

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Things that Remain.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR JAMES ORR, D.D.

I.

THE time changes, and in the new world opening before us many signs portend large revolutions in men's thoughts, theories, and institutions. Is the Gospel among the things that are to perish amidst these changes? So some appear to think. The old faith, they imagine, has gone, and they are busy casting about, like some wise men in the *Hibbert Journal*, for a "substitute for Christianity." Two things reassure us. One is that, if there are many things that change, there are other things that are abiding. "Yet once," says Jehovah in Haggai, "and I will shake the heaven and the earth" (ii. 6). "Yet once more, signifying the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain"—so comments the writer to the Hebrews (xii. 27). God remains; the soul of man remains—singularly the same in all ages, as our increasing knowledge of the oldest civilizations shows; sin remains; the weariness, and unrest, and wretchedness of the world remain; the longing for deliverance, for rest, for peace with God, for hope, for fulness of life, remain. These are the "constants" in the history of man; and over against this need of the race are other "constants." Christ and His Gospel remain; the Cross remains; the Spirit of life remains; the Bible remains; the peace and joy and rest and hope that spring from the possession of God's salvation remain, and are reattested each day anew in the experience of millions who know whom they have believed (1 Tim. i. 12). Our experts who are complacently occupied in digging the grave of Christianity have much to do before they "shake" these things out of existence.

But another thing that reassures us is that among the changing things none are more changeful than the theories

themselves which are to take the place of Christianity. Suppose Christianity disposed of, what is to take its place that is more enduring? The question is ludicrous, when one thinks of what Dorner calls "the screaming contradictions" of the modern views of the world, all in open war with each other. Deists, Pantheists, Atheists, Monists, Materialists, Spiritualists, Pessimists, Agnostics, Positivists, liberal "theologians" of all shades and degrees—who shall bring harmony out of their Babel of discords? As I have written elsewhere: "Were their respective opinions to be put to the vote, out of a dozen systems each would be found in a minority of one, with the other eleven against it." This in no way proves Christianity true, but it shows at least that it is not unreasonable to think, as the ages have done, that, after all, the religion of Christ holds the eternal truth to which the world, after its stumblings and incessant self-confutations and disillusionments, will be glad to come back. "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" asked Jesus. Then, after the disciples had recited the babble of conflicting voices of the age, "But who say ye that I am?" and in answer Peter rang out the unchanging truth: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is the same always. The clang of discordant watchwords and theories, and over against it the Christ who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

One thing a good deal of modern thought seems sure of is that it is about to banish from the world and from religion belief in the supernatural as aught more than the presence of the spiritual *in* the natural. That is a logical position for the Monist or Pantheist to take up; but is it really tenable for anyone who holds in a warm, living way, as many still do, belief in a personal, loving, fatherly God—One who can be spoken of as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"? I fail to see it. A "scientific"—that is, a purely mechanical theory of the world—has just as little room for such a Being as it has for "miracle"; and if it be said that, nevertheless, we must believe in such a Being—rest the faith on "value judgments," or whatever else—what is this but to admit that the

“scientific” view of the world is one-sided and incomplete, and that in the realities of things there is room for infinitely more than a narrow philosophy of Nature dreams of? Admit God, and much else is possible—nay, certain; for it is simply unthinkable that such a Being can exist, yet be closed in by any system which He Himself has constituted from immediate access to souls that need His help and redeeming grace. There are changes in conception here also since the seventies and eighties of last century; and, if I mistake not, this idea of Nature as a rigidly enclosed mechanical system is itself rapidly breaking up, and giving place to a more vitalistic view, in which God’s presence and continuous plastic action will speedily resume their own.

Anti-supernaturalistic dogmatisms are rife in science; they are rife also in the new theories of religion and of Christianity. Professor Foster, of Chicago, has lately been telling us in his book on “The Finality of the Christian Religion,” with endorsement—no less—from the University of Chicago, that a man who in these days believes in miracles hardly knows what “*intellectual* honesty” means. So we have an efflorescence of theories of religion, even of so-called “Christian” religion, which are to dispense with everything above Nature. But are they among the things that remain? He is a hopeful man, judging from the fate of such theories in the past, who assumes that they are. We know well the tone of dogmatism with which our newer theorists speak, their calm appropriation of such words as “modern,” “scientific,” “critical,” to their own particular coterie; but we know also what has come of this talk in the past, and what fate is overtaking a good deal of it at the present hour. Baur in his day wrote haughtily of his school as the “critical” as opposed to the “uncritical” school; but how many will give in their adhesion to-day to his critical results, or his reconstruction of the history of the Apostolic age or of primitive Christianity? Much gain, no doubt, has accrued from Baur’s movement, but the break with the *theory* which was the soul of the movement is complete.

Or take the thorny field of Old Testament criticism. There

are changes and dogmatisms enough there assuredly, but are they all in the one direction? Kuenen wrote of his own theory of the religion of Israel, with express exclusion of the supernatural, as the "modern" in opposition to the "ecclesiastical" view, thus ruling out of the class "modern" all scholars, whatever their critical standpoint, who yet believed in a special supernatural revelation of God to Israel. "Modern" is applied in a large section of the critical literature in this exclusive sense still. Scholars who occupy what is regarded as a half-way position are patiently tolerated for the aid they render, but they are not really regarded as up to the "modern" mark. Yet within the "modern" school itself all is not well. There are changes, and the current has already begun to flow in an opposite direction from that which the Kuenen-Wellhausen school had marked out as final. I have referred in other connections to the recent pronouncement of Winckler, the Berlin Orientalist, at Eisenach, in which he vigorously lays the axe to the roots of the much-vaunted Wellhausen theory of religion of Israel. If Winckler's contentions are right, that whole theory is a mistake, and not one of its presuppositions will hold. But there are other signs. Here, for instance, is a book by Professor Baentsch, of Jena, an Old Testament critical scholar, on "Ancient Oriental and Israelitish Monotheism." It also is an appeal for a revision of the current theory of the history of Israel's religion. It is almost amusing to see the fear in which the author stands of being ranked as a reactionary and enemy to scientific inquiry, because, forsooth, he ventures to argue for a Monotheism that goes back to Moses! He expects that his book will be regarded by many as "a deplorable retrogression (*Rückschritt*), a surrender of painfully-won positions, an example of the worst absence of method," etc. Still he holds his ground, and has little difficulty in making out his case. He dwells in his preface on the impossibility of finding an explanation on the ordinary theory of the development of the God of Sinai into the sole God of heaven and earth, and cites in proof "no less a person than the master of this school, Julius Wellhausen" himself, who, in

one of his latest utterances, says: "Why did not Chemosh of Moab, for instance, develop into a God of righteousness and the Creator of heaven and of earth? To that question it is not possible to give a satisfying answer." Reviewing this book, another well-known critical scholar, Baudissin, so far agrees as to maintain that Moses had such a conception of the Divine Being that the prophets, from the time of Amos, were able to say that the God of whom they spake was the God whom the fathers knew in the desert. So, after all, Israel's God remains!

In the New Testament sphere we have the same arrogant dogmatism on the one side, and the same evidence of change to saner positions on the other. If one class of critics seem to hold it as an axiom that everything "traditional" must be false, we have a "master" like Harnack emphatically declaring that the whole movement of recent research has been to re-establish the authority of "tradition," as respects at least the literature. "There was a time," he says — "the public generally, perhaps, imagines it is in it still—when people considered themselves bound to regard the earliest Christian literature, including the New Testament books, as a tissue of forgeries and falsifications. That time is past. . . . The earliest literature of the Church is in its principal points, and in most of its details, historically regarded, veracious and reliable" (Preface to "Chronologie"). This conviction of Harnack's receives new assertion and brilliant vindication in his recent book on "Luke the Physician," in which, in teeth of the reigning school of criticism, he successfully champions the Lucan authorship of the Third Gospel and of the Book of Acts. Our New Testament remains.

On the other hand, into what strange vagaries is an irresponsible criticism continually running? Here is Oscar Holtzmann, for example, explaining the resurrection of Jesus by the hypothesis that Joseph of Arimathea, repelled by the idea of the body of a crucified malefactor reposing in his family tomb (why did he admit it at all?) had it secretly removed, and so created the belief that the Lord had risen! Here is a large two-volume work by Kreyenbühl gravely defending the theory that the

Fourth Gospel was the work of the Gnostic Menander, that Simon Peter in this Gospel is the Gnostic Simon (the Magus), and that Andrew is Menander himself!

In this connection it is proper to refer to the interesting reply of Professor Kaftan of Berlin, in his pamphlet "Jesus and Paulus," to the recent publications of Bousset and Wrede on the Jesus of the Gospels and on Paul. Bousset's "Jesus" has been translated, and is probably known to many readers of these pages. Kaftan vigorously contests the claim made by the two writers to speak in the name of historical method. Their representation, he effectively shows, has not its roots in "method" at all. It roots itself in the so-called "modern view of the world." This *a priori* conception, which refuses to go beyond natural causation, leads throughout to historical distortion and mutilation. He refuses to accept the so-called "modern view," and expresses his surprise that so many thinking men should be led astray by that puppet (*Popanz*). He vindicates Paul, and winds up by declaring that, "As this Jesus-religion has no points of support either in the Gospel of Jesus or in primitive Christianity, so it can never approve itself, not now, and not in the future, as a possible form of Christianity." Jesus remains.

The most striking fact in all the writings now named—Winckler's, Baentsch's, Harnack's, Kaftan's—is, however, less the divergence they show from current views or their reversal of these, than the decisive break they all represent with current critical methods. The language of Harnack and Kaftan in criticism of these methods is as strong as anything heard in conservative circles. It is time, also, that such protest was made. The dogmatism especially that rules out everything as "uncritical" which recognises a supernatural element (Harnack himself is not free from blame here) needs to be firmly resisted. As a specimen of this temper, one notes how in Lobstein's book on the "Virgin-Birth" writers on the subject are grouped into the "historical and critical" (those who deny the Divine fact) and "the apologetic camp" (all who accept it)! Thus all the able scholars who accept of this part of the Gospel history

are robbed of their title to be "historical and critical"! It is an easy method of begging a question in dispute.

What is true in Biblical criticism and history as to change in theories is not less true of the relations of theology and science. The ruling thought in modern science is undeniably "evolution." Evolution, or the doctrine of descent, is in nine cases out of ten identified with "Darwinism," or the special theory of the origin of new species by natural selection, acting in a slow and gradual manner on minute fortuitous variations in organisms. As applied to man, the theory postulates a long and slow ascent of man from animal conditions. Here arise difficulties as to man's primitive condition, great antiquity, and the origin of sin. Probably few have any idea of how profoundly the whole conception of evolution is being changed by recent research, and in how different a light the changes put the problems about man and sin. "Darwinism" is being superseded by a theory which restores the idea of finality, and proceeds by other methods than those of slow and insensible changes in organisms. The present writer has sought to impress this in his book on "God's Image in Man," in the notes to which some very remarkable articles are cited from the pen of Rudolf Otto, now Professor in Göttingen. The matter is referred to here in order to say that these articles of Otto's are now incorporated in a larger work of that author, just translated into English by Professor Arthur Thomson, of Aberdeen, and his wife, under the title of "Naturalism and Religion" (in the "Crown Theological Library"). This important book should certainly be studied by everyone who wishes to see where science at present stands on the subject of evolution. It is a valuable contribution to the establishment of the things that remain.

II.

A striking corroboration of the statement that the "shaking" in Old Testament criticism is not all in one direction is furnished by the able article on "Recent Developments of Old Testament

Criticism" in the January number of the *Quarterly Review*, from the pen of Dr. G. A. Smith. Eighteen or twenty years ago, Dr. Smith says, everything was thought to be tolerably well settled. Now, apparently, it is mostly all unsettled again, except as to the main facts of the analysis, and perhaps the exilic date of the priestly law (the latter a view which seems to be to the present writer demonstrably untenable). With three-fourths of the article one can express hearty agreement. The criticism of Dr. Cheyne, who "stalks through the Negeb and Northern Arabia, sowing forests on the hills, and lifting kingdoms from the sand," of the new textual criticism of the poetical and prophetic books, "through which it drives like a great ploughshare, turning up the whole surface, and menacing not only the minor landmarks, but, in the case of the prophets, the main outlines of the field as well," and of the new and revolutionary Babylonian school of Winckler, is trenchant and successful. It is a large admission when the writer allows that Wellhausen and Professor Robertson Smith were wrong about the dates of the patriarchal narratives, and signifies his adhesion to Gunkel in carrying back these narratives to 1200 B.C. Gunkel may still regard the narratives as legendary—though he "has shown that we must read in them the style, the ideas, and the historical conditions of the ages before Moses"—but we are certain that, if Dr. Smith applied his pen to the task, he could as effectively dispose of Gunkel's fantastic theory of the origin of the "legends" as he has done in the case of Winckler's hypothesis that the prophets were the kept agents of foreign powers. Stories such as we have about the patriarchs, with their depth of meaning, and penetration with promise and purpose, are not the kind of thing that legend produces.

Larger results follow from the range of these admissions than appear in the article. If the patriarchal narratives existed in 1200 B.C., who will certify that they may not have existed much earlier? If they existed then, why could they not be written then? (The article has nothing to say on the recent discoveries on the early development of writing.) The chief

reasons for the ordinary dating of J and E fall to the ground if the narratives, as Gunkel thinks, have no mirroring of events after 900. Or, again, if the narratives go back to 1200, how far are we supposed to be from the Exodus? If the Rameses II. theory of the Oppression is maintained, the Exodus will fall, in the opinion of recent scholars, not earlier than about 1230 or 1250. Dr. Smith may put it a little sooner. In any case, on this view 1200 B.C. takes us back so nearly to the Mosaic age that the difference hardly seems worth fighting for.

In the article some friendly criticisms are offered on the present writer's volume on the Old Testament, and certain objections are mentioned to the early date of the Deuteronomic and Levitical legislation there maintained which are thought to be "insuperable." A word may be said on these in concluding. They may not leave the same impression of "insuperableness" on other minds.

The objections (specified) are three in all: 1. That Elijah "repaired" and sacrificed at the altars of Jehovah—this in disproof of the existence of the law of a central altar (Deut. xii.). But one may well ask: "What was Elijah to do after the complete suspension of political and religious relations between the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms which ensued almost immediately after the house of Jehovah had been built? What could he do, or would he be likely to do, but just what is narrated—fall back on the simpler forms of worship that previously had prevailed?" The repairing of the altars of Jehovah does not show, at least, much sympathy with the calf-worship, the flocking to the shrines of which was probably the cause of the neglect of the altars.

2. That Jeremiah states (vii. 22) that Jehovah gave no commands to Israel concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices—this in proof that, if the Levitical laws were extant in Jeremiah's time, he was ignorant of them. But this surely is a large and impossible inference from a passage that can quite easily be understood in a less absolute way. It involves the view that Jeremiah did not know (or accept) Deuteronomy in a

form which included chapter xii. ("all that I command you," ver. 11); it overlooks that it is not the Levitical laws only that command and regulate sacrifice—surely Jeremiah knew the Book of the Covenant (*cf.* Exod. xx. 24, xxiii. 18), and was not ignorant of the sacrifices at the making of the covenant (*cf.* Exod. xxiv. 5-8)—and it is contradicted by the fact that Jeremiah, like other prophets, himself pictures sacrifices and offerings as part of the order of the perfected theocracy (xvii. 26; *cf.* xxxiii. 17, 18). In any case, is it not true, according to the Pentateuch itself, that when God brought the people out of Egypt, and made His covenant with them, the stress was laid primarily on moral obedience (Exod. xix. 5, xx., xxiv. 7), and that the Levitical sacrifices had a secondary place?

3. A special disproof of the existence of the Levitical law is found in the narrative of the sins of Eli's sons in 1 Sam. ii. "The demand of these sons of Belial, as the narrative calls them [to have the flesh given to them raw], is the very thing that Leviticus enjoins." But is this criticism cogent? First, the rendering probably needs to be amended. Instead of, "And the custom of the priests with the people was that," etc. (ver. 13), the rendering of the Revised Version margin, "They knew not the Lord, nor the due [right] of the priests from the people," has the balance of scholarly opinion in its favour. It is the rendering adopted or preferred by Wellhausen, Nowack, Klostermann, Van Hoonacker, H. P. Smith, Driver, etc. Then, the practice of the sons of Eli in taking their portion of the sacrifice with a hook out of the pot in which it was boiling falls into its place as an abuse. When contradiction is found in their demand to have their portion given to them "raw"—which was the thing the law contemplated—the accent is laid in the wrong place. The quarrel of the people with the priests was that the priests refused to burn the fat on the altar before claiming or seizing their portion. They seem to have been willing to give the priests their portion in any form desired—why should they not?—provided the fat was first burned (ver. 16). The "sons of Belial" refused, and helped themselves by

violence when the flesh was being cooked. So far from contradicting the Levitical law, the passage testifies—(1) to a “right” or “due” of the priests from the people, (2) to the fact that portions were assigned them from the sacrifices, and (3) to a law requiring them to burn the fat before doing anything else. There was certainly no Levitical law entitling them to neglect or postpone the burning of the fat.

It looks as if the existence of the ritual laws, instead of being overthrown, was very clearly established.



Keble as Poet.

BY THE REV. I. GREGORY SMITH, M.A., HON. LL.D.

IT is barely half a century since the grave closed over the author of the “Christian Year,” in a village churchyard near Winchester. But a transformation so marvellous in many ways has passed over England in this interval, that the critic to-day stands quite far enough away from what he is looking at. Arnold of Rugby, writing to a friend just after the appearance of the book, speaks of “John Keble’s Hymns.” It is a misnomer. The poems have not the “*élan*”—the swing of hymns; they are not obvious enough. In fact, it is not easy even to get good hymns out of them. They are lyrical, like the odes, say, of Gray, Collins, Horace, and they must be judged as such.

One of the most interesting of many attempts to appreciate Keble as poet is by Mr. A. C. Benson in an essay, which came out in the *Contemporary Review*, and afterwards in a volume of miscellaneous essays.¹ Many of his criticisms, whether in praise or blame, are acute and discriminative, not lightly to be set aside. If I venture to demur sometimes, it is not where some minor canon of the art is concerned, but where the larger and deeper

¹ Macmillan, 1896.