

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.

Is it out of place to lament the loss of the angels? The time is scientific; the telescope has swept the universe and has not found angels. Is it unscientific even to lament the loss of them?

The Rev. J. A. Beaumont, M.A., Incumbent of St. John's Church, St. John's Wood Road, London, laments the loss of the angels. Mr. Beaumont has published a volume of sermons. He has published it by request, and he laughs at himself for doing so. 'Sermons always are published by request,' he says. But no one else will laugh. For in these sermons he has done that which we are all trying to do, that which we know it is our supreme business to do. He has translated the eternal truths of the gospel into the language of to-day and made them applicable to our life. It is in one of these unmistakably modern sermons, in a sermon breathing the modern scientific atmosphere, that Mr. Beaumont laments the loss of the angels.

The title of the book is *Walking Circumspectly* (Skeffingtons). The title of this sermon is 'The Desire of the Angels.' The words of its text are, 'Which things the angels desire to look into' (1 P 1¹²).

Mr. Beaumont is struck with the originality of his text. It tells us something about the angels.

It tells us something which we are told nowhere else. 'This statement,' says Mr. Beaumont, 'is unexampled in its originality.' But originality is nothing if it is not truth. 'Which things the angels desire to look into'—is that true?

One answers, 'Certainly it is true; we have St. Peter's word for it.' Another answers, 'St. Peter's word is no better than my word; it is simply a pious guess.' St. Peter himself tells them that they are both wrong. For, in this very passage, his purpose is to show that when prophets and apostles make such statements as this, neither are they making a good guess nor are they standing upon their office. Every prophecy, he says, is due to *penetration*.

Every prophecy is due to penetration. Is it a prophecy about salvation? First of all the prophets must be interested in salvation. Their minds must be occupied with it. Then before they are able to say anything original about it, before they can prophesy anything that is true about it, they must 'inquire and search diligently.' To use Mr. Beaumont's modern language, 'they must bring to the business personal effort based on a lively interest.' What did the prophets themselves call this 'lively interest' in the salvation of men? They called it—no, St. Peter calls it, 'the Spirit of Christ which was in them.' But he does

not say that the Spirit of Christ which was in them played upon their minds as you would play upon a piano. He says that they had still to inquire and search diligently. They lived within their own time. They were intensely interested in the things which affected it. They had also a strong belief in the providential order of events and in the eternal righteousness of God. They based their prophecies upon insight and intuition—insight into human character and intuition into divine principles.

St. Peter also was a prophet. His method was the same. If he dares to offer us a new fact in the spiritual order, if he rises to the height of asserting that the angels desire to look into the things which belong to our salvation, he has made the discovery by 'inquiring and searching diligently.'

Mr. Beaumont calls this *penetration*. The peculiar characteristic of prophecy, he says, is penetration. It is the way in which all discoveries are made. Science has no favourites; and as for God, it is long since men found out that God is no respecter of persons. This, says St. Peter, is the way in which the prophets were able to prophesy of the grace that should come; this is my way, this is even the way with the angels, and this must be the way with you. 'Wherefore, gird up the loins of your *mind*.'

Now, what St. Peter knew about the angels already was that they were messengers of God, occupied in His service and intensely interested in the affairs of men. What he discovered for himself was that their interest in men came to a climax in the events which concern man's salvation. And just as the prophets longed to *see* into all the play of motive and incident in that remarkable history which formed the prologue of the Incarnation drama, so the angels—though, so far as we can gather, they were debarred by their nature from any immediate participation in it—are keen to *see* into the working out of that marvellous development of what St. Peter calls salvation, in

which the power of the Incarnation Truth is gradually permeating the whole life of the world.

So the angels are not indifferent to the things which concern us, and Mr. Beaumont laments our loss of interest in them. To lose the angels is to lose a part of ourselves. It is to lose the religious imagination. It is to lose the religious side of that faculty by which all discovery is made, and the religious side is the higher and nobler side. Mr. Beaumont is very modern and scientific, but he rejoices that he has been able to resist the atrophy of the spiritual side of his imagination, that he still finds it an inspiring thought that the angels in their keen intelligence bring an added testimony to the greatness of our inheritance in Jesus Christ when they 'desire to look into' the things which belong to our salvation.

If it is not out of place in so scientific an age to lament the loss of the angels, is it out of place to lament the loss of the devil? That is a more delicate matter.

The Warden of Keble College, Oxford, is bold enough to lament the loss of the devil. He has gathered together a number of papers connected with the study of the Bible which he had contributed to various magazines, and has published them under the title of *The Bible and Christian Life* (Methuen; 6s.). One of these papers is a sermon on 'The Evil One' of Mt 6¹³. In that sermon Dr. Lock argues that it is better for us to recognize the existence and activity of the devil.

But first about the translation. He has no doubt that the translation 'the evil one' of the Revised Version is correct. He admits that men have not taken to it. He admits that it has had very little effect as yet upon either our public or our private prayers. He doubts if it will ever make its way into currency. Yet he thinks the change was worth making. In St. Matthew's form of another petition of the Lord's Prayer, Jerome

turned 'our daily bread' of the Old Latin into 'our supersubstantial bread,' though he left 'our daily bread' in St. Luke. We have not taken to 'our supersubstantial bread.' Yet it has had an influence. It has prevented men from being satisfied to pray for material bread alone. So, thinks Dr. Lock, will it be with 'the evil one.' As long as that translation stands, and Dr. Lock has no doubt that that is what our Lord meant to say, men will recognize that the struggle with sin is a personal struggle, that 'the Lord's Prayer is an appeal to a personal Father who is in heaven to deliver us from a personal foe, who is striving to counteract the Father's work on earth.'

One great difficulty with the devil is to know him when we meet him. But that difficulty is due to the loss of the devil. Having lost the devil, we think the first bad man we meet may fairly be called a devil. But the devil is not a man: and thanks be to the God who made us, no man can ever become a devil.

It is true that even when we recover the devil there seems to be two of them. There is Milton's devil and there is Goethe's. But Dr. Lock holds that we have nothing to do with Milton's devil. Milton's devil has to do with God. He is a rebel against the Most High, before whom he stands 'the type of proud defiance, of envy, of superior greatness, of the desire for revenge, of eagerness to thwart the purposes of his conqueror.' It is with Goethe's devil that we have to do. When the evil one comes to us he comes in the likeness of a Mephistopheles.

For in the first place, Mephistopheles is the spirit of *denial*. Does the student Faust aspire after truth? It is nothing more than the frenzy of a crazy spirit. Is Margaret the type of the purity of womanhood? His sneer is as ready for woman's purity as for man's search after knowledge. Next, he is the spirit of *irreverence*. The one springs from the other. He is introduced into the courts of Heaven and talks with God in

a tone of impudent banter, treats Him with jocular familiarity. And why? Because he sees no greatness in things spiritual. If happiness is to be found, it will be found in the gratification of the lowest senses, the sway of evil temper or of sensual passion. And so the third thing is this, that his whole influence is thrown on the side of *sensual indulgence*. Faust finds his happiness in the enjoyment of a day.

Thus the devil is with us still. But his power has bounds. He cannot undo the evil which he has done. His answer is always, 'What is that to me?' He cannot cause the sinner to forget. He carries no 'sweet oblivious antidote' with him. And he cannot destroy the sinner. Both Faust and Margaret escape him in the end, and are saved; while even Mephistopheles himself is shown to be a part of that power 'which wills the evil but effects the good.'

Dr. W. F. Cobb, known (but not so well known as he should be) by his *Origines Judaicae*, has published a Commentary on the Psalms (Methuen; ros. 6d. net). Now we are in no need of another Commentary on the Psalms on the old lines. We have enough. But Dr. Cobb's Commentary is not on the old lines. If he is right, most of the commentaries we possess are wrong, and there is sufficient need for a new one.

What is the difference? Dr. Cobb selects Kirkpatrick's *Psalms* in the 'Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges' as an 'excellent English Commentary' of the old kind. Kirkpatrick, he says, is 'in the main a follower of Baethgen, and to a slightly less extent of Jennings and Lowe.' What does he do? We see that by seeing what Dr. Cobb does not do. He does not treat the Psalms of David 'from the after-thoughts of theology, or from the meaning read into them by Christian writers.' And we see it yet more clearly by what he does. He treats the Psalms as 'documents of religion in its historical setting.'

He treats the Psalter as 'a collection of documents which, as the Hymn Book of the Second Temple, illustrate the type of piety which immediately preceded the birth of Christianity.'

What does the difference amount to? Let us take the 22nd Psalm. Generally speaking, Dr. Cobb's text is the text of the Revised Version, and his notes are short and philological. But he offers a new translation of the 22nd Psalm and discusses its theology. For it is a Psalm which compels its interpreter to say where he stands in relation to prophecy and inspiration.

In discussing the theology of the 22nd Psalm, Dr. Cobb asks three questions. First, Is the author speaking in a personal, ideal, national, or predictive capacity? Second, How far and in what sense is the whole Messianic? And third, What are we to understand from it is the nature of Inspiration? The answer to the first question is the answer to the whole.

Is the author speaking in a personal, ideal, national, or predictive capacity? In the first three, says Dr. Cobb, but not in the fourth. He is speaking *personally*. 'If the personal were not the solid framework of the picture, the ideal would be but a will-o'-the-wisp.' On this (especially when interpreting the 16th Psalm) Dr. Cobb is emphatic. He resists Cheyne's demand that in all these Messianic Psalms 'the speaker is the personified association of pious Israelites.' He admits that much has been urged in behalf of this idealizing tendency of the Psalmists, from Augustine downwards. But he holds it impossible to accept any theory which makes them mere mouthpieces of the Church-nation. 'What they felt and wrote, they felt and wrote indeed as Jews, but they had first experienced it as men.'

But the Psalmist is also speaking *ideally*. 'If the ideal be removed, the picture is but one out of myriads of pictures in history calling for our sympathy, but not compelling our attention.' And

he is speaking *for the nation*. For 'if the national be absent, the personal element is narrow, selfish, and unlovely.' The Psalter is a Hymn Book. Why did it become a Hymn Book? Because the author of every Psalm in it wrote out of his own experience. That is the first thing. But the second thing is that his experience is not a mere individual's experience. It is the experience of one who realizes his own life in the life of the society of which he is a member. He makes his own good the good of his people. And so this Hymn Book of the Jewish Church after the Exile comes to us 'not directly from its several authors, but fragrant with the aspirations, fears, hopes, joys, and sorrows of the Church-nation which adopted it.'

In all this Dr. Kirkpatrick agrees with Dr. Cobb, and Dr. Cobb agrees with Dr. Kirkpatrick. But besides being personal, ideal, and national, Dr. Kirkpatrick believes that the 22nd Psalm is *predictive*. Dr. Cobb is 'quite unable to accept that view.'

What does Dr. Kirkpatrick say? He says, 'The Psalm goes farther. It is prophetic. These sufferings were so ordered by the Providence of God as to be typical of the sufferings of Christ; the record of them was so shaped by the Spirit of God as to foreshadow, even in detail, many of the circumstances of the Crucifixion.' Dr. Cobb is quite unable to accept that view. And it is not through want of reverence, he tells us, but through the compelling abundance of it.

Dr. Kirkpatrick represents God (Dr. Cobb warns us that he is going to put the matter bluntly) 'as planning the details of the Passion of His Son centuries beforehand, and inspiring men to write them down.' That, he holds, is to take a low and unworthy view of His action. It also introduces a psychological miracle which is as vain as it is unthinkable. Is there a single case of prediction in the Bible? Is there a single case, he asks, in the whole Bible where

God has revealed indubitably a matter of historical fact, as distinct from an eternal principle? If there were, that case, he holds, would contradict the Bible. For the religion of the Bible is a religion of spiritual insight and feeling, not of outward authority; it is a religion of faith, not of belief and argument.

In this issue of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES there will be found some record of a discussion concerning the conduct of public worship. It does not touch those who follow a fixed order. But they have some perplexities of their own. One of them is what to do with the Imprecatory Psalms.

Imprecatory is a good word. It has given relief to many consciences, which the 'Cursing Psalms,' if they had been called so, would have cut to the quick. Yet imprecatory means cursing. And the one thing that is clearest about these Psalms is that they have no regard for euphemistic language. When they curse they curse. Dr. Cobb wonders that they do not seem to cause any serious difficulty at present to the consciences of Churchmen generally. Perhaps Churchmen generally are at present sufficiently occupied with the Athanasian Creed. The time of the Cursing Psalms will come.

To the Dean of Lichfield it has come already. Dr. Mortimer Luckock has published a volume which discusses various *Spiritual Difficulties in the Bible and Prayer-Book* (Longmans; 6s.). Our 'difficulties' seem to be as numerous as ever. This is a book of more than three hundred pages, and it is full of them. But there are two which the Dean of Lichfield feels more keenly than all the rest, the Blessing on Jael and the Imprecatory Psalms. And of these two the greater is the Imprecatory Psalms.

For Dr. Mortimer Luckock cannot soothe his conscience with any of the interpretations which give other men rest. Are they Judaic? Do they

'breathe the spirit of the Old Dispensation, in which the standard of morality was necessarily lower than in the New'? Then what business have we to be repeating them? Is the sinner and the sin so identified that to curse the sinner is really only to curse his sin? 'In some of the worst examples,' answers Dr. Luckock, 'the imprecations are manifestly the outcome of vindictive personal animosity.'

But the Dean of Lichfield has found a remedy. Like many good medicines it is not new. As long ago as the eighteenth-century a learned Jew discovered it. His name was Moses Mendelssohn. The imprecations in the Imprecatory Psalms are not the utterance of David or of other pious Jews but of wicked men. They are never the words of the Psalmist, but of the Psalmist's ill-tongued enemies.

Dr. Luckock quite frankly admits that this explanation does not fit every case. It does not fit every Cursing Psalm just yet. But let us wait. It fits the worst of them. Possibly hereafter it may be found to fit the others also. Let us wait. If the world had to wait eighteen centuries for this, surely we may be willing to wait a little longer for the rest.

What name do we give to God? What do we call Him? When we pray, what do we say? Jesus bids us say 'Father'—'When ye pray, say, Father' (Lk 11² R.V.). Do we say 'Father' when we pray?

It is not a matter of no moment. Jesus never commanded things of no moment. It seems to be in the line of God's discipline. If we may follow the history of Redemption as it is at present set forth in the Old Testament (and whatever criticism may discover as to dates and documents, the present arrangement of the Old Testament seems purposely made for edification), there appear to be stages of progress marked by the use of the name of God. There appear to be three great steps.

At first when men prayed, they seem to have simply said 'God.' This continued down to Moses and the Deliverance from Egypt. Then the name Yahweh was revealed. Never mind whether it was used already according to our documents or not. Never mind where it came from. The Old Testament was written for our edification, and in the process of edifying us it seems to be revealed that at the recovery of Israel from the bondage of Egypt to serve the living God this name was given. Henceforth, when an Israelite prayed, he said 'Yahweh.' Long after the Exodus, looking back on all the way, the pious Israelite could say, 'Yahweh, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.' But when Jesus came, He said, 'When ye pray, say, Father.' And that is our name for God. That is the name in all *our* generations.

Some still say 'God.' To say 'God' is to think of Him chiefly as Creator and Preserver. It is to put Him, perhaps, somewhat far away. It is to make Him somewhat doubtful. George Eliot has a woman in *Silas Marner*, a churchgoer and Christian, who never ventured nearer than 'Them as are above us.' And there is a story which, though it be not true in particular, is perfectly true in general, that an infidel took to praying once because he feared the ship was sinking, and said, 'O God, if there be a God.' That is the danger of saying 'God.' We almost add 'if there be a God.' But they that come to God must believe that He is.

It is better to say 'Yahweh.' For Yahweh is nearer and surer. If it is not so evident that He is the God of all the Earth, it is certain that He is the God of Israel. And we have entered into that inheritance. When Moses went down into Egypt he took this name with him. He took other things besides this. He took the wonder-working rod. It was wonderful to see the rod turn into a serpent when Moses threw it on the ground. But the rod did not make the deepest impression upon the people who were crying by reason of the bond-

age. 'When they heard that Yahweh had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.'

And in all their generations thereafter Yahweh was their God. What is their secret? They gave us our Bible. They gave us our Religion. They gave us our Saviour. Other nations have offered us Bibles, Religions, and even Saviours, but we will not have them. Egypt offers us its Book of the Dead. The Book of the Dead? It is the book of a dead nation: we are not interested in it. Greece offers the world a religion—the gods of hoary Olympus, and the goddesses; but the world has been amused at it or ashamed. What is Israel's secret? The secret of Israel is Yahweh. The prophets lisped 'Yahweh' at their mothers' knee; and they came to Israel and said, 'When ye pray, say, Yahweh.' That is the secret of the history of Israel.

But the best name is Father. Yahweh came with the tabernacle and went with the temple. When the temple was ready to depart, Jesus met a woman of Samaria. 'Our fathers,' she said, 'worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' It depends on whom men worship. No doubt Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship Yahweh. But 'the hour cometh, and now is, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.'

Father is best. For Father is as wide as God and as near as Yahweh. As wide as God? Surely. 'The Father of all men'—we have good Scripture for it. And yet as near as Yahweh. For though it is true that God loved and loves the world, yet says Jesus, 'If a man love me, he will keep my Word, and my Father will love him.' There is a wider circle of love and there is a nearer. He is 'the Father of all men, but especially of them that believe.' And in that 'especially' lies a great difference.