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Brooke Fosse Westcott.

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BROOKE FOSSE WESTCOTT was born in Birmingham in 1825, and baptized in St. Philip's Church. His early years were spent in Erdington, then a village near Birmingham. At the age of twelve he was sent to King Edward's School. At this time the Headmaster was the famous Dr. Prince Lee, afterwards first Bishop of Manchester, a man who exercised an immense influence over the shy, thoughtful lad who soon outdistanced his fellows, and won the warm approval of all his teachers. At fourteen he was in the first class, and Dr. Prince Lee reports: "Very industrious, persevering, and attentive; general reading very good; deserves much praise." Some of his contemporaries have told us that he appeared to them a nervous, thoughtful boy, seldom, if ever, joining in any games, yet brave as a lion when once roused. On one memorable occasion he saw a small boy bullied by a big boy. Filled with righteous indignation, he made such a vigorous onslaught on the persecutor that he fled. In gratitude to his preserver the small boy took him home and introduced him to his people. The small boy was Whittard, and his eldest sister became Westcott's wife.

In school he was devoted to his work, and noted for the authoritative decision of his answers. His younger school-fellows regarded him with awe, and he exercised a great and good influence over them. One of the chief features of his school life was his reverence. To see his pained face when any wrong or rash word was spoken was a lesson. One friend writes: "An atmosphere of light and purity surrounded him, and his kindness and courtesy, which was real and constant to any small boy who had to deal with him, only made us feel that it would be unbearable to rouse his anger or even disapproval." His father had been a teacher of Botany and Geology at

Sydenham College, the predecessor of Queen's, and young Westcott was always keenly interested in these subjects. His long rambles were a continual botanical feast. He included flowers among those things which were to be carefully tended. "Will you think it very strange if I ask you to reckon flowers among living things? I never see a handful of golden buttercups or purple spikes of foxgloves thrown upon the road to be trodden under foot without being deeply grieved. Every petal is a miracle of beauty, and ought to be lingered over very lovingly. There are many men and many children who go about as if they were blind and deaf outcasts, for whom the sky bears no glory and the air has no music; they are poor in the midst of boundless wealth." Moreover, he had an enthusiastic love of architecture, and every country church provided him with fresh delight. His sketches were delicate and accurate, and he had many a permanent reminder of those architectural features which, both in England and in France, had impressed and delighted him. Dr. Prince Lee had, as I have already mentioned, commended his general reading. Of European literature, of painting, and kindred subjects, he had a wide knowledge, but it was in the field of classics that he gained the highest academic honours. This was the department of knowledge which he made his own, the one in which he won his greatest victories. But in mathematics, too, he achieved some success, for in 1848 he had taken twenty-fourth place among the Wranglers. While at Cambridge he and several friends used to meet on Saturday evenings to read and discuss essays written by members of this so-called Philological Society. These covered a wide range of subjects, and thus show how varied were his sympathies and interests at this time.

Before we leave this portion of our subject, I must mention one or two incidents in his early life which made a lasting impression upon him. In 1831 he saw Thomas Attwood lead a crowd of men to a mass meeting of the political unions. This was at the time when the Reform Bill was being brought before the country, and passions were stirred to fever heat, and

men fondly imagined that, this famous Act of Parliament once passed, the millennium would be within measurable distance. Again in 1838, he and Mr. Whittard saw the same leader on his way to a Chartist demonstration at Holloway Head, when Feargus O'Connor himself came to the town, and Westcott was fascinated by his oratory. Brought up as he had been in an Evangelical environment, he had exaggerated the importance of the individual, but the speeches of these Chartists first forced him to the conclusion that the individual was helpless apart from Society, and in later years he was never weary of reiterating this truth. In 1839 serious riots took place, because a Chartist meeting, which was to have been held in the Bull Ring, was forbidden. Soldiers were drafted into the town to keep order, and two turbulent persons were put into prison for inciting the masses and blocking the thoroughfares. Young Westcott deserted his meals to listen to Feargus O'Connor. The impression made upon him in these early years was never lost. He often said himself that it was at this time that he first had vividly put before him the sufferings of the masses crowded together in the great towns. His sense of justice and his hatred of oppression were always keen, but the impressions made upon him then struck deep into his nature, and we may truthfully say that he became the great leader in a crusade on behalf of social righteousness, that he claimed for every worker a share in the joy as well as in the burden of his labour, because Birmingham brought the shy, sensitive scholar, as a lad, into touch with the realities of human toil.

His degree taken, his fellowship won, he still remained in Cambridge, and for the next twenty years his chief work was teaching, first at Cambridge, then at Harrow.

At Cambridge began that wonderful friendship formed between three old Edwardians—a friendship which was to have such important results for the whole of England. Lightfoot and Benson had, indeed, been friends at school, and came up to Cambridge with a deep respect for the old schoolfellow, who was to be their tutor, although but little their senior in years.

To this trio must be added F. J. A. Hort, for whom Westcott had such affection: "He has been to me for more than forty years," he wrote to Mrs. Hort, "far more than a brother—a constant strength and inspiration."

Before I pass on to speak of Westcott as a scholar and a prophet—perhaps *the* prophet of the nineteenth century—I should like to say a word or two about him as a teacher. At Cambridge he came into touch with young men at a time in their lives when they needed to be fired with zeal, and their ideals and enthusiasms quickened and deepened; when they were inclined to slip into a path which led to self-indulgence, and ended in moral loss and failure. To them, and to the lads at Harrow, among whom was Bishop Gore, he came as an inspiration. Fired with enthusiasm for whatever subject he taught, whether it were prose composition, or Christian doctrine, or Browning's poems, he held his pupils spellbound, and communicated to them the enthusiasm, the sacred fire, with which he himself burned. To him his teaching was a sacred service, a holy responsibility. He gave to them ungrudgingly of his very best, and threw a new and wonderful light upon every subject he touched. I cannot resist quoting the words of one who heard him: "As in closing words of almost whispering earnestness, tense with spiritual emotion, and vibrating with prophetic hope, he tried to sum up the collective message of all the fragmentary efforts by which, in many parts and in many modes, men had groped their way towards self-realization and truth, I remember how every pen dropped and breath was hushed, and a pin-fall would have resounded, as we listened spellbound to a peroration that passed into a confession and a prayer."

Of all his work as a teacher, whether at Harrow, or later at Peterborough, and again at Cambridge, thoroughness was the outstanding characteristic. Inspired as he had been by Dr. Prince Lee, for whom a word had its own peculiar history, and its own precise message, he had an intense belief in the exact force of language. "Belief in words is the foundation of belief

in thought and of belief in man," he used to say, and this accuracy and thoroughness was of inestimable value, not only in the training of those who were fortunate enough to come under his influence, but in that work of Biblical criticism and revision, both in the English and Greek versions, to which the best years of his life were given. "All was steeped in the atmosphere of awe and devotion and mystery and consecration." "He taught us," says Dr. Scott Holland of him at Peterborough, "as one who ministered at an altar. His touching belief in our powers of scholarship used sometimes to shatter our self-control, and I well remember the shouts of laughter which we just succeeded in mastering till we found ourselves outside in the moonlit close, when he confessed his disappointment at our not remembering the use of a certain verb in the Clementine Homilies—we who had then the very dimmest conception of what the Clementine Homilies might be. Sometimes he would crush us to the dust by his humility, as when, after we had gaily turned off at a moment's notice *our* interpretation of some crucial passage in St. John, he would confess in an awe-struck whisper that he himself never dared put on paper his own conclusion of the matter."

He dreaded popularity, and the influence which he had upon so many while at Cambridge, and afterwards at Westminster, really distressed him. He wrote to his wife: "It is the influence that one seems to have in some places here and there which troubles me most. It is an opportunity to be used, and I don't see how to use it." Again to his eldest son he wrote: "There are times when I feel just overwhelmed by the kind things which are said and the gratitude of men. It makes me quite afraid."

At the root of all his teaching there lay the conviction that what really mattered was character. He realized that there was a growing tendency to estimate education by its commercial value, to look upon it as a means by which the young men of the nation might learn to outstrip their rivals in the race for wealth, to value it just so far, in fact, as it helped a lad to get on.

To him such an idea was little less than blasphemous. "Education as I understand it," he once said, "is not a preparation for commerce or the professions, but the moulding of a noble character, a training for life—for life seen and unseen—a training of citizens of a heavenly, as well as an earthly kingdom, for generous service in Church and State."

We may now go on to consider Dr. Westcott not merely as a teacher, but as a scholar also. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Englishmen had paid little attention to the writings of German theologians. Dr. Pusey had already warned them that the time would come when the objections raised across the silver streak would have to be met and answered here, if the Faith was to be maintained. Westcott and Lightfoot came forward as champions who were prepared to accept frankly the best results of modern criticism, and to refute those specious arguments which the Tübingen School levelled at Christian documents, for the authenticity of which there was better external evidence than for the work of many a classical author which was accepted without demur. It was their opinion that the books of the Bible, if investigated with thoroughness and devotion, would emerge from the test with an even better claim to man's allegiance than they had possessed hitherto. "The Holy Scriptures have nothing to fear from the most searching criticism," said Westcott, and his confidence has not been misplaced.

Their work was at first confined to the New Testament, for Westcott felt very strongly that it was disgraceful to continue to circulate a translation of the Scriptures which was in many places inaccurate. He and Dr. Hort gave the best twenty-eight years of their lives to the task of producing a text of the New Testament which should be as accurate as possible. This work, published in 1881, is probably the most important contribution to Biblical learning in our generation, and our present Revised Version, which is slowly becoming known and appreciated, owes very much to what is known as the Cambridge text.

It would take too long to discuss all the works on Biblical criticism which issued from his fertile pen. The earliest, an "Introduction to a Study of the Gospels," is a work which no theological scholar can afford to do without. His commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews, on St. John's Gospel and Epistles, are of the greatest value, for he himself was so much akin to the beloved disciple in spiritual insight, and so in sympathy with the philosophic outlook of that unknown writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that he was able to enter into these works and explain them as no other could. These commentaries were described as "an expository and theological masterpiece—the greatest of many great gifts which Dr. Westcott has offered to the Church"—but it was the profound grasp of ethical and historical truth, the marvellous spiritual insight, which made these books helpful and instructive to many. Dr. Westcott was often called a mystic, but he disliked the name. A recluse he said he might be, but never a mystic. He never could understand why others failed to see that which to him seemed so clear.

At the age of sixty-five Brooke Fosse Westcott was appointed to succeed his old pupil and much-loved friend, Lightfoot, at Durham, and many persons thought that the scholar, the recluse, would be quite in the wrong place, and that the organization of a large diocese, and the practical problems with which he would be called upon to deal, would be beyond his power. Never was there a greater mistake. Almost at the outset he was brought face to face with a task which would have daunted the boldest. A coal strike broke out in the North, and affected some 80,000 workers. Masters and men were equally unwilling to yield, and the strike had lasted from March to June, and caused much distress, when the Bishop of Durham offered to act as peacemaker. He was trusted by the men—"a gloryus ould man, with a good, 'onnest, smiling fyes," as one of them said; and his character and position insured him the respect of the employers. A conference met at Auckland Castle, and within two days the strike was over, and a Conciliation Board

had been formed to discuss any points of difference which might arise in future. In all social questions there were one or two points which he himself saw so clearly that he was always puzzled to know why these were less evident to other people.

1. *Legislation.*—It was his opinion that social legislation was good, but only in so far as it rested upon a strong public opinion—otherwise it was powerless to effect any moral revolution. As long as there is any large class tolerant of any social evil, such as sweating or intemperance, legislation is useless. "The remedy must be more prevailing than force. I once asked a labour leader what would cure intemperance and gambling, and the reply was, 'Nothing but religion.' That I believe to be absolutely true."

2. *The Relation of Employer and Employee.*—Here he felt keenly and expressed himself quite clearly. There ought to be no hostility between master and man, but there should be co-operation. The man brings to his labour his life as his capital. He should feel that he has a deep interest in the work, and that he shares the full pleasure of its success. "Man must trust man. He must enter into the pleasures and sorrows of his fellows, and as he gives the whole of his life to his work, he knows that he will enter upon the fulness of the lives of all with whom he is united in the living bond of human union." He expected that the Co-operative Societies, from which he hoped great things, would help to provide a model of what retail trade might be, that they would fix fair hours of labour, and provide in some way by pensions for those who had been faithful servants. He was always trying to bring men back to first principles, and testing all practical reforms by their conformity to that standard. A bargain—which usually means loss to buyer or seller—seemed to him impossible between Christians.

Overcrowding was one of the chief evils in some parts of his diocese, and he set himself to rouse public opinion upon the subject. He visited the pitmen's houses, he ascended ladders and found himself in garrets, where even his slight figure could

not stand upright; and then he went to a public meeting and pleaded in the name of our Faith on behalf of those who with us are joint heirs of the grace of life that this source of moral infection should be removed. "To corrupt the development of life is not less criminal than to maim the body; we are guilty of conniving at the defilement of the temples of God till we face this problem according to our opportunities and strive to solve it."

He was the first President of the Christian Social Union, one of his pet objects, and one which he regarded as having a special claim upon him, and every year found him giving his whole-hearted support to its work, whether at the annual meeting, which he never missed, or at Council meetings, which his son says he sometimes found very trying, for he was frequently called upon to act as a restraining influence. At a meeting at Manchester he spoke upon the Christian law, for it is the root principle of the Union to claim for the Christian law the ultimate authority to rule social practice.

"But what is the Christian law? We are often reminded that Christ left no code of commandments. It is in Him, in His Person and His work the law lies. He has given, indeed, for our instruction some applications of the negative precepts of the Decalogue to the New Order. He has added some illustrations of positive duties, almsgiving, prayer, fasting. He has set up an ideal and a motive for life, and at the same time He has endowed His Church with spiritual power, and has promised that the Paraclete sent in His Name shall guide it into all truth."

The Christian law, then, is the embodiment of the truth for action in forms answering to the conditions of society from age to age. The embodiment takes place slowly, and it can never be complete. It is impossible for us to rest indolently in the conclusions of the past. In each generation the obligation is laid on Christians to bring new problems of conduct and duty into the Divine light, and to find their solution under the teaching of the Spirit.

The unceasing effort to fulfil the obligation establishes the

highest prerogative of man and manifests the life of the Church. From this effort there can be no release; and the effort itself becomes more difficult as human relations grow wider, fuller, and more complex.

And the man himself—most of us have seen his portrait, many must have seen him. A slight figure, with wonderful grey eyes, grave but not sad, lighting up with enthusiasm as he spoke, his whole face quivering and alive as he swept along under the influence of his emotion. He believed with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and inspired all who came within his reach, by word or by writing, with the same contagious warmth. He was severely simple in all his tastes. His favourite lunch from schoolboy days was a few biscuits. At Peterborough meat was only found on the family breakfast-table on Sundays; and when he went on long journeys, his wife made him send her the paper serviette provided with the luncheon basket, as a proof that he had eaten a proper meal. If he was forced to drive, he always sat huddled up with his back to the horses, mutely protesting against such a luxury as a carriage.

He was more in sympathy with the great Greek Fathers than with the Latin giant who had dominated the thought of Western Christendom for so long. With Origen especially he had the deepest sympathy, for he was a man after his own heart. Those who have not read his article on that marvellous thinker, whether in the "Dictionary of Christian Biography" or in "Religious Thought in the West," should do so without delay. "Not a word in it, nor yet a silence that breathes suspicion against that gracious name. Nothing to decry, to cramp, or to fetter thought." It has been said that the Greek Fathers see human life as Divine before they turn to see it degraded and defiled. Therefore the redemption of man means restoration to a true condition. Founded upon the Incarnation—the truth that God became man—there is a Divine purpose in human life working for the restoration of lost ideals of brotherhood and fellowship, which are to be realized, not in the individual as an isolated being, but in the fellowship of the society of redeemed humanity. The Incarna-

tion was not an expedient devised to meet the difficulties of sin, but it was part of the order of Divine providence. We can see clearly that this was Westcott's position. It was once said that he could not fit human depravity into his scheme of things. "The Bishop does not seem to believe in the Fall," exclaimed one of his clergy. His moral optimism was extraordinary, but it was the reflection of his own innate purity of soul. Man is naturally Christian was his belief to the last.

There was a wonderful freshness about him, a freshness of hope and sympathy, which made it a real joy to him to help all who came to him. He warmly welcomed every new development, if only he was persuaded that it was true. "You *must* see visions," he said to one of the younger clergy; "I despair of you if you don't. Visions belong to youth; when you are older you will only dream dreams." But he, too, saw visions, and it was in the presence of the Unseen that he met all life. The cloud of witnesses was very real to him, and he loved to be alone in his beautiful chapel, where the unseen company seemed more real to him than any crowd. One night his chaplain found him struggling over the draft of a service for the dedication of gifts in some tiny church. "Well, my lord, that congregation will not be very critical; they are accustomed to anything." With a gentle, surprised smile, the Bishop looked up from his desk and said: "You forget *who* are the congregation; *we* are only an infinitesimal part of it."

There are two things in his life which to me seem to give the clue to his character. His faith was real and true. It had been tested in the fire of doubt, and he had had his hours of intellectual difficulty; but he won his way through, and he was able to guide others safely over the dangerous places which he had conquered. His faith did not remain as an abstract or intellectual speculation; it was translated into action, and his life became a reasonable duty and service. Man has been said to live only when he serves, then he truly lived his life to the full. He considered that the only possible realization of self was to be found in the completest service for others. "What a stupid phrase is that we keep to ourselves!" he said. "As

truly as we live by others—receive from them our birth, our growth, our education—so we wrong our neighbours most surely unless we live for them."

In regard to his teaching, it often happened that men found it difficult to adopt his point of view as their own; he was, moreover, so wont to see far into the infinite that at times his thought became speculative and his language obscure. He had a way of putting forth thoughts as if he were meditating aloud, and he had a horror of a certain type of definiteness which would mean a loss in variety and fulness of thought. In his effort to avoid this, he often went to the other extreme, and often left his hearers with a hazy feeling. In such work as his articles on the Vulgate or Origen, or his book, "Religious Thought in the West," no one can accuse him of vagueness, for nothing could be clearer and more concise. But when dealing with a different type of subject—the Incarnation, for example—he gazes out and sees visions which he can with difficulty reduce to writing. "He loves the twilight which subdues the stronger colours and softens the harsher and more rigid outline."

Yet with all this absorption in the transcendental aspect of life and thought, he was himself the most practical of men—practical in the administration of a great diocese, practical in his helpfulness for others. He brought about a peaceful settlement of a great labour dispute, he endeavoured to lead employers and employees to discuss questions of vital interest to both in a generous spirit, and by the conferences held at Auckland Castle made master and men better able to understand each other's difficulties. He had great faith in the Co-operative Movement, and longed for a better conception of right and wrong in commercial transactions.

To the world he presented a unique contrast, for he was a practical reformer of social abuses, a scholar and a teacher of intense spirituality; thorough and sincere, he counted no effort too great if by any means he might help some. To few men of this generation has it been granted to exert such an influence, and to leave behind the memory of so great an example as this simple and loyal servant of God.