

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

SOME time ago Sir James BAILLIE, late Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, contributed a striking article to the Hibbert Journal which is now published under the title of *Spiritual Religion* (Allen & Unwin; 1s. net). It is a fine testament to his faith, and as such it will be cherished by his former friends. But it is of wider interest to the thoughtful public. For here we see a philosophic mind of the first quality turning to the contemplation of the highest theme, and the treatment of it given here is marked not only by lucidity and firmness of thought but by true religious fervour.

Religion is 'a self-contained form of experience, essentially different from any other; one which can and must be cultivated for its own sake; which has its own conditions, its own processes, and its own end; and which cannot be explained away or explained in terms of some different kind of experience.' This is what many fail to realize. They suppose that religion must wait upon the verdict of science or philosophy, that it must be established by some historical inquiry or theological argument. But this is to make it a secondary and dependent thing. Religion makes its claim upon us in its own right just as morality and beauty do. We do not make our appreciation of beauty or music wait on some previously accepted theory of art. We do not first formulate a theory of morality before we undertake the duties of the moral life. So the religious instinct in man is primary and ineradicable.

Now if religious experience is thus independent and unique, distinct from moral or æsthetic or scientific experience as these are distinct from one another, its aims and processes may be studied independently of these, and the contribution it makes to the sum of human experience assessed. There are three questions which may be asked: 'What is the purpose of spiritual religion? What is its procedure? And what are the essential conditions by which its purpose is secured and its procedure maintained?'

The purpose of religion is the attainment of peace with God, that peace which comes when the finite mind enters into conscious harmony with the Divine Spirit. 'It is the spiritual correlate in man's life of the divine changelessness amidst change, of the "central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation" in the rolling stream of events constituting the course of the world. Whether it is a gift of the Divine, or an acquisition of man's religious efforts, does not for the moment concern us. The point for the present is that this is the primary purpose which man has in view in spiritual religion, and towards this all the experiences of spiritual religion are directed. It is the pearl of great price for which a man will give all—his predilections, his prejudices, his pride, his affections. Its possession is that in which his spiritual safety, his "salvation" consists.'

Further, what is the procedure by which this

purpose of spiritual religion is attained? The essence of it is 'a process of conscious intercommunication between finite spirit and Divine Spirit, and is carried on in terms of fellowship.' This communion of spirits is dependent on Nature for its means, and uses the resources of Nature. 'The organism in which the finite spirit is embodied, with its various sense functions, in particular the function of speech; the facts and processes of the natural world; the actions and events which make up human history—these in all their endless variety and wonderful extent are utilized by the spirit for the purpose of putting into language and realizing in action and feeling the presence of the Divine Spirit, and for expressing to itself and to others its communings with the Divine.' This communion is conducted on the plane of the moral life as well as on the plane of art in all its forms. 'But the very fact of man's failure in the moral life, his mistakes, his evil, and his sins, calls for some experience which will secure his peace in spite of these defects; and that experience is found in his communion with the Divine which is able to transcend his errors, to forgive his sins, and thus reconcile man to the Divine Life whose perfection man seeks to share and by sharing to find fulfilment.'

There remains the question of what are the essential conditions in and through which this communion is sustained. 'The remoteness of the Divine Spirit from man might indeed justify silence on the part of God. But in spiritual religion it is held, and experience can alone verify the fact, that the Divine Spirit does communicate with man, does disclose His mind and will. 'In what way or ways, then, is man able to break through or break in upon the august silence of God?'

The answer is, along the path of Faith and Hope and Love. First comes Faith by which man's spirit affirms as triumphant and ultimately attainable, if not in time then in eternity, the supreme ends of his life. 'Faith is not mere belief but a form of communion with the Divine, carried on from hour to hour and day to day; and the Divine Spirit communicates His life to man in and through Faith. The peace it produces is the correlative of

Faith and that peace is the peace of God.' Then comes Hope which concerns itself with the future. 'Hope is that frame of mind in which man, by his union with the Divine, realizes in anticipation the ends he continues to pursue.' It is this Hope which gives rise to the conviction of Immortality. The final and highest stage of communion is Love, a form of communion difficult to attain and to express. 'Love brings the very life of the Divine into the soul of man and takes it as its own. . . . The Divine Spirit becomes the unchanging friend, the intimate companion, carrying on close and eternal fellowship with the finite spirit in perpetual reciprocal intercourse of thought and action and desire.' This intimacy would seem to involve on God's side a desire to enter in the fullest possible way into human life and the temporal struggle. This leads naturally to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation with its sequence in the Resurrection.

Much of all this is true and nobly expressed. The only criticism one feels disposed to make is that it has less of a specifically Christian than of a Neo-Platonic ring about it. Much of it, indeed, is pure Neo-Platonism. It is anthropocentric. It is based on man's restless desire for God. God is sought for the satisfying of man's desire. The story is of man's ascent to God through faith, hope, and love, rather than of God's descent to sinful man in His infinite and unmerited grace. Communion with God is regarded as being open to man through his native kinship with God and on terms that suggest a certain equality. There is little recognition of sin as the mighty barrier which must be removed ere communion is possible. Naturally, therefore, there is no mention whatever of the Cross, and it is doubtful if the real nature of the Divine Love is apprehended. Man's love to God and God's love to man are spoken of in the same breath as cognate. Man desires God, and God desires man, and therefore must become incarnate. Plato was more logical. Starting from this conception of love as a desire to possess and enjoy, he argued that love of man towards God is possible and right, for man seeks his highest good in God, but God can experience no such desire; for He already enjoys in Himself perfect blessedness to the full. Therefore

Western Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois ; 25 cents). It is part of the genius of the Anglican Communion, says Dr. WAND, to develop its organization in the form of national churches. There are the Church of Ireland, the Church in Wales, the Episcopal Church in Scotland, and the distinct and independent churches of China, India, and Japan. The only administrative point of contact between these various national churches lies in the decennial conference of the Bishops at Lambeth ; and that has no legal but only a moral authority.

On anthropological grounds there seems no doubt that nationalism has a real and important part to play in religion. Certainly that is what has happened. Each nation had its own religion, its own gods, its own system of worship. In regard to the Church the evidence is not so clear. We must, of course, remember that the Church does not begin with the New Testament. Throughout the Old Testament Israel and the Church are one. The nation is the Church. And the first generation of Christians claimed to be the New, as well as the True, Israel. But facts un-deceived them. The Christian Church soon found itself bereft of all national rights. It became a voluntary association. And it was not till the reign of Theodosius the Great that the Church was established as the State religion, and the position in the Old Testament was reproduced on the Christian level.

Dr. WAND rapidly surveys the events of the following centuries, maintaining that even before the Reformation the English Church was in a real sense national, with what he calls a 'modified nationalism,' and the Reformation made this more of a reality. But the real interest of the Archbishop's lecture emerges when he comes to discuss the present situation. He contends that the Church of England can still claim to be a national Church ; not in the sense that all the citizens subscribe to its faith and share in its life, but in the sense that it represents, both in its faults and in its virtues, a typically English expression of Christianity. It still continues to represent the Christian faith of the nation as a whole.

What then does nationalism stand for ? And what does it contribute to the common stock of faith ? There can be no doubt, to begin with, that the younger Christian churches can, and do, make a real contribution to the understanding of our religion. The natural genius of each individual race expresses itself in Christian thought and worship. The specimens of Christian art produced in these churches do bring an enrichment of the spirit and a fuller illumination of that faith which we have long practised. And, if in art, why not in theology ?

Dr. WAND is inevitably led at this point to ask what effect nationalism in religion may have on the world's present struggle towards international unity. If this is to be achieved, the present tendency towards exaggerated political nationalism will have to be checked. The various States will have to surrender some element of their full independent sovereignty. Dr. WAND doubts whether anything other than religion will be able to produce such a conversion, or to help the creation of an atmosphere of mutual goodwill in which alone the hope of peace or international unity can arise.

What part can our national churches play in this movement ? They can play their part by becoming international. They must recognize themselves ever more clearly as integral parts of one world-wide Communion. They need not forfeit their national character by submitting to one central source of organization or to one fount of jurisdiction. But they must realize fully that they are part of the Catholic Church. Dr. WAND suggests that the churches of the Anglican Communion afford an almost ideal example of this kind of unity. They have each their own customs, but their ministry and method of worship, their belief and practices, are the same. Would not this very unity, transferred to the political sphere, solve the urgent and critical international problem ?

'I believe,' says Dr. WAND, 'that in this respect the work that we have been doing during the present century for Christian Reunion will be seen to take on a new and enhanced importance. In the ecclesi-

astical history of the last four hundred years two movements stand out with remarkable clarity, the missionary expansion of the nineteenth century and the reunion movement of the twentieth. In both of these God has permitted us to take a leading part. . . . It is almost inevitable that the ecclesiastical *rapprochement* should assist in the development of more friendly secular co-operation between the nations.'

And now Dr. WAND comes to very concrete business. If the Anglican national churches are to exercise the influence on the world of which they are capable, they must make themselves more efficient. Dr. WAND points to certain glaring defects and outlines certain suggestions for bettering matters. One is the need of a church ministry of information. In England almost nothing is known of the Church overseas, except the missionary dioceses. And the separate churches know little of one another. It is true that once in ten years, at the decennial conferences, these churches are made aware of one another and of the great worldwide Anglican Communion. But memories are short, and an exiguous Continuation Committee can do little to fill the long ten years' gap.

When the Report of the Doctrinal Commission was published in England the first information of its contents that reached the Church in Australia was contained in the scare headlines of the newspapers. When the public turned to the Bishops for fuller and more expert handling they were in no position to supply it until two months had elapsed. Another instance of this lack occurred at the out-

break of the present war. The people overseas expected to be given special opportunities for united prayer, and they would have been glad to have joined in the same forms of service that were being used by their brethren in England. But these were so long in reaching Australia that the authorities there had to compile and publish services of their own.

But a closer bond is needed than the mere spread of mutual knowledge can effect. There ought to be a much more vital and personal interest in each other's concerns than exists at present. Something can be done by interchange among both clergy and laity. But a system is called for that will be more definite, official and permanent. In secular affairs this is being done by the appointment of permanent officials of one country at the government and trade headquarters of another. Could not the Church adopt a similar policy, and send to the overseas churches men corresponding to the Agents General and High Commissioners who do so much to bind the Empire together?

By means of such a spiritual diplomatic corps insularity would be broken down, and the accumulated wisdom and experience of the whole Church could be easily and rapidly applied to the circumstances of each church. This would be a logical development of the true principle of nationalism. It would prevent a drift to practical separatism. It would add greatly to the value of the Lambeth Conferences. And it would make the national churches, thus bound together by real ties, a more potent influence in world affairs.