

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

'AND he closed the book; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him.'

'He closed the book.' It was a very simple and obvious thing to do. Every Sabbath day the reader of the prophets in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he had come to the end of his reading, closed the book. Yes; but look again, and perhaps you shall see beneath the obvious, the wonderful; and beneath the customary, the unique. He closed the book. Something happened in the synagogue at Nazareth that day that had never happened before. The book had been closed before, but never like that. Never with such divine reasons, such wealth of suggestion, such assumption of authority.

The sermon is by the Rev. Percy C. AINSWORTH. Three, if not four, volumes of sermons by this preacher have been published, although he was taken away in the earliest years of manhood. And every succeeding volume makes the first surprise greater. 'The more I think,' said Jeffrey, when he received Macaulay's first essay for the *Edinburgh Review*, 'the more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style.' This young man's style is as perfect for his purpose as Macaulay's was for his. And the style is but one thing. The more we think, the less we can conceive where he picked up his insight into the mind

of Christ, and his ability to make the mind of Christ a key to open the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found in Scripture. The new book is called *A Thornless World* (Kelly; 3s. 6d. net). The title of the second sermon is, 'He closed the Book.'

Why did He close the book? Because He is greater than the book. The book was the shadow; He was the reality. The book was the echo; He was the voice. The book was the forecast; He was the fulfilment. The book was the teaching; He was the Teacher. You can in some measure realize the tremendous significance of that simple act of closing the book, when you understand that the sad strange story of the Jewish people, from that day unto this present time, turns on their inability to interpret it.

He closed the book and made it a greater book. It is a greater book now than when He closed it—far greater. Its prophecy is illuminated by its history. Instead of being but a whisper of that which shall be, it is now also a story of that which hath been and now is. We can read the meaning of long centuries of sacrifice, and interpret the dim light of all religious altar-fires, in three hours of anguish on Calvary. It is a larger book now, a deeper book, a holier book. But still He is greater than the book. Still there ever comes to

men, if they will receive it, the voice that is mightier than the voice of the book, the message that is warmer and more vital than the message of the book. It is the living grace of the closed book.

He closed the book, not because the reading of it was done, but that He might continue to read it. We read one portion at the beginning of the day, and again another portion at the end of it, and we say, 'I wish I had more time to read my Bible.' But we close it that we may go on reading it. We have all the day to read our Bible. Sometimes the only way to read it is to close it. We come to a point where it seems to have no more to teach us. It has said its last word. We pore over it, and ponder it, and analyze it, but we never get any further with it. Then the secret of understanding is to close the book. We thank God for an open Bible. Let us thank God for a Bible we can close. Let us thank God for the truth that is not prisoned in the pages of a book, but that dwells in human life.

He closed the book. He closed it that He might open it. He laid it aside for a moment that they might learn what it meant. While it was open before their eyes, and they were beholding nothing beside it or beyond it, they could not understand it. He closed the book in order that they might carry its profound messages into the setting of their daily lives. 'I wish,' says some one, 'that I could read the Bible in the original.' It is a laudable wish. It is, indeed, the only way in which any man can understand the Bible. But what is the original? Not Hebrew or Greek. There is one original language in which the Old and New Testaments are written; it is the language of human experience. Hebrew is useful; Greek is still more useful; but life is essential. The deep original language of the human heart in its loves and its clingings; the deep original language of the human spirit in its aspirations and self-consciousness; the language of hope and love, sorrow and need, endeavour and patience and victory—that is the original language of the Bible.

'Like as a father pitieth his children.' A man may read those words in the beautiful Hebrew, or in the nameless grace of our Authorized Version. But the deepest wealth and comfort of that immortal simile is given to him at the cradle of his own little child.

'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.' If the great Biblical scholar can tell us anything about that promise that is worth telling, it is not because he knows the force and history of every Hebrew root in it; it is because he knows what it is to lean a tired heart on the tireless help of the Eternal Love. The authority on this text is not the man with the best education; it is the man with the biggest burden and the simplest faith. He closed the book that they might learn to read it in the original.

Professor Josiah ROYCE has published a volume of Essays. The first essay is the Phi Beta Kappa Oration delivered at Harvard University in June 1911. It is an appreciation of the work of the late William JAMES, and, being the first essay, it gives the book its title: *William James, and other Essays on the Philosophy of Life* (Macmillan; 6s. 6d. net).

Now Professor ROYCE did not always approve of Professor JAMES. That form of philosophy called Pragmatism with which the name of Professor JAMES will always be associated has never been quite palatable to him. Nevertheless he does not hesitate to say that 'the representative American philosophers are now three, and only three—Edwards, Emerson, James.'

But it is not the essay on William JAMES that we wish at present to speak about. The other essays in the volume are on 'Loyalty and Insight,' 'What is vital in Christianity?,' 'The Problem of Truth in the Light of Recent Discussion,' and 'Immortality.' The essay we wish to speak about is the third. Its title is 'What is vital in Christianity?'

Nothing is more widely, or indeed more anxiously, sought for at present than an answer to that question. We have passed through a long period of criticism—criticism of the Bible, criticism of Christ, criticism of Christianity. And criticism causes surrender. Upon its demands we have had to give up this, we have had to give up that, till now at the end of it, if it is the end, we seem to be reduced to the barest elements of belief. We have no longer any stomach for a struggle about theories of the Atonement, or a dispute over the exact angle at which the two natures of Christ come together; we are driven to ask if there is anything in the religion which we profess that gives it eternal significance. In the words of Professor ROYCE, we now put the question anxiously: ‘What is vital in Christianity?’

Professor ROYCE answers his question by splitting it up into three questions. He asks first, What are we to understand by ‘vital’? What is it in a religion, in any religion, that must be called vital, as distinguished from that which is not vital? When he has answered that, he turns to Christianity, and he asks next, What do we find in this particular religion which we call Christianity that is vital to it? What is that without which it would not be Christianity? And then, when he has answered these two questions, he briefly asks a third, What is the permanent value, and in particular what is the value for us to-day, of that thing or those things which in Christianity we are compelled to call vital?

The first question is, What do we mean by vital as applied to the contents of a religion? Vital means more than living; it means necessary to life. That is vital for a living organism, without which the organism cannot live. Breathing is vital for us all. Now, when we turn to religion, we notice that it is made up of practices or ideas, or both. It is made up of practices such as prayers, ceremonies, festivals, rituals, and other observances. Or it is made up of ideas—ideas about God or spirits, or the like. Or it is made up of religious

ideas and religious practices combined. So, when we come to ask what is vital about a religion, our first question is, Whether are the practices or the ideas of a religion more vital? Or, in other words, if on the one hand we let the religious practices go, or on the other hand let go the religious ideas, do we still retain the religion?

Now, in the primitive religions it is practice that prevails. And not only in the primitive religions, but also with the simple-minded followers of all religions. Professor ROYCE goes even so far as to say that in the world at large, including both the civilized and the uncivilized, the followers of a religion are, in general, people who accept as binding the practices of that religion. They may not think about the meaning of these practices at all. Or, if they do, they may interpret them in all sorts of different ways. That which makes them followers of the particular religion is that they say its prayers, they keep its festivals,—in short, perform its practices.

This leads Professor ROYCE to make the startling suggestion that perhaps the origin of all religion is to be found in practice. ‘Men come to believe as they do,’ he says, ‘regarding the nature of some supernatural being, largely in consequence of the fact that they have first come to follow some course of conduct, not for any conscious reason at all, but merely from some instinctive tendency which by accident has determined this or that special expression. When the men come to observe this custom of theirs, and to consider why they act thus, some special religious belief often arises as a sort of secondary explanation of their practice.’

Suppose men were pigeons. ‘The pigeons in our college yard cluster about the benevolent student or visitor who feeds them. This clustering is the result of instinct and of their training in seeking food. The pigeons presumably have no conscious ideas or theories about the true nature of the man who feeds them. Of course, they are somehow aware of his presence and of what he

does, but they surely have only the most rudimentary and indefinite germs of ideas about what he is. But if the pigeons were to come to consciousness somewhat after the fashion of primitive men, very probably they would regard this way of getting food as a sort of religious function and would begin to worship the visitor as a kind of god.

We need not follow Professor ROYCE with his pigeon parable further. His conclusion is that everywhere practice has preceded idea. But that does not prove that idea is more vital than practice. Nor does it prove that when the practices of a religion are interpreted, the interpretation may remain while the practices fall away. All that Professor ROYCE seems to have accomplished yet is to show that, since practices precede ideas, it is probable that that religion which demands belief or faith is higher and more permanent than that which rests content with outward observance.

But surely—Professor ROYCE hears our impatient ‘surely.’ But surely, we say, a religion that is to last must contain both creed and conduct. Whether in the evolution of religion, if religion is the subject of evolution, conduct or creed came first does not seem to be a matter of what you call ‘vital’ importance. Can a religion that is worth the name ever be an affair of practice apart from inner belief, or an affair of belief, however orthodox and elevated, apart from conduct and life? Professor ROYCE admits the reasonableness of our interruption. It is right, he says, that we should come at once to the highest religion. And in the highest religion what is vital is neither mere practice nor mere opinion. It is the union of the two. ‘It is the reaction of *the whole spirit* in the presence of an experience of the highest realities of human life and of the universe.’

What have we now? We have the end of the first answer. The question was, What is that which must be called vital in a religion? The answer is, That is vital which brings together most harmoniously the best belief and the best practice.

One man says the vital thing is, Believe in God. Another man says the vital thing is, Do good and sin not. Both answers are insufficient until they are united in one. In a word, that which is vital to the highest religion is the union of faith and works through a completed spirituality.

But what is a completed spirituality? The answer to that will be found in the answer to the second question.

Now, before he proceeds to answer the second question, Professor ROYCE has to remind us that what is vital in Christianity, if Christianity is permanently to retain its vitality at all in our modern world, must be defined primarily neither in terms of mere religious practice nor yet in terms of merely intellectual formulation, but in terms of that unity of will and intellect which may be expressed in the spiritual disposition of the whole man. He proceeds to ask, What is that spiritual disposition or spiritual attitude of the whole man which is essential to the Christian religion?

Two answers have been given. They differ from one another. They are finally irreconcilable.

The first answer is that the vital thing in Christianity is the shaping of the life of the Christian in accordance with the teaching of Christ. Grasp the spirit of Christ's own teaching, interpret life as He interpreted it, and live out this interpretation of life as completely as you can, imitating Him—then you are a Christian.

The other answer is that the vital thing about Christianity is to regard the mission and the life of Christ as an organic part of a divine plan for the salvation and redemption of man. It is necessary that the person of Christ should be viewed in its relation to God and the work of Christ as an entirely unique revelation and expression of God's will. Now the work of Christ culminated in His death. The cross is therefore the symbol of whatever is most vital in Christianity. In short,

according to this second answer, what is vital to Christianity is an acceptance of the two cardinal doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement. Only if these doctrines are accepted is it possible to interpret life in the essentially Christian way and to live out this interpretation.

At first sight, these answers seem to carry us back to the difference between practice and belief. But Professor ROYCE denies that they do this. The believer in the incarnation has no occasion, he says, to charge his opponent with degrading Christ to the level of a mere teacher of morals, and Christianity to a mere practice of good works. Nor has the man who accepts the sayings of Christ, and seeks to conform his life to them, any right to say that his opponent makes true religion depend upon the acceptance of certain metaphysical opinions regarding the superhuman nature of Christ. No; the opposition between these two views regarding what is vital in Christianity is an opposition that appears on the highest levels of the religious consciousness. Both view Christianity as a faith which gives sense to life, and also as a mode of life which is centred about a faith. Yet the two positions are opposed and irreconcilable. You may believe in the teaching of Christ and endeavour to conform to it, and you may also believe that He gave His life as a ransom for sin and uncleanness. But the question is, Which of these two views is vital to Christianity? They are not both vital. Christianity is essentially either a religion of redemption in the sense in which tradition has defined redemption, or else it is simply that religion of the love of God and the love of man which the sayings and the parables so richly illustrate.

Which of these things does Professor ROYCE himself believe to be essential? If Professor ROYCE were a theologian, we should probably expect him to say that Christianity is essentially a religion of redemption. But he is a philosopher. Nevertheless Professor ROYCE believes that Christianity is a religion of redemption.

'As a student of philosophy,' he says, 'coming in no partisan spirit, I must insist that this reduction of what is vital in Christianity to the so-called pure Gospel of Christ, as He preached it and as it is recorded in the body of the presumably authentic sayings and parables, is profoundly unsatisfactory.' He gives two reasons. For one thing, he says, Christ can hardly be supposed to have regarded His sayings as containing the whole of His message, or as embodying the whole of His mission. For, if He had so viewed the matter, the Messianic tragedy in which His life-work culminated would have been needless and unintelligible. For the rest, the doctrine that He taught is manifestly incomplete. It ever looks beyond itself for its completion.

Well, we are making progress. We have now reached this definite conclusion, that Christianity is a redemptive religion. Or, to use the words which Professor ROYCE himself uses at this stage, 'What is most vital to Christianity is contained in whatever is essential and permanent about the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement.' Is this the end, then? No, the end is not yet.

For, you observe, Professor ROYCE does not say that what is most vital to Christianity consists in the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement. He says that what is most vital to Christianity is contained in *whatever is essential and permanent* about the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement. Now Professor ROYCE does not accept the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement as they have been handed down from the beginning. What is essential and permanent in them is not the same to him as it has been to the Church. To put the difference into a sentence, Professor ROYCE does not believe in miracle.

How, then, does he understand the doctrine of the incarnation? He believes that it is not necessary to look upon the incarnation and the atonement as having been accomplished at a particular

time in the history of the world, or in the case of a particular person. He says that they ought to be viewed as timeless facts which never merely happened, but which in every age determine anew the relation of the faithful to God. And he holds, besides, that this view has been in existence, though not the prevailing view, throughout the history of the Church. Some of the mediæval mystics, for example, 'fully believing in their own view of their faith, and innocent of any modern doubts about miracles, were accustomed in their tracts and sermons always and directly to interpret every part of the gospel narrative, including the miracles, as the expression of a vast and timeless whole of spiritual facts, whereof the narratives are merely symbols.' He takes Meister ECKHART by way of example.

ECKHART begins as follows a sermon on the text, 'Who is he that is born king of the Jews?' (Mt 2²): 'Mark you,' he says, 'mark you concerning this birth, where it takes place. I say, as I have often said: This eternal birth takes place in the soul, and takes place there precisely as it takes place in the eternal world,—no more, no less. This birth happens in the essence, in the very foundation of the soul.'

Again, ECKHART expounds in a sermon the statement that 'Christ came in the fulness of time'; that is, as people usually and literally interpret the matter, Christ came when the human race was historically prepared for His coming. But, says Professor ROYCE, Eckhart is careless concerning this historical and literal interpretation of the passage in question, although he doubtless also believes it. For him the true meaning of the passage is wholly spiritual. When, he asks in substance, is the day fulfilled? At the end of the day. When is a task fulfilled? When the task is over. When, therefore, is the fulness of time reached? Whenever a man is in his soul ready to be done with time; that is, when in contemplation he dwells only upon and in the eternal. Then alone, when the soul forgets time, and dwells upon God who

is above time, then, and then only, does Christ really come.

Now at this point one is compelled to ask the question, Why cannot Professor ROYCE do as Meister ECKHART does? ECKHART believes in the timelessness of the incarnation and the atonement. So does Professor ROYCE. But ECKHART believes also, and first of all, that the incarnation and the atonement were first accomplished in the person of Christ and in a definite moment of time. It is that definite moment that gives it its timeless value and even its possibility for him. Why does not Professor ROYCE believe that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ, who then, when the literal time came, suffered for us, the Just for the unjust? Professor ROYCE cannot believe because he is a philosopher.

For it is not science, as we have so long and so awkwardly held, that says miracles are impossible; it is philosophy. Professor ROYCE is an idealist. He is an idealist of a peculiar quality. He believes that God is identical with the universe. So identical, that is to say, that we cannot even in thought separate the one from the other. In his own words, and they are words that are not without audacity: 'Like the Logos of the Fourth Gospel, this entire world is not only with God, but is God.'

There is no place for miracle, then. The distinction between the natural and the supernatural is abolished. All that is natural is supernatural, and all that is supernatural is natural. And so the incarnation takes place whenever any soul, be it the soul of Jesus or the soul of John, recognizes this present God and responds to the peace of His presence. And as for the atonement—the atonement depends upon the evil that is in the world.

The atonement depends upon the evil that is in the world? But how can there be evil in a world which is simply the embodiment of the life of God?

Professor ROYCE'S answer is that the evil is there deliberately, as part of the Divine purpose. There is evil in the world in order that there may be suffering in the world. And there is suffering in the world in order that there may be atonement.

For it is only through atonement, through the sacrifice of self for others, that the incarnation can become complete, and the soul of man, of any man, Jesus or John, can enjoy the eternal relation of the soul to God.

Professor ROYCE sums up the whole matter in two theses: 'First, God wins perfection through expressing Himself in a finite life and triumphing over and through its very finitude. And secondly, Our sorrow is God's sorrow. God means to express Himself by winning us through the very triumph over evil to unity with the perfect life: and therefore our fulfilment, like our existence, is due to the sorrow and the triumph of God Himself. These two theses express, I believe, what is vital in Christianity.'

The Attitude of the Outspread Hands ('Orante') in Early Christian Literature and Art.

BY DR. D. PLOOIJ, TIEL, HOLLAND.

IN the Dutch *Theologisch Tijdschrift* of September 1911, I have printed an article on the attitude of the 'Orante' in the Odes of Solomon. Asked to give my argument in English for scholars who do not read Dutch, I do so readily, especially as I have now an opportunity of treating the subject in full, and to correct some ambiguous expressions.

For me it is beyond doubt that Dr. Bernard, in his article on the Odes,¹ has shown the right way for explaining the Odes in calling them 'hymns of the baptized.' Some of his arguments may have been too weak, so as to make his position more uncertain than needed,—in the main point continued and careful study undoubtedly decides in favour of his hypothesis, as many new parallels prove. Of course, the enigma of the Odes is not yet solved with this, but the right way is shown, and that is the main point.

Dr. Bernard, however, seems not to have noticed a detail which, in my opinion, confirms his thesis so far as to prove positively at least that the Odes as we read them now in the HARRISIAN collection have been in *baptismal liturgical* use. I have in mind Ode 27 and Ode 42¹⁻³. The translation of these verses as given by Dr. Harris in his second edition of the Odes (p. 127 and p. 139) runs as follows:—

Ode 27.—(1) I stretched out my hands, and sanctified my Lord: (2) for the extension

¹ *Journ. of Theol. Studies*, October 1910, pp. 1-30.

of my hands is His sign: (3) and my expansion is the upright tree (*or* cross).

Ode 42.—(1) I stretched out my hands, and approached my Lord: (2) for the stretching of my hands is His sign: (3) my expansion is the outspread tree which was set up on the way of the Righteous one.

The text of these verses is not in order, and, even after the emendations and corrections proposed by several scholars, there remain uncertainties, which I will not try here to remove, but the main point is quite clear and certain: the stretching out of the hands is a symbolic act signifying the cross of Christ, and in this act a confession of the Lord is expressed.

Now, Zahn already has pointed out the liturgical character of these verses. He says: 'Sie sind eine liturgische Formel von ausgesprochen christlichem Charakter, mit welcher der Sänger sich zu gottesdienstlichem Gebet anschickt.'² The liturgical character is certain, but that the act in itself is a prayer-act, as Zahn says, cannot be inferred from the verses quoted. The Odes mention the attitude of the outstretched hands in other places. Of these only 37¹ may be called a prayer: (1) I stretched out my hands to my Lord: and to the Most High I raised my voice, (2) And I spake with the lips of my heart, and He heard me, etc. But neither in 21¹, nor in 35⁸, where the same attitude

² *Neue kirchliche Zeitschr.* 1910, S. 694 f.