

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

by the extremity of his ritualism. But he is at least fair to the spiritualist, while he shows how needless to a believer in Christ the whole spiritualistic position is and how hurtful.

Professor Alexander Souter, D.Litt., has translated for the S.P.C.K. series of Latin Texts, two of Tertullian's *Treatises*, the one Concerning Prayer and the other Concerning Baptism (3s. net). The text he has used is that of the Vienna 'Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.' He has made his translation and written his notes independently of all other editions. The Introduction is short, full of matter, and most accurate.

Number nine of the S.P.C.K. 'Texts for Students' is *The Inscription on the Stele of Méša* commonly called *The Moabite Stone* (6d. net). The little book contains the text of the Stone, both in Moabite and in Hebrew, with a new translation. The author is the Rev. H. F. B. Compston, M.A.

The S.P.C.K. 'Helps for Students of History' are increasing. This month we have to notice the issue of five volumes—*An Introduction to the Study of Colonial History*, by A. P. Newton, M.A., D.Litt., B.Sc. (6d. net); *Parish History and Records*, by A. Hamilton Thompson, M.A., F.S.A. (8d. net); *Hints on the Study of English Economic History*, by W. Cunningham, D.D., F.B.A. (8d. net); *The French Renaissance*, by Arthur Tilley, M.A. (8d. net); and *The French Wars of Religion*, by the same author (6d. net).

It is not hesitation in assigning universality and finality to the Christian religion that makes so many of us desirous to know all that can be

known about other religions; nor is the desire due solely to the scientific and searching temper of our age. We now believe that God left not Himself without witness even in Arabia when Muhammad gathered the wild and warlike tribes round him and gave them the Qur'an for their instruction. And our desire is to discover the truth which the Qur'an contains that we may know God better and that we may be the better instruments of His hand to add to the Qur'an the knowledge of the grace of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Teaching of the Qur'an is the title of a work written by the Rev. H. Weitbrecht Stanton, Ph.D., D.D., and published by the Central Board of Missions and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (7s. net). It satisfies our desire to the uttermost. A trained scholar and an intimate student of both the life and the literature of Islam, Dr. Stanton is also a highly accomplished writer. He has spared no pains to make this book perfect and complete, wanting nothing. There is a history of the growth of the Qur'an; its teaching is classified and expounded; and there is a most useful Subject Index, based perhaps upon Hughes's Dictionary of Islam, but to tell the truth much more accurate than that useful book. We congratulate the author on a difficult work well done.

Mr. Norman E. Dando is another preacher to children. He preaches through the 'Banbury Advertiser' first, and then through a book called *Cleaning the Boots* (Stockwell; 2s. net). He forgets the parents and gives himself wholly to boys and girls from ten to fourteen. He is neither moral nor spiritual; he is simply natural.

Christ and God.¹

BY THE REVEREND HUGH ROSS MACKINTOSH, M.A., D. PHIL., D.D., PROFESSOR OF
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH.

'GOD,' writes Tyndal, the martyr translator of our English New Testament, 'is not man's imagination, but that only which He saith of Himself.' If we let our minds wander about just at random, picking up our ideas anywhere, our thoughts of

God are as likely to be wrong as right. The Jews had a genius for religion, and yet you find Jesus telling them repeatedly that their conceptions of God were erroneous and certain to lead to mischief. So we, if we gather our impressions of God indiscriminately from a variety of quarters—surface studies of history, queer books, the newspapers, talks with people in a railway carriage—are likely

¹ At more than one point in the following pages there are echoes of Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin's fine volume, *Some Christian Convictions*.

enough to end up with a picture that gravely misrepresents Him. He is so great, anyhow, that the antecedent probability is we never could discover the truth unless He took the initiative and told us. And the Christian religion is the religion which teaches that God *did* take the initiative in a certain way, in order to be sure we knew Him properly; and that this way is Jesus Christ.

Christ and God—that is our subject now. Look a single moment at these three words—Christ and God. Isn't it rather suggestive that we can put these two names close up to each other, utter them in one breath, without the slightest sense of incongruity? I have never seen an address called 'St. Paul and God,' or 'Abraham Lincoln and God,' or 'Mr. Gladstone and God,' or 'Florence Nightingale and God.' And certainly, had these people seen their own names in that collocation, I expect they would have been horrified. They would have said, 'Don't be irreverent.' But about 'Christ and God' we cannot feel like that. Instinctively we are aware that the two names go well together, and that the people who have done most for the world's well-being have thought so too. And stranger still, we have an inkling that Jesus would have agreed with them. He did not think it at all unfitting that He should put Himself into one sentence alongside of the Father. That either revolts one or it arrests one profoundly.

When we turn over the pages of the Evangelists—and we must go by them, if we are not to talk mere whimsies—one thing leaps to the eye. It is this: Jesus never doubted that He knew God. It was knowledge by acquaintance. There were no abstract arguments; He never forced men to their knees by sheer reasoning; what He did was to put out His hand and lift a veil. No question that He had a special familiarity with God ever entered His mind. Whether speaking the parables or healing the sick or defending the oppressed or forgiving sin, always He obviously felt that He was acting for God, that God was acting *in* Him. The sense never left Him of a peculiar touch with God which He had no desire to keep to Himself, but which He longed to communicate to men, because He knew it would make all the difference to their hopes and fears. The consciousness of God was like a garment of light in which He walked.

Jesus was quite sure of His insight into God, and His perpetual fellowship with Him; perhaps

it is still more wonderful that those who knew Christ best, the disciples, had no doubt of it either. It is no unheard-of thing for a man to credit himself with powers which all his friends scout the very thought of: but Jesus' friends, the people who had watched Him, had an unclouded certainty about His nearness to the Most High. That was what *made* Jesus, for them. We can't think of Marshal Foch without instantly thinking of the War; and it was literally impossible for an Evangelist to remember Jesus and leave out His connexion with God—that suffusing and encompassing Presence that put Him in a class by Himself. The disciples had a tremendously high conception of God, particularly after Jesus was done with them; and yet they saw Jesus and God together. As the two stereoscopic pictures, right and left, merge into one solid object—so, when they looked back, they saw Christ and the Father as one. It is an extraordinary certificate to Jesus. It leaves you wondering whether there was really any limit to Him. They felt He was completely like the Father He had worshipped, and they put Him beside God in their imagination and their prayers. That was His right place; it was there He belonged.

There, then, is our great point—God is wrapped up in Christ: the two resemble each other so much they really can't be separated. Now that Christ has been here, it is genuinely impracticable for us to detach the view of God that goes with us into working, loving and praying from Jesus of Nazareth. And when our mind travels back to the ages before Christ came, we have to conceive of God as preparing for this, as being unable to refrain from disclosing Himself in Jesus.

Some one says: 'How am I to be sure that God is exactly like Jesus? I have heard people say He isn't in the least; and you surely aren't going to say it is self-evident that the God indicated by the present condition of Europe has a Christlike character?' That is an enormous difficulty; if we get over it, it can only be with a struggle and real prayer.

But the practical point I want to make is this. You feel it questionable whether the Unseen Power behind the world is genuinely like Jesus—have you taken pains to know Jesus closely? I don't mean have you read books about Him, or listened to addresses; but have you put your mind steadily to the Gospel narratives? I have known a man

spend three months in a laboratory identifying a bacillus; have you lived with Matthew, Mark and Luke in order to get to know, away beyond all doubt, what manner of person He actually was?

Suppose you have. You have dwelt in Christ's company as He spoke of repentance, and laid His hand on the sick, and said to the paralytic man, 'Courage, brother, your sins are pardoned,' and appealed to Zaccheus' hospitality and changed him by friendship, and had the hem of His garment touched in the crowd by the woman, and confronted wrong alone, and set His face to go to Jerusalem, and drank the lonely cup of agony in Gethsemane—you have listened, and watched, and reflected. You have felt—this is quite possible, quite reasonable—that you know Jesus better than you do any of your contemporaries. Well, now, what are you going to do with that Figure? Where are you going to place Him? He is Highest in the Highest realm you know, and you cannot conceive anything more high—no more perfect combination of Love, and Righteousness and Forceful Purpose, you feel, can be imagined. Either there is no God, or the God there is, is morally inferior to Jesus, or He is just precisely what Jesus is. If I had never heard of God before, should I not be excused if I cried out, This is the God for me? He shames me by His reality; He exalts me by His love; He passes into me and through me His own will to redeem; He clarifies and realizes for me my highest inspirations from the unseen. I stand before Him, and, do what I will, I cannot but have awakened in me a religious response. In other words, only let us get close up to Jesus, so as really to make Him out, and we find we have no other use for the word 'God' but to apply it to Him. *That* is God, or we may put the word away. Had we not seen Jesus, we might have been satisfied with less; but by His character He has spoiled us for any poorer or lower idea of the Divine.

That is what the word Revelation means. The Revealer is he who opens a new world for you, of Truth, Goodness, Beauty. And always after he has shown it, you say to yourself, Yes, I know, it was bound to be like that. So Christ lives before you—teaching, healing, helping, forgiving—and you wake up, after looking at Him for a while, to discover you have a new impression of God. And you say to yourself, gratefully, adoringly, Yes, I know, it was bound to be like that. God, if I

have a God, could not be anything but a copy of Jesus Christ.

Just here let us guard ourselves against a misapprehension which is sometimes created by our habit of speaking about Jesus as the picture or portrait of God. When I stand before a great portrait, it may be stately and beautiful, but one fact I observe—it doesn't *move*. It does not act or get things done. It is still life. But when I look at Jesus in the Gospels, wondering what He reveals about God, I see that He is moving—He is going somewhere. He does not drift through life, He makes unswervingly for a goal that puts its stamp on every detail of His career and bars out many things that might otherwise have been permissible. He is absolutely absorbed in getting the Kingdom of God established in the world of mankind—the new, better, gladder order of things in which God's glorious will is realized. And I further can make this out, as I keep on looking, that He regards no price as too high if only He can have that purpose accomplished. Not even the price of death, in shame and pain and darkness. Whatever the reason, Jesus ended at Calvary, and He went to Calvary of His own accord.

You can't leave the implications of that out of the new conception of God you are allowing Jesus to teach you. It proclaims two things about the Father. To begin with, He has a purpose for this planet of ours and for the human family gathered on its surface. The world is a ship, not an iceberg, and there is a great hand upon the rudder. God is pursuing a vast world-embracing plan that spells Love and Righteousness just as much as Christ was pursuing a plan when He taught and cured and prayed and gathered disciples and refused a crown in Palestine two thousand years ago. Many things have been said about Jesus; but I have never heard of its being said that He lived at random. Follow Him from Nazareth to Jerusalem, and then to Cæsarea Philippi, and eventually to Golgotha, and at every step you can tell 'that something deep is on.' He has a plan, and the plan is not for His own advantage, and He is convinced that the happiness and value of every human life is bound up with its coming into line with His great object. God is like that. He means something with history; He is bent on bringing us to some point of building some vast enduring beautiful social structure out of the lives into which He enters:

The other truth is that, if we may use the expression, God will stick at nothing in the way of sacrifice to get His plan executed. Jesus did not go back when death confronted Him; He paid the price and counted the object well worth its cost. We can carry that over to God just as it stands. Henry Sloane Coffin has said that 'at Calvary we see the rocky coast-line of men's thoughts and feelings against which the incoming tide of God's mind and heart broke; and we can hear the moaning of the resisted waves'; then he adds that 'the incoming waters break into the silver spray of speech, and their one word is Love.' If His Kingdom can be set up in no other way, then God is ready for the cost. Life is teaching us all the time that the best things cost most, and God Himself bows to that law.

Don't you think Christendom is in danger, just at the moment, of settling its conceptions of God with the Cross kept well out of sight? We so readily avert our eyes from tragedy. We prefer to grasp at something that is cheap and easy. Anything sombre or morally profound and silencing daunts and mystifies us. I believe the Church in many quarters is called upon to guard itself supremely against a happy-go-lucky notion of the Divine Fatherhood; against playing with the thought of a Fatherhood that means nothing more than smiling benevolence, and, in a phrase of the New Testament, 'winks' at evil. Well, a Fatherhood that insults the startled and agonizing conscience because it is regarded as treating things like cruelty and selfishness and uncleanness lightly and wiping them out with good-humoured tolerance will not carry us far. If you want a Fatherhood of God that will stay with you; and support you in view of life's worst realities instead of drugging you with moral levity, take your thought of it out of Jesus' experience, and therefore put at its very heart the Cross. Build your view of God round the tremendous fact that He judged a Divine death for the sinful necessary to their redemption, and that, since the sacrifice had to be, He willingly stooped to make it. Calvary is a window opening into God's heart. There we see into the life of the Lord of heaven and earth. 'Behind the cross of wood outside the gate of Jerusalem we catch sight of a vast, age-enduring cross in the heart of the Eternal, forced on Him generation after generation by His children's unlikeness to their Father.' *That* sense of God's Fatherliness goes down to the

depths of our being and thrills the conscience with ennobling satisfaction. It fortifies the soul to know that in our desperate struggle with evil we have on our side One who took the conflict so seriously that He grappled with sin in pain, and put it away by the sacrifice of Himself.

If, then, we take our cue from Jesus Christ we must think of God as Redemptive Love, not shallow or good-natured, but passionately righteous and utterly self-denying. But does this Love have power over the world? It ought to be sovereign; our hearts tell us it should be uppermost, but then is it so? Is there any experience of Jesus that illustrates the sovereign power of God—exhibits Him to us as sufficiently in control over all things to accomplish through them His will? That is where the Resurrection breaks in with its vindication of God as mighty to save. He was mighty to save Jesus from death's grasp, therefore we know He is wise and strong enough not to let nature or men defeat His purpose. All along during Jesus' life, God was 'the loving Response from the unseen which answered the trust of Jesus'; and that loving Response went on after Jesus had bowed His head and died. Like the Psalmist long before, Jesus had trusted the Father so utterly as to say, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave, Thou wilt not suffer Thine holy one to see corruption'; and the Father did not play Him false. In the plenitude of His loving Power He kept His word to Jesus His Son, and lifted Him above the strangle-hold of death. There is nothing that can hope to prevail when matched with the Father's redemptorial energies acting through a perfectly consecrated will. That is the kind of God men believe in through Jesus Christ.

Now if what Christ discloses about God is true, it is mightily important for our life, and for our views and convictions about the world and religion and society and everything. For example, clearly if Jesus was right, if He represented God correctly, then *you* can have communion with God. Jesus had it, and He offered it to others through Him as intermediary. He brings God to us, in the sense that He lives God before our eyes; He brings us to God, in the sense that just by being Himself He evokes our trust for the Father whose love is shining through His life, and persuades us to put away suspicion and incredulity and pride. An intermediary is a person who brings people together, and Jesus does that for God and us.

Supposing He has done that, supposing you have allowed Him to do it and are now infinitely in debt to Him for having done it, what will it mean for us to know God as our Father? Not merely that we accept the idea of His kinship with our nature and rely on His kindly disposition; but that we let Him establish a direct line of authorship with our life and father our impulses, our thoughts, our ideals, our intentions. Jesus kept accepting His life and its meaning at intervals from God. As has been said: 'His every wish and motive had its heredity in the Father whom He trusted with loyal childlike confidence, and served with a grown son's intelligent and willing comradeship.' It is up to us to let Jesus infect us with that spirit.

Again, if God is similar to Jesus, and we see Him through Jesus' eyes, we shall be quite sure that there is just one God, and that He rules everything there is. Polytheists have a host of gods—one for the forest, one for the wind, one ruling the sea and another the sky and so on. We imitate them, do we not? by having one thought of God for home life and religious fellowship, and another for business and politics and international affairs. All that division must go; if Jesus is trustworthy at all, what we see in Him is the only possible God. His will is the principle that must be put down at the foundation of family life, prosperous industry, decent statesmanlike foreign relations, righteous social arrangements. To put it in a single word, He is not our God only, He is the God of other people. When we treat our neighbours shamefully, or acquiesce in their being treated

shamefully because they are so weak they cannot call society to account, then it is He we have to deal with really. That is how things are, according to Jesus. If He is right about the centre, He must be right about the circumference. If we see what He saw, we must see a Father with a passionate interest in all others—men and women and children, light-skinned and dark-skinned races, Britons and Germans—and when we think of other people, and adjust our life to theirs, we have to remember that, or there will be trouble.

Long since men believed that, were the great Nile tracked to its source, its origin might be found in some tiny spring, some scanty nameless rivulet. But when explorers finally pierced the secret, it was to discover that the river sprang from a vast inland sea, sweeping with horizon unbroken round the whole compass of the sky. So we are prone to fear lest the river of salvation, that flows past our doors and into which we have dipped our vessels, might, if followed back to its fountain-head, prove to be fed only from a grudging and uncertain store. But in truth the Father's mercy is like the rolling sea at the continent's heart—that sea from which the great river bursts, full and brimming at its birth. It is from everlasting to everlasting. Shall we not rise up to take it for our own? Shall we not live in the joy of it, and freely take its power for holiness, for power, for brotherhood? 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

In the Study.

Virginius Puerisque.

Birthdays of Good Men and Women.

II.

'Who against hope believed in hope.'—Ro 4¹⁸.

GLOOMY NOVEMBER!

'Tis late before the sun will rise,
And early he will go;
Grey fringes hang from the grey skies,
And wet the ground below.

The sun itself is ill bested
A heavenly sign to show;
His radiance, dimmed to glowing red,
Can hardly further go.¹

These verses were written by a poet whose memory is very much beloved. One of the reasons why so many people love him is that even into his very saddest poems he brings a note of hope. They never end in the sad minor key.

¹ *The Poetical Works of George MacDonald*, i. 365, 366.