

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 Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

ROBERT RAINY.

WHEN in 1862, at the age of six-and-thirty, Robert Rainy was appointed Professor of Church History in the New College, Edinburgh, in succession to Principal Cunningham, it appeared as if he had been destined by Providence to the life of a scholar. And for such a vocation he had manifest qualifications.

He had the brooding mind. On whatever subject he spoke, he created the impression of having pondered it long and deeply. On most subjects the majority of readers or hearers were soon made aware that, however far they had penetrated, he had been as far, and probably farther. Not only did he attack a subject from every side, but he seemed to get his hand right underneath it. His own psychological processes were so subtle and comprehensive that he naturally worked with the psychological method; and, Church History being his subject, there was plenty of scope for its application. He never contemplated history as a mere pageant, as Dean Stanley did; still less did he take heretics and knock their heads together, as his predecessor, Dr. Cunningham, had done. In dealing with departures from orthodoxy, he took you to the point where the divergence had commenced, and showed how, in the heretic's circumstances, it was not unnatural that he should mistake the path, and that, indeed, if you had been at the same pass, you might have done the same. He seemed to feel his way through the systems of the great thinkers from the inside, instead of exhibiting them as objects to be contemplated from the outside. You saw how the thinker, having placed the one foot down here, was bound to put the other there; and so on, till the whole circle of his thinking was explained.

It is only saying the same thing in other words, to re-

mark that he was a personality. This is what students desire above all things in a professor. It was almost as interesting to find out what new light any subject, as he discussed it, cast upon Rainy, as to discover what new light he could cast upon the subject. While he had not the extraordinary mental brilliance and literary skill of Professor Davidson, who was lecturing in the same college at the same time, he had more weight and more intricacy, and, therefore, was quite as much a subject of discussion and anecdotage. He created in his students the belief that he could do anything. For many years there lingered about the college an understanding that he was engaged in the composition of a work on St. Augustine; and the merits of this production were as devout an article of faith as if it had been actually written and published. Perhaps the topic on which in his time the minds of students were most troubled was the Atonement; and it was loyally believed that, if he could only find time to write a treatise on it, all the difficulties of the age would be cleared up. I have myself earnestly urged him to write this work; and he was good enough to keep his gravity under my rhapsodies. Into his ear there were poured more of the confessions and confidences of students than were entrusted to any of his colleagues. For such sacred work he was admirably qualified: he had been there himself; he was patient and undogmatic; and he could, in such circumstances, say things that reached far and gave real relief. I remember how he astonished me by saying that the definitions of the Trinity and the Person of Christ were not so much exact statements of fact as the nearest approaches man could make to that which is inexpressible.

Of learning he might have had more. But he had enough to know where to go for the information he required; and his lectures gave the impression of a good deal of reading

in the sources. *The Ancient Catholic Church*, the latest of his publications, is substantially a reproduction of his class-lectures on the first four or five centuries ; and a perusal of its pages will confirm this impression. He is singularly happy also in the characterization of the great leaders of the past. The following sentences, extracted from his description of Athanasius, may appear to some no bad delineation of the author himself :—

Athanasius possessed the eye for men and for affairs, and the purpose to make all his resources tell for the cause he served, which are the main elements of statesmanship—in his case statesmanship sustained by faith, and therefore never owning or accepting defeat. He was not understood to possess, like Origen, the learning due to enormous reading ; the circumstances of his life forbade it. Nor was he a religious genius, like Augustine. His knowledge and his range of religious insight and sympathy were, no doubt, adequate to the representation of a great cause, and have commanded the respect of theologians down to our time. But Athanasius was, most of all, a commanding personality : one who impressed, controlled and mastered men ; one whom his followers enthusiastically trusted, and whom his enemies feared and hated. He did not quite live to see the result which was to reward his efforts and sacrifices ; but he saw the beginning of that memorable close. And he left behind him an impression of consistent greatness hardly paralleled in the annals of the Church.

Professor Salmond, one of the editors of the series in which this work appeared, was extremely desirous that more of the lectures should be reproduced in this shape ; and the author was in no degree unwilling. He spoke to me with great earnestness of his desire to proceed with the publication. His lectures on Modern German Theology, if he had been able to go on so far, would, I am persuaded, have been found of permanent value.

The book, however, which must be looked upon as the most spontaneous production of his genius, and which had for a long time to serve alone to outsiders as an indication of his mind, is *The Delivery and Development of Christian*

Doctrine, the Cunningham Lectures for 1873. It was occasioned partly by the speculations of Matthew Arnold, on the one hand, disparaging doctrine, and partly by the writings of Newman, on the other, exaggerating it; but it really contains a great deal of the author's own most intimate thinking, and it will be found full of the seeds of things by those whose mental development has chanced to proceed on similar lines. It may be said to stand midway between the theology of Dr. Cunningham on the one hand and that of Dr. Robertson Smith and Dr. Bruce on the other. There is much of the spirit of Dr. Cunningham in the importance attributed to doctrine, though there is far more appreciation than was exhibited by that divine of the human element in revelation. The contrast is equally striking with the younger theologians as regards the reverence with which revealed truth is handled; yet there is full recognition of the necessity for handling it as a historical magnitude. The same range of subjects is embraced as in the epoch-making work of Rothe, entitled *Zur Dogmatik*; but, as far as I remember, there is no reference to this fact; and the conclusions reached are widely different.

The principal point of contrast with Rothe is the reserve exhibited in connexion with inspiration. As is well known, Rothe completely rejected the traditional doctrine on this subject, attacking its positions and defences with a severity and an eloquence similar to those displayed by Coleridge when championing the same cause in *The Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*. It might have been thought that it would be impossible to write about the delivery and development of doctrine without taking up this theme, this being the point at which the revealing mind and the human mind meet. The writer could not be unaware how much the general attention was occupied with this topic at the time. Yet he evades it; or, it may be truer to say,

he does not feel the difficulty. He has the immediate intuition which the Reformers had of the inspiration in the Scriptures. Thus he says curtly (p. 356): "The efforts made to show that the New Testament is not inspired—i.e., which is the same thing, that the writings it contains are due merely to the influences which operate in the minds of religious men at any great crisis of religious history—all such efforts may be set down as labour thrown away. On the mind of each generation of Christians these writings impress their claims with an evidence which outlives all objections."

The revelation of truth about God's nature and intentions, about man's sin and destiny, and about the means of salvation, seemed to him one of the great necessities of human nature and one of the leading instances of the mercy and grace of God; and in the Bible he found this information supplied with such an amplitude and wisdom as carry on their face the proof of divinity. He does not separate between the revealing God, the Book in which the revelation is transmitted, and the men who penned the writing; all three are one phenomenon; and it is a phenomenon of unique and unmistakable quality. Thus he says:—

Here I raise no debate as to the state of mind in which the inspired man should be conceived to be, or how far his insight extends. I neither know nor care. It is enough for me, that, speaking in the Spirit, he speaks out of the fulness of a supreme insight and a supreme wisdom. These are the resources which, through whatever experiences and workings of his own mind, conscious or unconscious, are translated into the effects with which we deal. And, when I ask again, What sources do the New Testament writers draw from, and in what method do they proceed?—I reply, Let those say who have felt how these writers, as from the centre of some bright world, of which they are a part, and which they perfectly behold, speak out to us, approaching from the outside and from below, apprehending feebly what they deliver so certainly and so fitly.

Let us suppose that I have some experiences to go through, and that, in order to go through them successfully, an acquaintance is needed with the principles and applications of some science, some body of truth complex and far-reaching, involving abstract principles that branch out in all directions. Let me suppose that I have only the most vague and dim notions of this whole department of knowledge. Let me suppose that one who is a master of all science, and of this science, takes me in hand to meet this pressing difficulty. He says to me, Do not give way to bewilderment. I cannot make you in an hour or two a master of this science, yet, if you will attend to me, I will give you enough of what you need to know, to guide you through what lies before you, intelligently, advantageously, safely. So he begins, keeping always in view my practical exigency, my stage of knowledge, my degree of capacity, and measuring and proportioning his statements by this point of view. He tells me the facts and the processes, the forces and the conditions, with which I shall have to deal. That I may deal with them intelligently, he explains them as he goes, drawing forth principles, so far as I can take them in, so far as they are required with a view to my experiences. He does not always confine himself to what is barely necessary for the bare practical exigency. Partly because he respects my desire to understand, partly because gratified intellectual interest fixes my knowledge by illuminating it and connecting it, he goes here and there a little further out into theory, and shows me lines of principles stretching away into regions which cannot for the present be explained. All through he dexterously adapts whatever he says to my actual state; he dovetails his instruction into my actual mental condition; he links what he brings to what he knows me to have beforehand; familiar experiences of mine become analogies to illustrate, and fixed points by which to hold, the new knowledge; familiar applications are suggested, experiments that I might make, whereby to see with my eyes how the forces work. The lesson is a marvel of adaptive skill, and at the end he repeats: Now attend to what I have said, and it will take you safely through. But all these things which he has said, as he says them, are part of a complete world of ordered thought that dwells within him,—a knowledge not fragmentary but complete. And even in his concrete illustrations, his condescensions to my ignorance, in his very phrasing of them, there are shades, and accuracies, and nice distinctions, that would be very significant, to one who knew a little more than I, how the operation of various principles that concur and limit one another is full before his mind, and is provided for in his speech. He is fetching out of the great array of ordered truth at his disposal this here, and that there, which my exigency requires, and putting it in shapes that adapt it to me; yet so that the harmony and per-

spicuity of the rounded truth is nowhere really violated. For me, meanwhile, it is well if my provisional and imperfect perceptions so keep the tracks laid down for them, that I truly hold the facts and guiding notes delivered, and that I enter genuinely into the glimpses of science given me, so as to have my practice illuminated and made intelligent, and to have the spirit of research awakened for the days to come.

Not very different from the case supposed is the case we have before us. For, if our knowledge is not quite so hasty, and not so fragmentary, and not quite so provisional and occasional, as the illustration supposes, yet how far, on the other side, does His supreme insight, who is our teacher, rise above the 'measure of all the masters of earthly knowledge! So, then, the apostles, speaking in the spirit of their Master, draw, from a knowledge that is not in part, so much as shall serve the occasions of the life of faith for a few hundred or a few thousand years. They aim not at one department of the man only, but rather at the whole mood of mind that ought to be cherished, and the whole working of the man that ought to be set agoing. Into these dogma enters as an element, sometimes as the leading and prevailing element, but not as the only one. And then, it is generally not a single dogma singly analyzed and extricated, but a certain complex of beliefs in their mutual connexion and influence, that is presented and inculcated. Resting on the facts of the divine history of redemption, they fetch down principles from above, as it were, the full bearings and relations of which are apparent to them, or are apparent to the Spirit in whom they speak; and they show to us some of these relations and bearings. They bring them to bear in the manner of direct insight. They do not speak like men following out patiently abstractions of their own minds, but like men who see the thing with their own eyes; so that even their argumentative illustration is not in the way of painful analysis of thought, but is sudden, powerful, broken, hastening from point to point, as if some scene were rushing into view, and the connexion of its parts not thought out, but seen. Hence, as in the case supposed, so in this, the sentences have a meaning so full and deep that, while the immediate intention for us is discernible, there is always room for further insight. Nor does this remark apply only to the mind of the author in his sentence. In the very utterance of it there is a pregnancy, not as of men paring down their words to the strictness of theory, but as of men filled with the complex greatness and fulness of the reality they see.

This supreme insight, with its direct effect on the utterance characterizes all Bible teaching. We also will utter our theology so when we are inspired—not till then in this world.

This is a very favourable specimen of his powers of exposition ; and it is highly characteristic of his attitude towards Holy Scripture. If, however, the deposit of truth in the Scripture is of this quantity and quality, is not the Biblical expression of it sufficient ? No, says the author : it is necessary for man not only to have the truth spoken to him in the language of the Revealer, but to speak it out in his own words, in order to prove whether or not he has rightly apprehended it and to become able, through successive attempts, to express it more adequately. This is the *rationale* of all doctrines and dogmas. There is a vast difference between the truth as delivered in Scripture and the truth as apprehended in actual experience. History proves that the Church, after the close of the Canon, had to begin at the beginning and attempt like a child to express in its own words what the Revealer had expressed in His words ; and the process has gone on century after century, with innumerable mistakes and imperfections, yet on the whole with success and growing maturity.

It is characteristic that the author does not defend the process of constructing doctrine or dogma on the ground of the claim of science to present knowledge in a perfect form or on the ground of the exigencies of Church life, though of course both are recognized, but by the necessities of the spiritual life of the individual. Doctrine is implicit in experience, but tends by its own nature to become explicit. It is a native instinct of the soul to know the God and Saviour by whom it has been redeemed ; and, the more fully it knows, the more comprehensive and tenacious does the grasp of faith become. The powers of knowing in the human subject are not isolated, but advance or regress with all the other elements of experience ; and it is a poor tribute to truth to suppose that, if the mind does not happen to possess it, something else will do quite as well.

The discussion is throughout very abstract ; but, at the close, it comes down to the common earth in a chapter on the Functions of Creeds, where numerous points are touched upon which are of perennial interest. As a whole, this chapter is a powerful vindication of the legitimacy and necessity of such documents, while, however, no concealment is made of the evil they may occasion by committing churches hopelessly to false and antiquated positions.

It is probably to the abstractness of the discussion, that the comparative ineffectiveness of this book, as a book, is due. On one occasion he spoke to me very frankly about the fact that his books did not sell. Describing a circle in the air with his finger, he remarked, " You know, I have always been too contented to know that the point lay somewhere thereabouts, instead of saying that it is there " (giving a dab in the air with his forefinger). " You know," he went on, " I have no style ; and the reason of this defect, I think, is that, when I was a young minister at Huntly, I did not write my sermons, but trusted to the preparation of the ideas, when I ought to have written at least one discourse a week and so acquired grace and force of diction."

It may be that there was a strain of indolence in his nature, and that an external stimulus was requisite to cause his mind to work at its full vigour. I have seen him at the commencement of a meeting, over which he was presiding, state the subject with the utmost apparent unconcern, almost falling asleep over his task ; but in the course of the proceedings something occurred to rouse him ; when, in a moment, he became another man and spoke with irresistible energy.

Happily such an external stimulus came at a critical hour in his history when, in 1872, Dean Stanley was brought down by the Broad Church party in Scotland, to give a

reading of Scottish history, in the form of a course of Lectures before the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, the main drift of which was to cast mild ridicule on the Covenanters and to vindicate and extol the Moderates. On the spot Rainy gave the answer. The last of Stanley's lectures was delivered on January 12th, and on the earliest days when the Music Hall could be procured for the purpose—on the 24th, the 26th, and the 31st of the same month—Rainy delivered three lectures in reply. The building was crowded every time with an audience whose enthusiasm went on increasing till it reached white heat. I had the privilege of hearing these lectures; and I shall never forget the scene at a passage where the lecturer was vindicating his country against the taunts of the Southerner: the audience rose *en masse* and continued to fill the hall with deafening cheers, till old Dr. Harry Rainy of Glasgow, the lecturer's father, a venerable figure with white hair, who was sitting beside his son, started to his feet and stretched his arms aloft, as if to deprecate a tide of emotion which was overwhelming. Rainy knew his subject perfectly; his deepest feelings had been stirred; the attack had come from a man with a great and well deserved reputation; so that the powers of anyone accepting the office of replying had to be put on the strain. Rainy rose to the occasion not only with the requisite ability but with a dignity and grace equal to Stanley's own. The answer, which was generally felt to be crushing, assumed a national character—the reply of Scotland to a traducer—and there can be no doubt that, by stepping out so promptly and effectively to speak for his country, Rainy immensely advanced his position as a public character.

It may have been due to the enthusiasm of youth, but many passages of those lectures affected me like poems, impressing themselves so instantly and permanently on

the mind that, when I now open the book, I seem to know them by heart. Such were the passages, in the first lecture on Presbyterianism, in the second on martyrdom in connexion with the Covenanters, in the third on Robert Burns. I can still see the poise of the speaker's head, the movement of his features, and hear the tones of his voice, as he pronounced such memorable utterances. All the apparent indifference which too commonly clung to his manner was gone; his mind was energizing with perfect freedom; and his sallies went straight as an arrow to the mark. It seemed to be the very genius of his country that was uttering itself through him—or rather the genius of the Christian portion of his countrymen; for he took his stand uncompromisingly on the most Christian ground and identified himself with Evangelical principles. Of course these lectures are too brief to give by themselves anything like a complete account of Scottish Church History; but, if read along with a work containing the facts, they would supply the essence or soul, which is too often lacking in more pretentious performances.

From what had appeared to be his natural and providential career Rainy was drawn away by the attraction of ecclesiastical politics. I have frequently heard him narrate the circumstances in which this change in the course of his life began. At a crisis of the history of his Church he had been urged to write a pamphlet; one of his colleagues in the New College dissuaded him, warning him that, if once he touched the edge of this maëlstrom, he would never get out of the current; but necessity was laid upon him, and he had to yield. The result was as had been predicted. Thenceforth the door of his study was to a great extent shut against him; instead of writing learned books, he was incessantly occupied with reports, minutes and the other para-

phernalia of ecclesiastical courts. He had to persuade men, to secure majorities, to smooth differences and soothe susceptibilities. He was not unaware how much he was sacrificing, and he was not without qualms of conscience. But, on the whole, he would have answered in the words of Alexander Henderson—a churchman whom he strongly resembled—“When, from a sense of myself and my own thoughts and ways, I begin to remember how men who love to live obscurely and in the shadow are brought forth to light, to the view and talking of the world; how men who love quietness are made to stir and to have a hand in public business; how men that love soliloquies and contemplations are brought upon debates and controversies; and, generally, how men are brought to act the things which they never determined nor so much as dreamed of before; the words of the prophet Jeremiah come to my remembrance: ‘O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself.’” It is impossible not to wish sometimes that it had been otherwise; yet, as has been frequently remarked, it is a greater thing to be a maker than a writer of history; and it was to the making of history that he was now called.

For this rôle also he had eminent qualifications.

He was not, indeed, an orator. In the obituary notice in the *Spectator* he was compared in this respect with Mr. Gladstone. But a more misleading comparison could hardly have been made; for, whereas in his very simplest utterances Mr. Gladstone was invariably the orator, Dr. Rainy’s speaking, even on the greatest occasions, lacked this special quality. Of this he was well aware; and I recall a remarkable saying of his on this peculiar gift. “I have heard,” he said, “all the great speakers of my time, in both Church and State, but, after hearing Chalmers, I could not call one of them eloquent.”

In another obituary notice he is praised for encouraging

younger colleagues : “ He consulted them, he drew them out, he treated them as equals.” This, however, is written only from the ideal of an ecclesiastical leader in the writer’s mind, not from the facts. Dr. Rainy accepted those who offered themselves and worked heartily with them ; but he was deficient in the art of drawing out the hesitating and making opportunities for beginners. Once, in the rashness of youth, I ventured to remonstrate with him against appearing too often on the platform with an inferior practitioner, thereby giving the enemy occasion to blaspheme ; but he kindled up at once, saying : “ That man does what is done by very few : he puts his shoulder every time, and all the time, beneath the public burden : and that is enough for me.”

He exhibited, indeed, extraordinary patience in working with those who thus in Providence were made his fellow-workers. Often have I seen him in committee produce a draft of what he proposed as the deliverance on an important case ; and, as what he had written seemed to me to be perfect, I was annoyed beyond measure at the alterations insisted on by others. But he would alter words, clauses and whole sentences, till there was hardly anything left of what he had submitted, without betraying the least dissatisfaction ; and it was manifestly his reverence for the rights of others that made him so tolerant.

The charge oftenest brought against him was an excess of pliancy—a dexterity in breaking down opposition and securing majorities. But, as Professor Masson pointed out on a memorable occasion, it belongs to a position like that occupied by him to be “ a master of expedencies ” ; and love and humility may be the moving springs of such a habit rather than craft or ambition. The only occasion I can remember when he seemed to me to be putting a strain on his own conscience was at a private meeting the evening

before the Free Church finally decided to unite with the United Presbyterians, when he agreed to accept verbatim a statement from the leading man amongst the objectors ; and next day, when it turned out that this had been entirely in vain, he lost for once the temper over which he maintained so unfailing a control, pouring on the man whom he had tried to secure such scathing words of disdain as will never be forgotten by any who heard them.

He seemed always to have powers in reserve. One of these resources of which he made very rare use was humour. But more than once, when a serious argument would have been dangerous, I have seen him simply blow a disagreeable question out of the window with a blast of the most irresistible fun. In private he relished a good story, and he could tell one too with the best.

But what told most of all in his work as a public man was an impression he produced of wisdom. Not infrequently his speeches were tedious and circumlocutionary ; they must have been the despair of reporters ; plain people, reading them, could not follow or make out what he was at ; but somewhere there would be, before the speech was done, a sentence which settled the question ; and the General Assembly, which he held in the hollow of his hand, would wait with Scots stolidity and patience till this sentence came, and would then go away perfectly happy and satisfied. As he sank into his most indifferent mood, I have often thought how difficult it would be for a foreigner to understand the secret of his power. But on occasions when a strong stimulus was applied, he was transfigured ; and, such a stimulus being applied continuously during the last two years of his life, his speaking was superb. It was finer than it had ever been ; and remarkable it was to see a man of eighty covering the whole ground, touching every point, and enfolding the whole subject in the fervour of a radiant faith.

For the total result of his services as a Church leader different formulae would be used by different observers. It might be said, for example, that he was the man who induced the Free Church to abandon the attitude of hoping for a return to the Establishment and to accept the attitude of seeking Presbyterian union outside the State Connexion. When he first came to the front, the Church was about equally divided ; but he wore the opposition down, till only a rump was left, in which, however, there still proved to be a sting ; and the Church united with a body to which separation from the State was, if not formally, yet practically, a matter of faith. Another formula which would cover a great deal would be to say that his task was to hold together, as one whole, a Church composed of very heterogeneous elements. The Free Church comprised North and South, Highlander and Lowlander, the inhabitants of the Islands and the inhabitants of the great cities. It was always difficult to get such various companies to keep step. Some tended to advance too fast, others to progress too slowly. His task was to restrain the forwards and encourage the laggards, and keep the line as straight and even as he was able. He was successful till 1892, when the minute secession of the Free Presbyterians took place ; and then, at the Union, in 1900, occurred the second breach, the dimensions of which are still to be ascertained. Within one or other of these two formulae most of his career could be embraced ; but of course there was a great deal of miscellaneous work not easily brought within any formula. It turned up incidentally from time to time, and a leader had to do the best he could with it, without conscious reference to any programme of his own, though no doubt his policy was in conscious or unconscious harmony with his underlying principles.

By the movement in favour of the use of hymns in public worship and by that in favour of organs he snapped the

strings of custom and set his Church free for development. Still more was this the case with the Declaratory Act of 1892, by which tender consciences were relieved from the strain of the more questionable portions of the Confession of Faith. Although, as has been mentioned, this occasioned a secession, Dr. Rainy used to say that no act of his life gave him more unalloyed satisfaction.

The first great movement in which he was engaged was that for union with the United Presbyterians. The first negotiations ended in failure, or rather postponement; and I have often wished to know by whose advice the advance was suspended. I suspect it was by Dr. Rainy's; for I do not believe that the hot spirit of Candlish could have dictated such a surrender. I doubt also whether Dr. Rainy would have himself moved in the resumption of the negotiations, had not the United Presbyterian Synod forced his hand. For welcoming the invitation from that quarter Dr. Ross Taylor deserves more credit than he receives. But, when Dr. Rainy at last committed himself, he threw all his business talents into the negotiations; and he deservedly became the figurehead of the Union.

After the dropping of the first union negotiations, Principal Cairns, of the United Presbyterian Church, and Principal Rainy threw themselves together into the movement for Disestablishment; and it was their hope that the Church would be disestablished before it was necessary to resume union negotiations, and then the disestablished Church of Scotland could be included in the union. At one time it seemed as if their object was well within their grasp, Mr. Gladstone being apparently on the point of disestablishing the Scottish Church. But there is many a slip between the cup and the lip; and at the critical moment Mr. Gladstone's energies became directed to the absorbing subject of Irish politics. In connexion with the Disestablishment

campaign Dr. Rainy encountered extraordinary odium from opponents; he was indifferently supported in his own Church; and not a few severe losses were sustained, when those who took up the cause of Anti-Home Rule with something like religious fervour adopted the notion that he had sold his support of Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy as a *quid-pro-quo* for disestablishment. Never, however, was there a more baseless belief. From first to last Dr. Rainy was acting on a profound conviction of his own, not only that a reunion of Scottish Presbyterianism on a large scale is impossible except outside of the State Connection, but also that State support for Churches is an expedient which belongs to the past. He did not take the trouble to decide whether it had ever been lawful and advantageous: that is to say, he was not a theoretic Voluntary; but, at all events, at the stage which the Christian Church has reached in Scotland, he considered it an impediment and not a help.

The second formula mentioned above, as embracing the work of Dr. Rainy as a Church-leader, received its fullest illustration in the cases brought before the Church Courts through the development in Scotland of the Higher Criticism. The instinct which guided him through these perplexing processes was the desire to keep the Church together. It carried him too far when it led him to propose the removal of Professor Robertson Smith from the Chair of Hebrew at Aberdeen without a formal conviction; but the temptation was strong; for the alarm which had broken out in the country, and especially in the Highlands, was genuine and profound. For many reasons it would have been far easier for him to commit himself without reserve to the progressive party. He said to me at the time, that he knew he was risking his whole career by letting the young Free Church look upon him as an enemy. But it was

the main current of his life which was carrying him forward. At heart he was in sympathy with progress ; but his belief was that there would not have been a Free Church to make progress in, if he had not for the moment given way. He nobly redeemed afterwards his pledges to the cause of freedom when he carried Professor George Adam Smith triumphantly through a similar trial. Only he had to incur the charge of inconsistency, which it was easy to bring against one who recommended in the one case the views he had resisted in the other.

Never did Dr. Rainy show to less advantage than in the Robertson Smith debates. In those days he often appeared to me like a man fighting with one of his hands bandaged to his side, or like a boy who, having resolved not to fight, allows the other combatant to batter him at pleasure. And his antagonist did not fail to take advantage of his opportunity. It was pitiable in those days to see how the leaders of the Church, shying at the merits of the question, which they did not understand, rode away on points of order and procedure. Rainy knew perfectly well what the real issue was ; but of course he was an outsider in comparison with an expert like Robertson Smith. A most interesting memorial of the exercise of his mind on this subject will be found in a small book, entitled *The Bible and Criticism*, being four lectures delivered in 1878 at the Presbyterian College, London ; and a perusal of this work will lead, if I am not mistaken, to the conclusion that Criticism, as a scientific method of dealing with certain phenomena of the Holy Scriptures, had thoroughly penetrated his mind and won from him the recognition of its legitimacy as one of the functions of a Church, but that Criticism, in the sense of a body of opinions which critics at present hold with so much consent among themselves as to demand for it the assent of the Church

also, had but faintly touched him, and had in no degree altered his attitude to the Bible.

When, on August 1, 1904, the decision of the House of Lords on the Church Case fell like a bolt from the blue, many at once exclaimed that this would be the end of Principal Rainy. On the contrary, however, it proved to be the signal for the most remarkable phase of his entire career. That which staggered younger men exhilarated him and summoned forth all his latent capacities, while his religious faith rose buoyantly to meet the crisis. His appeal to the country against manifest and crying injustice made the intervention of Parliament inevitable; and his personal exertions in London transmogrified the Bill of the Lord Advocate. The late Samuel Smith, an old parliamentary hand, expressed to me the opinion that the securing of the Act in the circumstances was the most remarkable parliamentary achievement he had ever witnessed. Advantage was taken of the juncture to pass in the Church Courts a declaration of spiritual independence more unmistakable than had ever been formulated before; and it was in full view of this that the restoration of property was made. As the country saw the old man encountering disaster with such cheerfulness and tranquillity, and fighting his way through it with such resolution, sympathy and enthusiasm rose to salute the heroic figure, and even the tongues of enemies could not withhold their tribute of admiration.

For a lifetime Dr. Rainy had excited the keenest opposition, very real on the part of those who believed their interests to be endangered by his policy, largely histrionic on the part of the secular press. But from the first he was surrounded by a body of zealous adherents who understood and appreciated him. And this body steadily grew, its love being only stimulated by the attacks of the press. It received a large accession at the period of the Union, the

United Presbyterians acquiring as high an esteem for him as those of his own Church. What these came to see and appreciate was the religious character of the man. It has never been difficult for churches to get men of ability to love and serve them, when these have been rewarded with the honours and prizes which a Church is able to offer ; but such men have not infrequently been inferior characters, sustained in their exertions by motives far from exalted. Rainy, on the contrary, loved his Church for the amount and the quality of the saintliness it contained, and his constant aim was to make it a better instrument for the salvation of men. He knew all the heights and depths of religious experience ; and this kept him simple and humble, when circumstances might have rendered him the reverse. In his Lectures on the Scottish Church in reply to Dean Stanley he laid down as one of the conditions of the life and power of the Scottish Churches “ the common conception prevailing and cherished among us of what conversion is, what the divine life in the soul of man is ” ; and anyone who reads his exposition of this theme, in the Third Lecture, may learn for himself what was the essential conviction of the man who wrote it. Of Alexander Henderson history records that, when Moderator of the Glasgow Assembly of 1638, he devoted the intervals that could be snatched from business to conversation with those in spiritual anxiety, and to Dr. Rainy this would at any time have been a congenial transition. Twice he interrupted his ordinary course, when Mr. Moody, the American evangelist, was in Edinburgh, in order to speak to his students, who listened with breathless attention, on the necessity of conversion and on the place of revivals in religion. Now and then, when expected at public meetings to speak on ecclesiastical politics, he would diverge to the *interiora* of Christian experience. Once, when he did so in the General Assembly

an elder remarked to a friend of mine : “ I am from the North, and you know what I have been taught there to think of Dr. Rainy ; but I have discovered for myself this day that he is a great man of God ; and I am ashamed of the falsehoods I have believed about him.” On occasions of bereavement he would unexpectedly write with his own hand long letters of sympathy, in which he showed familiarity with the deepest secrets of the soul. In such a letter he mentioned that his wife and he had lost an infant in their early married life at Huntly ; and he used, he added, to lie awake on wintry nights and think how incongruous it was that they should be lying so warm and comfortable, while the little one, out there in the darkness, was pelted with the rain or the snow. When, in his later days, he spoke of “ the Lord ”—his favourite name for the Saviour—it was with a tremble in his voice which betrayed how his heart was affected at the very mention of the word. In recent years his commonest thought was the “ wonder ” of the Christian life—that God should think of creatures like us at all, and that His thoughts about us should be so lofty and glorious in Christ.

The truth is, that, though we naturally wish to vindicate the modernness of Principal Rainy, he cannot be understood at all without the recognition in him of something antique. He was old enough at the Disruption to drink in deeply the spirit of that event, and both among his own kindred and in the city of Edinburgh he lived at the very centre of the profound piety generated at that epoch. Not only had there entered into him the greatness of the Disruption, but also its limitations. He was extremely Scottish, very little cosmopolitan ; indeed, till quite recently he was little known outside the bounds of his own country. For him Scotland was enough, and the Free Church was enough. In later life his sympathies expanded, and a wider world began to have some knowledge of him ;

but it will be by his own fellow-countrymen that his memory will be cherished ; and these will number him among a select and chosen few who have illustrated most perfectly what all Scotsmen would desire to be, and have served most wisely, faithfully and unselfishly the highest interests of their native land.

JAMES STALKER.

SONS OF THUNDER.

AMONGST the unsolved problems of the Gospel, both in the text and in the interpretation, I reckon few more perplexing than the determination of the meaning of the name which our Lord bestowed upon the sons of Zebedee, and the decision of the form in which the name ought to be presented. It is not easy to see how *Boanerges* can be a transliteration of a Hebrew or Aramaic title ; nor, if the transliteration can be restored to its original form, so as to give something which will justify Mark's translation, can we explain, without undue subtlety of exegesis, why the name was bestowed upon the two disciples to whom it is assigned in the Second Gospel. I should myself assume at once that the mysterious name was in error somewhere, both in its consonants and in its vocalization : for how can *Boane-* be the equivalent of *Sons of-*, without an extraordinary looseness of vocalic transcription ? nor can the Semitic consonants which underlie the last half of the word *-rges* be a correct transcription of any word which honestly means *thunder*. Dalman, in his *Grammatik des Jüdisch-Palästinischen Aramäisch* (p. 112), explains the word as follows : First, he assumes that the final letter in *Boανηργές* is a replacement of a Greek ζ, just as we find in the early MSS. of the New Testament the form *Boés* for the ancestor of King David. Then he regards the first vowel in the word as displaced, and re-writes the title as

Βανηργές.