

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

pardon and salvation' (p. 133). Nor ought we to speak as though Jesus' death had any inherent or, so to speak, necessary virtue as a means of justification; it is such a means for us simply because God appointed it so. It is His will to justify us freely, reconciling us to Himself, not (as St. Paul says in Ro 5¹⁰) by the death of His Son, but rather by our faith as evoked by that death. Faith and repentance are the real expiation which God asks for. Now we do not feel that St. Paul would recognize this doctrine as his own. At all events, it has comparatively slight relation to his argument in Ro 5. And in general we may say that nothing is easier than to glide from the true and axiomatic idea (as to which 'orthodox' people are as clear as any one else), that God had no need to be reconciled to man,—in the sense that He had to be brought, or induced, to love us,—into a position which is very far indeed from being true, namely, that reconciliation originates on our side, not God's. Reconciliation, as the apostles mean it, is God's taking the first step and bearing all the cost in the stupendous business of putting away sin. It is not that we reconcile ourselves; we *are* reconciled by His great love in the sacrifice of His Son. Everywhere in St. Paul reconciliation is not something we are called on to permit or to effect, but something which is real already, and which in the

gospel we are entreated to take. The fact that it has been achieved, not by us, but by an infinite love which bore the world's sin, is the foundation of the entire argument.

The closing section of the book, dealing with the subjective work of Christ, touches a higher level of reality, and is well worth study. Apart from an ill-considered attempt at one point to divide faith against itself—on the plea that by one moment in it we accept the gift of God in Christ, and by another are made one with Christ's very life—which is as much as to say that there is a justification which does not sanctify, this is a wise, warm, and sympathetic account. An admirable passage treats of the connexion, in St. Paul, of sin and death. What is meant by the condemnation of sin in the flesh (Ro 8²) is explained with point and freshness. And there are sections on the sacraments in St. Paul, and their relation to unity with Christ that seem exactly right, and that thrill with a fine spiritual ardour. The book as a whole is so good, so competent, so intellectually and ethically awake to the infinite service Christ the Mediator has done to sinners, that we shall look with keen expectancy for the sequel, in which M. Monteil promises to set forth Pauline Christology proper.

H. R. MACKINTOSH.

Edinburgh.

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.

V. Recapitulation—Problems for Future Investigation.

WHEN European savants copy inscriptions in the Libyan oases in the south-west of Egypt, the natives believe that the white strangers acquire through the inscriptions power over vast hidden treasures described therein. The ancient inscriptions and allied texts have been our subject in the foregoing pages, and we may ask, in conclusion, whether scholars have succeeded in recovering the precious treasures whose presence was betrayed by these old texts. If the question were asked of archæologists and historians alone, there is no doubt it would be answered by many in the

affirmative. The general science of classical antiquities owes an enormous debt to these texts. Brilliant proof of this assertion is afforded by the single name of Theodor Mommsen. The whole life-work of this eminent scholar was rendered possible solely by the ancient inscriptions. If then the question about the recovery of the treasures were addressed to the student of early Christianity, he could answer, in the first place, that every real advance in our historical knowledge of antiquity must indirectly benefit the historical interpretation of Christianity. But we believe it is possible to

go further, and to speak of a threefold direct value possessed by the ancient texts in the study of the New Testament and, consequently, Primitive Christianity.

In the first place, the inscriptions, papyri, ostraca, etc., have taught us to judge rightly of the language of the New Testament. Roughly speaking, the New Testament is written in the non-literary colloquial language, more particularly in the non-literary language of the people.

Secondly, the texts have assisted us in the literary criticism of the New Testament by heightening our appreciation of writings of a non-literary and pre-literary character, and by teaching us to distinguish between popular and artistic varieties of literary work. Thus we have been enabled to recognize a large part of the New Testament as non-literary, another large part as popular literature, and a minute fraction as artistic literature.

Thirdly and lastly, a study of the texts of the Roman Empire has yielded results bearing on the position of the New Testament and Primitive Christianity in the history of religion. They have taught us to reconstruct with fairness and greater accuracy the popular religious environment in which the great religious transformation took place. They have sharpened our vision for innumerable details which Primitive Christianity took over and further developed from its surroundings in the East and in the West. But chiefly we have been taught to regard Primitive Christianity not with dogmatic, theological eyes, but with sympathy for simple religion, especially for the vigorous religion of the masses. Thus we have learnt to recognize that the character of Jesus is wholly, that of St. Paul principally, untheological and pre-dogmatic, and generally to recognize the lofty simplicity of Primitive Christianity.

This threefold study of the New Testament based on the authentic evidence afforded by antiquity has been associated with a method of inquiry which, instead of isolating the New Testament and Primitive Christianity, seeks to put them back into the place, and time, and particularly into the social class in which they originated. If the New Testament learning of former centuries has generally been too dogmatic and aristocratic, it must in our century become historical and democratic in avowed opposition

thereto. The democratic point of view is of the greatest importance and value, not only for the early history, but for the understanding of the whole two thousand years' evolution of the world-religion. Even after it had found its way from the workshops and cottages into the palaces and schools, Christianity did not shun the workshops and cottages, but remained with its roots fixed in the lower social stratum. Whenever in the revolution of the historical kalendar autumn had stripped the leaves off the tree-tops and the winter storm had torn off the branches, the sap rising upwards from below always awoke the sleeping buds, promising blossoms and rich harvest days. At the beginning there stand Jesus the carpenter, and Paul the tentmaker, and so at the most important turning-point in the later history of Christianity there stands another *homo novus*, Luther, the miner's son, the grandson of a peasant. The whole varied history of Christianity has been far too often regarded as a history of the Christian upper class, as a history of the theologians and churchmen, the schools, councils, and parties, though the really *living* Christianity was often to seek in quite another place than in the councils or in dogmatic lecture-notebooks and folios. Tischhauser, the lecturer to the Bâle Mission, has done good service by writing a German ecclesiastical history of the nineteenth century, in which attention is paid to those undercurrents which are generally ignored because they leave no literary memorials, or because the modest literature which they produce is ousted by the collected works of academic Christianity and Church politicians into the darkest recesses of the *bibliotheca christiana*. As regards the historical estimate of the earliest stage of Christianity, there can be no doubt that every study which is conducted mainly on aristocratic lines will distort the real picture. On the other hand, a mainly democratic method of study yields an abundance of important facts, and not unfrequently new points of view; and here there are still great problems awaiting solution.

'Problems'—that is the subject of which we have yet to speak. To speak on this subject—the present writer knows not whether to call it easy or difficult. He is tempted to call it easy, because he is confident that he sees a number of problems clearly defined, because he is persuaded of the necessity of their solution, and because he

ventures to see in all these problems a portion of his own lifework. On the other hand, he must call the problems difficult, and find it difficult to speak of them, because it means speaking of what is unfinished—of dozens of opened books piled one upon another, hundreds of scribbled slips and sheets of paper, library steps to be climbed, dust to be encountered, dull cloudy days and lamplight, excitement and disappointment, and the miserable bargains that the researcher is forced to make, parting with a single solved problem, and receiving in exchange for it ten unsolved. Our subject is, above all, difficult, because the worker knows that his aim is great, that his accomplishment will share the imperfection of all human work, and that by speaking prematurely of this great aim he will rouse expectations that he is unable to fulfil.

But that is after all the fate, we say the blessed fate, of all true research work: in this respect more nearly related to the work of the artist, it has to temper its strength by striving after an ideal which, being an ideal, is unattainable, but which for that reason floats before our eyes as the goal which must be attained.

The first problem is concerned with the texts themselves. Texts must be collected and carefully edited. More particularly in excavating for papyri in Egypt much yet remains to be done, and the collection and preservation of the despised ostraca are only just beginning. In the publication of papyri it is urgently desirable that even non-literary fragments of apparently insignificant contents should be printed verbatim, especially in the interests of historical philology. It is illogical and unjust to publish almost every tile-stamp of the Roman legions in full, and long papyrus documents of the same period often only in excerpts. Of the inscriptions on stone, metal, etc., we have already said that new editions of the old collections are now in progress. We may here add that the acquisition of new texts, especially excavating for papyri and ostraca, is largely a question of finance, but that even now with comparatively slender means much may be done if a skilful beginning is made. We have special cause to be grateful that recently, even in Germany, the means for such excavations have been provided by wealthy persons of scholarly tastes, thus following the gratifying example long set by England and America.

The second problem for research concerns the competent working-up of the texts in the interests

of philology, literary and religious history. It is highly gratifying to note with what zeal the philological work has been taken up. In view of the numerous works on the history of the Greek language in the period between Alexander the Great and the Byzantines, we must fairly speak of a renaissance of Greek philology. Next, the literary study of the ancient world will be promoted by working out more precisely the distinction between what is literary and what is non-literary on the basis of the new texts. One great task especially lies before us here: the history of ancient letter-writing must be written,—and that is now possible. Immeasurably great are the single problems in religious history. Works of the type of Cumont's brilliant monograph on the cult of Mithra, already mentioned, are needed on many other cults of the Empire, and here also many distinguished scholars are at work. At the end of these studies—the word 'end,' of course, means here only a new beginning—at the end of these studies there will come a Master, the Mommsen of ancient religious history, who, being at once an exact scholar and an inspired artist, will create a complete picture of the religion and religions of the imperial age, confirming beyond all expectation that verdict of St. Paul's religious and historical insight which the apostle of the Gentiles summed up in the expression *Pleroma*, the time of fulfilment.

These problems will for the most part be solved outside the range of specially theological literature, although the old boundaries between our learned crafts have, by no means to the disadvantage of research, been broken down at many points, and are destined to disappear yet more. But the theological faculties will also receive work in plenty. Briefly the problems before us can be thus formulated: Aided by the self-recorded evidence of antiquity, including, of course, that of ancient Judaism and the Semitic religions of which we have not had to speak here, we have to win a point of vantage from which to study the New Testament scientifically; the exclusively retrospective method, in which the predominating dogmatic and ecclesiastical interests have only too often made us blind to religion, is to be replaced by the historical investigation of religion. In this last phrase 'religion' is to be emphasized as strongly as the 'historical.' It cannot be otherwise, since the study of ancient religious texts,

which are certainly not dogmatic, is bound to restore to us more and more that feeling for the religion in the New Testament which we had almost entirely lost. A whole mass of discussions, unintelligible apart from the inner mysteries of the higher dogmatics of after-generations, and connected with the New Testament only by an artificial bond, will cease to be. A later age, grown powerful indeed, but at the price of spiritual beggary, was dissatisfied with the original simplicity of ancient popular recollections, testimonies, and emblems of faith, and therefore painted them over with glaring colours and disfigured them with a glittering frame. Now, however, the pious hand of the historically trained scholar will conjure up again the old and the genuine from beneath the later additions, and will replace the modern frame with a fresh wreath of olive or Galilean anemone. The whole interpretation of the New Testament, ceasing to be dogmatic interpolation and becoming historical and psychological exegesis, will supply what the New Testament itself hints, but most books on the New Testament do not hint, namely, the historical explanation why Christianity brought about the transformation of the world's religion. And we may add here in parenthesis: this kind of interpretation will do much more for practical Christianity at the present day than the dogmatic exegesis which evaporates the spirit to get at the doctrine. Spiritual forces which had been artificially kept in check will be set free, and will flow forth from the Old Book, bringing life to the new age.

The great work which is to be done on the New Testament divides up into a multitude of separate problems, philological, literary, and religious. In all these single problems, however, about which we will not speak here, one work will be of the greatest value, the compilation of which is at present the most important task awaiting New Testament theology, and on which in conclusion we have something to say more in detail. We refer to the New Testament dictionary.

What is a Dictionary? In most people's opinion it is something very simple: an alphabetical list of foreign words, Latin, French, Italian, or what not, with their meanings. It is something perfectly simple, therefore; a book, we may add, which many persons even of liberal education regard as possessing primarily no strict scientific interest, but as designed only for the practical necessities of life;

just like, let us say, a railway time-table or a directory, a handsome volume to the eye, but within rather a mechanical than a learned production. Or, perhaps, at the word 'dictionary' we think of the days when, poring over Cæsar's account of the construction of the Rhine bridge, and coming across a most unpleasant number of hard words, we opened the dictionary and in a moment knew what this or that peculiar word meant. All of which is indeed extraordinarily simple, at least for any one who knows his A B C and so much more as to be aware that he must look for the word *trabs* under the letter T.

In striking contrast with the widespread learned depreciations of the dictionary is an equally widespread servile submission to the single explanations of the dictionary. 'Here is the word; that must be the meaning,' is the thought of thousands who, having a foreign word to interpret, fly to consult the dictionary.

The scientific view and scientific lexicography begin, on the other hand, as soon as it is acknowledged misleading to think that the meaning of a word can be at once read out from the book, or as soon as it is recognized that every word has its history, and that we may not venture to speak learnedly about a word until its history has been explained, *i.e.* its origin and the fortunes which have determined its meaning or meanings. This, then, is the task of scientific lexicography: to trace the history of words from the earliest times represented by our materials—nay, more: from the primitive stage of the language which comparative philology enables us to reconstruct hypothetically—down to the moment when we find the words in use by any given speaker or writer.

Thus, though it has many mechanical accessories, and though the usual system of alphabetical arrangement is based on practical, not on scientific considerations, lexicography is an historical science. It is the historical census of the vocabulary.

As an historical science it is of quite recent growth. Lexicons have been in use for thousands of years; historical dictionaries have only existed since last century. Two of the newest great dictionaries, neither of them yet finished, may be mentioned by way of example: the dictionary of the Egyptian language prepared by the Berlin Academy of Sciences, and the great Latin dictionary promoted by an association of various academies, the *Thesaurus Linguae Latine*.

There is also a Greek Thesaurus, a large, expensive work in nine folio volumes, but it in no way satisfies the requirements of scientific lexicography, and is in every respect obsolete. The same applies to all other Greek dictionaries, even the *Mega Lexikon* now publishing at Athens, which is great indeed, but not a lexicon. All things considered, we may pass this judgment on Greek lexicography at the present day: that probably no other department of classical philology is in an equally backward state.

And then these Greek dictionaries, that were already antiquated on the day of their publication, were fated to witness the period of epigraphy and papyrus research. It was as though the director of a museum, who had covered every square yard of his poor, badly lighted galleries with old paintings, often wrongly labelled, were suddenly to receive a donation of hundreds more pictures of great age. The director wrings his hands and asks where he is to put all the treasures. Greek lexicography has not yet been able to open new rooms for the enormous increase of material due to the new discoveries,¹ and so all the precious gifts, literally gifts of the Danaï, are still in their packing-cases in the corridors and yards, and no one knows when it will be possible for the museum attendants to come with the hammer and crowbar.

The fate of Greek lexicography as a whole has been shared also by that special branch of it called New Testament lexicography.

New Testament or, more generally speaking, Biblical lexicography has an extensive past. The Jew Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of St. Paul, was probably the author of a lexical work on the proper names of the Old Testament. The Library of the University of Heidelberg possesses a third or fourth century papyrus fragment of an old Christian lexicon, also dealing with the explanation of the Hebrew names, and probably connected somehow or other with Philo's work.²

But New Testament lexicography proper is not yet 300 years old. The first special dictionary

of the New Testament was published by Georg Pasor at Herborn in 1619, and had a long history: In edition after edition, for over a century and a half, it regulated the New Testament studies of many generations. Besides the large edition two abridgments of different sizes were called for. Though nearly all that Georg Pasor was able to ascertain with the resources at his disposal is now obsolete, we nevertheless look back with gratitude upon the lifework which the hard-working scholar accomplished first at Herborn and then, during the horrors of the Thirty Years' War, at Franeker in Friesland.

After Pasor there came a long series of New Testament dictionaries. The last, and probably also the best, was that by the American scholar Joseph Henry Thayer, an independent revision of the excellent New Testament dictionary by Wilibald Grimm. Thayer closes the older period of New Testament lexicography, and it is an honour to American Biblical scholarship that the close was so brilliant. The more recent editions of the dictionary of the late Greifswald Professor of Theology, Hermann Cremer, which, on the whole, rests rather on a dogmatic than on an historical foundation, constitute, despite occasional borrowings from inscriptions and papyri, no real advance on Grimm and Thayer.

Of course these dictionaries compiled by the older generation also witnessed the renaissance of Greek philology due to the discovery and working-up of the new linguistic remains, and for no other book in the world are the inscriptions, papyri, etc., so valuable in lexical matters as for the New Testament.

The situation, therefore, from the scholar's point of view, is here the same as in general Greek lexicography, namely, the new epoch calls imperatively for a new dictionary of the New Testament.

What is the new dictionary to do? It must give a trustworthy account of the history of each of the five or six thousand words in the New Testament, and show particularly in what senses these words were used at the time in the East and West of the Greek-speaking world. For both of these purposes the new texts, with which the lexicographers could not or would not trouble themselves, must be worked through page by page and line by line. Hundreds of separate facts will thus be noted in a few days; as the years go by the

¹ What constitutes a very meritorious beginning is the painstaking work of the venerable Dutch scholar, H. van Herwerden, *Lexicon Græcum suppletorium et dialecticum*, Lugduni Batavorum, 1902; to which the same author added an *Appendix*, Lugduni Batavorum, 1904.

² Published with facsimile and commentary by the present author in *Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrus-Sammlung*, I. *Die Septuaginta-Papyri*, etc., Heidelberg, 1905, pp. 86-93.

amount of material excerpted on paper-slips will swell to thousands and tens of thousands of observations. But the book will also be distinguished by its freshness and directness of treatment. Where formerly we had only a collection of casual items, we shall now discover lines of relationship stretching through the centuries. This may be shown by a comparatively simple example. At the beginning of Chapter IV. we quoted the words of Jesus about 'benefactors.' He refers to the custom, common in that age, of bestowing on men who had deserved well of the public the title of *εὐεργέτης*. This custom was already familiar to us from the writers of the time, but how much more lifelike and real does it become when, by studying the Eastern and Western commemorative inscriptions and the coins, we are able to trace it for eight centuries on the monuments themselves. The New Testament dictionary will, therefore, have to quote the inscriptions and coins as well as the literary evidence,¹ e.g. the Thessalian Sotairos inscription of the 5th cent. B.C.; inscriptions from Delphi, *circa* 370 B.C.; from Olus (in Crete), 3rd cent. B.C.; Delphi, 3rd cent. B.C.; Amorgos, about the middle of the 2nd cent. B.C.; coin (from Ptolemäis-Akko) of Alexandros I., Bala, 150-145 B.C.; coin (from Tyre) of Antiochus VII., 141-129 B.C.; coin of the same king from Arados in Phoenicia; inscriptions from Kotyrta in Laconia, 1st cent. B.C.; Methana, end of 1st cent. B.C.; Delphi, beginning of 1st cent. A.D.; Ancyra, *temp.* Trajan; Bedir-Bey, in Caria, imperial period; Goel-Bazar, in Bithynia, between 102 and 114 A.D.; Tchoukour-Keui, in Bithynia, 210-211 A.D.; Mile-tus, *circa* 250 A.D.

Are these too many examples? We believe that no trouble can be too great when the object

¹ Of course, every inscription will be quoted with a reference to the work in which it is published. We have omitted the references here for the sake of brevity.

is to re-create the background to any saying of Jesus. And the object is, moreover, in every case to determine how men of the early age understood and were bound to understand the New Testament. Hence the list of examples has to be continued into the second and third century A.D.

Not till the material has been collected by dint of much patient toil—the lexicographer's field is the world—shall we be able to venture on the final stage: to reconstruct the background of Primitive Christianity out of all the hundreds and thousands of paper-slips by writing the MS. of the New Testament dictionary.

Nevertheless we run a grave risk, to which many a scholar has succumbed, of losing ourselves and our individuality under the burden of paper-slips—and that in an age which looks for men who can do something more than arrange slips and correct proofs. In the midst of such work we perhaps hear it asked whether he who prunes a vine, goes down into a coal-mine, binds up a scalded limb, or helps to reclaim a depraved man, does not do more for humanity than the man who intends to write a new book, adding one more to the hundred thousand volumes which, like an inherited encumbrance, enslave our race in bondage to the past. . . .—No, not merely enslave, but also educate by the example of the past.

Therefore there remains to the scholar amid the paper-slips and the dust of his workroom the certainty that his work on the past is helping to put old truths once more into circulation, setting free old forces for the service of the new times. And so the day may come when the word *Thesaurus*—literally 'treasure'—may also be applied to the dictionary which New Testament scholarship claims as its own. If it does not itself constitute a treasure, it will at least facilitate access to the treasury from which for well-nigh two thousand years humanity has drawn coined gold.