

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THERE are few passages of Scripture one hears misquoted so frequently as Romans 3²⁶. It is misquoted in two ways. Some catch at an opposition in the apostle's language, and quote, 'that He might be just, and *yet* the justifier.' And that is natural, though careless. Others are more ambitious. Reading the mind of God as St. Paul did not dare to read it, they quote, 'that He might be just, and *therefore* the justifier.'

In his commentary on Romans in the *Expositor's Greek Testament* Dr. Denney points out that the first misquotation is simply misleading. St. Paul is making no contrast. He is stating the two facts that have to be preserved in the redemption wrought by Christ. He states them with a simple *and*—'that He might be just, and the justifier.'

But the second misquotation is more than misleading, it is theologically impossible. It makes the Cross of Christ a superfluity. In the words of Dr. Denney: 'There is no conception of righteousness, capable of being clearly carried out, *and connected with the Cross*, which makes such language intelligible.'

The subject of controversy throughout the month has been the meaning of the words, 'This is my body.' The President of the English Church

Union, having convened its members, read in their presence a certain interpretation of these words, and asked them to signify by standing that that was the interpretation for them. They stood and accepted it, and the controversy began. We are not immediately concerned with the Declaration of the English Church Union. But we are much concerned with the meaning of the words. And we observe with interest that in the *Pilot* for June 30 there is a contribution by Mr. T. B. Strong of Christ Church, Oxford, in which he says that 'roughly speaking' there are four ways of interpreting these words of our Lord at the institution of the Supper.

First, it has been maintained that the words have 'a merely figurative meaning.' Then in Mr. Strong's language, 'the Sacrament is merely a memorial act without any proper spiritual force or significance.' He says that this is the view attributed to Zwinglius, and that it is still maintained by a (probably decreasing) number of Christians. It does not fairly represent Scripture, and he doubts if it has any support among the Ancient Fathers.

Second, it has been maintained that a definite gift is conveyed in Communion, which may be described as the body and blood of our Lord.

But the reality of the gift depends on the faith of the recipient—apparently at the moment of reception. This is Hooker's view. Its modern form Mr. Strong describes severely as 'usually negative, and consists in the strenuous denial—to use technical language—of the objectivity of the Presence of Christ.'

Third, it has been maintained that the body and blood of Christ are truly conveyed to the communicant through the consecrated elements. The elements lose nothing of their own natural reality, but by consecration act as the vehicle of that which is greater than they. 'From this point of view—again to use technical language—the presence of the Lord is real, objective, and spiritual.'

And fourth, it has been maintained that after consecration the elements do not retain their own natural reality, but are converted miraculously into the reality or substance of the body and the blood of Christ.

Those are the four interpretations. The first denies spiritual reality specially to the elements. The second affirms such spiritual reality in the elements, but makes it depend for the recipient on his faith at the moment. The third affirms a spiritual reality in the elements independently of the condition of the receiver, but holds that they are still bread and wine. The last makes the same affirmation of spiritual independence, but affirms that the bread and wine are no longer bread and wine, but are changed into the body and blood of the Redeemer.

Mr. Strong has no sympathy with the first interpretation, and sets it aside. It has also no 'Catholic' adherence. The 'Catholic' interpretation is one or other of the last three. Which of them? The writers before the ninth century vary between the second and third—with a leaning, especially the earliest, to the second. But the fourth was made the doctrine by the Roman

Catholic Church at the Lateran Council of 1215. It is the doctrine called Transubstantiation. But it is not the doctrine of the Church of England. 'The Church of England deliberately and in terms repudiated the doctrine of the Lateran Council.' What is the doctrine of the Church of England, Mr. Strong is unable to say. It is either the second or third. And he would count it a grievous wrong if he were not allowed to teach the 'stronger of these two.'

Where was the Tower of Babel? At Borsippa, say most archæologists. The identification comes down from Benjamin of Tudela. About A.D. 1160 Benjamin travelled in Babylonia, and having examined the probable sites, came to the conclusion that the mound which the Arabs call Birs Nimrud in Borsippa contained the remains of the Tower of Babel.

The mound suits well. The difficulty is in the name. Babel is surely Babylon. And Babylon is not Borsippa; the two cities, though near one another, have always been quite distinct. So keenly is this difficulty felt that Professor Hommel thinks the verse in Genesis (11⁹) which calls the Tower by the name of Babel is a late addition to the narrative. Professor Cheyne also breaks away from Benjamin, and identifies the Tower with the ruin of the great temple E-sagila in Babylon.

Still the greater number of archæologists have accepted Birs Nimrud in Borsippa. And now there comes, apparently, a strong support to that opinion from an unexpected quarter. At a recent meeting of the Académie des Sciences, M. de Mély produced a Greek MS., hitherto unpublished, which states that one Harpocraton visited Borsippa in the year 355 A.D., and there measured an ancient Chaldæan temple, which must have stood on the Birs Nimrud mound.

Harpocraton says that from a platform of 75 ft. in height rose a tower of six storeys, each 28 ft. in

height, the whole being finished in a temple of 15 ft. high. The priests climbed to the temple by a staircase of 365 steps, 60 of which were of gold and the rest of silver. This MS. claims to carry us back to the time when worship was actually conducted in the Temple. It did not cease, says Harpocraton, till A.D. 380, twenty-five years after his visit.

In the text of the 'Great Text Commentary' for this month there is a play upon words which can scarcely be accidental. It is not to be supposed, certainly, that St. Paul was troubled with the etymological itch, which will not allow men to pass from a word till they have tortured it into telling stories of its long-forgotten birth and up-bringing. But we know that his ear was sensitive to the sound of a word. And there are other places in which he uses a like antithesis.

The sentence is, 'And let us not be weary in well-doing.' That is how the Authorized Version gives it us. And strange to say the Revised Version gives it word for word the same. But, as Mr. Silvester Horne says, in a sermon just published by Passmore & Alabaster, it is a luxury to be weary *in* well-doing, a luxury that was enjoyed by St. Paul himself, and is not denied to anybody. The earlier versions had, 'Let us not be weary of well-doing,' which is as good English now as ever, and much more like the meaning.

But even that translation fails to express the word-play. There are two words in Greek that stand in sharpest contrast: *καλός* the good or noble, and *κακός* the bad or base. These words are used together here. 'Let us not be base in doing the noble thing' is a literal rendering of the Greek (*τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιῶντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν*), though it misses the force of the word-play.

So the 'well-doing' is the noble work of 'sowing to the spirit' of which he has just been speaking, and the weariness is neither of body nor of mind, but weariness of heart or will. It is the

very thought that elsewhere is expressed by 'faint-hearted.' It carries a strong moral condemnation, as indeed 'faint-hearted' in the Bible always does. If the word 'faint' itself had not lost the sting which once it carried (Henry Smith speaks of 'the faint spies that went to the land of Canaan'—see *D.B.* under FAINT), we should have been able to reach the apostle's meaning very closely by saying, 'Let us not faint in well-doing.'

There is a characteristic sermon on the text in Dr. Hugh Macmillan's *The Spring of the Day* (Isbister). He counts the weariness a kind of degeneration. He compares it to a rosebud which, through some defect in nature or through excess of nourishment, goes back from its promise and produces only a tuft of greenish scentless leaves—a 'green rose,' as gardeners call it. In his wealth of illustration he again compares it to a 'wheat-ear carnation,' in which, through the same cause as produces the green rose, the blossom changes into a long green spike, destitute of the usual pink colour and delicate fragrance. The advice of the apostle, he says, is literally, 'Let not your goodness become badness,' or less literally, 'Let not your beauty become deformity.'

The greatest difficulty in the way of disbelieving the miracles in the Gospels is the difficulty of accounting for their existence. If Jesus did not perform them, some one invented them. Who invented them? And who fitted them into their place? And who made them part of the picture of the Jesus of the Gospels?

Perhaps some one will come some day and tell us. No one has come yet. The latest explanation of the existence of the Gospel miracles is just as incredible as the earliest. In his Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, just published by Messrs. Putnam, Dr. G. L. Cary states the three possible hypotheses which have been suggested to account for the story—a story told by all the Synoptists—of the healing of the leper (Mt 8¹⁻⁴ and parallels). The first hypothesis is that it was made up by one

of the early disciples in imitation of the story in the Old Testament of the wonderful cure of Naaman. 'This hypothesis,' says Dr. Cary, 'now has few, if any, defenders.'

The second hypothesis is that of the modern Dutch school of criticism. The story, says this school, was originally intended as a symbolic representation of the helpful relation which Jesus sustained to the outcasts of society. He figuratively called Himself a physician. Leprosy is the fittest possible symbol for the disease of sin. So His cures of moral leprosy became transformed, in the thought of a succeeding age, into cures of the bodily disease. Dr. Cary fears that this supposition wants 'a solid basis of ascertainable fact,' since Jesus only once, and then indirectly, calls Himself a physician of souls.

One hypothesis remains. It is Dr. Cary's own, though not exclusively, and he explains it at some length. Jesus saw that the leper was really not a leper, and told him to go to the priest, who would pronounce him clean. The disciples, and indeed the man himself, did not see so clearly as Jesus did. They all thought that his disease was really leprosy. When the man was pronounced clean they saw that they had been mistaken. Jesus was right. The man had not been a leper. The incident would have been allowed to pass, and would probably have been forgotten, if it had not been that Jesus afterwards got the reputation of being a healer of disease. Then this case was remembered. As it passed from mouth to mouth it was gradually elaborated. And when it came to be set down in the Gospels it had assumed the proportions of a striking miracle.

To the *Pilot* of 7th July, the Rev. Arthur Wright, M.A., of Queens' College, Cambridge, contributes a letter on the meaning of one of the New Testament words translated 'minister.' It is the word *hypēretēs* (ὑπηρέτης). Mr. Wright is the most courageous of the modern advocates of what is called the oral theory of the origin of the Gos-

pels, and it is frankly in the interests of that theory that he writes his letter. His argument is that *hypēretēs* in the New Testament means one who teaches by word of mouth.

The English word 'minister,' as we know, means simply *servant*. And it has generally been considered a good equivalent in that sense of the Greek word *hypēretēs*. To some extent Mr. Wright admits it is. He holds only that it is not definite enough. The *hypēretēs* originally was the *under-rower* in a galley, either one who rows beneath the hatches, out of sight, or one who sits on the lower tier of benches. The sailors are on deck and see what is going on, the *hypēretēs* is below and simply obeys their orders. In the ship of the Church the sailors are the bishops or elders, the *hypēretēs* is like the deacon. The elders dictate to whom the alms of the Church shall go, the deacon simply takes the money and delivers it. Thus far the translation 'minister' or servant suits very well.

But when a man is called a 'minister of the word,' it means more than that he is a servant. It means, says Mr. Wright, that he originates nothing, but only repeats what he has been told by others. It is true that we now call the written Bible 'the Word of God.' But Mr. Wright believes that 'word' here means 'spoken word.' And, inasmuch as an apostle, prophet, or evangelist would never be called a deacon or minister, he holds that 'St. Peter or St. Matthew supplied the teaching, while the *minister* treasured it up in his own memory and imparted it to the catechumens.'

It strengthens Mr. Wright's position somewhat to observe, as he does, that the chief duty of the *Hazzan* or attendant, who waited on the ruler of the synagogue, and who is called *minister* (ὑπηρέτης, Lk 4²⁰), was to teach the boys. 'When,' he says, 'we consider the influence of the Synagogue upon the Church in the earliest days, we are entitled to argue that if the "minister" among the Jews was a schoolmaster, the "minister"

among the Christians is likely to have discharged the same function.' And then he boldly concludes that when it is stated that Barnabas and Paul had Mark 'for their minister,' the meaning is that 'St. Mark's chief duty was the all-important one of catechising the new converts.'

The *London Quarterly Review* for July opens with an article by Dr. George Matheson on 'The Characteristics of Bible Portraiture.' It is customary in the *London* as in other quarterlies to print the titles of so many books at the top of each article as if the article were to be a review of these books. By the audacity of the most perfect modesty Dr. Matheson prints the titles of some books of his own, and then begins his article.

It is to be the contribution of an artist. The Bible is to be looked upon as literature. 'I will endeavour to be a neutral spectator, to look at the book as if I had seen it for the first time—seen it as a purely secular thing, and as a purely literary phenomenon.'

Men rarely look upon the Bible so. 'There is perhaps no book in Europe,' says Dr. Matheson, 'whose phrases are so familiar; there is perhaps no book in Europe of which the masses have so little artistic knowledge.' It is because it has to do with conscience that it is so familiar; but it is because it is supposed to have to do exclusively with conscience that it is so neglected. 'I have heard young men of great ambition, and of high pretensions, actually boast of their ignorance of the Bible.' Having to do with conscience, it was not supposed to have to do with culture.

But it has to do with culture. And that he may show its artistic value, Dr. Matheson gives his attention to that which is most secular and nearest to the common day—the figures delineated upon the page of Scripture.

He soon discovers, and is astonished by the discovery, that the figures of the Bible are purely mental pictures. The writers being unphilosophic, the physical ought to predominate. But the physical does not predominate, it is almost entirely absent. The modern writer tells you first what his hero is like, next where he lives. The writers of the Bible ignore both form and environment. 'Was Peter tall or short? Was Judas handsome or deformed? Had Martha wrinkles on her brow? Had Elijah a flashing eye? Had Abraham a patriarchal mien? No answer comes. We hear a dialogue of voices, but we see not the form of him who speaks. And the environment is equally unrevealed. There is no vision of the land where Abraham journeyed, of the oak where Abraham worshipped, of the mountain where Abraham sacrificed. So far as description is concerned, Joseph in Egypt might have been Joseph in Mesopotamia, or Joseph in Arabia. The central figure of all is no exception. The Son of Man is physically unseen.' Only once does His physical beauty break through the unseen. It is the moment of transfiguration glory. It confirms the principle, His countenance is illuminated exclusively from within.

Is this an accident? Was it by chance that the writer omitted to portray the fire on Elijah's face, or depict the openness of Nathanael's countenance? Accidents like these do not occur. They do not run through a nation's literature. It is a mannerism, says Dr. Matheson, a mannerism as pronounced as the mannerism of Browning. To every Hebrew writer as to every Hebrew man came the command, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any . . . image.' The inner man is to rule the outer. The Spirit is the life.

And so, since they have no body of their own, it is left to us to give the characters of the Bible a body. Being without local habitation, we can offer them a home in our midst. They are household words among us. They have taken possession of our altars and our hearths. And though

we clothe them in a garb they never wore on earth, though each of us has woven for them a different garb, yet we cannot destroy their proper impression. Their identity is not in their garb, but in their mind. Their impression is a spiritual impression.

But not only are the men and women of the Bible mental abstractions, their deeds are purely inward. 'What is the drama of Abraham? It is the sacrifice of the will—a sacrifice which is never outwardly exacted, and where the lamb for the burnt-offering is unseen. What is the drama of Isaac? It is a life of self-restraint—a life in which the man withholds the exercise of half his power. What is the drama of Jacob? It is a struggle with conscience—a struggle in which a man wrestles with his better self until the breaking of the day. What is the drama of Joseph? It is the communing of a youth with his own dreams—alike under the stars of heaven and within the bars of a dungeon. What is the drama of Moses? It is the tragedy of hope deferred—of a heart never quite seeing the realisation of its promised land. Nay, I ask with reverence, what is the drama of Calvary? It is the vision of a Spirit broken by no outward calamity, by no visible storm, by no stress of mind or fortune, but simply and solely by the sense of human sin.'

Again, as he stands apart and looks at the Bible figures, Dr. Matheson sees that they are timeless. They are like their God, 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' He takes for illustration the most limited and local period in the history of Israel—the period that followed the return from the Captivity. Never did the nation make such frantic efforts to be of one land and of one time. Never did she so nearly succeed in becoming 'a peculiar people.' Yet that is the period, according to accepted scholarship, when the most of the Psalms were written. And what is the character of the Psalms? The Book of Psalms is 'the most universal manual of inward biography that ever was written.'

The Book of Psalms—its writers were intensely patriotic, exclusive, limited; but there is nothing local in the book, nothing transient, nothing peculiar to an age. 'I do not know an emotion of the human heart, I do not know a phase of the human intellect, revealed in these Psalms which is not also an experience of mine. The diary of these nameless lives is a diary of *my* life. Every mental struggle of these unconscious biographies is *my* struggle. It is I who look up into the heavens and say, What is Man? It is I who pray for the advent of a reign of righteousness which shall be a refuge to distress. It is I who have made the discovery that the only availing sacrifice is a surrendered will, a broken and a contrite heart.'

And yet, while the heroes of the Bible are timeless, they are men—and they are mostly old men. Other nations magnify youth, the Hebrew nation glorified old age. Of its heroes it is said, 'They shall bring forth fruit in old age.' The glow of the morning sun is thought to be indispensable to the poet's gallery. It is oftenest at evening-time that in the Bible there is light. 'Did it ever occur to you,' asks Dr. Matheson, 'that each successive picture of these Bible times is a picture of heroic old age?' He sees an old man 'breasting a storm that has drowned the world.' He sees an old man climbing the heights of Moriah to become the prophet of a new age. He sees an old man, who has spent his youth and middle life in money-making, break forth on his deathbed into the grandest poetry. It is the old who greet the rising sun of Jesus—Elisabeth and Zacharias and Anna and Simeon. It is to 'such a one as Paul the aged' that this earth which had been despised by Paul the young becomes a possible scene of glory. And it is to the gaze of age, not of youth, that there comes in Patmos isle the most optimistic vision that has ever flashed before the eye of man—'the vision of that city of Christ which has reached the harmony of a length and a breadth and a height that are equal.'