

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

Entre Nous.

WHAT THEY SAY.

Nothing touches people so nearly as reality, and there is nothing about which opinions are more confidently bandied than about the nature of what is real.¹

'You,' Bismarck said to the Poles, 'will never realise your ambitions except as the result of a war, disastrous to Germany, when Prussia has been smashed to pieces.'²

Bismarck might be satisfied with his power to convert. He, too, now opened his Bible and read Ps 93^{3,4}, which greatly comforted him. Yet he also wrote with perfect sincerity: 'We have good confidence, but we must not forget that Almighty God is very capricious (*sehr launenhaft*).'³

Bismarck undertook the apparently impossible task of convincing his sovereign and countrymen that in 1864, 1866, and in 1870 they were fighting, not an aggressive, but a defensive, war. Neither Moltke nor he himself believed that—quite the contrary. But it was essential that the King and Prussia—the professors, the lawyers, the bourgeois at his desk and the peasant in the fields—should believe it. And they did—in the end.⁴

I believe we all really admit in our hearts that a great part of the best practical Christianity of our country is to be found among the Nonconformists, and that there is no word which requires more careful and charitable application than the word 'schism.'⁵

The religious situation, then, is something of this kind. The 'shaking' of established institutions and established ideas which the world-wide convulsion of the war has brought about has generated and produced into the light not only a great deal of criticism, shallow and profound, of existing religious institutions and creeds, but also a widespread positive aspiration, which is vocal and intelligible, towards the restoration into prominent emphasis of the two most fundamental and original elements of the Christian Creed—the Lordship of

¹ A. McDowall, *Realism*, 2.

² C. G. Robertson, *Bismarck*, 389.

³ *Ibid.* 204.

⁴ *Ibid.* 170.

⁵ Bishop Gore, *Dominant Ideas*, 35.

Jesus and the Mission of the Spirit to constitute the visible Christian Church His Spirit-bearing body—His organ and instrument for self-expression and action in the world.⁶

The story of the elder brother has often been treated as if it were for all practical purposes a new parable. Surely this is to misread it. The younger son has had his gay time in the far country; and when times change for the worse all he has to do is to make for home, where he will be received with open arms and every mark of distinction, with never a word of the shameful past. We do not find it so in life. The conversation between the father and the elder brother is not a superfluous addition to the story, but a second and integral chapter. The elder brother wants to know, as we all want to know, whether after all the younger son has had the best of it. And the father says 'No.' The prodigal returns indeed, but he does not return as he went. His share of the parental estate, youth, health, reputation, purity, all are gone; and he has a new inheritance of a load of bitter memories. Long weary years of patient uphill work will not bring him back to a position quite like that which he destroyed in a few reckless months.⁷

CERTAIN TOPICS.

The Paradise of the Apocalypses.

Over against these pictures of vengeance, we find in the Apocalypses a presentation of the joys that await the righteous. This side of their message contains many beautiful and tender sayings, and is almost as vivid as the other, as lavish in imagery, as fertile in fancy. The pictures of future blessedness are as emphatic and unrelieved as the pictures of perdition. As the wicked have no light in their darkness, so the righteous have no shadows in their light. They are perfectly victorious, happy and strong; they dwell in a new world with God and His Anointed; are clothed with light as with a garment and walk in eternal goodness and truth. They are satisfied with the likeness of the Lord, and reap in perpetual harvest the fruits of all their sorrow.

⁶ *Ibid.* 114.

⁷ Professor J. E. McFadyen in *Jesus and Life*, 34.

'On the heights of that world shall they dwell,
 And they shall be made like unto the angels,
 And be made equal to the stars;
 And they shall be changed into every form they
 desire,
 From beauty into loveliness,
 And from light into the splendour of glory.'¹

A Revival.

When I left London for America in 1904 there was a religious revival at work in Wales which was unlike any other movement of the kind, both in its method and its quality. It was not organized, it had no outstanding preacher, it was scarcely directed; it was in the strict sense of the word a movement, a mysterious stirring of the depths, a spreading wave, a swelling and rush of spiritual tides that swept through the entire Principality. I remember an agnostic journalist telling me that no sooner did he reach Wales than there fell on him a curious awe. He had intended to write a cynical article for his newspaper—all his articles were cynical—but he was overwhelmed by the sense of a spiritual power which he could not comprehend. He came back to London with his article unwritten. 'I feel,' he said, 'as though I had seen God.'²

Blood and Iron.

On 29th September 1863, Bismarck gave expression in debate to the famous sentence: 'Germany has its eyes not on Prussia's Liberalism, but on its might. . . Prussia must reserve its strength for the favourable moment, which has already more than once been missed. The great questions of the day will not be decided by speeches and resolutions of majorities—that was the blunder of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron.' Spoken with calm conviction, that phrase burst like a shell in a powder magazine. It roused a hurricane of indignation through Germany. No such language had been heard from a Prussian Minister since 1815, and if men needed convincing that the Landtag was confronted with the Junker of 1849, the proof was surely there from the Minister-President's own lips.³

A Nation's Conscience.

The Polish rebellion of January 1863 precipitated a European crisis. The sympathy of Western and Central Europe, alike in the governments and their people, with the Polish effort to secure national

unity and administrative autonomy—freedom as a race from Russian tyranny—is very remarkable and profoundly significant of the grip of Liberal and Nationalist ideals on the temper of the age. In London, Paris, Turin, and Vienna, the Polish cause was acclaimed with enthusiasm. The Poles were fighting for the inalienable right of a nation to work out its salvation and establish its civilization as a self-governing unit in the fraternity of European National-States. The disintegrated Germany of the Federal Bund and denationalized Austria were no whit behind the new Italy, France, and Great Britain in their Polish sympathies. The contrast, indeed, is striking between the manifestation in 1863 of public opinion in Prussia and non-Prussian Germany, in support of the Poles, and in sincere reprobation of the terrible severity with which the defeated rising was crushed by the Russian autocracy, and the cold-blooded equanimity with which Germany and the Magyarized Dual Empire of 1876 and 1896 condoned, when they did not positively approve, the more terrible treatment of the Balkan Slavs and the Armenians by the Ottoman autocracy. Only by such a contrast can we realize the strength of the Liberal movement and of the moral forces behind it, with which Bismarck wrestled in 1863, and register in 1896 the atrophy of a nation's conscience and the withering of its ideals, when for two generations it has been drugged by the doctrine that the great questions of the day can be decided only by blood and iron.⁴

The Demand of Religion.

Out of the mighty struggle of life there has developed in man, among other things, a tremendous capacity for endurance, heroism and courage—all the qualities which go to make up the fighting capabilities of man. But of late years, at any rate, religion has made little, if any, demand upon these qualities. Instead of offering men a challenge that will thrill every drop of blood within them, it has sought to commend itself to them as an almost certain road to prosperity and happiness, its aim apparently being to make its appeal as easy and attractive as possible.⁵

¹ *Ibid.* 137.

⁵ E. H. Reeman, *Do We Need a New Idea of God?* 117.

¹ J. H. Leckie, *The World to Come and Final Destiny*, 11.

² W. J. Dawson, *The Father of a Soldier*, 112.

³ C. G. Robertson, *Bismarck*, 122.