

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.

'I HAD a long talk,' wrote the Principal of an English Theological College, 'with Dr. So-and-so' (naming the distinguished occupant of a Scottish Theological Chair); 'it turned chiefly on the dearth of students of theology.' With the same post came the April issue of the *Biblical World* of America. Its first article, for which the editors—the Professors of Theology in the University of Chicago—are jointly responsible, is entitled 'The Decrease in the Number of Theological Students.'

'According to official statements,' begins this article, 'there are at present in the Protestant theological seminaries of the United States approximately two hundred fewer men than last year.' The decrease is not confined to any single denomination, but is pretty evenly distributed, although the Presbyterian schools seem to have suffered most. And the editors of the *Biblical World* (who are themselves of the Baptist denomination) proceed to consider the reasons.

The Presbyterian colleges have suffered most. Now the Presbyterian Church has recently passed through a great and prolonged controversy regarding the criticism of the Old Testament. It is probable then, is it not, that the Higher Criticism is the cause of the decrease? That would be a simple explanation, and not a few are already

satisfied with it. But the editors of the *Biblical World* find that it does not stand examination. 'Men,' they say, 'are not being kept from the seminaries because of this fear of Higher Criticism. Indeed, one might almost infer from the statistics that the loss of students was in some sort of ratio to the so-called *soundness* of an institution. The progressive seminaries as a rule suffer less than others, if, indeed, they do not report an actual increase in attendance.'

Well, then, it must be due to fear on the part of active-minded young men that in entering the ministry they will lose liberty of thought. But if that is so in America—and the *Biblical World* seems to admit that it may be so, having no other explanation to offer—it is certainly not so in this country. It is true that one still hears a creedless Christian cry out against the tyranny of the creeds, but it is a cry that has no pathos in it now, and perhaps not much sincerity. There may be an occasional young man who would claim freedom in the ministry to be something else than a Christian. But they who stop short of denying the Foundation upon Whom the Christian Church is laid are now perhaps less restrained by custom, creed, or professional etiquette in the Christian ministry than in any other of the learned professions.

So the reason has not been found yet. But the fact is there. And it is as unpleasant a fact as the lover of the Lord Jesus Christ could have to face. For the people cannot hear without preachers. The seed cannot be sown, the harvest cannot be reaped, without a due provision of devoted and sufficiently accomplished labourers.

The editors of the *Biblical World* believe that labourers are not wanting, but that they are not sufficiently accomplished. In America men are entering the ministry in ever increasing numbers who have had no proper theological training. They mention various means by which this is made easy. And they say that 'the ministry is being recruited from the ranks of men not as well educated as are many persons among their congregations, unfitted to cope with the pressing problems confronting organized Christianity.' They do not deny—how could they?—a place to the comparatively untrained evangelist. They say that such ill-trained men unquestionably accomplish much good. But they hold it impossible to regard them as fitted for the leadership of churches. 'Standing, too, generally as the champions of crude theology and misleading interpretation of the Bible, notably of the prophecies'—(they are speaking of America, remember)—'they inevitably tend to divorce the church from the intellectual forces of their communities.'

What is to be done? Ministers, says the *Biblical World*, must send their own sons into the ministry. Churches must urge their bright young members to look upon the ministry as a desirable lifework. Parents must again desire their Christian boys to be ministers. 'Christian people of culture and wealth, as well as those of sobriety and poverty, must once more take up the prayer that the Lord will send labourers into His vineyard—and see that they go.'

To the same issue of the *Biblical World* Professor G. L. Robinson of the McCormick Theological

Seminary, Chicago, contributes an article on 'The Wells of Beersheba.' It deals with one of the oldest and keenest debates in biblical geography—how many wells there are at Beersheba. Two years ago the question seemed to be settled. For in February 1899, Professor Gautier visited Beersheba for the express purpose of ascertaining the number of the wells. He was led to do so by a communication from Dr. Trumbull to THE EXPOSITORY TIMES in 1897, and he sent to this magazine the result of his investigation. He wrote: 'There are but three wells at Beersheba. Besides these we have not been able to discover any remains of other wells in the neighbourhood. I think, therefore, that the question of the number of the wells may be considered as settled, at least as far as our century is concerned.'

If Professor Gautier meant the century which was just closing, it was a modest hope. Perhaps that is what has given Professor Robinson boldness to open the controversy again. He visited Beersheba on 11th May 1900, and he now writes to say that he saw five wells containing water (of which four were in actual use), and two others which may soon be cleared out.

After describing the five opened wells, which he visited one after another, Professor Robinson comes to the first of the two that are yet unopened. It was evidently a well which had long ago been stopped up. 'For we saw distinctly the grooves of the ropes which had been used at one time in drawing water. Grass covered the hollow depression, while loose stones lay about on the circular mound which surrounded the well's mouth. I asked one of the Arabs when it would be dug out. He replied: *When God wills.*'

Six were found. But 'Beersheba' probably means 'the Seven Wells.' There must be a seventh. 'At this stage in our investigations, however, we were delayed, being almost baffled by the unwillingness of the Arabs and of our Gaza guide to show us where the seventh well might be.

At last, after repeated solicitations, the guide whispered, "I will show it you if you won't tell anyone"—that is, adds Professor Robinson, 'any one of the Arabs. I promised him to keep it an eternal secret from all his clan.'

He led me almost due west from Well No. 5, a distance of about 150 feet, bade me climb with him over a low wall, and, when he reached a certain spot in what was about the middle of a small garden, he said, "We are standing upon an ancient well now." He then told Dr. Robinson that he himself had made this little garden the month before, that as he dug down he came upon stones built in the form of a well, which he had removed and built into the wall that surrounded his garden. Dr. Robinson went with him, and saw the stones. Some had the marks of ropes, while others were scooped as if for water-courses or aqueducts.

The explanation of the miracles in the Gospels which at present seems to satisfy their unbelievers best, is that Christ was a little in advance of the science of His day. When He took the daughter of Jairus by the hand and raised her up, He understood the ways of hypnotism better than the women who laughed Him to scorn, imagining that she was dead. When He healed the centurion's servant without even seeing him, He already relied upon the powers of our most recent and astonishing science of telepathy. And when He walked on the water He showed an acquaintance with the laws of gravitation which we have scarcely attained to yet.

It is an explanation that deserves the kindest consideration. Certainly it does not carry us very far. For it is clear that if Jesus did all these things by means of His scientific knowledge, He was more than a little in advance of His day. And the question arises, Where did He gain His knowledge of science? The miracles may be explained, but the Miracle is more inexplicable than ever.

Still, it deserves the kindest consideration. For is it not possible that it is the real explanation after all? It is issued in the interests of science. It is an effort to keep both science and Jesus. In so far as it keeps science and a merely human Jesus it fails. But science, if it is not falsely so called, must surely agree with a supernatural Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that He was in advance of the scientific knowledge of His day. We believe, do we not, that in His miracles as in all His working He takes care that everything be done decently and in order? Is it not at least possible that when we do know more—much more—than we know now, we shall see that the miracles in all the Bible are in strict accord with the laws of God's natural and spiritual universe?

And more than that. It is just possible that we have already reached the explanation of some of the miracles of the Bible. When we go back as far as the Wilderness Journey we come upon the crossing of the Red Sea and the provision of Manna. We have learned that gales blow there, violent and persistent enough to raise the waters as a wall, and leave a possible passage for an army. We do not count the crossing of the Red Sea less a miracle on that account. And now that we have discovered the marvellous nature of Manna, and unlike the Hebrews who 'wist not what it was,' can actually describe it scientifically, we do not the less believe the saying that is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

We have found out what Manna is. The 'Strange Story of Manna' is told in the *Sunday Magazine* for May by Mr. G. Clarke Nuttall, B.Sc., and occupies the foremost place in the magazine.

The most widely accepted suggestion as to the nature of Manna has been that it is the sap of the Tamarisk. That suggestion is now abandoned. Manna is a plant. It is one of the Lichens. Its scientific name is *Lecanora esculenta*, or the edible Lichen. It is greyish yellow in colour and grows on grey limestone rocks, in the form of a wrinkled

crust so like the rock itself that it is easily overlooked. It is found over great tracts of South-West Asia, near Constantinople, in the Crimea, the Deserts of Arabia, the Sahara, and the Deserts of Algeria.

As it ripens, the Manna gets detached from the rock. Then, when the whirlwinds come, its feather-weight pieces are caught up and carried far from their native home. And at any place or any moment a sudden shower of rain may bring them down and lay them along the ground so as to cover it to the depth of several inches. 'In August 1890, in the neighbourhood of Diarbekir, in Turkey in Asia, there was a sudden local rain and an abundant shower of Manna, which fell over an area of about half a mile in circumference. The Manna was in small spherules, yellowish on the outside and white within, and was eagerly gathered by the natives, who regarded it as food rained down from heaven. They ate it raw, or ground it down into meal, which gave a palatable and easily-digested bread. Some of this Manna was sent by the Director of the Central Dispensary at Bagdad to French scientists for examination, when it was found to be the Lichen called *Lecanora esculenta*.'

So the Manna which 'our fathers did eat in the desert' was a Lichen. But what is a Lichen? Here the scientific wonder begins. We speak of a Lichen as a plant. But it is the union of two plants. These two plants have agreed to live together, for the same reason as some people are said to marry, because they are so unlike one another. This also is a new discovery. Or rather it is newly accepted. For although it is thirty years since Dr. Schwendener made the suggestion, it was only in the closing years of the century that the improvement in microscopes turned the ridicule with which his suggestion was at first received into wonder and scientific assurance.

One of the two plants that make up a Lichen is an Alga. It is tiny and green, the simplest

green plant in the world, for it consists of a single roundish cell filled with a jelly-like substance and green colouring matter. Still this green cell is capable of performing all the functions of a more elaborate plant. It absorbs nourishment from air, soil, and water, and grows thereby. The other plant is a Fungus. It consists of a mere network of interlacing white threads. It is a degraded plant, the microscopists say, a product of degeneracy. It is now incapable of manufacturing its own nourishment out of the elements around, and so it takes to some green plant, such as the little Alga, and gets its food supplied to it ready made.

What return does the Alga obtain for this? When Dr. Schwendener first described the Manna Lichen, he said that the Fungus was a master living by the sweat of the brow of his slave the Alga. But the figure was overstrained. If the Alga gives food, it receives protection, and it seems to be as unable to thrive without the protection of the Fungus as the Fungus is unable to live without its food. In short, it is an establishment that is conducted on terms of strictly mutual advantage.

'Moses gave you not that bread from heaven.' No, we see now how completely beyond the reach of Moses that bread is. And yet it is only one of the earthly things. How long will it be ere we understand the meaning of the heavenly thing which follows—'but my Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven'?

Although we have worked with Deissmann's *Bibelstudien* and *Neue Bibelstudien* since their issue, the translation in one handy volume is a welcome relief. It is not only that it incorporates Deissmann's most recent corrections and additions, it is also that it is a bound book, faultlessly printed, and translated into easy accurate English.

Deissmann's *Bible Studies*—to use the new comprehensive title—is one of the few books that

are fresh enough to fascinate. But it is more than good reading. There are very many passages, especially in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts, turning perhaps upon an ill-understood word, which it either rescues from mistake—or at least makes more precise and living.

Take an example. Take it from the less frequently illustrated Epistles. In James 1³ occurs the expression 'the trying of your faith worketh patience'; and in 1 Peter 1⁷ 'that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.' The 'trying' of James and the 'trial' of Peter represent the same word (τὸ δοκιμαῖον). In the first passage a possible though not very natural meaning is obtained; in the second it is difficult to find either sense or grammar.

Expositors have always felt the difficulty. They have tried various meanings. They have tried different meanings in the different passages. Cremer suggested *exploratio* for James and 'verification' for Peter. But the Greek word is found nowhere else with either meaning. The difficulty arose from taking the word to be a substantive (= τὸ δοκιμαῖον, *means of testing*). It is true that no instance of an adjective had been elsewhere found. But now the papyri and inscriptions have been searched. The word has been found as an adjective. The difficulty is resolved.

In pawn tickets and marriage contracts the adjective is found. It is used of buckles and other articles of gold. It means simply *valid, standard, genuine*. It is equivalent to a commoner form (δόκιμος). Hence in both passages the neuter of the adjective is used as a substantive, and the meaning is 'that which is genuine.' Luther catches it exactly in Ja 1³, when he renders *uer Glaube, so er rechtschaffen ist*, 'your faith, so it

be upright, worketh patience.' And that meaning suits 1 P 1⁷ equally well, 'So that what is genuine in your faith may be found more precious than gold—which, in spite of its perishableness, is yet proved genuine by fire—unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.'

In the *Expositor* for April Canon Cheyne writes a homily on 'Few Things Needful.' His text is Lk 10^{41, 42}, 'And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.' There are two readings. One is represented by the Authorized Version as above, and is followed by Tregelles and Tischendorf. The other is expressed in the margin of the Revised Version, 'But there is need of few things, or of one'; it is the reading of Westcott and Hort. Canon Cheyne follows neither. Claiming the right to use 'the trained subjectivity of a methodical modern critic' in preference to 'the ill-regulated subjectivity of ancient scribes,' he drops the words 'or of one,' and adopts the simple brief expression 'there is need of few things.'

Professor Cheyne does not think that the things of which Christ said only a few were needed were supper dishes. He believes that the reference is wider than the provision for a feast or the due entertainment of a guest. Our Lord spoke as in the Sermon on the Mount. The 'few things' were 'the material necessities of a modest human existence.' The poet, in fact, accurately interprets this saying in the lines—

Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.

But Dr. Cheyne does not write this homily to recommend contentment. There is room for the preaching of the gospel of simplicity of life; but his purpose is to preach the gospel of simplicity

in theology. He holds that it is as true in theology as in life that few things are really necessary; and when many things are sought after, when our creed is composed of many particulars, the effect is both distracting and disastrous.

What then are the few things that it is necessary for us to believe? Alas! Dr. Cheyne does not tell us. He seems to say that the time has not yet come to tell us. 'Long and careful discussion would have to precede any such attempt.' But he mentions one thing. 'It is not a doctrine of Inspiration. It is not a definition of Incarnation. It has nothing to do with Priesthood or with Sacramental Grace. It is this, that faith in the highest sense has for its objects neither books nor doctrines, but persons.'

The remark is not new, and Dr. Cheyne knows it. The question is, Who are the persons? Dr. Cheyne quotes the text, 'Believe in God, believe also in Me,' and the text, 'Ye search the Scriptures, for ye think that in them ye have eternal life . . . and ye will not come to Me that ye may have life.' He quotes these texts though they are found in the Fourth Gospel. For, 'though partly coloured by the doctrines of the Evangelist,' they 'convey one of the most fundamental ideas of Jesus, who knew Himself to be the Saviour of men.' The 'persons,' then, appear to be God the Father and Jesus the Saviour of men, and since even the

capitals to the pronouns are Dr. Cheyne's own, all seems well.

And all is well when Dr. Cheyne goes on to add that 'the centre of gravity in theology can never be shifted from the person of Christ.' But then comes this sentence: 'The Jesus whom we call Master is at once the historical Jesus of Nazareth, and that ideal form which becomes more and more glorious as man's moral capacity increases.' So the persons in whom we are to trust are God and the historical-ideal Jesus Christ. The historical Jesus we know, but who is the ideal Christ? Canon Cheyne says that without the historical Christ the ideal Christ could never have beamed upon us. It is, therefore, he says, 'our highest object as biblical critics to revive, however faintly, the outlines of the historical picture of Jesus, and to recover the first principles of His teaching.' But what then? Then he says it is our business 'to comprehend better those great ideas and those wonderful experiences of the New Testament writers which are the afterglow of that morally gorgeous sunset when Jesus of Nazareth finished the work which had been given Him to do.'

'The afterglow of that morally gorgeous sunset.' Then there was no sunrise that followed? 'It behoved the Christ to suffer'—that was the 'sunset when Jesus of Nazareth finished the work which had been given Him to do'; and all the rest was 'afterglow.'

Science and Faith.

BY THE REV. G. FERRIES, D.D., CLUNY, ABERDEENSHIRE.

A SKETCH of the origin and growth of Science shows that its roots lie in religious belief, and that during the greater part by far of its history, it continues to be closely related to religion. At length the independence of science is recognized, with the results that, on the one hand, there are

conflicts with traditional faith, and for many persons a definite and whole-hearted assent to religion becomes a very difficult matter; and, on the other hand, if one has attained to faith, and is also in sympathy with modern thought, the advance of science proves to be in a high degree stimulating