

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

The Preaching of Christ's Resurrection.

BY THE REV. W. BURNET, M.A.

THE effect of the Gospel message depends very much on our preserving the due proportion of the faith. The late Canon Stowell, of Manchester, was so sensible of this that he used to keep a list of the subjects which he had handled in the pulpit arranged under topical headings. He intended this list to serve as a check to any unconscious leaning towards any one branch of Christian doctrine to the neglect of others, and he often recommended the practice to his clerical brethren.

In the present day there seems to be a strong tendency towards unduly exalting certain truths, and keeping others equally important in the background. Some teachers and writers will, for instance, dwell on the Incarnation of our Lord, as if it were in itself the sum and substance of the Divine message to man, and without reference to the Atonement, with which it is so intimately connected. So we observe in some quarters a disposition to put forward the one atoning sacrifice of the Saviour on the cross apart from the completion of His work in His Resurrection and Ascension. Even those who are in no degree affected by modern rationalistic theories about the historic truth and mysterious reality of that great central fact of our religion, fail to give it full prominence as the foundation of the believer's hope and the Divine source of all its vital and vitalizing power in his heart and life. This, we fear, is so with some otherwise excellent mission preachers and evangelists. They delight to expatiate with commendable fervour on the sufficiency of the one sacrifice offered for the sins of the whole world, and plead with their fellow-sinners on its unspeakable value for their salvation. But they do not point out the supreme importance of Christ's Resurrection as the seal of the sinner's pardon, and the spring of new life and energy in the believer for overcoming temptation and bearing witness to the truth. So far as this is the case their Evangel must be wanting in

consistency and power. The late Mr. Moody in some of his sermons very plainly dwelt on this aspect of the Gospel, although perhaps he did not assign it sufficient importance in others. Dr. Torrey, being a more thoroughly trained theologian and gifted expounder of Holy Scripture, with convincing force of reasoning and eloquence, has dealt with this essential subject, especially in his admirable addresses to City men, and he no doubt owes much of his success with thoughtful hearers to this feature of his ministry. Spurgeon, again, was never wanting in this respect. Very faithfully has Bunyan in his allegory adhered to Gospel truth, when he represents his pilgrim as still burdened when he passes through the wicket-gate and the Interpreter's house, and not released from his burden until he comes to the cross, and it falls off into the sepulchre below it, never to be seen again. But we fear there is much of modern preaching, both in our own Church and amongst Nonconformists, which is seriously deficient in this respect. Amongst ourselves this grave fault is far less excusable, as the teaching of our Articles and formularies is so very distinct and well defined about it, and the order of the Christian seasons is so fitted to preserve the balance of the truth.

But we feel bound to draw attention to the signs of this error in some very popular and impressive hymns. Such is one in Mr. Alexander's collection, which opens with the appeal, "Would you be free from the burden of sin?" The answer is repeated in a variety of forms, "There's a wonder-working power in the Blood." Not for one moment would we question the precious truth implied in the refrain. Still, one cannot but wish that the hymn had been so worded as to include a distinct reference to that great kindred truth which imparts all its efficacy to the atoning Blood, and to the Holy Spirit's power in sealing it upon the believer's conscience. With this hymn we may contrast another still more touching melody, "Man of Sorrows, what a Name!" for in it we sing :

" Now in heaven exalted high—
Alleluia ! what a Saviour !"

Indeed, most of the hymns in the Sankey's and Alexander's collections are open to this criticism, and on this point they do not admit of comparison with the more solid standard hymnals used in our own Church and other communions. This is the more to be regretted because the majority of the hymns in question are so admirably adapted for mission services, and come home with especial sweetness to the hearts of illiterate Christians.

It may, therefore, be well to remind our readers of the position assigned to this great doctrine throughout the New Testament. Dr. Griffith Thomas, in his work "The Catholic Faith," has well summed up this matter in a few words: "The Resurrection vindicated our Lord's character. It also sealed and certified God's acceptance of His atoning sacrifice as the assurance that that sacrifice is sufficient for the sins of the whole world (Rom. iv. 25). The Resurrection, moreover, is the Divine source of our holiness, for we receive the risen life of our Lord into our lives, and are enabled to live the resurrection life of holiness and righteousness (Rom. vi. 4, 11, and Col. iii. 1-5). Last of all, the Resurrection guarantees and pledges our own resurrection, our Lord being the first-fruits of them that are asleep. Thus the Resurrection enters into every part and aspect of the Christian revelation in its relation to our present life." Such was certainly the teaching of the Apostles. They always treated their Master's Resurrection as inseparably connected with His Divine Sonship. A doubt of this cardinal truth would have been fatal to their confidence in Himself and His work. He had throughout His ministry most plainly asserted it, and He had been condemned by the Sanhedrim because He had claimed to be the Son of God. If He had not risen again that claim would have been completely and for ever set aside. But, as St. Paul wrote to the Romans, He is declared to be the Son of God by His Resurrection from the dead. So, again, the completeness of His mediatorial work is placed beyond all reasonable question by the same glorious and well-authenticated fact. With dying breath He exclaimed, "It is finished!" and when on the

third appointed day He rose triumphant over the grave, He gave a most conclusive proof of the truth of His own words, which was confirmed still more positively when on the Day of Pentecost St. Peter proclaimed that He who had been exalted by the right hand of God had poured forth that which all saw and heard. So it is still. Every outpouring of the same Holy Spirit is a most sure and living evidence of His Divine power and Godhead, and at the same time of the perfection and acceptance of His mediatorial work in our behalf. On that memorable occasion the effects which followed in the conversion of the 3,000 were the convincing seal of the truth of the Apostle's words. His sermon was not marked by any astounding flights of eloquence or by any remarkable power of argument, but was rather a plain, manly, unvarnished statement concerning his Master's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, and then the Holy Spirit applied those facts with deep, searching conviction to the hearts and consciences of all who heard them. The marvellous change that took place in them was due in part to St. Peter's personal testimony to the truth, and chiefly to the Holy Spirit's revelation of the truth within the souls of those first converts. So a few weeks later St. Peter and St. John announced the same simple but sublime facts to the crowds gathered at Solomon's porch by the miraculous cure of the cripple, and ascribed the power imparted to them to the Prince of Life, whom His enemies had slain, but God had raised to life. The next day, arraigned before the Council, the Apostles boldly attested the same great truths, which the rulers could not deny. So it was ever afterwards : wherever they went they and their fellow-Apostles with unflinching lips bore witness to the crucified and yet risen Saviour. So it was later on with St. Paul, who had seen the Lord in the way. At Antioch, Athens, Rome, and in every place throughout his ministry to Jews and Gentiles alike, he, too, with full conviction and regardless of consequences, proclaimed the same message. In full agreement with the uniform tenor of their public ministry is the teaching of the Apostles in all their Epistles. We need not here enlarge

upon this point. One very notable example we may cite from the Epistle to the Ephesians. There he prays for his brethren that they might know "what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," and then he adds: "What is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward, who believed, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead?" In these words St. Paul seems to exhaust human language to express the extraordinary energy put forth in the Lord's Resurrection as the Divine Head of His Church, and being still exerted in himself and his brethren as members of His spiritual Body, in quickening them together with their risen Saviour. His is a quickening Spirit. All spiritual life, then, emanated from Him, and will do so on the souls of believers to the very end of time. This truly gives to this great fundamental doctrine its deepest spiritual significance. Were it disproved, all spiritual life would at once cease. Nor is this all. St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. and in his other writings connects the fact of Christ's bodily Resurrection with that of all His believing and spiritually risen people. He is the first-fruits of them that slept. That fact was most surely believed in the Church at Corinth and in all the early Churches, and he draws from it the equally certain truth of the future awakening in His glorious likeness of all who shall have fallen asleep in Him. In all these connected aspects, whether we regard it as an evidence of the completeness and Divine acceptance of our Lord's mediatorial work, or as the spring and source of the believer's hidden life, or as the ground of his hope of his having a part in the first blessed resurrection at the Lord's coming, the risen and ascended Saviour is the one corner-stone on which the temple of revealed truth is builded, and by which it is consolidated and held together. As the Bishop of Liverpool lately remarked with striking emphasis, "The very heart of Christianity is not a dead, but a living Christ." It is therefore not enough for the Church with an annual burst of enthusiasm to celebrate her Eastertide. Easter truths, Easter life, and Easter joy should

pervade and animate all her ministrations. Whether in our ordinary teaching or in special evangelistic efforts a crucified and risen Saviour must be our one central theme. So alone can we hope to experience that Saviour's presence whenever and wherever we carry to our fellow-men the glad tidings of His salvation. In proportion as we are faithful to His commission will be the blessing with which the Spirit of truth and power will accompany His message, and men shall feel the power of His Resurrection as well as the fellowship of His sufferings. Christ's own promise will in every case be fulfilled, when He said so emphatically : " Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the [spiritually] dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear shall live " (John v. 25).



Literary Notes.

THE subject of Christianity and Socialism seems to be occupying the minds of a number of writers at the moment. The other day someone wrote a book entitled "Should Christians be Socialists?" Now comes the announcement, "Should Socialists be Christians?" by the Rev. Vallance Cook. It appears to the writer of these notes that all these treatises are missing the main point. The Socialistic movement cannot succeed Christianity, and its existence can only be assured by working *with* it. To oppose it would be futile. And for any writer to propound such queries as "Should Christians be Socialists?" or "Should Socialists be Christians?" is so much waste of good ink and paper. The truly conscientious Christian must necessarily be a Socialist, and the fervent Socialist cannot conscientiously enjoy the title until he has grasped and accepted the fundamentals of Christianity.



A new volume is being added to the "Historical Series for Bible Students." It is a compilation which has been undertaken by Dr. Frank Knight Sanders, and the title given to it is "Outlines of Biblical History and Literature," from the earliest times to A.D. 200. These outlines enable the student to get at the Bible itself in a most helpful way, to realize vividly the story which it relates, supplements, or develops, and to appreciate the various stages in the gradual development of the Israel which became the world's religious teacher.



The constantly discussed question of the evolution of life has probably become all the more absorbing of late owing to researches concerning