

Macpherson's 'Christian Dogmatics.'

MR. MACPHERSON is well known as a careful expositor, and his previous works have been accorded an appreciative reception in the theological world. In this new book on Christian Dogmatics he has covered a much larger field than hitherto, and drawn upon a necessarily wider store of learning. There was certainly room for this effort. Whatever be the value of Hodge,—and the *Systematic Theology* is worth a good deal more than is often thought,—one has a distinctive feeling of its strongly polemic character, for it rather seeks to determine than guide the views of students in a definite direction. Compared with the *Systematic Theology* of Hodge, Mr. Macpherson's is of course a much smaller book, yet we are inclined to think it will prove on the whole the more useful of the two. A student will attain to his own reasoned views regarding dogmatics, and he does not so much require a master as a guide. This is what Mr. Macpherson's manual really is—a guide to the study of Christian Dogmatics from the standpoint of moderate Calvinism. No doubt the views of the author have been urged throughout,—it would be impossible

¹ *Christian Dogmatics*. By Rev. John Macpherson, M.A., author of *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, etc. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898. Price 9s.

to write such a book without this happening,—but they have not been unduly pressed to the exclusion of all others. Indeed, certainly not the least valuable contribution Mr. Macpherson has made, is to be found in the compendious and exhaustive list of the literature under any given subject. Thus a student, desiring to enter upon the great subject of the 'Sinlessness of Jesus,' on turning to this manual, will find (pp. 301–309) an accurate discussion of the question, which will serve as an excellent introduction; but, in the list of literature prefaced to the discussion, he will find himself directed to such works as Ullmann, Lobstein, Hering, Du Bose, together with a large number of minor and less-known contributions. He has thus material to follow out the subject for himself; and undoubtedly this is the only satisfactory method. Mr. Macpherson has, for the first time we believe in English, made this possible over the wide field of Christian Dogmatics; and provided what has certainly been a felt want not always met in the colleges of divinity. His book will, we have no doubt, be widely adopted, as what we conceive it is meant primarily to be, a text-book for students desirous of being thoroughly equipped in their subject. For this reason we heartily welcome it, and wish for it a generous circulation.

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Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

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I.

'Help us, O Lord, for we rest on Thee.'—2 CHRON. xiv. 11.

THIS is a very familiar cry. None is more common in the Bible. 'Help, Lord,' is the frequent exclamation of the Psalmist. 'Lord, help me,' was the cry that Jesus often heard as He walked among the people. 'Help' was the cry from Macedonia that St. Paul heard in his night vision. It is a cry that very naturally arises in emergencies, and these come into all lives. In the first years of our life how helpless we are, how dependent on the care of those who love us! The

human creature is at first the most helpless of all animals, and for a much longer time than any other. The chicken and the cub are far less dependent than the babe. And, as we grow up, we need help still, though we do not always so well realise it. We are apt to begin to think ourselves capable in all things, clever enough to face the world; we are inclined to scorn advice, and to disregard the experience of wiser heads. By and by, however, most of us get past that stage, and, finding that there is not so much genuine and generous help in the world that we can afford to think lightly of it, we learn to prize it in the case of the few who

specially love us and are interested in our welfare. But emergencies will arise where no human help will be of avail. The heart has to direct itself to a higher Source. 'Help, Lord,' is the ultimate cry of the soul.

It is not only in emergencies, however; it is well, too, that in the *enterprises* of life we should recognise our dependence upon God. Not only when we are baffled and beaten, but when we are going forward, even with high hopes, to the undertaking of some work to which we are called. The one sad thing in all Nansen's wonderful story of struggle and endurance, in his effort to reach the Pole, is that there is no reference in it, from beginning to end, to his dependence on a higher Power. It would be so refreshing to come upon some statement in it breathing the spirit of this prayer, 'Help, Lord, for we rest on Thee,' or of the utterance of the Psalmist, 'My times are in Thy hand.' It is a wonderful story of enterprise and emergency, and he came through, but it would be as the gem in the ring, were there even but one solitary reference to his trust in God. How different it was with Luther when entering on his career as a reformer! Great was the enterprise he had undertaken, and hopeless would have been the emergency had he trusted in his own strength and guidance; but his power lay in a deep, possessing, gladdening faith in the help of God. 'Little monk,' said a baron to him, when he was about entering the Diet of Worms, 'thou hast need of great courage, but if thou hast faith in these doctrines which thou teachest, in the name of God go forward.' Luther paused a moment, then replied, 'Yes, in the name of God, forward.'

How important to begin life in the spirit of the text! You, dear boys and girls, are entering upon the great enterprise of your life. It is greater far than you know of yet, and emergencies you do not dream of now will arise; but it means everything to go forward in that spirit. 'Keep me, O God! The sea is so great and my boat is so small,' is said to be the Brittany fisherman's prayer. The ocean of life on which you are embarked is a great one, and small and frail is your bark to contend with the storms that will arise; but, whatever happen, no abiding evil will befall you, you will weather all gales and reach the heavenly haven at last, if, together with all the skill and foresight and resolution you can acquire, there be a humble and sincere dependence upon God.

II.

'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'—PROV. iii. 6.

THE word 'acknowledge,' as ordinarily used, sometimes means little, and sometimes much. It might signify merely a bow of recognition, or it might mean hearty appreciation, involving cost. It is needless to say that, applied to God, it ought to have a deep significance. It is a word used very frequently in business transactions. 'I beg to acknowledge the receipt,' etc. And that may suggest to us our subject here. Remember that our relationship to God should also be on a business footing. There are other ways in which you may look at it—ways more endearing; but do not lose sight of that one—it means business. Dr. Chalmers, the Scotch divine, was once at a meeting where the first speaker had given a rather lengthy address—very fine as a bit of oratory, but with nothing very much to the purpose in it. When he was done, the Doctor rose and said, 'After that brilliant introduction, let us now proceed to business.' It was a sharp rebuke, but in the circumstances probably not undeserved. They had not met simply to hear fine language, they were met to get some work done, and the sooner they proceeded to do it the better.

It was just the reverse way, you may remember, with the prophet Ezekiel. He, the speaker, meant business, but his hearers would have none of him in that sense. He was unto them, it is said, 'as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice.' Certainly they acknowledged him to a certain extent, but not in the practical way the prophet wanted. They listened to his earnest entreaties and exhortations, charmed by his eloquent pleading, but to them it was only like a good song, enjoyed for the time being, but with no lasting effect.

Now, a good song has its own time and its own value; and 'the song that stirs a nation's heart is in itself a deed.' The Bible is full of lovely songs, and about the only thing we are told of heaven is of the music that is there—as the song of Moses and of the Lamb. But, while all that is true, our acknowledgment of God must have the solemnity and regularity and fixedness of a business transaction about it. Our religion must be practical, and not lose itself in mere sentiment. 'Wist ye not

that I must be about My Father's business?' said the Boy Jesus.

Of course, as we said, there are higher ways of looking at the relationship. It is one of father and child, for instance, which means more, far more, than business. Still, the business aspect is a very important and fundamental one. Indeed, in earthly relationships of the dearest kind there is yet the business basis. In marriage, one might say, surely the vows of love are sufficient there. Well, that is the highest view to take of it, and without love it is worse than nothing. Still, the ceremony has to be gone through, the register has to be signed, and it may be all the better if there is an ante-nuptial contract. The whole thing has the fixity and legality of a business transaction. And in the daily dealings in the home life, it is very important to remember the business aspect. It may save friction and irritation, and prevent growing estrangement. If a boy borrows sixpence, say, from his brother, let him be very careful about the paying of it again. He might say, 'Oh, it is only my brother. He won't mind.' But just because he is your brother, be, if possible, all the more careful and correct even in money matters. True, he might not say anything, and might never ask again for the sum lent; but, all the same, if you are mindful and businesslike in these common transactions, mutual respect will not be endangered, and the higher meaning of brotherhood will be all the more fully established.

There is one thing that is a characteristic of good business, viz. that both parties benefit by the transaction. Gambling, for example, is not good business, because there what one party gains another loses. But in good business both parties—buyer and seller—are the gainers. The buyer gets the article he wants at a fair price, and the seller gets the just profit that is his due. Well, that is so in our relation to God. If we acknowledge Him honestly, justly, fully, that is what He wants, and He will be satisfied with His share of the bargain. And we, too, shall find that in every sense we shall profit, and that, for one thing, we shall not look in vain for needful guidance on our daily path.

III.

'And the men did the work faithfully.'—2 CHRON. xxxiv. 12.

THERE is no quality of human nature we come to prize more in life than that of faithfulness.

What is it we look for, and appreciate most, in friends? It is the spirit of faithfulness. We can pardon many things in a friend—an error in judgment, a thoughtlessness of speech or action, even if it should bring loss or suffering to us. We can yet forgive these things, even as, perhaps, we need to be forgiven. But a breach of faith would take all the bloom and the aroma of the friendship away. What is it but their fidelity that attaches us to some of the lower animals? We know that the dog will be faithful to his master whatever befall. Come prosperity or adversity, he will not falter in his attachment. Though the heavens should fall, yet the dog will remain true in his regard. An Edinburgh lawyer said, some time ago, to this effect, that he was sick of mere intellect and cleverness. He could get as much of that as he wanted in the law courts. What he longed to see more of was the spirit of charity and faithfulness in life's relationships.

There are no more cherished incidents in our nation's history than those connected with faithfulness to duty in trying circumstances. Let me mention one that is well known. Nearly fifty years ago, a horseman came galloping at full speed up the streets of Cape Town. He was on his way to Government House with disastrous tidings. Putting his hand to his mouth, he shouted, as he galloped along, to the wondering people on the pavement, 'The *Birkenhead* has gone down!' Men's faces were blanched, and their hearts chilled, at the news. For a time they could hardly comprehend all that it meant—that the troopship, that had left the bay so gaily and gallantly but a few hours before, had sunk beneath the waves. But when, later, all the details became known, then a wondrous story was revealed, worthy to sparkle on 'the jewelled finger of Old Time,'—how the soldiers stood drawn up as on parade, looking calmly on while the boats, full of women and children, left the sinking vessel, none remaining for them; how they stood in their ranks motionless and silent, and, as the ship went down, sank with it, shoulder to shoulder, firing a parting volley ere they disappeared beneath the waters—

'There rose no murmur from the ranks, no thought
By shameful strength unhonoured life to seek.
Their post to quit they were not trained, nor taught
To trample down the weak.'

In the text it is a very humble duty that is referred to—the repairing of the temple; but the

workmen did it faithfully, and what better than that could be recorded of them? Ruskin says that if two angels were sent down from heaven, one to conduct an empire, and the other to sweep a street, they would feel no inclination to change employments; each would carry out his orders heartily and do his work faithfully. Well, that may be true about the angels, but it does not quite hold good of men; for, if we are capable of any higher work, there is certainly nothing wrong in aiming at the higher. There is no virtue in being content to sweep a street if you can do anything better. Still, if that is the work you have to do for the time being, then it means everything to carry the spirit of faithfulness into the doing of it. We need to learn the beauty, in God's sight, of all service faithfully done.

Remember, too, that it is not the deed we do, but the spirit in which we do it, that makes it immortal from God's point of view. Oliver Goldsmith spent a lot of his time writing mere hackwork for the booksellers, in order simply to make a living; but, in the midst of it all, he devoted his strength and the special power of his genius to the production of a work which he hoped to make immortal. And he succeeded. The hackwork is all forgotten now, but his *Vicar of Wakefield* still survives. But in Christian work it is often just the hackwork that is immortal. Most of us have only hackwork to do in the world—common duties, nameless duties, that amount to little or nothing in the eyes of men. If faithfully done, however, they are everything, so far as we are concerned, in the sight of God.

'In all the great, the strange, the old,
Thy presence *careless* men behold.
In all the little, weak, and mean,
Be Thou by faith as clearly seen.'

IV.

'I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I: send me.'—ISA. vi. 8.

IN the first of this month's texts we had the human cry of help ascending to God—so common and so natural. Here we have, what we might hardly expect, God calling to men and asking help from them. He is all-powerful, yet it is through human agency that He works, at least in the advancement of humanity. You find that, in the mission field,

one great object of the missionaries is to train up some of the natives to be missionaries themselves among their brethren. So God wants men to be so imbued with His grace that they shall go forth and be made blessings to others. And, indeed, that is the only way to keep any religion to yourself. There is an old saying that, if you have no religion to spare, you will soon have little to keep.

Observe, however, that there is a *connection between call and qualification*. It is not enough to have the volunteer spirit. A man might volunteer to be one of a lifeboat crew, and, from incapacity, might do more harm than good, might simply be in the way of the others, and would be filling a position that might otherwise have been occupied by a more capable substitute. When a prime minister is forming his cabinet, he does not throw open the positions to the whole Houses of Parliament, and say, Who will undertake the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer? who that of Foreign Secretary? and so on. No, he has, in his mind's eye, certain members whom he thinks best qualified, and he goes to them, and invites them to join him. The call comes to the best qualified. When that call came to Isaiah, it seems to be couched in general terms, and to mean, Who among mankind will go? But, remember, it was only Isaiah, and not all mankind, that heard it; and though the question is put by God in a general sort of way, yet all that it meant was simply this, 'Shall I send *you*? Will *you* go?'

Now we come to the response of the prophet, 'Here am I: send me,'—a hearty and decided answer. In the Bible the answer follows immediately upon the question, but there may have been a long time, for all that, between the first whisperings of the Divine call and this unqualified acceptance on Isaiah's part. Often the man to whom the call comes is the last to realise his fitness for the undertaking. Others see it before him. It was so, often, with those who were called to some special work by God. But God makes no mistakes. Moses was hard to persuade that he was the man to undertake Israel's deliverance. Luther was, for a time, troubled with the idea, so natural to a humble-minded man, 'Can it be possible that I alone am right, and all others, from the Pope downwards, wrong? May I not be presumptuously deceiving myself?' But once such men as these were convinced, they were ready to undertake, and faithful to the end.

'Ready, aye ready,' is an old motto. At the time it was first used, it probably meant simply ready for war, ready to retaliate, and that sort of thing. Taken, however, in a higher sense, there could not be a finer motto. Of all the titles that are given to St. Paul, or that he gives himself—as Paul an apostle, Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, Paul the chief of sinners—we should be inclined to place among the highest that of Paul the ready. He was ready to preach the gospel at Rome, ready to die at Jerusalem, ready to be offered, ready to every good work. It is evident from his life that he was ready for anything that was God's will.

But it is not simply to the wise and great and grown-up that God comes. To you also, as to young Samuel, the call will come according to your qualification. There are some things that may be best done by you, better than by older people. Here is a workman who has dropped his tool down a narrow pipe. He cannot put his hand down to take it out; his hand is too big. He calls a passing schoolboy, and asks him to put down his hand, and bring out the tool. The boy could do what the grown man was unable to do. And in some ways you may have greater influence, among brothers and sisters and companions, than older people—greater influence for good or evil. According to your qualifications, then, God's call will come to you also. May He quicken us all! May He open our ear to hear His calls, and inspire our heart to obey!

V.

'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'—ISA. xi. 9.

As the waters cover the sea. How do they cover it? *Completely.* There are no gaps or inter-spaces. The sailor is glad to get out into the open sea. Near the land he is watchful, but when his pathless track lies far from the shore, he is more at ease. They cover it, too, *abundantly.* There is nothing scanty about the sea. The average depth, geographers tell us, is about thirteen times the average height of land above sea-level. They also cover it *helpfully.* The waters seem to sever country from country, but, really, they are the best means of bringing far separate lands into communication with each other.

What a grand picture, then, is here suggested with regard to the knowledge of God! It will

cover the earth completely. All shall know Him from the least to the greatest. It will be an abundant knowledge. As it is, the earth is full of the glory of the Lord. Everywhere, God. The cataract utters forth God. 'Every common bush afire with God,' but too often we only 'sit round it and pick blackberries.' It is one thing for God to be everywhere, it is another thing for God to be recognized everywhere. But in that happy time herein foretold, the glory of the Lord will be visible and adored, and men will get deep down into the Almighty's heart in the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It will also be a helpful knowledge. It will not lead us to make less of this world's duties, but more. As the waters that seem to separate, yet connect all the more closely, remote lands, so the more truly men know God, the better will they know each other, and the grander will seem the duties of the common day. The whole world would be one great Garden of Eden if that gladsome time were come.

One great blessing resulting from that knowledge is specially mentioned in the chapter—'They shall not hurt nor destroy.' The wolf will not devour the lamb, nor the leopard the kid; the child will fearlessly play with the adder. It is something one can hardly imagine, that beautiful time when Nature shall no more be 'red in tooth and claw.' It may be but a poetical description of the peace and harmony of the Messiah's kingdom. But there is one part, at least, will be literally true. However it be with regard to the attitude of beasts to men, or to each other, man's attitude to the beasts will be one of thoughtfulness, gentleness, and mercy. It is said that a man's dog should be the better of his Christianity, and so it will. 'A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.' And, of course, still more will it be true that man's attitude to his fellow-man will be what it ought to be. One of the saddest thoughts in connection with this earth of ours, as it is, is the frightful callousness and unconcern with regard to human life where God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is not known. Think of a country like Dahomey, where the most prized ornaments are human heads stuck on poles along the highways. But, indeed, even in our own land, and when Christianity had laid some hold upon the nation, the time is not so far behind us when rebels' heads were fixed over city gates, and left to shrivel there.

The Church of Christ may be far from perfect

in our own day, but, at least, it stands for much that is beautiful and helpful among men, and it labours and prays for the fulfilment of its hope that righteousness and peace shall at last be universal. One comprehends that the Church—even the visible building of stone and lime—stands for some measure of realised blessing among men, by even such a simple story as that of the shipwrecked mariners, in doubt as to what sort of coast they had been cast upon,—whether the inhabitants were cannibals, or with some humanity in them,—and whose fears were quite relieved when one of their number, who had climbed a neighbouring

hill, came rushing back, shouting, 'It's all right. We are safe. I saw a church spire in the distance.' The most practical and visible result of the universal knowledge of the Lord will be that men's relationship to each other will be of the happiest and most helpful kind. Then, from Czar to *moujik*, Queen to peasant,

Let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,

That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

Contributions and Comments.

Yabveh in Early Babylonia.

IN the August number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES (p. 522), under the above title, Professor Sayce calls attention to an interesting West Semitic proper name dating from the Khammurabi dynasty, namely, *Ya-ù-um-ilu* (Bu. 88-5-12, 329; *Cuneiform Texts from Babyl. Tablets*, iv. 27). This name, in which the syllable *ya* is written with the usual notation, *i-a*, permits of no other reading, and presupposes a divine name, *Yàum*, i.e. *ya*, with the Semitic nominative ending and imitation. This is, of course, the masculine divine name *A-a* (which I have fully discussed in my *Ancient Heb. Tradition*, a name which may also be read *Ai* as well as *Ya*), only that in *Yàum* further the nominative ending presents itself.

Another interesting personal name, dating from the same period, is *Ha-li-pi-um*, occurring in a list of slaves (Bu. 91-5-9, 324, line 18, published in *Cuneiform Texts from Babyl. Tablets*, ii. pl. 23). Even before the appearance of Professor Sayce's article, I supposed that in this *-pi-um* we have the divine name *Ya-um*, since, as is well known, at that era and even as late as the Tel el-Amarna letters, the sign *pi* has also the values *wa* and *ya*. I hesitated, however, to publish this discovery, because I was unacquainted with any variant of this divine name written in the usual form *Yàum* (*I-a-um*). This *lacuna* has now been filled by

Professor Sayce with his *Ya-ù-um-ilu*, and there can now be no doubt that *Ha-li-pi-um* (which as such gives no sense) should rather be read *Ha-li-ya-um*.¹ The name is of importance in two ways: first, on account of the divine name contained in it; but secondly, also on account of the first element *ha-li* (*khâlî*), in which one immediately recognizes the Arabic synonym of 'ammî, 'my uncle' (cf. *Anc. Heb. Trad.* p. 84). It thus appears that, even at that early date, the paternal uncle ('amm) was distinguished by a special appellation from the maternal (*khâlî*). The circumstance that in the theophorous proper names of the Western Semites 'ammî occurs so frequently, while *khâlî* is very rare (not found at all in Hebrew proper names), certainly does not favour the ideas formulated by Robertson Smith regarding the matriarchate, for upon his theory we should have expected precisely the opposite, namely, a preponderance of *khâlî*.

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¹ It is also to be observed that an Assyrian eponym name of the ninth century B.C. appears as *I-a-ha-lu* (variant *A-a-ha-a-lu*), that is to say, we have the same name, only transposed (cf. the Heb. אַמְמִיִּל, *Ammiel*, and אַמְמִיִּל, *Eliam*). In the *Journal of the Transactions of the Vict. Inst.* xxviii. (1896), p. 35, I already explained the name *Ya-khâlu*, in which Mr. Pinches had recognized the divine name *Ya*, as = 'Yah is my *حال*.'