

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

what his text is about before he preaches from it, and, if he cannot do more, ought at least to consult the Revised Version, that in the mouth of two witnesses which every man can use the words may be established. But is he sure that the preacher would have changed his sermon even when he found that he was using a mistranslation? He admits that the sermon was "very good in itself," and it is true that we *are* called to virtue and glory; if it is not in this text, it *might* be, and the text may still stand as at least a motto for a "very good" sermon—may not the preacher have argued so? Preachers do argue so every Sunday, or act

so without argument, but we do not think they are justified. If the truth of the sermon is in Scripture, we think they ought to find the Scripture and make that their text. If it is not in Scripture—well, we do not believe there is time to preach it. On this very text we had the curiosity to turn to a sermon which we remembered by Dr. Maclaren, and we found that, though preached in Shoreditch Tabernacle to a large congregation of such as would gather there, he not only used his text correctly, but took pains to explain what the proper translation of it was, and the "deeper thought still" that lay in the new version.

The Study of Theology at Cambridge.

BY A CAMBRIDGE GRADUATE.

It is the aim of this article to give some account of the work done in theology at Cambridge under the guidance of the various teachers appointed by the University and the different Colleges.

A glance at the syllabus adopted by the special Board of Divinity for the present year is sufficient to show that theology is by no means a neglected study. In addition to the six University professors, no fewer than eighteen college lecturers are offering their services in the different departments of theological work. The courses arranged for are about sixty in number, the average attendance at which will vary from three or four hundred down to the twos and threes occasionally to be found, who are proof against the dulness of a third or fourth-rate lecturer. And besides these, there is that very important factor in Cambridge University life, the "Coach." Often the ablest men devote themselves to this kind of work, and the average undergraduate, provided his means allow, could not generally do better than place himself as soon as possible under the guidance of a competent "Coach." Otherwise he may lose much of his time in aimless and desultory reading. This is a serious danger. There is too much choice left to the ardent but uninformed freshman, and often the first two or three terms are thrown away.

The number of men who study theology is considerable. The Theological Tripos cannot indeed yet vie in numerical importance with the Classical or Mathematical or Natural Science Triposes, but a very fair number enter for it, and a still larger number attend some of the theological lectures. Many make it their special subject for the final examination for the ordinary degree; and others who intend to take orders in the Church

of England find it to their advantage to take up some of the courses, as by so doing they are excused parts of their "Bishop's examination."

Most of the lectures are framed with a view to the requirements of the Tripos, and it will therefore be best to state briefly the range of subjects included therein, at the same time endeavouring to estimate the relative value of the work done in the different sections. These may be described as Old Testament, New Testament, Church History and Doctrine.

1. *Old Testament*: which includes the history of the chosen people to the time of Christ, their literature, politics, and theology with special reference to a given period; translation from the historical books, of which two are generally selected for more careful study; Hebrew grammar and composition; history of the Text and Canon.

The papers set are mainly grammatical and historical in character. The questions raised by recent criticism are barely touched upon, and very good papers might be done by those ignorant even of the existence of the Wellhausen school. This conservatism is characteristic of all the work done in the Old Testament. It is careful and scholarly, and presents a striking contrast to the bolder critical methods represented at Oxford. The Hebrew scholars at Cambridge have nearly all been made by the Rev. P. H. Mason, President and Hebrew lecturer of St. John's College. No one who has come into contact with Mr. Mason can doubt the accuracy and thoroughness of his scholarship. There is no greater Hebraist in this country. And yet we cannot help wishing that he was something more than merely erudite. It may not indeed be well for the student of the Hebrew language to

enter largely into the different questions of modern controversy, and it is no doubt right that our teachers should insist above all on accuracy and pure scholarship in the earliest stage; but when so many interesting questions are in the air, it is impossible not to wish for some introduction to them.

Some of the questions perhaps would not have arisen if knowledge of Hebrew had been more exact, and if there had not been an attempt to explain it on foreign principles. At any rate, the Hebrew world owes a debt of gratitude to the Englishman, who more than any one has protested against this unwarrantable application of classical methods to a language so different from Greek and Latin as Hebrew undoubtedly is. And yet it is hard for the most docile pupil to place absolute credence in a man who has so much contempt for the work of others in opposing schools, and speaks with cold disdain of the labours of such an eminent body of men as the Old Testament Revision Committee.

Many of his disciples are more liberal than himself, but there is no prominent teacher who adopts the methods and results of the specifically "critical" school, though Bishop Ryle's son promises to give more serious attention to the movement. We cannot forget of course that we have in our midst one of the men who has done most to popularize German methods in England. But Dr. Robertson Smith is not an outcome of the Cambridge school. Moreover, since his arrival in Cambridge, he has been so taken up with other work, that he has had little direct influence, at any rate upon the undergraduates of the University.

II. *New Testament.* Three papers are assigned to this section in the examinations: the first on Textual criticism and the Canon of the New Testament together with Greek grammar and composition; the second on the Gospels; and the third upon the Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse. Besides translation and retranslation, questions are set upon the grammar and interpretation of passages; the structure, contents, and teaching of the different books, and anything else that the ingenuity of the examiners may suggest; the only restriction being that consideration of different readings must be confined to certain specified books.

The thorough and exhaustive character of this section leaves nothing to be desired. In order to excel here, a very intimate acquaintance with the language and ideas of the different writers is essential. Indeed it is in this part of the subject that the strength of Cambridge is best seen. We cannot easily speak too highly of our teachers here, or overestimate the value of their contributions to theological study. We who belong to the generation that has listened to Lightfoot and Westcott and Hort have reason to be proud of the achievements of

our *Alma Mater*, and to rejoice in the permanent enrichment which each department of New Testament work has received at their hands. If we desire a text constructed on scientific principles, it is to the labours of Dr. Hort that we turn. If we wish to know how the different books of the New Testament obtained their places in the canon, we consult Bishop Lightfoot or Canon Westcott. If we are in doubt as to the meaning of a verse or the purpose of an Epistle, it is to the same men that we look for the most reliable interpretations.

III. *Church History and Doctrine.* This section comprises the history of the Churches up to the Council of Chalcedon, 451 A.D., together with the development of doctrine during that period. The paper set on doctrine is not regarded with much favour by the average undergraduate, and the marks scored are generally extremely low. This may be due partly to the fact that the work in this subject is usually left until the last term or two, when the claims of revision are asserting themselves with appalling emphasis; but partly also, it may be, to the difficulty of the papers set. Very great latitude is allowed the examiners, and the field is perhaps too wide. For besides a history of the formation of the creeds, which is fairly definite, questions may be set upon the opinions of any of the early teachers, however obscure, upon any doctrine formulated or discussed during the period.

In this section, as indeed in all, the word which best indicates the methods employed is "historical." The question is not raised, "Is this what ought, or ought not, to have been said or decided?" but simply, "What as a matter of fact has been the decision of the churches on the points raised?"

In this subject Cambridge has produced at least two men whose work will be remembered—Dr. Lumby, for his clear exposition of the history of the creeds; and the late Dr. Swainson, for his contributions to the same subject and his very important work on ancient Liturgies. No enumeration of books written on the creeds would be complete without those "Two Dissertations" of Dr. Hort which seem to meet the student of the creeds at so many points.

These subjects constitute the first part of the Theological Tripos, which is taken at the end of the third year of residence. A few men proceed at the end of their fourth year to the second part of the Tripos. The subjects here are similar and treated upon much the same lines, so that it is unnecessary to enter into details. Periods of modern Church History are added to the ancient. Special attention is given to the Septuagint, Apocrypha, and Liturgies; but otherwise there is little difference. It is necessary only to take one of the sections into which this part is divided, and

to do one thoroughly is a good year's work. The historical method is still strictly adhered to, and even in the doctrinal section, where an essay is required on some theological subject, little scope is given to the candidate for the exercise of independent thought. All that he has to do is to make himself master of the opinions of the wise men of old, and be able to arrange these in an orderly way.

It will probably be clear from this brief sketch what the University of Cambridge conceives to be the most fruitful methods of theological study. It evidently holds that the materials out of which our theology must be constructed are to be found in the Jewish and Christian literatures, and that, in the main at least, the way in which those data were handled by the earliest constructors of creeds was the best way. Both of these assumptions may of course be challenged; but they are both necessary to justify the choice of subjects which the University has made the foundation for theological work.

With regard to the first assumption, objection may be made that only some of the materials are used. Why restrict the study of religious thought and expression to the two literatures mentioned? Other nations have shown remarkable religious activity, and left behind them distinct traces of their views on the subjects with which theology deals. Why are these neglected, and attention concentrated on the literature of one nation? Two answers are possible:—(a) there is nothing in other literatures which has not been better said by those whose works are included in the canon of Scripture, or (b) the expressions of religious convictions among other nations cannot be regarded as sufficiently trustworthy to warrant their use in the construction of our theology, inasmuch as they were not directly inspired by God. Which of these answers would now be given we will not ask. Certain it is that the belief which prompts the second answer has been the determining agent in the past in limiting the data of theology.

In passing we must notice the fact that lately a change has taken place, and although the study of other religions has not been placed among the subjects required for examinations, Dr. Westcott has for a few terms been lecturing to large audiences upon "Some Pre-Christian Religions." This may mean no more than that interest has been aroused in this comparatively new region of thought; yet if the Board of Divinity had regarded it as unimportant in connection with the study of theology, it would not have been justified in recommending the course of lectures Dr. Westcott has been giving. May we not regard it as a step toward a more scientific conception of theology?

Whether theology ought to be regarded as a

science in the strict sense of that term, and if so, whether it can be taught as such, so long as all its teachers are required to give their assent to the Thirty-nine Articles and other formularies of the Church of England, are questions into which we must not here enter. But the larger spirit in which theology is being approached cannot fail in time to modify and supplement still further the teaching already given.

At a time when the conviction is gaining ground that theology cannot profitably be studied in isolation from other branches of human thought, the question as to the completeness or incompleteness of any university curriculum is almost an idle one. No three or four years' course can lay claim to completeness. The theologian must have some acquaintance with the general scope and main conclusions of natural science. He must be a philosopher and able to avail himself of the facts and truths of pure reason. He will not willingly ignore truth however disclosed. It is his work to accept the labours of men in other fields, and interpret the known universe of fact and truth through the highest conception of the human mind, the idea of God. Unless he can do this, theology must cease to claim her proud title as the Queen of the sciences. Hitherto the connection between theology and philosophy has hardly received the recognition it deserves. It is therefore a matter of congratulation that next term a new movement in this direction is to be started. The newly appointed "Ely" Professor of Divinity, Professor Stanton, commences a course of lectures on Christian Ethics. If this new attempt is successful, a meeting-point will be established between the two, which can result in nothing but good. It is well that this common ground should be occupied by both. There is no more fruitful branch of philosophical study than ethics; there is no province of thought which Christianity can more justly claim as hers by right.

In conclusion, one word may be said about the two teachers who most profoundly influence the undergraduates of the University. They are undoubtedly Dr. Westcott and Mr. H. M. Gwatkin, the one the "Regius" Professor of Divinity, the other the lecturer in Church History at St. John's College, and one of the most successful "coaches" for all the subjects of the Theological Tripos.

The distinction of the theological mind into the "mystical" and "rationalistic" is a convenient one, and each type has been well represented in the history of Christian thought since these two unmistakable tendencies found expression in the rival schools of Alexandria and Antioch. Perhaps it would be too much to say that Dr. Westcott belongs wholly to the first type. He is much nearer, however, to it than to the opposite pole.

A third type is however possible. Between the mystics on the one hand, and the logicians on the other, there is the golden mean of common sense. It is the common-sense view of theology that Mr. Gwatkin so ably represents. Unable to live in the rarer atmosphere which is natural to Dr. Westcott, equally unable to rest satisfied with much that goes by the name of rationalism, he is a typical Englishman. He is not so well known outside the University as he deserves to be. Beyond his two books on Arianism, he has published little. Yet inside the University few men are better known or more heartily appreciated. Men from all the colleges flock to his lectures, and he has practically all the teaching in Early Church History to do. His career as a student was brilliant and unique. In one year he obtained no less than three first classes, viz. in the Mathematical, Classical, and Moral Science Triposes. The next year he added to this exceptional achievement a first class in theology, taking along with it two or three of the University prizes. Subsequently he devoted himself to the study of history, and has been an examiner for the Historical Tripos. Not content with this, he has taken up natural science as a "hobby," and has considerable acquaintance with some parts of the subject. Lately, I believe, he has been adding to his already astounding range of knowledge an acquaintance with law and jurisprudence. One half of this would prove too great a weight for most scholars. Yet he is as buoyant and genuinely human as any man in the University. His lectures are delivered with only the scantiest notes before him. They are packed full of information, models

of orderly arrangement, and relieved by flashes of irresistible humour. His appointment as Church History lecturer required the avowal of his attachment to the English Church, of which he is a sincere member. Believing that his work could be best done as a layman, he has never taken orders—a fact which may have stood in the way of his promotion. His views with regard to Church organization, the priesthood, and sacraments are uncompromisingly opposed to the claims of the sacerdotalists; and the vigour with which he attacks pretensions which he believes to be historically indefensible, sometimes draws down upon him the wrath of the High Churchmen, who look upon him as almost a Dissenter. This he is not. Yet his sympathy is largely with them. No man is ashamed of his Nonconformity in his presence, and he regards Nonconformists as the "backbone" of the Theological Tripos.

Dr. Westcott is so well known that any description of him seems superfluous. Only by living in the University, however, can one fully estimate the value of his influence. It is not simply because he is regarded as one of the greatest living theologians that his lectures are so well attended. There is a fascination about the man which attracts, apart altogether from the peculiar worth of what he says. He is almost as great a power outside the lecture-room as within. No one takes greater interest in the life of the University. There is no more prominent figure at the various meetings held to create interest in foreign missionary work, or the pressing social questions of the day. There is none whose loss we should feel so much.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF FIRST CORINTHIANS.

I COR. IV. 3-5.

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself: yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God."—(R. V.)

SERMONS.

Arnold (T.), *Sermons*, i. 155.

Bickersteth (E.), *Condensed Notes*, p. 508.

Chalmers (T.), *Congregational Sermons*, i. 104.

Colenso (J. W.), *Natal Sermons*, 1st Series, p. 72.

Dale (R. W.), *Week-day Sermons*, pp. 38, 257.

Fowle (E.), *Plain Preaching for a Year*, i.

Horne (W.), *Religious Life and Thought*, p. 86.

Liddon (H. P.), *Contemporary Pulpit Library*, i. 39.

„ „ *Sermons from the Penny Pulpit*, iii. No. 855.

Pusey (E. B.), *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 1.

„ „ *Oxford Sermons*, 1859-72, No. 13.

Reeve (J. W.), *Sermons from the Penny Pulpit*, No. 3271.

Robertson (F. W.), *Lectures on Corinthians*, p. 54.

Tholuck (A.), *Hours of Christian Devotion*, p. 34.

Trench (R. C.), *Brief Thoughts and Meditations*, p. 59.

Vaughan (C. J.), *Family Prayer and Sermon Book*, ii. 576.

Wilberforce (Bp. S.), *Sermons on Various Occasions*, No. 6.

Christian World Pulpit, xxii. 185 (Johnson).

Church of England Magazine, xxxvii. 400 (Kelke).