
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

statement that the difference between the Hebrew and the Babylonian religion is the difference between revealed and unrevealed religion. He calls it 'psychological and historical nonsense.' And he says that all religion, so far as it is religion, is revealed, and the difference between one religion and another is only the difference between what is true and what is more true.

Evangelicalism.

By the Rev. W. P. Paterson, D.D., Professor of Divinity in the University of Aberdeen.

II. The Latter-Day Crisis.

Thus far we have dealt with the causes of the great part played by evangelical religion in the history of Scotland during the last century and a half. But has it maintained its position and its influence during the most recent period? This there is good reason to doubt. There is of course much preaching which might be called evangelical rather than anything else, with a great organization of evangelistic effort, but there seems to be general agreement that they do not produce the same palpable results as in the earlier period. It may also be questioned if it has the same hold as before over the general mind. Formerly, to say that a preacher was evangelical was as much as to say that he was popular, while to-day the practical preacher who can also be interesting would rather appear—at least in wide circles—to be the favourite type. At all events, whether or not the evangelical pulpit generally has declined in power and popularity, there are various circumstances which have been making in this direction. One is that the hopes so fervently expressed in the early part of the Nineteenth Century as to the influence that a gospel ministry might be expected to exert upon the country at large, have not been realized. In particular, the great cities have not been purified, but in their depths are hideously festering with vice and crime. A second cause of disappointment may have been that the average person who professed, under the influence of evangelical religion, to have experienced conversion did not exhibit a type of character which, for all its spiritual excellence, was conspicuously superior in respect of unselfishness and integrity to that of the representative of a cross-section of ordinary respectable society. And lastly and chiefly, there has been some loss of power owing to a feeling of uncertainty as to how far the doctrinal setting in which the evangelical message was traditionally enclosed can be upheld, and also as to how, assuming that it must be amended, the evangelical message is to be recast.

In the first place, it is unquestionable that there are some doctrinal elements of the traditional evangelical system which can no longer claim to make any impression upon the cultivated modern mind, some which have even become to it a stumbling-block. The theory of scriptural inspiration with which the older school operated has ceased to be the working theory of the men of the younger generation. The latter may believe as much as the former that the Scriptures are the record of a revelation which is of sovereign authority in matters of faith and practice; but they are, speaking generally, unable to see in each section and verse a pronouncement which has the imprimatur of the infallible God, and which decisively settles any question to which it can certainly be shown to speak. To proceed, in the evangelical demonstration which was wont to be given of the miserable present condition and of the desperate outlook of sinful man, the argument was largely founded upon doctrinal assumptions, some of which at least have ceased to be a living factor in serious thinking. This holds more particularly of the use which was made of Adam's Fall, of the imputation to us of the guilt of his sin, and of the transmission of a nature which was wholly corrupted through his act of disobedience; and we may take leave to doubt whether the conscience of any educated or uneducated person is now touched by a reference to Adam, and to suggest that there is a deep-seated feeling that to discourse upon these primeval transactions is to prejudice the message by inviting the

hearer to travel into a region of unreality. The demonstration of man's distress culminated in the menace of the everlasting torments of hell; and while personally one may have too much respect for the general tenor of the New Testament, and too much belief in the power of freewill, to affirm the certainty of an eventual universal restoration, at least it seems clear that the doctrine of eternal punishment, whether because of the discovery of different strains of teaching in the New Testament, or because of a growing belief in God's love, can no longer be used with effectiveness as one of the axioms of religion. In the second place, there are evangelical doctrines which have been questioned with less ground if not with less plausibility. Passing to the machinery of redemption, and in particular to the Atonement, the modern pulpit has acquired to some extent a note of uncertainty, as knowing that while the death of Christ has been believed from apostolic times to be the ground of redemption, the precise form of the doctrine with which evangelicalism has operated is a version, emended in the old Protestant theology, of an interpretation first definitely propounded by a theologian of the Middle Ages. And, finally, as respects regeneration and the allied doctrines, modern research in the psychology of religion has tended to create and disseminate the impression that in the experiences of the converted life we have to deal, not with phenomena of the miraculous kind due to the workings of a supernatural power, but only with a peculiar modification of states of feeling which have their parallels in the experiences of men who render another worship to other gods.

But if some portions of the historic evangelical creed have become incredible, some dubious, it is not really necessary to abandon any vital element of the system. Let us take up in detail the salient points.

In the first place, it is evident that nothing has shaken the fundamental assumption of evangelical religion, that man is by nature in a condition of spiritual distress which creates the need of a redemption. Even if we confess our ignorance as to the primitive condition of the human race, and the first entrance of sin into human experience, the substance of St. Paul's argument in Romans is still valid, and verifiable by observation and self-examination—namely, that as we find ourselves in this world there is a lower self which has the mastery over the higher self, and that by consequence we are in a state of alienation from God. Then as regards the doctrines of the last things, even if we feel unable to include an everlasting Hell in our conception of final destinies, there remains a real 'terror of the Lord' in the absolute certainty that every soul which continues under the dominion of sin, and so long as it so continues, is preparing for itself a portion of ever-deepening depravity and of ever-accumulating misery. And if the distress of humanity is an assured and permanent fact, with equal confidence may it be said that no doctrine or theory of salvation, to whatever tests we may subject it, can compete with the evangelical conception of the gracious initiative and the superabounding magnanimity of God towards sinful men. That His love anticipated our merits and survives our merits, that from Him proceeded reconciliation, that He forgives and restores us on the gracious terms of faith, looking to our gratitude for a return, and that it is His will to bless, here and hereafter, those who trust in Him, above all that they can ask or think—is a religious message which, apart from its unequalled sublimity, at one and the same time signally redounds to the glory of God, and strikes a deeply responsive chord in the religious heart of man. Of this message it is also without doubt an integral part that the promises and blessings of the gospel rest on the work of Christ. It is further strongly argued by many, partly on the ground of the apostolic testimony, partly on the ground of the corroboration alleged in experience, that the formula 'for Christ's sake' must be carried to the point of greater definiteness by saying that the death of Christ was of the nature of a penal substitution, and as such was the necessary condition of our reception to the favour and forgiveness of God. At the same time, it seems clear that there are many, perhaps an increasing number of, thoughtful persons to whom the interpretation of Christ's death as a propitiatory sacrifice does not appeal; and he may be confidently classed as an evangelical preacher who, if merely with the understanding that in a real sense it is for Christ's sake, is clear upon the sublime fundamental truth that by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, but by the gift of God.

Upon the next cardinal evangelical topic, the work of the Holy Spirit, two remarks may be made. The first is that, as St. Paul argued, man in his natural condition is foredoomed to failure and ever-growing impotence, unless the unhappy balance of forces represented by the 'mind' and the 'flesh' is redressed by the infusion into the soul of a supernatural spiritual energy. On its part philosophical and pædagogic theory knows of no more powerful dynamic than education and example; and until education becomes more effective, example more inspiring, and human nature something radically better than we have hitherto known it, it will be permissible to believe that the great need of man is the gift of heavenly grace to renew the nature, to purify the heart, and to establish the will. Nor is the state of the argument to-day merely that man is in want of more spiritual power which it was probable that God would bestow. It is a patent fact, that for centuries a force has been at work in the world making young men to see visions and old men to dream dreams, setting hearts on fire with noble enthusiasms, bending men's wills to noble endeavours, uttering itself here in the heroism of conquest and martyrdom, yonder in the ministrations of unselfish beneficence, in the patient endurance of the cross of suffering, and in the unnoticed struggle to live out amid the commonplaces of temptation the duties of the victorious life—and in this force we can reasonably claim to have seen, not the expression of any special racial genius, not even the outflow of the endowment of a moral aristocracy of humanity, but the illuminating and vitalizing and enabling energy of the Holy Spirit of the living God.

Having thus surveyed the doctrinal substance of the evangelical creed, we are now in a better position to consider the remaining capital question: 'Is evangelicalism necessarily tied to the theory of Scripture with which it has been historically associated?' Even yet its predilections lean strongly to conservative criticism, and to the most rigid doctrine of inspiration, as may be seen from the great prominence given at the conferences and in the periodicals of the party which, for convenience' sake, may be called the Keswick school. On the other hand, the Free Church of Scotland, in the person of great scholars who have gained the ear not only of Scotland but of England, America, and Germany, has shown that it is possible to combine the evangelical spirit and the evangelical message with a point of view which certainly involves the abandonment of the theory of the inerrancy of Scripture. And what seems very clear is that a man who understands the gospel, who believes in the gospel, and who bases his life upon the gospel, ought not to feel the need of the doctrine of an infallible Bible. He knows that the note of infallibility attaches to the gospel which he finds, and which finds him in the Bible, and this ought to be sufficient. In this matter we can profitably learn from the Apostle Paul and his treatment of the question of authority. For him the matter of really vital moment was the body of truths constituting the gospel, which had been revealed and authenticated in his own experience, and to which he declared he would cleave though an angel from Heaven should proclaim another message. On the other hand, it appears that he made small account of doctrines which did not enter into the substance of the gospel. His attitude towards the Old Testament in particuar, while ostensibly governed by traditional views, was extraordinarily free and bold; he criticized its most essential provisions as radically defective, and only valued it to the extent to which he found in it anticipations of his gospel of grace. And when a modern Christian reaches a similar position, a *modus vivendi* has been found in the disturbing atmosphere created by Biblical Criticism. He values the Bible as the Word of God, because it is the record by which the gospel reaches him, but he is content to leave to criticism the settlement of questions of origins and sequences which do not involve the destruction or disintegration of his saving faith. Nor does it appear that the abandonment of the old theory of the thoroughgoing inerrancy of Scripture, or, to put it positively, the limitation of infallibility to the contents of the gospel, seriously impairs the power of the preacher to speak with the voice of authority. After all, what has always persuaded, and has most effectually persuaded men, is, not the appeal to an infallible Church, or to an infallible Book, but the perception by the people addressed that the message which a speaker delivers is one which he from his own heart believes, which he himself lives, and which he would fain have others believe and live as they value the welfare of their souls. And this conviction, with the power of persuasion which flows from it,

belongs to all who have found the gospel in the Bible—even if they admit in the Scriptures a body of historical and even doctrinal matter which bears the human hall-mark of ignorance or half-knowledge.

In conclusion, we may consider briefly the practical question of what the evangelical minister ought to make the staple of his weekly sermons. The question of economy, as it may be termed, involves consideration of the prominence that should be given to the evangelical message, and of the precise aspect of the gospel upon which stress is most usefully laid, by those who claim to occupy the evangelical standpoint. In regard to this, three working theories may be distinguished. According to the first, every sermon should contain the whole gospel. A second and third differ from the first, in that they only insist on a sermon containing a part of the gospel, while they differ from each other in their conception of the aspect of the gospel which is most properly brought into habitual prominence.

1. The view of the old evangelical pulpit was that, except on special occasions, every sermon should deal with the master-topics of sin and salvation. The point of departure varied with the text, but the argument soon worked round to the picture of our lost estate, to the exposition of the plan of redemption, and to an appeal to the unconverted to embrace the saving offers of the gospel. Nor is it difficult to appreciate the motives of the preachers of this school, who, realizing that they spoke to dying men, felt that necessity was laid upon them to bid them flee, while it was yet day, from the wrath to come. But experience soon showed that, except in the case of the most gifted preachers, this type of ministry was not effective. The congregation grew weary under the monotonous repetitions even of an earnest man, and more than callous when the gospel-sermon was felt to have lost the old force and fire, and to be merely an attempt to produce a conventional discourse in accordance with what it was supposed that a sermon should contain. For these and other reasons it has become evident that the evangelical minister is likely to produce a more profound impression by the interpolation into a teaching ministry of a varied character of an occasional gospel-sermon. In this case his ordinary message will contain only a part of the gospel, and the important question is, which part?

2. In a common type of modern sermon the evangelical message takes the form of a proclamation of the grace of the glorified Christ, and of an invitation to the hearers to seek, in communion with Him, for the needed guidance and strength and consolation. The discourse may have traversed wide fields of history and experience, and even touched upon present-day topics, but at least in its conclusion it seeks to maintain its evangelical character by a reference to what is taken to be the chief boon of the gospel, namely, communion with the risen Lord. There may have been no word of the condition of repentance so emphasized in Scripture, no reference to the radical change which lies at the beginning of the spiritual life; the sum of the matter appears to be that we are to look to the risen Lord, and to walk with Him, amid our daily tasks and trials, as a familiar friend. The opinion may, however, be expressed, that to resolve the evangelical message into the offer of the friendship of Jesus is a mistake. Communion with the risen Christ is a phase of Christian experience; it is a high and holy experience; it is the experience of the saints; but just for this reason we may doubt the wisdom of the main emphasis being laid upon it in popular preaching. Most of us resemble James more than Paul or John; we are capable of faith in the mercy of God, and in the mission of His Son, and in reliance on God's grace we can serve Him with some fidelity in the various spheres in which He gives us work to do; but we are not sensible of the sweets of fellowship with the risen Lord, and sometimes have a suspicion that the preacher does not himself know intimately the experiences which he so eloquently commends.

3. A third theory is that the staple of the teaching of an evangelical ministry may very properly be ethical, subject to the control of an occasional sermon which puts all things in their due place. A so-called evangelical preacher may really produce less genuine evangelical result than another, whose habitual aim is to commend to his people the ideal of the Christlike life, and exhibit to them the sordidness and the misery of ill-doing. In support of the view that practical preaching is evangelical, two reasons may be given. The first is that it has the example of

Christ. The second is that earnest moral teaching is the necessary instrument for creating that sense of personal unworthiness without which the offer of God's forgiving mercy cannot be appreciated or even understood. When the doctrine of eternal punishment was implicitly believed and boldly proclaimed, the preacher possessed an instrument by which he could, so to speak, bring the congregation to its knees before God; but now that this persuasive is comparatively little used, and is comparatively ineffectual even when used, heightened importance attaches to really good moral teaching, which is fitted to educate the conscience, to shake men out of their self-complacency, and to create in them the feeling of self-discontent and self-despair, which draws sinners to the God of all grace. The Law, it is true, does not save, but to preach the law with power is to dispose man from the heart to utter the prayer which contains the quintessence of the evangelical creed, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

In present-day preaching, in spite of the tendency of the sermon to become amorphous and indescribable, two types stand out with some distinctness. One is the evangelical sermon, which preaches Christ in some sort, but works no sense of sin. The other is the ethical sermon, which touches the conscience, but opens no door of hope. With the latter the evangelical minister may largely agree in his choice of topics, but with the difference that the congregation knows the place of morality in his general scheme, and his outlook towards the delectable regions of the gospel of the grace of God. With the popular type of evangelical theory he may agree to differ to the extent of not thinking it necessary to 'preach Christ' in every sermon, as knowing that he is really preaching Christ when he is leading men to repentance. And he may well think that, when he does undertake to preach the gospel, it is not enough to dedicate to Christ the general allusions of an eloquent peroration, but that there is matter for a special sermon in the great fundamental truths of the sinfulness of man and the grace of God.

At the Literary Table.

JANE AUSTEN.

Macmillan, 5 vols, 2s. net, each.

THERE is not the slightest intention in our mind of estimating Jane Austen's place as a novelist. It is certainly worth mentioning that to her the jaded appetite of the novel-reader returns. It is worth mentioning that Jane Austen will never be out of date. Dickens will pass and Thackeray be neglected, but to Jane Austen's hero, and of Jane Austen's heroine, it still will be said—

For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair.

But it is not even to mention these simple verities that Jane Austen's name is put at the top of this article. It is to seize the opportunity of saying that a new edition of Jane Austen has come out. Up to the present it is *the* edition. For nowhere else can the combination of good printing, happy illustrating, and low pricing be found. Happy illustrating!—it is Hugh Thomson that does it, and it is Hugh Thomson at his best. But Austin Dobson must not be forgotten, even though not a word of him will be read. He writes an Introduction to every volume.

THE CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY.

Cambridge University Press, vol. i., 16s. net.

The conception of this work was due to Lord Acton; its execution has fallen upon three of Lord Acton's pupils—Dr. A. W. Ward, Dr. G. W. Prothero, and Mr. Stanley Leathes. It would be difficult to overpraise either the intellectual strength of the mind that conceived the idea or the responsive fidelity of the minds that have now carried it into effect. The very fact that many hands were to be set to work on every period is an evidence of Lord Acton's fellowship with the modern and scientific method of writing history. The ancient method (it is not so ancient) made history a department of art rather than of science. 'Let me conceive this movement in my mind, and paint it so that it can be framed and hung up.' That the mind was not capable of conceiving so