

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 Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE emergence of aggressive Fundamentalism in America has given fresh interest to the question as to the relations of Science to Religion. Several histories of the old conflict and several new discussions of the grounds of controversy have recently appeared. A thoroughly adequate résumé of the dispute is given in *The Church and Science*, by Hector MACPHERSON, M.A., Ph.D., in the 'Living Church' series (Clarke; 6s. net).

As may be gathered from the title, it deals with the action of ecclesiastical authorities and the utterances of representative churchmen, and it makes rather humiliating reading. It is not exhilarating to have it so clearly demonstrated how dogmatic, how ignorant, and how merciless were the judgments of the Church on questions of astronomy, geology, and biology, and looking back from our vantage-point in time to see how wrong-headed, indeed how faithless, their criticisms were. If such an historical survey could be widely circulated among the extreme Fundamentalists, one would hope that they might take warning. We are tempted, however, to take a rather wider view than the author, who has performed his own strictly defined task with such marked ability to our entire satisfaction.

In the conflict, Science *v.* The Church, Science has won, and most churchmen on this side the water acquiesce. Deeper things, however, are involved when we ask, how has it fared with religion, espe-

cially popular religion? Some glibly say, 'The marches are now cleared; there is no conflict; Religion and Science can go on each keeping to its own sphere, doing no manner of hurt the one to the other.' That is easily said, but is it quite true?

It is not true of the religion of the man in the street. To him religion is largely a way of getting things done. He prays if his need is fairly desperate. Now Science has come in as a sure way of getting things done. How get rid of malaria? Science answers, 'You *may* pray, but you *must* destroy the mosquitoes.' Hence, as an American Professor said recently, it is increasingly difficult to appreciate the need of God. Granted that such a view, regrettable in the mouth of a Professor, rests on a profound misunderstanding of religion and of God's place in the Universe, it is true that to the ordinary man it is not plain that prayer is so necessary or useful as he used to think it might be; nor is he so sure of God's activity.

Take the easiest illustration, petitionary prayer. That is quite definitely prayer for getting things done. Is it more sensible to pray for a change of weather than it would be to pray that to-morrow's sun might rise an hour earlier? If with Fosdick we are to rule out petitions about weather, what else are we to rule out? or rather, what petitions can we retain? Science discovers the sure way of getting things done, and to the truly religious

mind Science is God's revelation of how those particular things should be done. Is prayer, then, to become just a communing with God with self-surrender to His will, or is there still a place for petition? That is a problem, far from new indeed, but one to which modern science has given a sharpness and an obviousness which it never had before.

Again, we might show how difficult it is to get Science and Religion to keep to the separate compartments which the popular Apologist has assigned them, by recalling that there are sciences which deal with religion, its history and its psychology. It is the new psychology, with its anatomizing of the religious life, that is most disturbing to-day. In comparison with the vital questions now raised, the old controversy, Genesis *v.* Geology, is almost trivial. In the old conflict religion was defended by a masterly retreat from untenable positions involving the supposedly scientific teaching of a supposedly inerrant book, and a fortifying of what seemed the impregnable position of the inner testimony of the human spirit. But the whole nature, and in consequence the authority, of that inner spirit is now the subject of investigation, doubt, and controversy.

The conflict is not over, the possibility of conflict may never be got over. For our comfort let us ask what is happening as the result of it all. Not this, that we have had to surrender one element of religion after another till a vanishing-point is within sight. But this, that we are becoming increasingly aware of what precisely religion is, what Scripture is, and what is the real value of both; and increasingly confident that all the 'explanation' of ourselves and of the world which Science gives, or can ever hope to give, is not all the explanation which we need.

Recent times have seen the production of 'Lives' of Christ that have possessed features of special interest. Three especially are worthy of mention for a particular reason, Papini's 'Story of Christ,'

Middleton Murry's 'Life,' and the most recent of all, Dr. WARSCHAUER's *Historical Life* (reviewed in another column). The first was by a man of peculiar gifts, almost entirely ignorant of critical methods and results, but with a vision that set Jesus, as he saw Him, before us with extraordinary vividness. It was a work of remarkable genius. There has been nothing like it.

Mr. Murry's biography was the expression of a deep and almost worshipful admiration. It was the literary man's tribute to the greatness of Jesus. The writer was not quite so ignorant of criticism as Papini, but his knowledge might have been written down in a comparatively small space. And, as in the first case, more knowledge might have saved him from some of his worst mistakes. Dr. WARSCHAUER, again, sets out with a definite picture in his mind, that of the Christ who was an apocalypticist modified by spiritual intuitions. This writer is, unlike the others, a trained scholar, and his book has the marks of an expert all over it. But the point we wish to make is that it is also a book based on an idea.

Here we have three portraits of Jesus, that of an Italian Roman Catholic, that of a more or less agnostic literary man, and that of a rationalist with a theory. The Christ they depict for us is in each case different, because they find different things in Him. What Dr. WARSCHAUER says of the Virgin Birth stories—which he rejects—is true of all these 'Lives': 'What must have been the quality of a Life to which such an Origin was attributed? They are trustworthy testimonies, not to the reality of certain incidents, but to the quality and magnitude of Jesus' character.'

As a matter of fact, the same variety, within limits, is found in the New Testament. It is a mistake to imagine that there is only one picture of Christ in the New Testament. There are at least three. There is the Synoptic picture of the Jesus who went about doing good. Not a mere man, for the Gospels were written by those who believed in His Deity. But it is His humanity that is emphasized, and especially His human

love and interest in those who were needy. This is the source of all the representations of Jesus in modern art. It is a definite picture.

The Johannine picture is quite different. It is that of a supernatural Being. It is the Word made flesh, and it is always that. It is not suggested here that the Johannine picture is less true to the Reality, but just that it is different. John found something different in Jesus. It is a picture of the Son of God, and we are never allowed to forget His heavenly origin and heavenly nature. It is a different vision from that of the Synoptists.

Then there is the Pauline Christ, who is in some ways different from both the others. It is the crucified and risen Lord. The Cross is the centre of the Lord's life for Paul. How much he knew of the earthly life we do not know. He knew a great deal probably. But he ignored it largely. The earthly ministry for Paul was the Cross, and the Resurrection was largely the vindication of the Crucified. Christ was He who died for us and rose again. The Pauline Christ is a different vision, because Paul found this different thing in Christ.

As a fact we need the three visions or pictures to show us the One. We need the human ministry, the supernatural glory, and the Cross: they are all in Christ. It is surprising how one-sided our conception of Christ is apt to become. Take the conventional portrait of Jesus in art and in pictures in our schools and books for children. Is that the real Jesus? It cannot be. It is weak and effeminate. It may be the portrait of the Jesus who blessed children, but it is not the portrait of the Jesus who scourged the traffickers out of the Temple. It would be a good thing if this conventional and traditional portrait of Jesus could be got rid of.

How different is, e.g., the face of Jesus in Titian's 'Tribute Money.' A wonderful face, tender, gentle, thoughtful, but also strong and full of power. That is the real Jesus. We have to take the Jesus with a child in His arms *and* the Jesus with a scourge in His hands in the Temple if we are to see Him as He was. And perhaps that is the

real value of all these 'Lives' of Christ. They all have their own 'vision,' their own picture; and there is truth, some truth, in them all. And as we read them we must not allow our differences from them to blind us to the truth they embody. For we too may say, 'What must have been the quality of a life that draws so many eyes and in which so many souls find so much that is great.'

Alike over critics, historians, moralists, and the common people, the Decalogue exercises a perpetual fascination. The critic endeavours to discover its original form, the historian traces its influence through the history of the Hebrew people and through the subsequent history of Christianity, the moralist asks in what sense, if in any, it may be regarded as an epitome of human duty, while the common man regards it as the adequate and indestructible basis of all individual, social, and national life.

The unabated interest in the critical and historical study of it and in its applicability to modern life has been attested by several books that have recently appeared. Four years ago we had Archdeacon Charles's Warburton Lectures on the Decalogue, quite recently we had a monograph in French from the pen of Professor Gampert, on the 7th of last November Professor Meinhold chose the Decalogue as the subject of his rectorial address at the University of Bonn, and now the Rev. H. J. FLOWERS, B.A., B.D., brings before us *The Permanent Value of the Ten Commandments*, in a volume of 283 pages, published at 7s. 6d. net by Messrs. Allen & Unwin.

The French and German studies are mainly critical, and the uncertainty which besets Old Testament studies is seen in the widely divergent conclusions to which these scholars have come—Gampert championing the Mosaic, and Meinhold the exilic, origin of the Decalogue. Characteristically the English writers are interested in the practical value of the Decalogue, Mr. FLOWERS almost exclusively so, while Dr. Charles in his

discussion combines that interest with a thorough investigation of the critical problem. His words, indeed, are deeply significant of the pragmatism of the English mind. 'Deeply as I have been interested,' he says, 'in the critical and historical study of the Decalogue, it has been my main aim to reinterpret the Decalogue on the spiritual and ethical lines already laid down in the New Testament, and to apply its lessons to the crying needs of our own day.'

Something like this is also the aim of Mr. FLOWERS' book, as its title would sufficiently indicate. Occasional touches show that he is not unfamiliar with the critical problems, but it is on the permanent value of the Decalogue that he has chosen to concentrate. Historical origin, as he truly says, is one thing, and inherent worth quite another. He knows that there is a danger of reading both too much and too little into the ten commandments, as into other great words of the Old Testament. He admits that 'there is no reason whatever for disputing that originally they meant what they said and very little more.' But he justly claims that we have the right to interpret them in the light that revelation and history have thrown upon them.

That is to say, for example, that the seventh commandment, which in itself only forbids adultery, may be taken, and in the light of Christian thought ought to be taken, as forbidding any and every kind of unchaste action and thought. And the ninth commandment, which, taken strictly, prohibits the giving of false evidence in the law courts, may be legitimately held to cover no less the prohibition of 'slander, calumny, detraction, blackmail, and misrepresentation of every sort.' We are the children of history; and the real meaning of the commandments is not only the meaning which the critical student of their origin may prove that they ultimately bore, but also the meaning which they have come to acquire for the enlightened Christian conscience.

A comprehensive study of the Decalogue like that of Mr. FLOWERS brings us face to face with many live modern problems, and the writer does

not miss his opportunity. The eighth commandment, *e.g.*, brings up the whole question of property. On this he has many sane and useful things to say. Regarding property as part of the Divine order through which men express and realize their personality, he offers some trenchant criticisms of communism as 'the politics of sentiment.' It is a system which has appealed not infrequently to the moral and religious thinker, but it has rarely commended itself to the professional economist, and it has no real support in the early Christian society described in Acts, for that was not built on the compulsory surrender of private possessions.

But it is worth while to point out, as Mr. FLOWERS does point out, that there are more thieves abroad than those who pick our pockets. Essentially a man is a thief who robs society of the service he is fitted and entitled to render, and essentially a man is not greatly better than a murderer and should be visited with drastic punishment, who adulterates food or drugs, thereby endangering the health of the community, and it may even be the lives of individuals, or who does or permits or authorizes or connives at the doing of scamped work, or the use of shoddy material, which may lead to fatal accidents. He refers to the law in the code of Hammurabi that, if a badly built house falls on the owner and kills him, the builder is put to death, and grimly adds, 'We could well copy the spirit of the Babylonian Law against jerry-building.'

The discussion of the second commandment leads Mr. FLOWERS into a searching analysis of image-worship. He knows all that can be said in favour of the crucifix as an aid to devotions and of the adoration of the Virgin and Child, and he deals with the arguments not unsympathetically; but he ends with a resolute rejection of all such practices. The constant contemplation of the crucifix at devotions tends to localize Christ, and, further, to concentrate attention on the wrong symbol of Christianity, the true symbol being not a cross, but a heavenly throne; while the adoration of the Virgin, besides undermining the purity of Christian worship and the uniqueness of Christ,

introduces an intermediary between man and God.

The writer's intensely Protestant convictions further come out in the statement that he regards 'with the utmost contempt and suspicion the constant attempts that are made to attach priestly functions to Nonconformist ministers.'

There are a few points at which we disagree both with Mr. FLOWERS' thought and with his language. We do not, for example, like to hear of God 'butting into' the plans of men, nor of His 'hammering certain facts home to them.' Nor are we quite sure that he puts the case well when he says that 'in order to witness to the worth of the family, Israel had to believe in the worthlessness of the

individual.' 'Relative unimportance' would surely have been nearer the truth than 'worthlessness.'

Nor is the following sentence beyond challenge: 'The wars of extirpation carried out against the Canaanites were in accordance with the command of God, and were in the nature of punishment upon the enemy for their cruelty and idolatry.' But what of the cruelty of these very extirpations? And what of the treatment of Adoni-bezek? The truth is that the Jahweh who was believed to have commanded these massacres was practically on the level of the Chemosh of the Moabite Stone. These, however, are but little points in a book that cannot fail to be full of suggestion to the preacher, and that deserves the eulogy of Dr. Moffatt which appears on the wrapper of the book.

The Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke xviii. 1-8).

BY PROFESSOR J. A. ROBERTSON, D.D., UNITED FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

THIS parable is a companion picture to that of the man outside a locked door at midnight trying to borrow three loaves to feed an unexpected guest (Lk 11⁵⁻⁸). They were probably originally spoken by Jesus at the same time, this one of the Unjust Judge following that of the Unfriendly Friend. Luke makes the story of the Unjust Judge follow a discourse on the Parousia, possibly because he found an apocalyptic conclusion attached to the parable, or because he got both from the same source—had listened to some Christian preacher, an early follower of Jesus, some prophetic voice, Silas or some other, discoursing on our Lord's predictions of the end. Certainly the closing verses do sound like some Christian prophet's attempt to press home the moral of the story.

But the kinship with the parable of the Unfriendly Friend is unmistakable. In both we find a needy suppliant and a reluctant bestower; in both there is a touch of the Master's humour; and both end with a complete breakdown of the reluctance. Here, however, in the parable of the Unjust Judge all the lines and shadows are hardened and intensified. In the earlier parable we are listening to a friend begging from a friend on a friend's behalf. In this case we are listening to a Jewish widow,

one of the most helpless and unprotected creatures on God's earth, petitioning a callous beast, who happened to be the city's judge, for justice against some wolf of a man who was taking a cruel advantage of her unprotectedness. We are away from the circle of human friendship, out amid the cold and blighting winds of enmity. The widow had no bribe to offer the judge, and he had no sense of justice and apparently none of the milk of human kindness about him.

It is one's own impression that both these stories are founded on experiences which Jesus Himself had shared. They are memory echoes of the early days in Nazareth. In the one there is the family atmosphere of protection and freedom from care which Mary shared with her children, while the hard-working, conscientious husband Joseph was alive. The other is perhaps the guarded memory of the blackest hour in the long grim days when the widow and her eldest-born, without protection now, exposed to all the bitter and relentless winds of man's inhumanity to man, toiled and struggled to keep the little home together. How often is that word 'widow' upon Jesus' lips! And was the enemy of that Nazareth home perchance some pious money-grubbing Pharisee, who devoured