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

ministry. The work that the series of dictionaries called for was too hard and too exacting to allow him to carry as well the burden of a pastoral charge. The step was wisely taken, not only in the interests of his own health, but in the interests of Biblical scholarship generally. Only those who have been allowed to see something of the *Dictionary of the Bible* in course of production can have any idea of the labour that is involved in the settlement of subjects, in the allotment of the articles to various writers, in the supervision of contributors — alas, those postcards to the tardy—in the translation of the articles written by foreign contributors, in the clipping of verbosities and the curbing of irrelevancies, in the cares and difficulties of proof-reading and the verification of references. Those who have enjoyed Dr. Selbie's friendship count it among the best things they have received. It is no small matter to have known this man, so profoundly learned and so utterly modest, so lavish in his appreciation of what others haltingly do, and so stern in the criticism of his own work.

The New Testament

IN THE LIGHT OF RECENTLY DISCOVERED TEXTS OF THE GRÆCO-ROMAN WORLD.

By Professor Dr. theol. Adolf Deissmann, of the University of Heidelberg.

IV. The Importance of the Texts for the Religious Interpretation of the New Testament.

In the days when the inscribed stone monuments of the ancient world were still above ground, and the dust and rubbish of Egypt were not yet piled up over the cast-out papyrus leaves, when people still wrote upon sherds, and the coins of the Roman emperors were current throughout the world—in those days a Man of Galilee, in conversation with His opponents at Jerusalem, took a Roman silver denarius in His hand, and, pointing to the portrait and inscription on the coin, spoke the words, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.'[1] In an age in which divine homage was paid to the Cæsar, this sentence, without being disrespectful to the monarch, nevertheless clearly draws a sharp line of distinction between Cæsar and God. The two terms, Cæsar and God, are not of equal value in this sentence, but the first is subordinated to the second: 'Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and, much more, of course, unto God the things that are God's'—that is the meaning of this pregnant text. The image and superscription on the coin are proof patent of the right of Cæsar to the tribute; the rights of God are not thereby impugned, for they tower high above the rights of this world. Thus the portrait and inscription on a Roman coin were used by Jesus as an object-lesson, in answer to a religious and political question of His age.

And not long afterwards, on the evening before His Passion, in the intimacy of converse with His nearest disciples, Jesus alluded to a custom that must have been known to Him from Syrian and Phœnician coins, and which can be proved by numerous inscriptions of the Greek world. The kings of the Gentiles, He says, are called 'Benefactors,' but it is not to be so with the disciples; he that is chief among them is to be as a servant.[2] Here, then, we are listening to the hypocritical phrase that displays itself on the coins and in the inscriptions of that age.[3] For a man to allow himself to be called 'benefactor' by another man seemed to the Master incompatible with the idea of brotherhood.

Some twenty years later we see St. Paul, the world apostle of Primitive Christianity, on his way through the streets of Athens, pause and reflect before the inscription on an altar. The inscription interests him most intensely. *To an unknown god*,[4] he reads; and to him the stone speaks as the collective voice of heathen humanity seeking and sighing for the living God. And when, soon

[1] Mt 22[21] etc.

[2] Lk 22[25ff.]

[3] See chapter v.

[4] Ac 17[23].

afterwards, he comes to Ephesus, here, after the episode of the inscription at Athens, he has a remarkable experience with papyrus books. By the power of the Spirit in his preaching a number of pagans were converted who hitherto had been addicted to magic, and now they brought their books of charms in great quantities and burnt them publicly, books to the value of 50,000 silver drachmæ, as we are told in the Acts.[1] They were, no doubt, exactly the same sort of magical texts as are now recovered in such numbers on Egyptian papyri of the imperial age.

The coin in the hand of Jesus, the inscribed stone at Athens before which St. Paul stood, the papyrus charms of the Ephesian magicians—does not the New Testament itself, in these typical cases, challenge us to regard the pagan texts of the imperial age with the eye of the student of religious history? Thus we raise the third question which it was our intention to consider: the question of the importance of our texts for the interpretation of the New Testament as viewed by the historian of religion. Our first question was concerned with the philological importance of the texts, the second question with their literary importance. Both questions referred principally, though not exclusively, to the external or formal interpretation of the New Testament; in this chapter, however, the question touches most emphatically the inner or material interpretation of the New Testament, and therewith of Primitive Christianity. We believe that here also our texts will yield not unimportant results.

A mere glance at the fact that hundreds and thousands of the inscriptions and papyri are of religious content will interest us in the whole problem. There are the countless epitaphs in poetry and in prose, often stereotyped and impersonal, but not infrequently also of a simple sincerity of feeling; there are prayers and dedications, private letters with a religious colouring, and other records. The extent of what is discoverable from these texts, about the religion and cults of the age which saw the great change in religion, is shown by the monographs of the last twenty years. Even the non-specialist will have great profit in reading what Friedländer, for example, in his pictures from the history of Roman morals, has collected out of the inscriptions concerning religious life under the Empire, with examples from the length and breadth of the Græco-Roman world; or what Carl Wessely[2] has collected from the papyri in his researches on the civilization of two Egyptian villages, and the religious life of those villages. To quote but one more recent work, which may in a double sense of the word be termed 'monumental,' there is Franz Cumont's book on the cult of Mithra; without the inscriptions this brilliant work could not have been written.

In these observations we have already indicated the *first* reason why the pagan texts are of such importance for the New Testament studied as part of the history of religion. They enable us to realize the religious environment of Primitive Christianity more clearly and comprehensively than was possible merely by the use of the literary sources.

Let us look for a moment at this environment.

The civilized world round the Mediterranean, in the age of the Roman Cæsars, lies stretching out before us in the sunshine of the South. Lost in contemplation of the vision we hear the words, 'The field is the world,' and in the Eastern morning sun we behold a Sower moving along the furrows to sow His seed.

What did this field look like? Here, too, we have to correct the traditional lines of the picture. Most of us probably have learnt that it was a world of corruption into which the gospel came. The religious and moral condition of the Roman Empire has generally been painted in the gloomiest colours, and in places where they could not but find light, only too many of our authorities were disposed to call the virtues of the pagans brilliant vices. In our opinion this gloomy picture is owing to its being drawn, firstly, from the literary evidence of the age itself, and then from the polemical exaggerations of many old Fathers of the Church. It will be readily understood that, however intelligible as psychological phenomena, these exaggerations of polemic cannot be accepted as historical without criticism. It ought, however, to be equally clear that purely literary evidence is not sufficient to give us a reliable picture of any age. Literature, as a rule, reflects the feelings of the upper class, where the voices of doubt, negation, satiety, and frivolity are much louder than in the

[1] Ac 19[19].

[2] *Karanis und Soknopaiu Nesos, Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, philos.-hist. Klasse*, Bd. xlvii. pp. 56 ff., Wien, 1902.

healthier, less *blasé* lower class. When the lower class begins to doubt and deride, it has generally learnt to do so from the class above, and thus the lower is always a generation behind the upper class. It takes that amount of time for the impure matters to settle, but then they are purified again by a sort of automatic process. The forces of healthy reaction against decay lie in the healthy organism itself, or, as Carl Neumann once expressed it, in the well-spring of the deep-seated spiritual strength of the people. The literature of the Roman Empire abounds in expressions of resignation and negation; it witnesses to the luxury of the monarchs, with its refined cult of lust and cruelty; and hence it gives to a portion of the upper class—not to the whole of society in that age—the look that portends its fall.

If, however, we allow the non-literary evidence to influence us, that is, if we by this means allow the lower class to be heard, we shall be compelled radically to revise our judgment of the religious position under the Empire. The great mass of the people were deeply religious, and even in the upper classes there were plenty of pious souls. This has been proved irrefutably from the inscriptions by Friedländer in his sketches of the history of Roman morals. The papyri afford further proof. Any one who is not satisfied with this evidence might calculate the enormous sums of money that were then voluntarily devoted both in the East and in the West to religious purposes, to temples, oracles, priests, and pious foundations. The great religious movements also bear witness to the strong hold that religion had upon the men of that generation. Gods migrated and became blended with the gods of other nations. Foreign cults came from the East and from the South and mixed with the old forms of worship; Isis, Sarapis, and, later, Attis and Mithra found everywhere their enthusiastic devotees. There was a dark side to all this, of course, just as in the upper classes of society there were the pleasing vistas already mentioned. But certainly, if we wish to be just—and the victors presumably can afford to be just to the vanquished—our general verdict as historians of religion must be framed like this: that the vast majority of mankind were not tired of religion, or hostile to religion, but friendly to religion, and hungering for it.

We may quote in confirmation of this another observer who long ago came to the same conclusion from the study of ancient inscriptions—we mean the Apostle Paul. After wandering through the streets of Athens, where so many inscriptions met his view, St. Paul summed up his impressions thus: 'Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious!' Such were his words on the Areopagus at Athens,[1] and so they must be translated; not, as the Authorised Version says, 'Ye are too superstitious.' They prove that St. Paul possessed a knowledge of the real spirit of his age, knowledge that he had acquired at first hand, by walking about with open eyes among the men and monuments of his time.

Considering, therefore, the strong hold which religion had on the age which saw the birth of Christianity, we are impelled to say that the age was prepared for the new religion, positively prepared for its reception.

We have already hinted that the lights are attended by shadows, and the second, somewhat less decided, impression which the period leaves on us is that it suffered from deep religious and moral evils. St. Paul, whose eye for facts may be trusted after Ac 17^{22}, has in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans drawn a night-picture of contemporary civilized life, particularly that of the great cities, which—to our shame be it spoken!—stands without parallel save in the cosmopolitan cities of modern Christendom. The religion of St. Paul's contemporaries is flecked with shadows equally dark. One point alone need be emphasized. In our reading of the epitaphs and other texts we find, on the one hand, a firm conviction of immortality, and, on the other hand, expressions of a very different temper—the forced, hollow mirth which says, 'let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' and a helpless, weary, chilling despair. The Library of Yale University, U.S.A., possesses a Greek papyrus of the second century, from the Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus,[2] on which is a letter of consolation, highly characteristic of this spirit of hopelessness:

> 'Eirene to Taonnophris and Philon, good cheer! I was as much grieved and shed as many tears over Eumoiros as I shed for Didymas, and I did everything that was fitting, and so did my whole family, Epaphrodeitos and Thermouthion and Philion and Apollonios and Plantas.

[1] Ac 17^{22}. [2] The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, No. 115.

> But still there is nothing one can do in the face of such trouble. So I leave you to comfort yourselves. Good-bye. Athyr 1.'

Is not this letter an illustration of St. Paul's words about 'the rest which have no hope'? [1]

The helplessness of men before the great problem of personal life left them often enough at the mercy of the most degrading despotism. Thousands had recourse to magic in order to extort by demonic aid what was otherwise denied them. The existence of vast numbers of magical books at Ephesus,[2] as proved by the incident already quoted in this chapter, is typical. Numerous papyri, leaden tablets, gold plates, and similar finds, have not only taught us the extent to which magic was disseminated; they have restored to us the magical texts themselves in large numbers. For many people magic must have been the beginning and the end of all their practical religion.

With reference, then, to the moral evils and the oft-heard cries of fear and helplessness, we can repeat the sentence already formulated: That the age was prepared for the new religion, *i.e.*, in this case, negatively prepared for its reception.

Both the positive and the negative aspects of this preparation can be comprehended in one expressive Greek word, which we again borrow from St. Paul. Under the Roman emperors the world was in its *Pleroma*. St. Paul uses this word in Gal 4^4, where the Authorized Version has 'when *the fulness* of the time was come.' [3] It expresses the fact that St. Paul regarded the period of Christ's advent as the date appointed by God for the dawn of a new epoch, namely, the coming of age of the human race. In our somewhat different figure the word *Pleroma* implies that the world was ripe for Christianity.

So much for the first or general background of Primitive Christianity, as indicated by the texts. We have, secondly, the ample contribution of the texts to the history of religious feelings, ideas, and institutions in detail. This division of our inquiry overlaps the earlier division which dealt with the philological bearing of the texts. We learn that many of the religious ideas employed by primitive Christianity were adopted from its surroundings, from the period; that, on the other hand, Primitive Christianity often gave to these venerable ideas a new import, or itself created new ideas. The same is true of the religious customs and institutions. The following are but a few of the religious conceptions, for the history of which we have gained important new material [4] from the inscriptions, papyri, etc., namely, 'God,' 'Lord,' 'the Most High,' 'The Son of God,' 'the Saviour,' 'the Creator,' 'prophet,' 'ministration,' 'priest,' 'bishop,' 'virtue,' 'manner of life,' 'debt,' 'propitiation,' etc. A few observations on one of these, the conception of 'Lord,' may here follow.[5]

It is a well-known fact that Augustus and Tiberius refused the title of 'Lord,' because it did violence to the Roman conception of the Empire as the 'Principate.' 'Lord' is a thoroughly Oriental conception; from time immemorial the kings of the East have been 'Lords' of the slaves, their subjects. The conception runs also through the Oriental religions, which are fond of expressing the relationship between the divinity and the devotee as that of the 'Lord' or 'Lady' [6] to a slave. This can be proved by innumerable examples, apart from the Old Testament. The effects of this mode of thought are traceable even in Greek religion, and in the cult of Sarapis. The men and women who wrote papyrus letters in Egypt under the Roman Empire, for example, often assure their correspondents of their prayers to 'the Lord Sarapis.' In the time of St. Paul, 'Lord' was throughout the whole Eastern world a universally understood religious conception. The apostle's confession of his Master as 'our Lord Jesus Christ,' with the complementary idea that Christians were dearly bought 'slaves' (the Authorized Version weakens the expression to 'servants'), was at once intelligible in all the fulness of its meaning to every one in the Greek Orient. 'Our Lord' as a divine title is felt to be thoroughly Eastern. Hitherto it has been generally assumed that the Roman emperors were first named 'Lord' and 'our Lord' from the time of Domitian onward. It may have been so at Rome, and in the West,

[1] 1 Th 4^{13}.

[2] Ac 19^{19}.

[3] 'So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage . . . : but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons' (Gal 4^{3-5}, R.V.).

[4] Most of the references will be found in the author's *Bible Studies*.

[5] Cf. *Die Christliche Welt*, 1900, cols. 291 ff.

[6] Cf., for example, the inscription from Kefr-Hauar, in Syria, quoted above, p. 61.

but in the East, as we now know from the texts, men began much earlier to endow the emperors with the title which had been so long current in the courtly language of the country, and which from its associations carried with it an odour of sanctity. The later victory of 'Dominus' over 'Princeps,' which means the triumph of the political theory by which the Emperor was the Lord, and the overthrow of the other theory, by which he was only the Leading Member of the State—this victory, which ultimately betokens a victory of the East over Rome, was thus clearly foreshadowed centuries before. The present writer has collected a comparatively large amount of evidence on this point from papyri, inscriptions, and allied sources, from which it is clear that in Egypt and, for example, in Greece it must have been quite usual to call the Emperor Nero 'Lord.'[1] The ominous title occurs occasionally, however, with the name of Claudius, and even with Tiberius, and, of course, the protests of Augustus and Tiberius, already mentioned, allow of the deduction that these emperors had at some time or other been entitled 'Lord.' It is therefore not impossible that Eastern Christians, hearing St. Paul preach in the manner of Ph 2^{11} and 1 Co 8^{6}, and other such passages, may have seen in the solemn acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as the Lord, a tacit protest against other 'Lords,' or even against the 'Lord,' as the Roman emperor was beginning to be called. St. Paul himself may have felt and intended this tacit protest. More than this we would rather not assert at present. Later, no doubt, when the Dominatus had triumphed over the Principatus at Rome, there was, from the point of view of a Roman official, something extremely dangerous to the State in the formula, 'our Lord Jesus Christ.' And it can hardly be accidental that, as we again learn from the papyri and inscriptions, the Christian emperor, without abandoning the style of 'Lord,' yet chose another Greek word to express it. In papyri of the Christian period it is quite remarkable how κύριος gives way to the word δεσπότης in Greek imperial titles, as if it was desired to reserve κύριος for the Lord of Heaven.

That it needed no very special effort for St. Paul to think of the Roman emperor as 'the Lord' is shown by another fact which the newly discovered texts have established. In describing the Eucharist as '*the Lord's Supper*,'[2] St. Paul employs the adjective κυριακός, and many scholars, finding no other examples of its use, have assumed that the word was invented by St. Paul for the occasion. It is proved, however, by the inscriptions, papyri, and ostraca, that it was used in the official language of the Greek East (Egypt and Asia) to mean 'pertaining to the Lord, *i.e.* the Emperor,' 'imperial.' The earliest example of the pagan use of the word with which we are acquainted occurs in an inscription of the Prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander, found in the great Oasis. It belongs to the year 68 A.D., and is therefore of St. Paul's date. The prefect, of course, did not learn the word from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, but from the current language of his time, of which St. Paul also made use. We have here a clear case of a word current in the official political phraseology of the East being taken over into the religious vocabulary of Primitive Christianity, in the first instance by St. Paul.

The history of the term 'Lord' furnishes other analogies of some interest. Two short letters of invitation, of the second century A.D., were found at Oxyrhynchus, one of which is now in the Library of Eton College, Windsor,[3] and runs thus:

> 'Chairemon invites you to dine at the table of the Lord Sarapis in the Sarapeion to-morrow, the 15th, at 9 o'clock.'

The other,[4] now in an American Library, runs:

> 'Antonios, son of Ptolemaios, invites you to dine with him at the table of the Lord Sarapis in the house of Claudius Sarapion on the 16th, at 9 o'clock.'

The remarkable expression, 'the table[5] of the Lord Sarapis,' is a striking parallel to St. Paul's phrase, 'the Lord's table.' We regard St. Paul's phrase as parallel rather than derived, because in all probability it was influenced by the Greek Old Testament (cf. Mal $1^{7.12}$, Ezk 39^{20}, 44^{16} in the Septuagint), just as the phrase, 'the table of devils'

[1] It is impossible, therefore, to make use of Ac 25^{26} as a proof that the book in which it occurs is of late date.

[2] 1 Co 11^{20}.

[3] The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, No. 110.

[4] The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, No. 523.

[5] The Greek word in both papyri is κλίνη. In 1 Co 10^{21}, 'the Lord's table' (A.V.), 'the table of the Lord' (R.V.), the word is τράπεζα. For what follows, cf. *Die Christliche Welt*,' 1904, cols. 37 ff.

in 1 Co 10^{21} points to the Septuagint version of Is 65^{11}. On the other hand, we would not assume that the Sarapis formula is derived from the Pauline, although the idea is not an impossible one. For the present it can only be said that the two phrases crop up, as it were, side by side, without any apparent genealogical connexion. The lesson of the Egyptian parallel is that again in an important particular the pagan phraseology approximates to the technical phraseology of early Christianity. In order to make plain to his Corinthians the nature of the Christian Eucharist, St. Paul did not scruple to employ the analogy of the pagan sacred feasts.[1] In the gospel preached by a missionary like St. Paul there was so very much that sounded familiar to the 'Greek,' that the one new thing, the message of Jesus Christ, produced all the greater impression.

One further example may be mentioned, belonging to that popular sphere which has been so often brought into prominence in these pages. It concerns an expression[2] which occurs in the account given by St. Mark (7^{35}) of the healing of the deaf and dumb man:

> 'And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.'

Most commentators explain the phrase, 'string of his tongue' (R.V. 'the bond of his tongue') as figurative: 'the tongue with which it is not possible to speak is looked upon as bound.' This view is taken, for instance, by Bernhard Weiss in Meyer's *Handbuch*, with the result that, though the whole sentence is not made unintelligible, the point of the phrase in question is probably missed. We believe that the first readers of the Gospels and the evangelist himself understood the phrase in a definite technical sense. The idea runs through the whole of antiquity that a man can be 'bound' or 'fettered' by demonic influence. We find this idea in Greek, Syrian, Hebrew, Mandæan, and Indian charms.[3] From the Greek-speaking peoples of antiquity there has even come down to us a document[4] of precise instructions how to 'bind' a man by art magic, and we possess quite a number of ancient inscriptions with the 'binding' of a man as their subject.

'I bind Euandros in leaden bonds' is the reading on a leaden tablet of the third century B.C., from Patissia,[5] and similar inscriptions occur on over fifty leaden cursing-tablets of the same period form Attica.[6]

That the idea flourished not only at this time and place, but in other nations and periods of antiquity, is shown by a lead tablet of the imperial period from Carthage,[7] which calls upon gods and demons in these terms:

> 'I adjure you by the great Name, that ye bind every limb and every sinew of Biktorikos.'

The *tongue* of a man is often particularized. Among the Attic tablets of lead mentioned above there are thirty on which the tongue of an enemy is 'bound' or cursed.

'I bind the tongue and soul (of the enemy)' is the inscription on two Attic tablets of the fourth century B.C.[8] A cursing-tablet of the second century B.C., from Tanagra,[9] adjures Hermes and Persephone

> 'to bind the tongue of Dionysia.'

A Mandæan enchanting-dish of much later date in the Louvre at Paris bears the inscriptions[10]:

> 'Bound and stopped be the mouth, and stopped the tongue of curses, of vows, and of imprecations of the gods. . . . Bound be the tongue in its mouth, stopped be its lips, shaken, fettered, and banned be the teeth, and shut be the ears of curses and of imprecations.'

What was understood and intended by 'binding' the tongue is made clear by synonymous expressions.

'Cripple the senses, the tongue (of Kallias)' is

[1] 1 Co 10^{19-21}.

[2] Cf. *Die Christliche Welt*, 1903, cols. 554 ff.

[3] Cf. M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, vol. i. p. 31.

[4] In the Anastasy magical papyrus. The passage referred to has been edited by R. Wünsch in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum*, Appendix, p. xxx.

[5] *Ibid.* No. 45.

[6] *Ibid.* Nos. 40 ff.

[7] *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, viii. Suppl. No. 12,511.

[8] *Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum*, Appendix, Nos. 49 and 50.

[9] *Ibid.* p. viii.

[10] *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, vol. i. pp. 100 ff. The exact date of the dish cannot be determined.

the exhortation of an Attic leaden tablet[1] of the third century B.C. to Hermes Katochos.

'They will strike dumb my adversaries' is another expression of the same idea on a leaden tablet[2] of the third century from Kurion, near Paphos, in the island of Cyprus, where St. Paul encountered Elymas the sorcerer. He, therefore, whose tongue was 'bound' was expected to become dumb in consequence; and we may say inversely that he who was dumb was often regarded in popular belief as demoniacally 'bound.' This latter idea falls into line with the more general and very widely spread belief that certain diseases and diseased conditions were caused by demonic possession. Thus, in Lk 13^{16}, our Lord Himself says that Satan had 'bound' a daughter of Abraham eighteen years. The reference is to the deformed woman mentioned in $v.^{11}$, 'who had a spirit of infirmity,' and whose 'bond' Jesus had 'loosed' on the Sabbath day ($v.^{16}$). The 'bond of the tongue' in St. Mark may, therefore, well be a technical expression of this kind. The evangelist wishes to relate not only that a dumb man was made to speak, but that a demonic chain was broken, and that one of the works of Satan was destroyed. It is again one of those popular features which facilitated the entry of Christianity into the ancient world.

We have given only a few examples. Were it possible for a scholar at the present day to survey the whole vast mass of details afforded by the texts on stone, papyrus, etc., he would be convinced that the threads connecting Primitive Christianity with the life of the time are legion—in other words, that Christianity, though it introduced a new epoch, had a foundation in history.

Of still greater importance, in our judgment, than the promotion of our knowledge of all these details, is a third service rendered to the New Testament by the witnesses to the religious life of the Roman Empire. They make the student's eye keen to recognize the essence of religion, particularly of popular religion, religion as distinguished from theology. Previous generations of commentators have generally regarded the New Testament retrospectively. From their own theological and ecclesiastical sphere they looked back at the primitive age of Christianity, and submitted it to an essentially theological and ecclesiastical judgment, using the book of that age, the New Testament, according to their conception of it as a great Book of law and dogma. If, however, we approach the New Testament from the point of view of its own times, from the point of view of its own religious environment, as that has been made actual to us by the inscriptions, etc., scales, as it were, fall from our eyes. With the self-same eyes which, owing to modern dogmatic prejudice, formerly suffered from religious blindness, we then see that the New Testament owes its existence in large measure to religion rather than to theology. Just as the texts sharpened our perception of the real meaning of what was non-literary, so, too, they reveal to us the significance of what is non-theological and pre-dogmatic. This is laying strong stress on the fundamental distinction between religion and theology—what, then, is that distinction?

Religion is, no matter in what form, a relation between ourselves and a superhuman divine power. Theology is the science of religion; it examines the phenomena of religious life in the history of mankind. Besides this great historical function, it discharges also speculative and normative functions, but it is the science of religion, not religion itself. Religion and theology are related to each other in the same way as art and æsthetics, as language and philology, as the starry sky and astronomy. Theology is therefore of the secondary, religion of the primary, order of things. Theology is scientific reflexion concerning one aspect of the life of the individual; religion is personal life itself.

Now, by far the greatest part of the religious records of the Roman Empire are in the true sense records of religion. It is not always a simple living religion—not unfrequently it is formal and stereotyped—but it is religion, often the religion of the people, and hardly ever the theology of a thinker, that is represented in the existing remains. No serious student would dream of regarding the many scattered memorials of pagan piety as a series of theological manifestations — the testimonies to the religion of the Roman army,[3] for instance, as subjects for an essay on 'The Theology of the Roman Army.' And when, from a study of the memorials of a strong and simple

[1] *Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum*, Appendix, No. 88. The verb for 'cripple' is κατέχω.

[2] *Ibid.* p. xviii. The verb used here is φιμόω, which the lexicographer Hesychius explains as synonymous with 'bind.'

[3] As collected by the author's friend, Alfred von Domaszewski.

piety, one has acquired an eye for the childlike, unquestioning, and non-theological characteristics of true piety, it becomes impossible to understand how the New Testament can be read otherwise than with the same sympathy for the childlike, the unquestioning, and the non-theological, which stands out in almost every line of this book of the people of a former, more pious age.

Let us put the matter to the test. In the forefront stands Jesus of Nazareth, and if anything can with certainty be affirmed of Him it is this: that He was no brooding theologian. He is completely non-theological. He is all religion, all life; He is spirit and fire. To speak of the theology of Jesus is a mere form of words. He had no theology, for He had the living God in Him. The fact was shown by His testimonies, words of conflict and of exhortation. He who undertakes to formulate a theology of Jesus from our Lord's testimonies behaves exactly like the infant who stretches out his arms to grasp the golden sun. Let us have done with the theology of Jesus; it leads a shadowy existence in books, but in the light of day it never was.

And how is it with St. Paul? St. Paul certainly possessed, even when he was a pupil of Rabban Gamaliel, a decided theological bent. But it is highly questionable whether we have grasped St. Paul's chief characteristic if we call him the great theologian of Primitive Christianity. Our own answer would be, 'Not at all!' With St. Paul, as with every right theologian, the primary consideration is religion, and this is so not only with St. Paul in the course of his psychological development, but with St. Paul the finished man. St. Paul is the prophet and the missionary of Primitive Christianity. It is possible to speak of the theology of St. Paul, but we are unjust if we do not first speak of his religion, which glows and throbs beneath the surface even of the more theological parts of his Epistles. We decline, therefore, to discover only 'Paulinism' in St. Paul; we refuse to turn the man into a bloodless system. In history the religion of St. Paul has had far more effect than his theology, and the same is true of Primitive Christianity as a whole. It was certainly not long before Primitive Christianity struck into theological paths, as proved by the classical example of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the evolution of ecclesiastical Christianity is the evolution not only of a constitutional body, but also of theological Christianity. The mighty influence, however, exercised by Christianity in its early days was the result of religion, the force which propagated itself by contact, the life transmitted from man to man and from conscience to conscience. And subsequently the epochs of Christianity which have affected history have been the religious epochs. Where theology has pushed itself forward it has bound the pinions of the life in God and tied the hands of brotherhood and of the zeal which overcomes the world. In the study of Primitive Christianity the exclusively theological way of looking at things has presented us with dogmatists instead of prophets, and turned the confessions of struggling men and pardoned sinners into moral sentences. Totally unable to appreciate the signs of healthy life and sturdy independence, this same theologizing tendency has misinterpreted the non-literary letters of the apostolic missionaries as works of literature, and exalted their popular dialect into a sacred idiom. But when we approach the New Testament from the same point of view as men of the imperial age, all the prejudices which obscure the historic vision are removed. We hear the unpolished tones of the popular dialect, we see non-literary texts and popular books, we see a religion strong in the strength of the people, Primitive Christianity to wit, coming forward to gain adherents in the age of the 'fulfilment.'

Let us now attempt to view this propagandist religion in its characteristic peculiarity as it must have appeared to the pagan of the Western world. We are accustomed, as a rule, to take up a position within the sphere of Primitive Christianity and to look from East to West, from Galilee and Jerusalem towards Ephesus and Rome. But we shall not acquit ourselves of our historical task unless we take our stand in the West and view with the eyes of a contemporary the great tidal wave of a new religion slowly rising on the Western world from out the Eastern sea of nations, from the birthplace of the world's great religions.

In viewing the westward advance of Christianity we can, of course, only take in what is most characteristic. Microscopic observation is out of the question; we must stand back in order to see; then, and only then, the historical character of early Christian religion will appear. Therefore, instead of attempting ten or twelve or fifty horizontal sections of early Christianity, we conceive of it as a single whole, and make one vertical section through

that. Then it matters not if there were a number of different personal types of early Christianity; the men of the time were not affected by the individual variations, but by the style and spirit of the whole.

The first thing which strikes us at the present day in the religion of the Primitive Christians, even in the very first pages of the New Testament, is the miracles. A contemporary, however, would take them as a matter of course, finding in them nothing exclusively Christian. For him there was no such thing as a religion without miracles. The most remarkable feature in Christianity was for him what we, alas, at the present day too often take for granted as something commonplace and trivial, namely, *the One Living God.* We are careful not to say 'Monotheism'; that is the doctrine or the system of the One God. But the One God Himself, who is both Life and Spirit, and who drew near to the pagan in the preaching of the missionaries, now taking the wings of the morning, and now flying upon the storm-wind,—He it was who promised to satisfy the hungry. The world had long been prepared for this One; the Greek thinkers, Plato especially, had made straight His way, and Greek Judaism with the Septuagint had ploughed the furrows for the gospel seed in the Western world.[1] And now came He whom the wise men had foreseen and the Jews worshipped; and the pagan, anxious and distracted by the complexity of idolatry, at last heard of a God who is near us, with whom we can have communion, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being. The result was inevitable. The crowd of lesser lights in the night sky paled before the one majestic luminary of day: *ex oriente lux!* In this light from the East men understood what their poets had prophesied: 'We are also His offspring.'

And secondly, *the figure of Jesus Christ.* Whenever the apostles preached, they preached Jesus Christ, and it was clear to every hearer that these missionaries were introducing the cult of Jesus Christ. It was not the cult of a dead man, but of a living Person, the cult of a Lord who was above all lords. Such cults had already been preached by other apostles, but no other ancient cult ever impressed men as did the cult of Jesus Christ; all the cults of the old gods and goddesses were obliged either to give way before it or to take refuge under Christian names in the holes and corners of Christian superstition.

Wherein lay the superiority of the cult of Jesus Christ? In the gospel tradition of Jesus which lay behind the cult. Jesus was not merely a sacred name, the unknown mysteries of which filled men with vague misgivings, but He was a personality in history, richly endowed with very definite characteristics, and present to men's minds in very definite portraits, thanks to the tradition enshrined in the Gospels. What immense significance attached, for example, to the picture which St. Paul was so fond of presenting to the Gentiles—the picture of Christ crucified. And furthermore, the truly grand simplicity of Jesus, which is revealed on the mere linguistic examination of His words, helped to commend Him in the highest degree to the people. Women and children, soldiers and slaves hailed Him with joy, and at the same time philosophers might make ready to plunge into the depths of His personality.

Nevertheless there is great variety in the early Christian appreciation of Jesus. There is no stereotyped formula, no exclusive dogma, no uniform Christology. Thousands of witnesses confess Christ in as many voices, and yet they are voices singing in harmony the nations' hymn of praise. Some acknowledge Him as the Shepherd, the Way, the Guide, the King, the High Priest, the Saviour, the Lord; others confess the Lamb of God, the Prophet, the Brother, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Son of David, the author and perfecter of our faith. One or other of these full chords of praise would appeal to practically everybody who was at all attracted by Jesus.

The great chorus of witness to Christ culminates in the prayer, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' Over the apostolic age there hangs like a storm-cloud the expectation of Christ's speedy coming with power to judge the world. Thus we reach the third characteristic feature of Primitive Christianity—*its hope of eternity.* Hopes of Christ's Second Advent may have cooled as time went on, but Christianity remained a religion of eternity. Men heard tell of the heaven opened and of the resurrection of the dead, and this message concerning eternity satisfied all their needs, whereas the resignation bred of despair and doubt had had absolutely nothing to offer. Even pagans, who already as pagans had attained a hope of immortality, now found a new happiness beyond their old faith.

[1] Cf. Deissmann, *Die Hellenisierung des semitischen Monotheismus*, Leipzig, 1903.

The Christian message concerning eternity sounded forth as a trumpet, not only proclaiming peace to all the weary and heavy-laden, but also calling to judgment. The missionaries impressed on the pagans the fact that the world would be judged. This brings us to the fourth distinguishing feature of Primitive Christianity. Outsiders must have been struck by *the moral earnestness of Christianity*. Personal responsibility, the necessity of conversion, the awfulness of sin, and the pangs of conscious guilt—how real and indispensable these all are! The ideas were not altogether new; much had been anticipated and prepared for by earnest thinkers. But for this very reason the message fell on the ancient world like fine wheat on freshly ploughed fallow. The close interlocking of religion with morality, which from the beginning was one of the essentials of Christianity, and which has been perpetuated in the Christian conception of God, was intelligible even to the simplest when love of one's neighbour was demanded as part of the love of God. The lower classes at that time, as the inscriptions have lately shown us, were permeated by a strong feeling of solidarity which led to the formation of innumerable associations of artisans, slaves, etc. And now arose the religious association, the brotherhoods of the first Christians, in which the fraternal principle took shape, and where the slave sat beside his master, the wife beside her husband, and the Scythian beside the Greek and the Jew, because all were one body in Christ. There was St. Paul, with the countenance of a man dwelling upon the eternal, and yet with both feet firmly planted on the earth, organizing, building, collecting pence for the poor brethren abroad. A character such as this affected men profoundly, and it was in no small measure the social expression of Christian thought which contained the promise of victory over all the cults. They ravished the soul, perhaps, in the tremor of ecstasy, but forgot what St. Paul called the 'more excellent way.'[1]

We believe that the religion of the primitive Christians, regarded from the point of view of contemporaries, presents four characteristics worthy of mention — God, Jesus Christ, Eternity, and Love. These stand out against the background of the ancient world, and, as we look at them once more, surely there can be but one conclusion. Is not the impression left by this scrutiny of the evidence for the history of religion the same as we received from our philological and literary inquiries —a conviction of the splendid simplicity of Christianity? And does there not lie in this simplicity, which is not indigence but innate strength concealed, the secret of its future conquest of the world?

[1] 1 Co 12[31].

Literature.

THE CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY.

THE CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY. Vol. iv. The Thirty Years' War. (Cambridge: *At the University Press.* 16s. net.)

THE fourth volume of the Cambridge Modern History is not only the largest (it runs to just over 1000 pages), but also, in our judgment, the most important volume yet issued. It gives the best idea of the mental equipment of the man who projected the work, as well as of the unsparing fidelity to him and his plan of the men who are carrying it out. Its title is *The Thirty Years' War*, but the volume contains a history of Europe, and more than Europe, during that period: and not its political history only, the history of its thought as well as of its action. There is, of course, a chapter on Richelieu and on Mazarin, on Gustavus Adolphus and on Wallenstein; but there is also a chapter on Descartes and Cartesianism, and a chapter on the Fantastic School of English Poetry. It is, let us repeat, a complete history of thought and action throughout the period of the Thirty Years' War.

So massive a volume as this is beyond the compass of the reviewer. He can only touch it here and there. A good deal of the earlier work has been retained by Dr. A. W. Ward and Dr. G. W. Prothero in their own hands; and it could not have been placed in better hands. In Chapter X., on the First Civil War in England, and in Chapter XI., on Presbyterians and Independents, Dr. Prothero and Colonel E. M. Lloyd,