

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

IN the midst of the preparations for this number, war was declared against Germany. Those of us who passed through the sorrow and suffering of the last war find it well-nigh incredible that, with that experience, the world should be darkened by a calamity as great, if not greater. That an age which exalts reason and the powers of the human intellect should enter into a conflict that, in the depths of it and the reality of it, is totally against reason, is a bitter tragedy.

Dark as the prospect is, it may not be altogether dark. One of the reasons which we have given to ourselves for the belief that a great war would not come again in our time was that it would destroy the foundations of our Christian civilization, and that no responsible human being would face the prospect of that and risk what mankind has built up with such toil and tears. That belief has proved vain, yet we may earnestly hope and pray that the issue may not be as we feared, but that, on the contrary, the supreme values which are of all things most precious to us may in the end be vindicated and secured.

This is not the place to discuss the causes of this war, or the responsibility for it. Whatever these may be on the surface, the conviction has been growing in many minds that a conflict between two great systems of thinking and living was sooner or later inevitable. Meantime the duty and opportunity of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES are plain. Every

one of us is to-day being brought face to face with the realities of his faith. What do we really believe? Where does our confidence rest? What, in this solemn hour, does Christ mean to us? Does God, the living God, rule above the storms and passions of men? It is with these fundamental issues that we are concerned, and always have been, and our part is to continue to bear witness to those deep and abiding faiths on which the salvation of mankind depends.

Then and Now; the Day before Yesterday and To-day. Fifty years have elapsed since this magazine was started by the late Dr. Hastings, and during this half-century I think we may say that it has maintained its position in the theological world. Many of the most distinguished names in this country and in America have appeared above its articles. And in all modesty it may be claimed that the variety, interest, and authority of its contents have given it a special place in the religious and academic spheres alike. Inevitably in these circumstances our thoughts range back over this long period and especially over the changes that have taken place in the world of the Spirit.

Dr. HARRIS E. KIRK, of Baltimore, in his recently issued *Rice Institute Pamphlet* (Rice Institute, Houston, Texas), is engaged in a similar task, and

we shall more or less avail ourselves of his guidance. He deals in successive chapters with 'The New Element in the Modern Temper,' 'The Divine Purpose,' and 'The Human Response.' It is the first chapter that is of special interest. In it he surveys hopefully the new attitude to the claims of humanism. But that is already dealing with 'Now.' Let us first of all look back.

Probably no one who has lived through these fifty years will forget the temper of the earlier period. It was a time of confident unbelief. Science in the hands of men like Tyndall was arrogant. Pseudo-science, which always follows at the heels of the real thing, was provocative. Biblical criticism was largely negative. The reconstructions of the gospel story in France and Germany were widely broadcast, and caused something like panic in many quarters. Large secularist meetings were held in every big town, and shops were opened to sell all kinds of atheistical literature and gross pictorial caricatures of religious beliefs. If you were young and candid, you had to fight for your faith fifty years ago. It was not easy to believe in God.

Another feature of the early period, closely associated with the one described, has been fully discussed lately by Dr. Oldham. These fifty years have seen the culmination of a movement which began at the Renaissance, and has gone on gathering momentum from every fresh achievement of the human spirit. It has been briefly described as Humanism. It is simply the complete reliance by man on his own powers as sufficient for all his needs, moral and material. Science has provided him with immense material resources and has given him a mastery of Nature undreamed of in the past. All his problems, so it appeared, can be solved by his own unaided intellect. There is no need and no room for any supernatural reinforcement. Man is the lord of creation.

One other movement which many will vividly recall occurred in the early years of this period. Its slogan was 'Back to Christ.' The recession of the dogmatic attitude to the gospel story, the dis-

covery (it may be called) of the social and traditional background of the ministry of Jesus, the conclusions drawn from the new 'lives' of Jesus, all led to a definite emphasis on the human element in the Person of Christ. The 'historic Christ' was hailed as the truth of the Gospels, and for a good while this came as a breath of fresh air to minds that were in revolt against the dogmatic temper. Dr. A. B. Bruce represented and furthered this movement in Scotland. And his books were immensely popular. The movement had a healthy influence in bringing a sense of reality to the reading of the Gospels. But more and more it became evident that it had one far-reaching result. It reduced the figure of Jesus to human proportions, and silently but inevitably, it predisposed the minds of many against the miraculous and divine aspects of the Person of our Lord.

Long ago many of us learned from Schwegler's 'History of Philosophy' that there is a pendulum swing in the history of human thought. One generation emphasizes a side of truth, and the next discovers the other side, and there comes a period when the pendulum is at the lowest point of its swing when both sides are seen to be parts of a whole. Are we at that position to-day? At any rate the pendulum has obviously swung away from the position we have been describing. One of the most obvious facts is the new modesty of science. Scientists of authority may be said to repudiate with one voice any claim to provide guidance for man in his deepest need. Science is painfully aware of its own limitations. It will not pronounce on fundamental human problems because it cannot. It is far from being atheistic. It points emphatically beyond itself for a real explanation of the Universe. And so far it offers some genuine aid to faith.

This extraordinary reversal is matched by the attitude of contemporary Gospel criticism. The negative conclusions of Baur and Strauss have been, to say the least, modified by a critical realism which has made the Hegelian dogmatism of Baur as out of date as the old orthodox dogmatism. It may surely be asserted with some confidence that

there is a general agreement on the main point, that the picture of Jesus in the Gospels is a genuine picture, that on the whole its authenticity is established. In particular one thing seems to emerge from recent critical work, that the old 'Back to Christ' movement was essentially false in one thing. The Gospels do not present to us a purely human Jesus. They may be right or wrong, but at any rate the Jesus of the Gospels is a Divine figure in the eyes of His biographers. He is not a moral teacher. He is a Redeemer. This is the Figure that is emerging from the investigations of the last years of this half-century.

Above all, the fact that stands out perhaps more clearly than any other in our time is that the insufficiency of mere humanism is becoming painfully evident. Men are losing confidence in Naturalism as a guide. The helplessness of science in face of acute need is one factor in this new attitude. Science can and does give man great resources but it cannot help him to a right use of them. Where the moral need appears science has nothing to say. Moreover, the tragic social conditions in the world to-day reveal the impotence of the human unaided powers. And perhaps most of all the moral confusion of our time is making clear to us the insufficiency of the merely human agent to deal with what is deepest in our need. And are not the facts of this solemn and terrible hour a final blasting proof of the bankruptcy of human powers.

Professor Whitehead, quoted by Dr. KIRK, says that 'History shows that the unstable ages have usually been the creative ages.' Let us hope that this is true of our own unstable age. Meantime we can see one result of the growing sense of the limitations of pure humanism. It is sending men back upon sheer authoritarianism both in political life and in religion. It is this longing for some higher power to take things out of our hands that largely explains Nazism and Fascism. It is in a sense the same urge that explains the wide influence of Barthianism. Barth's protest is against that religious humanism which has ruled largely in Europe for some time and has been influentially

represented in our own country. It is as sheerly authoritarian as Hitlerism. But it contains a great and fundamental truth, which we can only forget at our peril—the sovereignty of God, which is the very basis of all real religion. That is its strength. The pendulum has swung away to the right, and Barth is probably the most significant, the most powerful, and the most essential protest against that religious humanism which left out the deepest truth of the gospel.

Watchman, what of the night? The morning cometh, and also the night. The morning comes. What is it to be? Are we not right in saying that everything points to the urgent need of Christ, the one positive and sufficient answer to our human problem? That is what THE EXPOSITORY TIMES has stood for all through its history. Amid changing opinions on all questions that are subsidiary we have maintained one tradition, that Jesus Christ is at the centre of history, and He alone can give us the answer to the one question that matters: How shall the world be brought to peace and unity and happiness? Dr. KIRK recalls a famous story of Alexander the Great. As a young soldier he was advised by Aristotle never to forget that he was a Greek, and everywhere to draw a line between the Greek and the Barbarian. To which Alexander replied, 'No! The aim of my victories will be to give all men a Greek mind.' It is the task of the Christian Church to-day to give man a Christian mind.

It has often been made an accusation against Karl BARTH that his writing is difficult and his meaning obscure, but this is the last thing that could be said about his most recent pronouncement. Its subject is *The Church and the Political Problem of Our Day* (Hodder and Stoughton; 2s. net).

It is the most terrific attack that has ever been made on Hitlerism from the Christian point of view. It might have come from the pen of Martin

Luther. Every sentence in it is a sledge-hammer blow. It is so Biblical, so irresistibly compelling, so mercilessly logical yet so heart-searching that it is bound to make the German Christians writhe and sound the trump of God through all the churches. Once again, to use his own phrase, he has pulled the rope of the great cathedral bell and sent the deep clear note of faith resounding far and wide over the confusions of Europe.

His book in Lutheran fashion is set out in the form of seven theses bound together in logical sequence like the links of a strong chain. The first thesis affirms briefly that the Church is the body of Christ, consisting of those who have found their own comfort and hope in Him, and the comfort and hope of the whole world, and who are therefore bound to bear witness for Him before the whole world which without Him is lost. 'She cannot have an inner life without having at the same time a life which expresses itself outwardly as well. She cannot hear her Lord and not hear the groaning of the Creation, the sighing of Jews and Gentiles still far from Him and yet already belonging to Him, the sighing of the whole world lost apart from Him and yet in Him already placed under the promise of salvation. . . . It is by bearing witness to this and to this only that the Church has to perform her service to the world. Consequently there are no other claims or tasks which she has to regard or observe.'

The second thesis defines what true witnessing for Christ means. It must be a definite confession of Him 'as the one who has come to us as Son of God and Saviour and will come again.' But it must at the same time be 'an actualising of this confession in definite decisions in relation to those contemporary questions which agitate the Church and the world.' This thesis is aimed at the pietistic type of Christian in Germany who would fain pursue his own spiritual way without coming out into the open and taking a definite stand in the hurly-burly of public life. There are many questions on which the Church is not called upon to pronounce, and regarding these she may lawfully be silent. But there are questions in regard to which the

Church 'has to speak decisively with Yes or No, has to call white white and black black when the hour strikes, and the occasion is here to do this in the act of witnessing to Jesus Christ.'

In bearing this witness the Church must steer a straight course, without regard to the action of any other parties, hostile or friendly. She may find herself opposed to the government; she may find herself in the company of 'the most frightful Liberals, Jews, and Marxists!' She must not be deflected from her appointed course. 'Let the Church which never at any time dares to be a party—out of pure anxiety simply of being brushed with a "mudguard," simply of appearing as though she might have embraced a party—look and see whether she is not now really, of necessity, compromising herself, *i.e.* compromising herself with the Devil, to whom no ally is dearer than a Church, so absorbed in caring for her good reputation and clean garments that she keeps eternal silence, is eternally meditating, eternally discussing, eternally neutral, a Church so troubled about the transcendence of the Kingdom of God—a thing which isn't so easy to menace—that she has become a dumb dog. This is just the thing which must not take place—must not take place *to-day*.'

The next two theses bring matters to a definite issue, dealing as they do with German National Socialism. It is asserted to be the big political menace of to-day, much more so than Communism, spreading its tentacles far beyond the confines of Germany. But what concerns the Church is that it has a double character, not only as a political experiment but as a 'religious institution of salvation.' At first, as a purely political experiment the Church had no call to pronounce upon it. It was entitled to get its chance. But now the time has come when the Church cannot be neutral but must pronounce a decisive Yes or No. For the real import and character of National Socialism is now openly disclosed as 'a dictatorship which is *totalitarian* and *radical*, which not only surrounds and determines mankind in utter totality, in body and soul, but abolishes their human nature, and does not merely limit human freedom but annihilates

it.' The Church has to face the question—Is this the Kingdom of God? or is it a daemonic counterpart, the kingdom of a false Man-God, under the lordship of a false Messiah? 'It is impossible to understand National Socialism unless we see it in fact as a *new Islam*, its myth as a new Allah, and Hitler as this new Allah's Prophet.'

The next thesis asserts that National Socialism is fundamentally hostile to Christianity and the Christian state. Evidences of this are manifest, among others in the persecution of the Jews. 'He who rejects and persecutes the Jews rejects and persecutes Him who died for the sins of the Jews—and then, and only *thereby* for our sins as well. He who is a radical enemy of the Jews, were he in every other regard an angel of light, shows himself, as such, to be a radical enemy of Jesus Christ.' Beyond that the policy of National Socialism is plainly either to make the Church completely subservient or, if she resist, 'to render her so impotent, so mute and so insignificant, to drive her so into a corner, until she stands there weak and ridiculous, ripe for death sentence.' At the same time National Socialism has denied and disowned the office of the Just State which according to the Scriptures is that of a servant of God to reward the good and punish the evil, to rescue the poor and the oppressed, and to make room for the free proclamation of the gospel.

In the following two theses Karl BARTH throws down the gauntlet. They amount to high treason against the Hitler régime and an open call to war. No peace is possible between the witnessing to Jesus Christ and the sovereignty of National Socialism. 'Then it follows that the Church may and should pray for the suppression and casting out of National Socialism, just in the same sense as in former times and when confronted by a similar danger she prayed for the "destruction of the bulwarks of the false prophet Mohammed."' In thus praying for her own preservation from the enemy, the Church must also first of all pray for her own spiritual restoration, in order that she may be worthy to be preserved. There must be confession of sin and deep searching of hearts, for the guilt

of the present crisis does not lie all on one side. But, on the other hand, the matter cannot *rest* with prayer. 'When we earnestly pray for the suppression and casting out of National Socialism and hence for the restoration of Church and State, then we are ourselves *eo ipso* summoned to do what is humanly possible towards that for which we pray.' To the charge that this is bringing the Church into politics BARTH's reply is, 'Now for once, in keeping with a famous example (I mean none other than Luther!), I want really to "be defiant" and say: Yes! by all means it is a political choice! . . . What is a choice of faith if it never becomes a political choice? And what is a choice of faith to-day if in this thing it never becomes *this* political choice? When, in the Apocalypse, the Roman Empire was finally and conclusively perceived and designated as the Beast out of the Abyss—that was *also* a political choice!'

In the final thesis BARTH brings men to the knife edge of decision. This is not a matter for mere discussion, suspense of judgment, a non-committal attitude. He is aware that many in the Church have shirked the issue or are not convinced, and some have spoken of his dogmatism as a Papacy resident in Basel. But there is here a real issue of faith. If the witness he has given is erring or false, then it must be met by a counter witness in unity with the confession of Jesus Christ as true and binding. What is the faith of those who dissent—their *faith*, not just their opinion? Do they say Yes to National Socialism? Do they say the Church ought not to pray and work against it? Is this their confession of faith? 'We do not wish to hear from these that they consider themselves free to hold another opinion. Nor do we wish to hear this their other opinion. We wish to hear the confession of their *other faith*. . . . It is one faith against another faith, one spirit against another spirit, and in the end and always—one God against another God. It has always been so when the Church has once again had to wrestle with the repetition and application of her confession.'

An able and timely book comes from the practised pen of Dr. John BAILLIE of the Chair of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh. It is entitled, *Our Knowledge of God* (Milford ; 8s. 6d. net), and it both reflects and interprets the main trend of recent theistic thought. It should be also said that it combines in a fresh and attractive way philosophical grasp with vital theological interest.

In a sense the five chapters are, as the author himself suggests, an expansion of Pascal's familiar words, 'Thou wouldst not be seeking me, hadst thou not already found me. Be not therefore disquieted.' Or, as we might also put it, the first sentence of the book gives a direct clue to the whole: 'The great fact for which all religion stands is the confrontation of the human soul with the transcendent holiness of God.'

The first chapter defends the view, as put forward by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, that all men 'are without excuse ; because, though knowing God, they have not glorified him as God nor given him thanks.' The second chapter defends the same view, but taking us not as from the beginnings of our individual and racial consciousness but at its later and more developed forms. It is possible to hold, contends our author, that 'the self-same image of God, which by the power of Christ is restored in the souls of the saints, is to be found dimly and brokenly reflected in all human nature, behind and below the ravaging defacements of sin's corruption.' This is affirmed in the light of the views of Barth and Brunner, in particular, on the *imago dei* and the relation of nature and grace.

In the third chapter it is contended that our knowledge of God's existence is not inferential, as it has been the prevailing habit of Western philosophy to regard it, and that it rests rather on the revelation of His personal Presence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Here the author takes his stand with St. Bonaventura rather than with St. Thomas. 'It is not the result of an inference of any kind, whether explicit or implicit, whether laboriously

excogitated or swiftly intuited, that the knowledge of God's reality comes to us. It comes rather through our direct personal encounter with Him in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son our Lord.'

This position is reinforced in the fourth chapter, in which it is said that God's approach to us in Christ is the closest approach that is ever made to our souls, so that through Christ as in no way else God is the 'Urgent Presence.' 'How can I, who in this very moment that I write am conscious of a demand being made *now* upon my life by God and His Christ, stand aside from the situation of responsibility thus created in order coldly to debate the question whether the God who thus claims me so much as exists ?'

Professor BAILLIE is well aware that apologetic of this kind, if apologetic it may be called, has no influence upon those to whom the phrase, 'a demand being made *now* upon my life by God and His Christ,' is meaningless. But he would rescue his position from what we may call the futility of sheer ontologism by adding that 'God does not present Himself to us except in conjunction with the presence of our fellows and of the corporeal world.' Which 'mediated immediacy' appears to yield something to St. Thomas.

The fifth chapter rounds off the discussion opened up by the first sentence of the book, treating of the Transcendent Holiness as the Divine Other who is not wholly other, and refusing to follow Barth 'in his apparent complete rejection of the truth for which immanentism and mysticism alike contend.'

Learned, cultured, and genial, Professor BAILLIE makes good company. And he keeps good company himself, showing withal a catholic taste. It is enough to say that among recent writers to whom he acknowledges debt are J. Cook Wilson and R. G. Collingwood, C. C. J. Webb and William Temple, E. Gilson and Karl Heim and Baron von Hügel.