

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE 'Gifford Lectures' constitute a remarkable series of which we have reason to be proud. No series, of course, can be uniform alike in erudition and in widespread appeal; and of the lengthy list of published 'Gifford Lectures' there are only a few that can be whole-heartedly recommended to the ordinary minister as likely to be useful to him in his pulpit work.

The latest, however, is one such. It is entitled *From Morality to Religion* (Macdonald and Evans; 12s. 6d. net). It is the course delivered last year in the University of St. Andrews by Emeritus-Professor W. G. DE BURGH. It is marked by the same qualities of logical arrangement, profound knowledge, sober judgment, and lucidity of presentation, which marked his former notable book, 'Towards a Religious Philosophy.' The writer makes philosophy speak the language of the person of ordinary education.

We have said that the average minister, who perhaps did not read for Honours in Philosophy, will find this volume a valuable addition to his library. If we are not mistaken many ministers are somewhat uneasy about the issue of the recent 'Recall to Religion.' They have found so many difficult to convince that there is anything important in religion to which they might be recalled. So many think, or profess to think, that the whole business of religion is an obsolete scaffolding for morality, once valuable and probably necessary, but now that morality is independent, no longer worth serious consideration.

Now that is precisely the heart of Professor DE BURGH'S subject. His main questions are: What does morality owe to religion? Can it survive in independence of religion? Is it intelligible in its demands without religion?

Matthew Arnold in a famous phrase defined religion as 'morality touched with emotion.' That has perhaps done a good deal to foster the belief of so many that religion may well be allowed to go if morality abide. So very properly our author deals early with the question, what differentiates religion and morality?

Three things, he answers. First, religion means acknowledgment and worship of God. Clearly a man may be virtuous who has no personal religion, within some social framework he may discharge all the duties of his station. Second, religion is essentially *theoria*, morality is essentially *praxis*. Third, for the religious man the supreme motive is love of God and that is of great importance, for moral duties, 'performed in the temper of religion, undergo a subtle and significant transformation.'

The second distinction requires a brief explication. Morality and religion are so far at one when we consider the highest forms of each. Christianity teaches morals. In the view of many that is its only value. Morality, when the moral man reflects, requires some *theoria*. But in each there is profound difference in emphasis. In religion *theoria*—embracing convictions as to God, the world, and man—is fundamental and the *praxis* follows. In

morality the *praxis* is essential and the *theoria* may or may not follow.

Preaching, let us interject, has probably been overmuch exclusively practical. The pulpit may need to remember that religion is essentially *theoria*, and that what bewildered men in this distracted world primarily need is not moral maxims but reassurance as to God and God's will and character and purpose. Our religion is practical and our preaching must be practical; but, paradoxical as it sounds, the merely or exclusively practical will get us nowhere, and will not recall men to religion.

Let us turn to another impressive passage where Professor DE BURGH shows how great is the debt of modern ethics to Christianity. One dominant principle which more or less clearly all modern teachers of ethics accept is that stated by Kant as to the treatment of all humanity in one's own person or in the persons of others as an end, never merely as a means. The immediate source of this was Rousseau, but it is of religious origin and has passed into secular ethics from Christianity.

Can it have much meaning without religion? What do 'personality' and 'humanity' mean apart from religion? For the Christian 'by virtue of his membership of God's Kingdom, personality is invested with an absolute worth.' Take from the idea of personality all that it owes to religion, and what remains?—'an empty form with no attachments to bind it to reality.'

This is what happened under eighteenth-century rationalism. The world went back to Stoicism enlightened with optimism as to what science would accomplish for man's happiness. And what has it accomplished? It is a two-edged sword. It is as fertile in bane as in blessing, and there is truth in Lawrence's complaint—'What is the good of an industrial system piling up rubbish while nobody lives?' If Christianity be set aside we are left with a barren idea of personality. 'The human person is but a self-conscious atom, one among

countless others, and no more. Can this be the essential core of truth in the ideal of personality?'

So with the idea of the brotherhood of man. What significance are we to attach to this? Well, what still lives on is the Christian ideal of human brotherhood. The 'religion of humanity' died at its birth. Eighteenth-century moralists strove in vain to find a content for the principle of general benevolence, and Hume candidly denied its existence. Apart from religion, 'humanity' like 'personality' is but an empty form. 'To give life to what is otherwise an empty form we must revert to the vision in which it had its origin, of all mankind, past, present, and to come, as very members incorporate in an other-worldly fellowship, as citizens of the Kingdom of which God is King.'

A new and pleasant feature in contemporary theological scholarship has been the introduction of the Swedish theologians, Brilioth, Aulén, and NYGREN, to the English reader. Some six years ago the last-named's *Agape and Eros* attracted much favourable attention in English-speaking circles. It was a study of the Christian idea of love as it appears in the New Testament and in contrast to the Hellenistic idea.

The second part of NYGREN's historical study of this Christian idea was published at Stockholm in 1936. It takes the reader to the point where the problem of 'Eros and Agape' finds its natural solution in the Reformation. For the convenience—as we suppose—of translator and publisher this second part will appear in two volumes in its English dress. The first volume is now before us as *Agape and Eros*, Part II. Volume I. (S.P.C.K.; 6s. net), and this time the translator is the Rev. Philip S. Watson, M.A., Wesley College, Leeds. It is substantially the story of how the synthesis of the two 'motifs' of Eros and Agape was prepared, up to the Cappadocian Fathers in the fourth century.

If the essence of religion is fellowship with God, then the question of questions for any religion is, How is fellowship with God conceived? Now the

answers, given by Judaism, by Hellenism, and by Christianity to this question are respectively: by means of Nomos, by mean of Eros, by means of Agape. Nomos or man's fulfilling of the Law, Eros or man's desire for heavenly things, and Agape or God's own Love freely bestowed on the sinner—these are three different ways to fellowship with God.

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Obviously, whenever the Nomos or Eros motif, which is egocentric, encounters the Agape motif, which is theocentric, there is bound to be conflict. We are thus prepared to find that in the course of Christian history the idea of Christian love has passed through many vicissitudes. Indeed, as the translator says, it is a story of dramatic struggle, of fierce hostilities, and strange alliances that is unfolded in NYGREN's pages.

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In the part of the work under review it is, however, the stage of synthesis that is considered, indeed, only the early manifestations of that stage. First, we are asked to notice that the Nomos or Judaistic type of Christian love is to be found in the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists, the Eros or Hellenistic type in Gnosticism, and the Agape or truly Christian type in Marcion. Then we are asked to notice further that the Nomos type is to be found in Tertullian, the Eros type in the Alexandrian theology (Origen), and the Agape type in Irenæus. But these conflicts issue in victory for none of the three main types, but rather in a compromise, such as we find in Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers.

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There is a certain smoothness in the above scheme that is apt to awake suspicion in the mind of the critical student of history. But we must simply be content to give point to this Note by illustrating certain of the positions above stated.

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Take Tertullian. For him the Old and New Testaments both stand on the same level, from both he draws his faith in exactly the same way. As he says, the Church 'mixes the Law and the Prophets with the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles; from thence she drinks her faith.' The

result in Tertullian is, as NYGREN remarks, a confusion of motifs. He 'mixes' Old Testament Nomos with New Testament Agape, and from the mixture 'drinks' his own faith, unaware that the New Testament has something essentially new to say about the Way of Salvation.

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Take Origen. With him the two great religious streams of late antiquity, the Christian with its Agape type of love and the Hellenistic with its Eros type, are commingled. He is by fullest conviction a Christian, but an equally convinced Platonist. 'God is Eros,' he says, and 'God is Agape.' When the Gnostic, he says in effect, finds the word Agape in Scripture, he should at once understand it as if Eros stood in its place, for that is the reality concealed under the protective disguise of Agape. The simple multitude would inevitably misunderstand all references to the heavenly Eros, confusing it with the 'vulgar Eros.' That is why we must claim that the Song of Songs is written for the perfect, for Gnostics.

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Take Irenæus. In him the idea of Agape is found in a purity of form unsurpassed in the Early Church. 'His whole theology is saturated with the Agape motif: it is of love that God has created the world and designed men for fellowship with Himself, of love God's Logos has become flesh in order to "recapitulate" in Himself the fallen human race and reconcile it to God.' But even Irenæus's idea of love is not entirely untouched by alien motifs. Thus the Eros motif affects the very centre of his thought. In plain dependence on Hellenistic piety he describes the goal of the Incarnation as the 'deification' of man: God became man in order that man might become God. Thus strands from the Eros and the Agape motifs are even in this thinker woven together.

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Karl BARTH has been suspected of having Romanist leanings. How such a criticism could have arisen it is hard to see, except that his writings have received the most respectful attention of Roman Catholic theologians. But these, while they recognize his powerful presentation of the funda-

mental doctrines of the Christian Faith, are in no doubt as to his position as a champion of Protestantism.

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Another criticism of BARTH is that in his theology there is no place for the Holy Spirit. This criticism also is difficult to understand, for in all his thinking God is, first and last, supremely active in His work for man and in man. But any doubts on the subject are finally removed by the publication of his book on *The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life* (Muller ; 5s. net) which has been translated by the Rev. R. Birch Hoyle.

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It contains a lecture delivered by BARTH at Elberfeld, and it treats the subject under three heads, the Holy Ghost as Creator, as Reconciler, and as Redeemer. Its leading ideas may be briefly indicated.

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Beginning with the assertion that 'the Holy Ghost is God the Lord in the fullness of Deity, in the total sovereignty and condescension, in the complete hiddenness and revealedness of God,' he proceeds in the first section to distinguish sharply between the Creator Spirit and the created spirit. 'Augustine was well aware of a fact that was not rightly known by later idealistic theologians, namely, that God's life, which is styled in the Bible as also Spirit, Holy Spirit, for this reason is not identical with what we recognize as our own created life of the spirit or the soul.' Here he runs counter to much of the religious thought of to-day which often speaks confusedly of the divine in man as being really man's spirit, an inborn endowment, the source and centre of all man's upward strivings.

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To this type of thought BARTH takes strong exception as tending to confuse the Creator and the creature, and detract from the glory of God's grace. 'If creature is to be strictly understood as a reality willed and placed by God in distinction from His own reality—that is to say, as the wonder of a reality which, by the power of God's love, has a place and persistence alongside of His own reality—then the continuity between Him and it . . . cannot belong to the creature itself but only to the Creator

*in His relation* to the creature.' In other words, the presence of the Holy Spirit must never be conceived as something native to man, an original endowment in his make-up, a permanent possession which he holds by some natural right. It must be held to be God's gift, 'the inconceivable, divine bestowal on His creature,' the act of God's free grace renewed from moment to moment.

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So when we ask the question, 'What is the Christian life?' we are bound to answer that Christian life is human life that has been made open by the Holy Ghost to receive God's Word. In revelation both the giving and the receiving are of God. God graciously gives the living Word, but man is incapable unassisted of hearing it aright. 'It is not within the compass of any cleverness or ability of mine; but it is purely and simply the office of the Holy Ghost to be continually opening our ears to enable us to receive the Creator's Word.' This is sound Reformation teaching, though somewhat obscured in our day. As Robertson Smith so nobly phrased it: 'If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the Word of God, I answer with all the Fathers of the Protestant Church, "Because the Bible is the only record of God's redeeming love." And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul.'

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Further, the special work of the Holy Ghost arises out of the fact that the Creator and the created spirit are in conflict. The 'holiness' of the Holy Ghost is expressive of His opposition to sin. He is not simply the spirit of the true, the beautiful, and the good, but is the spirit of Reconciliation striving against man's hostility in the battle and victory of grace. Here BARTH is anxious to guard against the error of synergism in every shape and form. The free will of man is not the pivot on which turns his relation to God. The decisive fact is that the Holy Spirit of God is at work conquering that sin which is essentially hostility to itself, and reconciling sinful man to God. He will not allow man's creative action, but only God's free grace, to determine decisively the

event. 'No psalm-singing to the glory of God, and no lowly knee-bending can alter the fact that when God's grace and man's doing are looked upon as two sides of an affair, where one can turn it round and say, instead of the words "Holy Ghost," with just as good emphasis, "religious fervour," "moral earnestness," or even "man's creative activity"—then it is a simple fact that man has been handed over and left to his sins. Sin is not taken in deadly earnest when it is regarded as something that can be radically overcome by the enthusiasm of good intentions, and then, by and by, can be removed by practical activity. You can cure a wound by such treatment but you cannot restore a dead man to life.'

In accordance with this it must be maintained that the Christian life is from first to last a life in the Holy Spirit. Just as the saving work of Christ is complete apart from any working of ours, so the Holy Ghost, being the Spirit of Christ, is alone the efficient cause of the new life. This is true of all the constituents of that life, whether in its repentance, its faith, or its obedience. It is the Holy Ghost who reproves and convicts of sin. Man will not convict himself, for he does not know himself as a sinner. The knowledge of the content of the word 'sin' is God's work. 'Sin, in itself, is obviously never at all this or that act, on which one could lay his finger; but it is solely resistance to God's law, opposition to His gracious pronouncement of acquittal and guilt.' It is essentially self-reliance and self-esteem which resent the accusations of God's Word, and which refuse always to live by God's forgiving mercy. 'This is unbelief, this is really sin. In comparison with this sin, all the rest do not matter so much, for this unbelief is the most critical sin of all sins.' The conviction of this can come only by the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

So is it with regard to faith and the new obedience. The man who has found salvation in Christ, and who looks to Christ as his righteousness, will never cease to acknowledge and confess that his being justified is utterly not of himself or through anything in himself. His life never ceases to be a life

of faith. 'When, in the assault of temptation, faith has triumphed over unbelief, then what gained the victory was not the human, nor the "Christian" spirit, but the *Holy Ghost* in him.' As St. Paul says, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' And again, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' 'Christian holiness,' said Luther, 'is not active but passive holiness. It is of God's mercy and grace, not of their own nature, that works are without guilt. They are forgiven and good, because of faith, to him who surrenders to this same mercy. Consequently, we must be afraid of works but have comfort in God's grace.'

Finally, as the Word of God is a word of promise, so the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the promise, by whom we are 'sealed unto the day of redemption.' In a word, He is the Spirit of the Redeemer *all along the line*. There is a very persistent view of man which would regard him as one existing in presupposed continuity with God. 'This view of continuity between God and man is always threatening to make man out as being his own creator and atoner.' He is represented as having a future and a destiny of his own. But into the Christian life there can never enter any thought of independence. As the Christian lives by faith, a faith which is not superseded, so he always lives in hope, a hope sustained in him by the Holy Spirit. 'To be *heirs*, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, is, as Scripture bears witness, our destiny. But "heirs" says, as plainly as can be said, that we are not possessors, but are those to whom possession is promised.' This life, lived through the Holy Ghost, becomes a life of hope, like Abraham's. And in the Holy Ghost thanksgivings are offered and prayer is made. For 'the wonder of prayer—and this is a thing quite different from the "infused grace" of ability to pray aright—is the incoming of the Holy Ghost to the help of the man who is praying. It is His sighing, which to be sure, is in *our* mouth; yet as *His* groaning, who creates out of the man who is sober or drunken or finical, or even the *homo religiosus* who has utterly collapsed (I mean by that, the man who prays in himself and to himself): out of a man of that kind, the Holy Ghost makes a person who *actually, really* prays.'