

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.

IN a previous issue we called attention in these columns to the admirable counsel given by Principal Macgregor to candidates for the ministry in his book 'For Christ and the Kingdom.' This month we cross a period of three centuries and a half to the days of Ephraim Luntshitz, to find that the problems that face the preacher and that are concerned with his preparation for the ministry were of much the same sort then as now. Luntshitz is a name that will be unfamiliar to most readers of this Journal, but, like many another unknown to posterity, he rendered conspicuous service to his own generation. He was born in Poland about the middle of the sixteenth century, he served as Chief Rabbi in Prague for fourteen years, he died in 1619, and interest in him has been revived by an elaborate essay on his sermons from the pen of Israel BETTAN which appears in volume viii.-ix. of the *Hebrew Union College Annual* (Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio).

This bulky volume, running to seven hundred and forty-six pages, is full of unusually good things, which no student of Judaism can afford to neglect. Julius Morgenstern devotes one hundred and fifty pages to the continuation of his important study of the Book of the Covenant, Meir Friedmann writes (in German) on the co-operation of women in public worship, and there is a fascinating essay by Abraham Crombach, extending over one hundred and twenty-seven pages, on 'The Psychoanalytic Study of Judaism,' on which one is tempted to

enlarge, and which may be heartily commended to those who are obsessed by the problem of the relation of sex to religion. But, however regretfully, we must, for reasons of space, confine ourselves to Luntshitz.

No one who reads BETTAN's essay can fail to be struck with the similarity of the problems that confront the modern Church and the mediæval Synagogue. The human heart has been the same in every age, and the weaknesses, the vices, the sorrows that the people bring, or do not bring, to public worship for strengthening, rebuke, or comfort, do not change with the ages. It is curious to hear Luntshitz complain that on the Sabbath and the Festivals, while the Scripture lesson is being read in the Synagogue, hosts of people are leisurely strolling through the city streets, as if they had no portion in God's law. The modern parallel is not far to seek.

And those who do come to the Synagogue, he complains, are practically destitute of the spirit of devotion. Their minds are immersed in secular interests, the meticulous observance of trifling regulations is accompanied by the grossest disregard of the fundamental practices of the religious life; envy and hate, slander and deceit, hypocrisy and avarice, vanity, lust and arrogance, prayerlessness and perjury, falsehood and frivolity—'these for ever stare us in the face.' It is a grave indictment. The result is that there is no con-

centration of the interests and powers of the worshipper on the act of devotion; prayer ceases to have any spiritual significance, it degenerates into the vain and meaningless chirpings of the bird. While Luntshitz hurls his prophetic denunciations at such men and such moods, he makes it clear that the conduct of worship in the Synagogue is little calculated to inspire the devotional mood, the service itself being 'beset by so many disorders and distractions as to make concentrated devotion extremely difficult if at all possible.' Worship in the average Christian Church may not perhaps be beset by the same distractions, but there is here an implicit warning for those who are responsible for the conduct of Christian worship that very much is inevitably lost if a devotional temper is not encouraged by the spirit and details of the service.

Luntshitz also sorrowfully complains of the absence of interest in the Torah. 'Ours is a generation that has no real love for Torah.' Substitute Bible for Torah, and our own generation is drawn in this sentence to the life: unhappily the Bible can now with more or less truth be described as 'the book nobody knows.' And when the Torah is studied, 'hair-splitting is mistaken for brilliant scholarship.' Traditionalists would doubtless apply this description to some of the labours of the critics, and while the charge is nothing like so true as they imagine, there is just enough truth in it to serve as a reminder that the best interpreter of Scripture is he who does not forget the spirit in the letter.

Such was the situation. What manner of man must the preacher be to cope with it? According to Luntshitz, he ought to be a highly educated man. Faith in God and spiritual insight are of course so indispensable that it ought to be possible to take them for granted in a preacher who has not mistaken his calling; but, apart from these qualities, he ought to be able to probe the mysteries of the faith with his rational faculties, and, in addition, to be 'conversant with the physical sciences, mathematics, and astronomy.' This demand for an adequate intellectual equipment is perhaps even more in order to-day. Contemporary

systems of thought, some of which make the acceptance of religion difficult for those who have come under their influence, must be understood by the preacher and answered; while a knowledge of the scientific outlook, and, if possible, also of one or more of the sciences, is very necessary for preachers to an age when science is profoundly influencing theological thought; and those who pour ridicule upon the inclusion of science in a theological curriculum are doing the Church a grave disservice.

Luntshitz appears to have been a fine blend of intellectual and moral qualities. 'On the intellectual plane, we discover in him the calm, patient, erudite, and painstaking craftsman; on the ethical plane, we encounter in him the impatient, impetuous, resolute, and unyielding moral reformer.' This is a combination rarely achieved. The ideal preacher would embody the excellences of Erasmus and Luther—the calm, exact scholarship of the one, with the fiery and soul-stirring passion of the other. Study ought not to be prejudicial to enthusiasm.

But it often is; and Luntshitz is well acquainted with the type of scholar who cares more for linguistic minutiae than for the thought of which language is the expression. He finds it necessary to insist that the preacher or teacher who wishes to impart to his pupil a thorough knowledge of the Pentateuch must 'stress the ethical and spiritual significance of each passage read and not solely the linguistic medium.' 'To be frank,' he says, 'one is quite puzzled to know why the Pentateuch should be studied at all, if the chief objective is a knowledge of the Hebrew language.' This warning is as timely to-day as when it was written. The study of language is undoubtedly important, but chiefly as a means to an end, the end being the interpretation of literature, which is itself an interpretation of life.

What use, then, will the well-equipped preacher make of the powers he has acquired and developed during the years of preparation? More than once Luntshitz maintains that the sole aim of all his

endeavours, whether in the written or the spoken word, had been 'to expose the godless men,' to excoriate sin and rebuke the sinner. But it is a relief to know that that was not all. The wise leader, he says, while never compromising with sin, will not forever dwell on the shortcomings of the people. He will recognize the good, as well as the evil, in men; he will welcome every opportunity to speak words of approval, to commend them for their virtues as well as to condemn them for their vices. Or, as he puts it elsewhere, his aim should be not only to declare to his people their transgressions, but to make known to them the paths of everlasting life. It is the preacher's business to proclaim not only that the wages of sin is death, but that the gift of God is eternal life—and the Christian preacher would add, 'in Jesus Christ our Lord.'

One of the most remarkable articles—perhaps the most remarkable—in *The Christian Faith To-day*, the report of the great Student Christian Movement Conference held at Edinburgh in January of this year, was that on 'Christian Community and Communism,' by Dr. Hans LILJË, General Secretary of the German Student Christian Movement. It is extraordinarily well-informed, and contains a great deal that is both novel and significant to most of us. Dr. LILJË starts with the reflection that in such a time as the present some people, who have given up hope and faith, turn to cynicism or despair, but others have lifted up their heads, waiting for some new vision of life that may come out of the chaos. To many Communism is such a light, announcing the coming of a new age.

What are the essential features of Communism? First, it is a radical change in the economic system. Russia is building up an industry of its own, using all that the West can give it. 'The machine will be our redeemer' is one of its slogans. Secondly, Communism means a new ideal of education. A new generation is being reared which rejects every remnant of bourgeois thinking. But above all Communism is a philosophy of life. It is a religion in the full sense. The mild edition of Marxism

which constitutes Western Socialism was satisfied to call religion a 'private affair.' For Communism there is no private affair. It is not satisfied with compromise. It is not satisfied with substitutes for religion. It is a definite anti-religion. It replaces one faith by another. Illustrations of this abound. In place of the 'ikon,' the image of a saint, which formerly hung on the wall of every house, there is to-day a portrait of Lenin. In place of the religious processions of the old Orthodox Church, there are to-day processions of new machines covered with flowers, and followed by enthusiastic crowds. In place of the pilgrimages of former days to the great Christian shrines, we have the hundreds of people who stand every day waiting to look at the mummified corpse of Lenin in the glass coffin at the special hall of the Red Place in Moscow.

Communism is absolutely comprehensive. It covers all life and all fundamental questions. It has created its own dogmas, and it asks from its adherents real self-surrender. It demands everything. It is this that explains the waste of life in Russia. In the minds of the Soviet leaders it is justifiable to sacrifice thousands of those who live at present in order that generations of free proletarians may live in the future. We cannot understand Communism apart from this religious enthusiasm. Take away this factor of religious faith and there will no longer be Communism. You will have moderate 'practical' socialism. Communism is a real religion claiming ultimate loyalty to its creed and morals. And it is an *Eastern* religion. Many interpretations of Communism err by trying to explain it from the Western point of view. But it is essentially an Eastern affair. It comes out of the Russian background with its paradoxes and its myth-creating atmosphere. Russia is essentially religious, and therefore the crucial fact about the relation of Christianity to Communism is that you have, not two different conceptions of economic or social life, but two religions facing one another.

And in this respect we must emphasize the definite eschatological element in Communism. The whole power of its conviction lies in its longing for a glorious future. No negative criticism of

bourgeois society, no hatred of the past, no discussion of Marxist theories could have the effect that this eschatological expectation has. And it is not a *longing* for a great future only. It is the certainty of it. At a great congress of the new faith some years ago Bucharin spoke of its progress in passionate terms. 'We can say (he cried) with full conviction, "we are now unvanquishable." We know that we will win the power in the entire world. We have nothing to lose but our chains.' And amid tumultuous applause the great assembly rose and sang :

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation !
 Arise, ye wretched of the earth !
 For Justice thunders condemnation—
 A better World's in birth !

Dr. LILJE goes on to deal with a vital point—the communist criticism of Christianity. This criticism stresses one point especially—the disastrous coalition between official Christianity and a special type of bourgeois tradition. The youthful idealist is impatient with a type of Christian thinking that leaves the whole question of reconstructing society untouched. The danger from which Christianity has not always escaped is that it stands for the existing order, showing no understanding of the radicalism with which a new order of society is confronted. One of the evil traditions of much Christianity is the falsification which has made Christian faith a mere example of the average bourgeois philosophy of life. It has become moulded into something very different from what it originally meant ; a happy and satisfied social order has been reflected in the good-tempered, unexcited, and unexciting ideas of average Christianity, which had lost most of its enthusiasm and fervour and had become quite uninteresting. In this respect Communism has an important task to fulfil. It is a God-given punishment to a lame and degenerate Christianity. Either Christianity must understand the full extent to which the present crisis has come, or there will be no hope for it.

This leads to the last point : What is the Christian response to the challenge of Communism ? The answer is very simple, but at the same time very

serious too. Christianity must first of all realize that this is one of the most serious crises in which it has ever been. A new creative religion has risen which is challenging the total life and thought of present-day Christianity. Communism cannot be opposed by ideas, but only by religious reality. Can Christianity claim to be a religion in the most vital and real sense of the word ? The answer to that question is to be found in these three assertions. First, Christianity must get away from the bourgeois falsification of its message. The criticism of Communism in this respect is utterly right, and cannot be met without a real conversion of Christianity. We need nothing more than a fundamental re-thinking of the Christian message. The world will be changed only by men with deep conviction. The great task which Communism has to perform in the history of the Church is to bring back Christianity to its original message. And it is teaching us what we ought never to have forgotten, that real faith is asking for everything in the life of man.

Secondly, there is no real religion without a clear eschatological element. It is completely hopeless to think that the high expectations of the coming of a class-less society could be met by a Christianity which dares not believe in the eschatological element of its own creed. Both things are true in Christianity : that the Kingdom of God shall come on earth, that there will be all the gifts of God in Jesus Christ in this world, and, on the other hand, that the disciple of Jesus Christ always is waiting for the coming of his Master. Only a this-worldly Christianity could forget the genuine power of the eschatological expectation of the Early Church.

And finally—and perhaps most important of all practically—the relative truth of Communism is its longing for real community. This is the point at which its criticism is most bitterly right. But Christianity possesses the truth, if it will put it into effect. Christianity alone will be able to find a solution of the serious conflict between the individual and society. The Communist has fought the idea of God, and has lost the image of man. He has fought bourgeois individualism by subjecting the individual to society. The Christian community

alone gives its true place to personality. It is in God and in our fellow-men that personality reaches its full stature. And the challenge of Communism comes in the end to this: Are there men and women, filled with fervent conviction and burning faith, who are fully prepared not to live their lives by themselves and for themselves, but to surrender them to the Lord, to whom all our lives belong?

In the Additional Notes to the *Commentary on Acts* recently edited by Dr. Kirsopp LAKE and Dr. Henry J. CADBURY there is an interesting discussion by the latter of the reference in Acts to gestures involving the use of dust, or of garments, or both. The interpretation of these gestures remains without settled solution, and the line of solution here suggested is certainly worthy of notice.

In Ac 13⁵¹ it is recorded that Paul and Barnabas on leaving Antioch of Pisidia shook off the dust of their feet. Rabbinic commentators on the New Testament regard the gesture as indicating that the city thus rejected is treated as the heathen, the dust from whose lands brings defilement. Yet the New Testament passages suggest that the act was not so much one of self-purification as one of warning to those left behind.

In Ac 14¹⁴ it is recorded that Paul and Barnabas, hearing the natives of Lystra call them gods, rent their garments asunder. Here, even more certainly than in the previous passage, Rabbinic testimony seems to afford the explanation. The rending of garments is the prescribed reaction against blasphemy (cf. Mk 14⁶³, Mt 26⁶⁵), though even in Jewish literature it is by no means limited to cases of blasphemy. And it would seem that protestation, rather than horror of blasphemy, was the meaning of the Apostles' gesture at Lystra.

In Ac 16²² it is recorded that the *strategi* at Philippi, tearing off 'their' clothes, bid Paul and Silas to be scourged with rods. But whose clothes? If those of Paul and Silas, then the matter is not a

gesture at all. But it is not impossible that the passage really means the clothes of the *strategi* themselves. Having heard the charge they express their horror and officious zeal by the violent tearing off of their own garments.

In Ac 18⁶ it is recorded that Paul shook out his garments against the Corinthian Jews, who were blaspheming. Possibly he shakes his clothes because he has already deposited his sandals according to custom at the synagogue door. The meaning of the gesture is conveyed in the words that follow, in which Paul is represented as saying, 'Your blood be on your own head.' More plainly than the shaking off of dust the shaking out of garments means 'washing one's hands'—to use another figure—of other men's guilt.

In Ac 22^{22f.} it is recorded that the hostile Jews of Jerusalem in their rage against Paul used both the gesture of casting their garments and that of throwing dust into the air. It may be that they were stripping themselves for action and throwing the dust with murderous intent, but the signs may not have been gestures of actual attack. Perhaps the object was to avert from themselves the curse that is likely to fall on the blasphemous (cf. Job 2¹²).

Thus practically all the gestures in Acts could come under the same heading, avoidance and deprecation of blasphemy. 'Whether it be the shaking of dust from the feet at Antioch, the rending of garments at Lystra or Philippi, the shaking of garments at Corinth, or here the gestures with both dust and garments, it is the old prophylactic of magic against blasphemy that is always involved. The Jews count it blasphemy for Paul to claim a Divine mission to the Gentiles, Paul counts it blasphemy for the Jews to reject the message, the Gentile prætors or *strategi* at Philippi count Paul's un-Roman teaching blasphemy, and of course Paul and Barnabas shudder with horror at being worshipped at Lystra as gods.'

'But it must be admitted that if such an apotropaic purpose is the origin of the gestures, neither the author nor the readers of Acts were probably

aware of it, certainly not in the instance at hand. For the proper gesture for sorrow, and probably for blasphemy, was to rub dust, earth, or ashes on the head.'

Biblical students have long been engaged in analysing the doctrines and characters of the Bible. In particular New Testament students have dissected the mind of the Apostle Paul to find the Rabbinic, the Hellenistic, and the other elements that moulded it. It has occurred to Mr. Vergilius Ferm to analyse the analysts, at least so far as these are American. The result is: *Contemporary American Theology*, i. (Round Table Press, New York; \$3.00). Twelve American theologians were asked to trace the influences which have entered into their thinking, the influences including circumstances, experiences, situations, temperamental sympathies and prejudices, personalities, events and books.

The 'Americans' include Dr. E. F. SCOTT, who confesses that 'there is much in the American way of thinking which I have never been able to assimilate or even to understand'; and one of the 'theologians' is Professor E. S. BRIGHTMAN, of Boston University, who tells us that 'to be regarded as a theologian . . . arouses my sinful, Adamic nature to no slight extent.' This Pilgrim's Progress of America's theologians can hardly be called a reassuring volume. The editor remarks: 'The multitudinous cross-currents in the contemporary stream, many of which are either referred to or directly presented in this book, put before the uninitiated what must seem a confusing spectacle indeed.' Apparently we are to infer that there is somewhere a circle of initiates on whom it will not make this impression. We gather that the roads to the Celestial City are many and winding. We can only hope that ultimately some of them will reach the goal.

Frankly, theologians are most convincing when they speak *ex cathedra* and do not tell us too much of the processes by which they reached the position they happen to occupy at the moment of writing their latest book; and especially when several of

them do not do this in one volume. A number of the writers were born into conservative homes. Professor BRIGHTMAN, for example, tells us that his father was 'conservative, yet cheerful and affectionate.' Light is shed on this quaint remark by the story told by Whittier to Professor J. W. Buckham, of Charles Kingsley's remark to him that 'having been brought up under the dismal shadow of Calvinism, when he finally learned that God is at least as good as the average Church member the relief was unspeakable.'

Professor MACHEN tells us that he is still a 'believer in the truth of the Bible,' whatever that may mean; and speaks of the 'mighty attack upon the truth of our religion,' by the higher critics. But most of the writers now occupy far different positions. Some of them, on the big questions of God and the world, have changed their minds several times. Professor Shirley J. CASE somewhat jauntily tells us that he cannot promise to dole out 'truth' once for all delivered to the saints. Jesus spoke of a life founded on a rock. The uninitiated would like at least to feel some confidence that there is truth somewhere to be found. But, when asked what the Christian of to-day should believe, the only reply Professor CASE can make is: 'What he thinks he ought to believe in the light of his own experience and knowledge.'

If Professor CASE stresses the influence of environment in the making of an ever-growing Christianity, to Professor Albert C. KNUDSON 'the cult of the contemporaneous, as it has been called, seems . . . of all our modern fads the shallowest.' Theology has not yet altogether discarded the New Testament. In the wistful, reverent, and characteristic words with which he closes his spiritual autobiography, Professor E. F. SCOTT reveals that he is conservative enough to believe that in the New Testament there is a word of God for our age. Its message to the first century does not exhaust its meaning. 'I seek for the further truth which would still prove itself, if only we could find it, to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. Now and then I seem to catch a glimpse of it but it keeps eluding me, and I know that I shall never apprehend

it except in fragments. Yet the confidence that it is there affords me motive and guidance in all my work on the New Testament.'

One of the chief impressions left on one's mind is that there is more to be said for the American Fundamentalist than one had supposed. Some of the theologians are conscious of owing something to their parents; at least one confesses he owes much to his wife; sometimes an unusual experience such as a serious illness is recognized as having played a part. Professor Douglas Clyde MACINTOSH finds the most fundamentally determinative event in his Christian life in what he is not afraid to describe as a conversion experience in his fourteenth year. But, speaking generally, the formative factors to which most weight is given are books and teachers. The fact that their influence is sometimes repellent rather than attractive reminds us that the mind is not a rudderless ship at the mercy of every wind that blows.

On the whole subject of the making of a theologian the wisest word has been spoken by Dr. E. F. SCOTT. He cannot tell how he himself has developed;

still less can he tell how any one else has developed. Whatever may be the truth about the theologian, Dr. SCOTT suspects that, so far as scholarship is concerned, much of the sorting out of 'influences' is delusion. One does not require to be a Barthian to believe that the Bible and the Divine Spirit have something to say to a theologian. Possibly most of the writers felt themselves precluded by the terms of their reference from discussing this aspect of their subject.

Fortunately Professor Rufus M. JONES felt no such constraint, and the result is a paper of very great interest on 'Why I enroll with the Mystics.' Rejecting the historical emphasis on mysticism as negation, mental blank, the dark night, he is a mystic of an affirmative type that claims positive fellowship with God. He cares nothing about arguments to prove the reality of God; for he has passed through an experience like that of the lame man in the third chapter of Acts, and is as certain that his new freedom from anxiety and fear, his new vitality, came from God as that the visible comforts and care that surrounded him were the work of human love.

Leaders of the Ancient Church.

IV.

The Third Century and its Greatest Christian: Origen.

BY PROFESSOR W. EMERY BARNES, D.D., CAMBRIDGE.

THE end of the second and the first years of the third century of our era saw a remarkable expansion of Christianity. Two writers who wrote in the first quarter of the third dwell with special emphasis on this expansion. In the East, Clement of Alexandria writes: 'The word of our teacher did not remain in Judæa only, as philosophy remained in Greece (*ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι*), but was poured out over the whole world (*ἐχύθη δὲ ἀνὰ πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην*), persuading whole households both of Greeks and of barbarians and converting not a few even of the philosophers' (*Strom.* vi. xviii. 167). In the West,

the eager Tertullian of Carthage writes: 'We are of yesterday, and now we have filled both the world and all your haunts' (*vestra omnia: Apol.* cap. 37). Later, in the middle of the century, the African Cyprian declares: 'The devil sees the idols abandoned and his shrines and temples deserted because there are too many believers' (*De Unit.* 3).

If these statements are rhetorically exaggerated, yet there is much fact behind them. Harnack does indeed call attention to the importance of a passage of Origen (*c. Celsum*, viii. 69), in which the Christians are contrasted *ὡς νῦν πάνυ ὀλίγοι* ('as at present