

Then, as a lad grows out of childhood, this process should be continued. His attention should be directed to instances in general history of high moral choices. He should even be encouraged to admire living heroes and heroines of the moral life. But all that is only one part of the work of education. Along with the education in moral sympathies, and beginning with the child's earliest years, Professor JOHNSTON ROSS would carry an education in religion, even in the dogmas of religion, for he believes that behind the question of moral sympathies are the questions of God and of communion with God.

There is the question of God. Now there are in every child's mind three instinctive ideas about God. They are the ideas of His awfulness, His interest in us, and His omnipresence.

There is, first, the idea of God's awfulness. Native to a child, says Professor JOHNSTON ROSS, is an awe of God. It is a sense approaching to, or absolutely reaching, terror—terror of the greatness and the power of God. And this instinct may be over-stimulated till the child fatally misconceives God and cringes in an unholy dread before Him. There is at present a wide revolt against this over-stimulation. But Professor JOHNSTON ROSS warns us not to let the revolt carry us too far and deny to the child its very real natural awe of God.

Now this conception of God, august, majestic, awe-inspiring, is found in the Hebrew prophets as it is found in no other literature in the world. Did Jesus of Nazareth revolt from it? No. He ratified it. He spoke of God as a God of absolute righteousness. It is true, His thought of God was always the thought of God as a Father. And in this respect He passed beyond the prophets. While the prophets emphasized our responsibility to God, He drew out the other side and made known God's responsibility for us. But if God is responsible for us as a father is responsible for his children, does that lessen our responsibility to Him? If the judgment on sin is the judgment of a Father, does that make sin less sinful? In that word Father, says Professor JOHNSTON ROSS, everything is contained that is needed to feed and exercise the faculty and instinct of awe. 'If ye call on him as Father,' said St. Peter, 'pass the time of your sojourning here in awe.'

Next, a child has an instinctive, and often a very beautiful belief in God's kindly interest in us all, and especially in the child himself. This lies in the mind of the child unreconciled with his belief in the awfulness of God, but not contra-

dicting it. And this belief may be stimulated without the fear that the other will suffer. For God's interest is not merely in the body. It is well to teach that God gives us 'life and breath and all things.' It is well to teach—

God, who made the earth,
The air, the sky, the sea,
Who gave the light its birth,
Careth for me.

But there are deeper needs than these. There is the need of a divine visitation of us in shame; there is need of comfort for conscience; there is need of humanly mediated pity and mercy and love; there is need of being drawn into fellowship with God, of finding in Him a permanent home.

Are those not the needs of a child? 'I answer that if you mean a child cannot articulate them. I agree with you; but you must know very little of the desolation of which the adolescent heart is capable if you do not know that it will take the satisfaction of all these needs to fill up these desolations.' How are these needs to be met then? 'I believe,' says Professor JOHNSTON ROSS, 'they have never been met as they have by the story of Christ as a revelation and act of God—by the story of Christ as an incarnation of God, of His life as that of the Divine Son, and the Friend and Elder Brother of man, of His death as atonement, of His resurrection and glorification as the Son of Man in heaven—of the whole as a revelation of what I may call the potentiality of a humanity in God, the actual revelation of a Divine man.'

Then there is the child's sense of God's omnipresence. A child has a sense—sometimes comforting, sometimes embarrassing, sometimes terrifying—of God as penetrating all life and every obstacle. And no doctrine, it is Professor JOHNSTON ROSS's belief, has ever answered this instinct as the Christian doctrine of the Holy Ghost. For the Christian doctrine of the Holy

Ghost is the doctrine of God's present action upon our spirit. It brings to us the appeal from Christ, as well as from nature and from providence; it inspires prayer; it 'bears us up toward the supreme.'

Professor JOHNSTON ROSS is afraid that his cloud of words has carried us far away from the simplicity of childhood. But he insists upon his point. And his point is that childhood and youth have needs which cannot be satisfied by an education in moral sympathies—needs of a God which only the Christian conception of God as Father, Son, and Spirit can satisfy. He does not defend any creed or formula. He urges only that the elements out of which the dogma of the Trinity was formed are permanently necessary elements in a satisfactory conception of God, and ought to be in the background of any effective teaching of religion to the young.

But the child must not only have his thoughts rightly directed toward God, he must also be stimulated and directed in the worship of God. The right act must be made to follow the true thought.

Now the secret of acceptable worship is humility. 'What will it profit thee to be able to discourse profoundly,' says Thomas à KEMPIS, 'on the Trinity if thou art wanting in humility and so art displeasing to the Trinity?' And humility, rightly interpreted, means three things. It means the preservation of the sense of awe; it means the absence of abjectness; and it means the constant transformation of mere formality in worship into a worship that is in spirit and in truth.

Where, then, will humility, thus interpreted, be found? In the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. For the worship of the Father, conceived as Christ conceived Him, delivers us from presumption and preserves the saving awe and salutary fear. The worship of the Son delivers us from abject terror, for it reminds us of God's

present tender love for us and of our own future in God. And the worship of the Spirit, being the worship of a God within us, makes a merely formal approach to God an impossibility.

'I believe, then, in the simplicity that is in Christ, and that the essence of the Gospel can be grasped by a child. But simplicity is not superficiality; it is "the last expression of profundity." And whether one is teaching little children or trying to grasp Christianity for one's self, I believe one ought to resist the temper that is impatient of mystery and is fevered by the craze for simplicity. A God whom we can comprehend, let it be said for the thousandth time, is not a God whom we can worship.'

'Be pitiful, be courteous,' says St. Peter. But when? Be pitiful always; but be courteous in time of ease. Lord Hugh Cecil, writing to the *Times*, says it is superfluous to discuss questions of courtesy when we are passing through a revolution, for 'revolutions and manners do not belong to the same plane.' Whereupon the newspaper denies him even the originality of his remark. When a certain traveller by the train from Glasgow left his hat and gloves on the seat and returned to find them on the floor and his place occupied, he remonstrated; this was not the courtesy travellers should show one another. The answer was, 'Courtesy! Dae ye no ken this is the Glesca fair week?'

But Mr. William STEBBING does not agree with Lord Hugh Cecil or the Glasgow trippers. To him courtesy is a beautiful quality to be observed on all occasions and by all men. And in his new volume *Truths or Truisms* (Frowde; 4s. net) he gives a complete and precious chapter to its exposition.

He distinguishes courtesy from politeness. Politeness is polished manners, and not to be

undervalued. Politeness is a product of Civilization and among its best. It is the removal of pebbles from the road along which Civilization travels, and Civilization is glad to have the pebbles removed. Without any extraordinary attention to elevation of spirit, Civilization is determined that at least outward behaviour, where visible, shall be well rolled and smoothed. But politeness is not courtesy. 'Evenness of the surface, however dexterously it has been levelled, and the dissembling of natural crabbedness, have little or no affinity to the inner graces of the habit, or temper, of which I understand courtesy to be the flower and fruit.'

Courtesy is not one of the virtues. 'It is so amiable a creature,' says Mr. STEBBING, 'that I should like if the virtues could rank it among them.' But it always remains distinct. Indeed there are men who are, in Mr. STEBBING'S phrase, almost ultra-virtuous, and they have been conspicuous for the lack of courtesy. They will express their regret to a plain spinster that few young men now have the good sense to mistrust good looks. Or they will do some other and yet more distressfully maladroit thing.

Courtesy, says Mr. STEBBING, is a thing by itself. And so it cannot be defined. For you can define only by comparison. It is in action that it is discovered. It is never officious, never superfluous. It can administer rebuffs without bruising. It teaches a youth to argue against his seniors with so graceful a fire that, instead of resenting the tone of equality, they delight in the flattery of a forgetfulness of their years. 'It shines in all assemblages, and into all hearts. Any one, Prince or Peasant, may have it. Everybody, Prince or Peasant, having, must manifest it, for it cannot be hid.' Nowhere are we insensible to its presence. How sweet breathes the air! How the gracious spirit generates its like! How, before it, every one has the feeling of being higher, better, kindlier.

'Be pitiful, be courteous.' When? At all times. In Glasgow fairs and in revolutions.

'Where there is neither Jew nor Gentile.' Where? The Apostle meant in Christianity. But at the First Universal Races Congress, held in London last July, there was only one evangelical Christian present. There was only one man present who would say that he was a Christian entirely after the manner of St. Paul.

The Congress was held from the 26th to the 29th of July 1911, at the University of London. The papers which were read at it have been published in one volume under the title of *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems*, edited by G. SPILLER (P. S. King & Son; 7s. 6d. net). In his preface the editor of the volume tells us what the Congress was called for. The object of the Congress was 'to discuss, in the light of science and the modern conscience, the general relations subsisting between the peoples of the West and those of the East, between so-called white and so-called coloured peoples, with a view to encouraging between them a fuller understanding, the most friendly feelings, and a heartier co-operation.' That looks very like an occupation in which St. Paul would have taken part. Yet there was only one Pauline Christian present.

Lord WEARDALE, who was President of the Congress, writes an introduction to the volume. 'Nearer and nearer,' he says, 'we see approaching the day when the vast populations of the East will assert their claim to meet on terms of equality the nations of the West, when the free institutions and the organized forces of the one hemisphere will have their counterbalance in the other, when their mental outlook and their social aims will be in principle identical; when, in short, the colour prejudice will have vanished and the so-called white races and the so-called coloured races shall no longer merely meet in the glowing periods of missionary exposition, but, in very fact, regard

one another as in truth men and brothers.' That seems to say, not only that the object of this Congress was strictly Pauline, but also that it had not met before the time. It seems to say that if we believe that there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus, we should have thrown all the weight of evangelical Christianity on the side of this Congress. Yet there was only one evangelical Christian there.

Mr. John M. ROBERTSON, who is a materialist, was there. Mr. Israel ZANGWILL was there, who is a Jew. Professor GENCHI KATO, of the Shinto religion of Japan, was there. But, while some Christians were there, one or two of whom might not refuse to be called evangelical, there was only one man present because he was an evangelical Christian. There was only one man who could say, 'I am here to testify that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Who was this? It was Dr. Alfred CALDECOTT, Professor of Moral Philosophy in King's College, London.

The question before the Congress was, How can the various races of the world be brought to see that the interest of one is the interest of all? That question well answered would be likely, first of all, to make for peace. And the cause of peace is the cause of Christ. But would it not be likely also to make directly for the progress of the gospel? Professor CALDECOTT believes that it would. He would have no race distinction obliterated. If the Turk becomes a Christian let him be a Turk still. Even if the Jew becomes a Christian let him still remain a Jew. Professor CALDECOTT believes that there is room for a Jewish Christianity that is not anti-Pauline, but is simply the Christianity of the Jewish race.

Remove the race-barrier, then, and you open the way to the entrance of the gospel. And the race-barrier is to be removed by recognizing the race. Let each race have complete liberty of conscience. Let each race, and every individual

of each race, have perfect liberty of choice whether they will retain their present religion or adopt another—then Professor CALDECOTT believes that the gospel of Christ will have free course and be glorified.

Now it is the Governments of the world that prevent the exercise of this liberty. The time has come when to every Government on the face of the earth the word should be sent, in the name of humanity, Hands off! 'What I think this gathering of representatives of the different Races is concerned to note is that in the propaganda of religion every one now agrees that it must be by absolutely voluntary effort: that by Churches, Societies, or individuals, but not by Governments, religions may be proclaimed all over the world. Two principles may well be asked for—

'That no Government shall disturb the political situation by including in its programme the propagation of its own religion, as distinguished from its maintenance;

'That no Government shall refuse to its subjects freedom to hear religious messages, or prevent them from accepting them if they so desire.'

These are fundamental principles. These principles, says Dr. CALDECOTT, express a right which may be generally accepted as lying at the root of the unification of mankind. And he is bold enough to proceed, in the presence of representatives of most of the world's religions, to point out what are the Governments that are denying that right. The Government of Spain, he says, and the Government of Russia within Christendom; the Governments of Turkey and Persia; the French Government. He does not charge the French Government with the intolerance of Turkey or Persia; but he says that the time has come when in French colonies official interference should be restrained as it is in the French Congo, and not exercised as it has so long been exercised in Madagascar.