

words and looks, sharing our dangers in the boat, but out there in the storm and darkness amongst destructive forces, speaking to us by their life and by their death from a distance.'

That is a failure. It does not explain the miracles. It is more than a failure, it is a fault. Not all the beauty of language or charm of sentiment can conceal the ethical delinquency. Mr. Gow knows that that is not what the disciples of Jesus understood by the stilling of the storm or the walking on the water. He knows that that is not what was meant by those who gave the miracles their place in the Gospels.

And what is the occasion of the fault? It is simply failure to recognize the two essential things in every miracle—that it must be the work of one who is competent and that it must be suitable to the time and circumstances.

Mr. Gow does not believe that Jesus was competent to perform a miracle, for he does not believe that Jesus was God. It is none the less remarkable that he should fail in the other respect. He speaks of the disciples of our Lord as if they had lived in the twentieth century. He says: 'The love and reverence of the disciples for Jesus gave them this feeling of his presence in the storm. It is something like the feeling expressed in the well-known lines of *In Memoriam*—

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

Far off thou art, yet ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee, though I die.

But through the influence of Jesus, the perception of the disciples was deeper. They felt his spirit ruling not only in beautiful and peaceful scenes, but in the midst of the darkness and danger round them. That feeling of Jesus in the heart of the storm, in the raging winds and waves, in the destruction and violence which threatened them is the highest perception of love. It is the transfiguration of danger and suffering through love.'

That is all beautiful and true, but not for the disciples of Jesus. Mr. Gow has no more knowledge of them than the Gospels give him. And this is not the picture of the Gospels. The picture of the Gospels is that they were slow of heart to believe. The spiritual presence appeals to Mr. Gow, and the miracles do not. The miracles made their appeal to the disciples and not the spiritual presence. 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and shewed forth his glory, and the disciples believed on him.' It was a miracle of the same kind to the Walking on the Water and the Stilling of the Storm.

Principal Denney as a Theologian.

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By the death of Principal Denney at the summit of his power evangelical religion throughout English-speaking lands has suffered a loss greater, we may say with sober truth, than would have been inflicted by the withdrawal of any other one mind. He seemed to have long years before him. In Scotland he spoke, often with a tongue of fire, to all Churches. He had put them all in debt to

his scholarship and his insight, and they listened to him as people only listen to a wholly disinterested man. The cause of Church Union wavered or advanced in no inconsiderable measure according to his judgment. In the Overseas Dominions and in America, particularly of course in Presbyterian circles, his influence went deep and wide. His own Church trusted him implicitly and drew

inspiration from his profound and passionately experimental faith.

His influence on Christian opinion was aided by an exceptionally lucid and convincing style which invariably complied with Swift's prescription for writing well: 'Have the proper words in the proper places.' None could be in doubt of his meaning; as some one said, he wielded 'the power that flows from the correspondence of word with thought.' No modern theologian exhibited more of that confident and incisive mastery of expression which bites upon the mind like a diamond. But he wrote no paradoxes; to him all epigrams had falsehood written on their face. I think there is some justice in the criticism that he liked to have everything about him just a little clearer than things are, but this ringing clarity gave him all the more purchase on his readers. He charged every argument with an extraordinary intensity of religious feeling of which at times the strain became nearly unendurable. In addition, he wrote with perfect frankness. In the Introduction to one volume he declares (speaking of himself in the third person): 'There is no policy in what he has written, either in its manner or its substance. Nothing, so far as he is conscious, is set down for any other reason than that he believes it to be the truth. . . . To the best of his knowledge he speaks without reserve, and has neither more nor less to say.' This might have been applied to any of his books. Much of his power rested on the recognition of his constitutional inability to hedge.

Denney was a great believer, who even by accident could not have uttered one irreverent or disloyal word. His prayers in the home stirred unwonted depths; you felt he was of one spirit with the martyrs who died for Jesus. Since his death, men of different communions have spoken of him as the conscience of Scotland. They are thinking, for example, of his solemn approbation of the Allies' cause and his equally solemn impeachment of the drink traffic as a curse calling for abolition not 'for the period of the war' but for ever. To a patriot of his sort, the wickedness and folly of the thing were torture. 'The nation,' he wrote, 'is sorely wounded by the war, yet in the liquor trade it opens its own veins, and helps to bleed itself white.'

But we cannot now dwell on his character, although I should myself call him one of the three or four best men I have ever known; our immediate

interest is his theology. In that field he towered above the general body of theological teachers in this country. Some years since, an American student of divinity who had taken a protracted course of study in Europe singled out three men as having made upon him the deepest impression of power: Herrmann of Marburg, Wernle of Basel, Denney of Glasgow. He belonged emphatically to the very small class of great lecturers. Men went into his auditorium expecting something to happen, and came out awed and thrilled.

It is probably true to say that Denney's mind, so far as theology is concerned, represented a constant tension between feeling and insight. His instincts were conservative, but truth ruled him so undividedly that he perpetually moved forward. Thus it hardly came natural for him to study Christianity on the principles of the science of comparative religion; yet he could say of the new method, 'its right is unquestioned, and though like all new things it is apt to go to some heads with intoxicating power, it has brought light to a few dark places in the New Testament, and has doubtless more to bring.' Few men have had his capacity for eliminating the accidental and fixing the universal and permanent—that is, the divine—elements in Christian tradition. Very few, indeed, reflected on the gospel with such utter fearlessness. This gave a singular and unflinching charm to his private talk, and he talked quite as well as he wrote. His mind was always breaking out at a new place. You could not travel over his intelligence and map it out once for all, for a creative evolution went on uninterruptedly. But so deep and strong was his faith that, so far as one could see, these transitions were accomplished without friction.

To live is to change, and Denney's attitude to philosophy, for example, seemed to change more than once. He once said to me that systematic thought appeared to him in one mood the great necessity, in another mood the great evil. On philosophies in general he would have pronounced with the apostle: 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.' But he never wavered in the conviction that consistent Hegelianism in theology means Christianity without Christ. The worst possible preparation for theological study, he has been known to remark with a smile, is second-class honours in philosophy; but in later years he recognized increasingly the

need for intellectual synthesis, and could even declare that whatever else a young man did or did not study before coming up to a Theological College, he ought at least to be trained in philosophy. Quite recently, speaking of his own student days, he told how he himself entered the Divinity Hall wholly uninterested in certain questions; what he wanted was to see Jesus, and to this Dr. A. B. Bruce helped him. But, he went on, he had come to feel more and more that faith must be related to nature as well as history, simply because in Christ we have touched the last reality in the universe, the truth through which all other truths are to be defined and understood. Jesus is the master light of *all* our seeing. Repeatedly in his work within the last ten years this thought reappears, that Christianity, if it is to be adequate to its own idea, must have the courage to conceive a Christian metaphysic, or, in simpler words, to Christianize all our thoughts of God and the world. As he puts it: 'Once Christ's absolute significance has become clear to us, we discover that our task, if we would understand the system of things in which we live, is not to find natural law in the spiritual world, but rather to find spiritual law—indeed, specifically Christian law—in the natural world.' Had he attempted to fulfil this task, it would no doubt have been in the spirit of a notable sentence in his *Jesus and the Gospel*: 'If anything is certain, it is that the world is not made to the measure of any science or philosophy, but on a scale which perpetually summons philosophy and science to construct themselves anew.' He was accustomed to say that what our age needed was a great new theological mind, a mind fit to think things together and draw lines between faith and the new knowledge, doing for this time what Aquinas and Calvin had done for theirs.

I cannot speak at length of his New Testament work, on which I am not qualified to give an expert opinion. But any one could see that the classical and literary¹ scholarship which he brought to it was in the highest degree technically exact and finished. He read the Greek poets constantly, and used to say that when he retired he would like to read Greek literature over again from end to end. Linguistic erudition is never obtruded

¹ His knowledge of English literature was unusual in exactitude. Some months ago he said to a friend, who has told me of it, that he believed that if Shakespeare's tragedies were lost, he could replace them from memory.

in his exegetical work, but it is always there, like the bones in a man's hand.

He contributed two volumes to the *Expositor's Bible*. *Thessalonians* (1892) consists of expositions preached regularly from week to week, marked by his special qualities of course, but necessarily omitting the technicalities of the exegete, and the critical discussion of important divergent interpretations. *2 Corinthians* (1894) for the first time revealed his exegetical power. It is a book one often returns to. But by far his greatest commentary, and one of the most rewarding commentaries in the world, is that on *Romans* in the *Expositor's Greek Testament* (1900). This is a classic, never likely to be really superseded. Its grasp of the theology of the Epistle puts it very nearly in a list by itself. Even when he was Professor of Systematic Theology, Dr. Denney used to lecture on *Romans* once a week, and no writing in the New Testament so called out all his powers. Along with this we ought to read his fine series of papers on the Theology of the Epistle in the *Expositor* for 1901, a year when obviously his mind was full of the subject; here he seizes and fixes with almost startling clearness of outline St. Paul's conceptions of the gospel, grouping all round the central idea of the righteousness of God. After reading accounts of Paulinism which leave us wondering how St. Paul came to make the mark he did upon Christianity, it is refreshing to read again this living and vigilant exposition of the greatest sketch of Theology that has ever been written, for Denney held that *Romans* 'contains what is so rare in Scripture, so unnatural apparently to the Semitic mind, a train of thought. There is a definite plan and structure in it, and one thing leads on to another till the argument is complete. . . . It was a representation of Paul's mind on the whole subject of the Christian religion, the relevance of which was not limited to the special circumstances of a given community.' One turns the last page with an eager wish that he could have given us a parallel sketch of the Theology of the Fourth Gospel, on which for years he lectured to advanced students. (Especially as he was accustomed to say that the writer of the Fourth Gospel has the last word to say on nearly every Christian idea.) Also—how one longed that he should give us a Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, written with the evangelic freedom he would have used! We must not forget as memor-

able and precise a study in Biblical Theology as he ever wrote, the article 'Holy Spirit' in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*.

There are some who conceived of Dr. Denney as a great New Testament scholar, yet felt that his contribution as a systematic thinker was relatively small. The fragmentary truth in this is that he had not quite recently published any specifically dogmatic work.¹ It was not his department. But at the very end he announced as the subject of his Cunningham Lectures, the Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, and we may confidently wait till the book appears with the assurance that it will again prove that, even within the field of Dogmatic, he had the most interesting mind in the country. One quality which distinguished his doctrinal teaching was its moral passion. It was the teaching of a man set on knowing not only what man is to believe concerning God, but what duty God requires of man. In this respect it resembled Calvin's *Institutes*. Denney once complained that there is not a hymn in the hymn-book about simply doing the commandments of God; similarly, he had no interest in doctrine which did not face toward conduct. I will put two passages together which reveal the ethical stringency and sublimity of his point of view. The first is: 'The man who is not good — the man whose being does not respond to the revelation of God and fulfil the Law involved in that revelation—has no right to be.' And the second: 'The only good man is in point of fact the pardoned man, the man whose heart has been made tender, and his conscience sensitive, by submitting to have his sins forgiven for Christ's sake.' Any one wishing to see how this profound and subduing moral interest controls all Denney's thought will find it exemplified with special impressiveness in his article 'Law' in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, and in a very different work, his *Factors of Faith in Immortality*. I have always felt that when he lectured on Christian Ethics, as for some years he did, he must have been greater than ever.

In his first Dogmatic book, the well-known *Studies in Theology* (1894), Denney came forward as a severe critic of Ritschlianism. I cannot say that on a re-perusal of the anti-Ritschlian passages

one detects much of that intellectual and imaginative sympathy which alone makes criticism worth while. Ritschl is a culprit at the bar, and every possible point is made against him. But in this matter, as in others, Denney changed. His review (1900) of a translation of Ritschl's chief doctrinal work was friendly in tone, and latterly one felt disposed to call him one of the most Ritschlian theologians in the country, in the broad sense that he too based all belief on the felt value of the revelation of God in Christ. But he applied this general principle differently from Ritschl, and, one may take leave to think, occasionally to the much greater benefit of those who wish to understand the religion of the New Testament.

The doctrine which will always be associated with Denney's name is the doctrine of the Atonement. Throughout his career he steadily called attention to this as belonging to the very heart of Christianity. The salient chapters of his early *Studies* deal with this topic, and as we have just seen, he chose it for the Cunningham Lectures he was never strong enough to give in public. What above all things he sought for was a doctrine that would preach. 'The evangelist,' he remarks characteristically, 'is in the last resort the judge of evangelical theology. If it does not serve his purpose it is not true.' He envied the Roman priest, who can preach with the crucifix in his hand.

Popular theology has decided that there is an orthodox theory of the Atonement, although this is most doubtful. At all events, not much is gained by asking whether Denney's views on the Atonement were orthodox or not; it is much more important that they reminded you of the New Testament. It is true that his special book on this subject, *The Death of Christ: Its Place and Interpretation in the New Testament* (1902), hardly satisfies the careful exegete, for, to put it broadly, it represents the different apostolic writers as all saying exactly the same thing about the Cross, which in fact they do not do. The living variety of interpretation is obscured. And some have not unnaturally felt that the book set forth the Atonement as consisting in the death of Christ rather than in the death of *Christ*. But the cumulative effect of the exposition is very great, and page after page, you feel, was written as if with blood from his own arm. What Denney was quite clear about, from first to last, and what he told out with piercing and unequalled power is this, that in

¹ Though we must not forget his three notable articles in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, under the titles 'Fall,' 'Mediation,' and 'Righteousness (in Paul's Epistles)'—all largely doctrinal in character and all recent.

the Cross we see Jesus Christ in His sinlessness dying the death of the sinful. 'All that sin meant for us—all that in sin and through it had become ours—God made His, and He made His own, in death.' He never said that God punished Christ, but he did say that in the Cross sin is once for all condemned, and that Christ bowed under the condemnation. There is no more concentrated statement of what he believed than part of his comment on Ro 3^{25, 26}: 'God's righteousness is demonstrated at the Cross, because there, in Christ's death, it is made once for all apparent that He does not palter with sin; the doom of sin falls by His appointment on the Redeemer. And it is possible, at the same time, to accept as righteous those who by faith unite themselves to Christ upon the Cross, and identify themselves with Him in His death: for in doing so they submit in Him to the Divine sentence upon sin, and at bottom become right with God.' Denney would not have said that this is the whole truth about the Cross, nor did he ever display verbal pedantry; but he held unflinchingly that room must be found for the truth that at Calvary there was judgment of sin as well as revelation of Divine love. It was one of his favourite thoughts that while some say, God is love, therefore He requires no Atonement, the New Testament says, God is love, therefore He provides the Atonement. Only thus do we have a Divine righteousness which 'puts the ungodly in the right.'

In various publications, as in *The Atonement and the Modern Mind* (1903), Denney urged that, in that case, the proper word to describe Christ is 'substitute' not 'representative.' The Saviour is given to us, not put forward on our side. Also he constantly refused to admit that St. Paul had in reality two theories of Atonement, a forensic and an ethico-mystical, lying side by side. Indeed, from the hostility of Dr. Denney's references to mystical religion it has sometimes been argued that he felt a whole-hearted aversion for that whole side of things, so far sympathizing with the early Ritschlians. Partly, this is a question of words. He did feel a strong distaste for Mysticism in its typical mediæval form, indifferent alike to history and to moral issues, and expatiating in a region 'beyond good and evil'; and there is only too much ground for holding that this species of piety has about it nothing specifically Christian, and may be found as whole, as perfect, in a Hindu

or a Neoplatonist as in the scholastic Erigena. But Denney did not really ignore the truth of Union with Christ. In a passage where he is actually protesting against submerging St. Paul in mysticism he writes: 'The seat of the attraction in Christ, in virtue of which sinners are drawn into ethico-mystical union with Him, is nothing less than this, that He has come into our place. . . . Here is the love of Christ which takes hold of men, and draws them into the ethico-mystical union.' And his exposition of Ro 6 is studded with sentences like this: 'The essence of our faith is a union to Him in which His experience becomes ours'; 'faith, looking to Christ and His death, really unites us to Him who died and rose again.' He selected these great lines from St. Bernard as putting perfectly what he himself believed as to the relation of the substitution of Christ to ethical identification with Him:

Propter mortem quam tulisti
Quando pro me defecisti;
Cordis mei cor dilectum,
In te meum fer affectum!

It might now and then seem as if he recognized no relation of persons deeper than the moral relation, but this is not the fact. He expressly disclaims the idea that moral categories of obligation can exhaust the truth of our relation to Christ. 'Even human life,' he writes, 'gives scope for acts . . . which are not moral, but far higher than moral; acts immediately inspired of God, the understanding of which is to morality as the discovery of a fourth dimension would be to geometry.'

Within the last ten or fifteen years Dr. Denney frequently recurred by preference to the idea that by Atonement we mean the cost of forgiveness to God. He was not original in this conception, which goes back at least as far as Bushnell, but it was a conception he took special pains to explain and illustrate. We cannot look long at pardon without the cost of it coming into view. Some of the most thrilling passages in Denney's recent sermons were devoted to showing how every great forgiveness is imparted at a price to the forger, and how by analogy the Christian mind is led to conceive of Jesus' experience, through which pardon is mediated, as representing, and indeed being, a vast transcendent Divine-human agony, which forms the vehicle of pardon corresponding to the magnitude and evil of the forgiven sin. Whether this profound and tragic thought has

been further developed in his forthcoming Cunningham Lectures we shall see. Of one thing we may be certain, that his latest argument will in no sense be only a repetition of the old. His mind could not be stationary. I recollect his saying to me, some months back, that he had come to the conclusion that every true and important idea about atonement was to be found in every genuinely Christian mind. If he has been able to bring this out, with his unrivalled force, he will have done his generation one great service more. From start to finish, Calvary was the centre of his world. He drank in life from the thought of Christ crucified, and poured out in burning words the convictions it quickened in his mind. As thus, in an article written but yesterday: 'The apostles did not imagine the atoning power of the death of Jesus—it is too great for imagination. They did not invent it to cloak the offence of the Cross; it is too great to be a theological contrivance. No, but a new truth rose on their horizon as they looked on the perfect sacrifice of Jesus—the truth of truths, beyond all telling wonderful—that sin-bearing love is the supreme and final reality of the universe, and that here it is incarnate once for all. From Christ on His Cross, goodness put forth its hand and touched them which outweighed all the sin of the world and made it impotent; henceforth they believed in God *through Him*.' Nothing ever came from his pen more completely characteristic of his faith and love. If we read these words on a scrap of paper in a desert island, we should think instantly of him.

The student of Denney's theology, if he is wise, will carefully examine the article entitled 'Preaching Christ,' in the second volume of Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*. It reveals with unusual clearness a conviction underlying his whole work, that we theologize only that we may preach. The article is really a first sketch of perhaps his greatest and most influential work, *Jesus and the Gospel* (1908). Both writings exhibit Jesus, in contradiction of Harnack's well-known *obiter dictum*, as even for his own mind a vital factor in the gospel. 'To preach Christ,' we are told, 'means to preach Jesus in the absolute significance for God and man which He had to His own consciousness and to the faith of the first witnesses; and to preach Him as exalted, and as having this absolute significance now and for ever.'

But, he held, Jesus can be thus preached without raising ulterior questions of metaphysic. The preacher must put first things first, and the first things concerning Jesus as Saviour are not His pre-existence or His virgin birth, though these are not questioned, but what we see as we read the Gospels, what we hear as we listen to apostolic testimony. Denney was always keenly aware of the uncertainties of metaphysic, in particular of the enigmatic relation of the temporal to the eternal; and as a theologian evangelist he deprecated with all his powers the religious confusion that is certain to be the consequence of making a man's witness to Christ dependent on his answer to speculative problems. 'While we share at the heart the faith of Apostles and Evangelists, we do not feel bound by all the forms in which they cast their thoughts.' This is saying plainly what every modern Christian in point of fact believes.

The concluding section of *Jesus and the Gospel*, in which the case for a simpler creed is argued, has deeply affected Christian thought in this country, especially the thought of ministers. It is there made as plain as such matters ever can be that the Church should bind its members to the Christian attitude to Christ and to nothing else. In a paragraph which has been oftener quoted than any other in his writings, Denney ventures to suggest the following creed as symbolic of the Church's unity in faith: 'I believe in God through Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord and Saviour.' And his exposition of this simple but profound confession has done more than perhaps he knew to quicken the movement for modification of the Creed, into a formula vital, unspeculative, and essentially religious.

It is not suggested in this brief and imperfect survey that the theology of Principal Denney had no faults. He had not adjusted his relations to philosophy; he now and then attained an unreal clearness by omitting some facts of moment; his use of the word 'propitiation' in discussions of Atonement remained puzzling. Some criticisms of new writers showed an undue severity. But as theologian and as man, there was no one like him. I have known many theologians both scholarly and devout; but I have never known his equal for making the New Testament intelligible as the record and deposit of an overwhelming experience of redemption, and for generating in those who listened to him the conviction that the

gospel incarnate in Jesus is the only thing that matters. The impressiveness of his faith and his extraordinary mental powers was heightened and intensified by a character of such goodness, such pureness, such sensitiveness to all that is high and

worthy, that one seeks in vain, throughout the circle of one's knowledge, for its like. God took him—so we may apply his words regarding another—God took him; not nature, or disease, or death, but the God with whom he had walked.

Literature.

THE EARLY ENGLISH CHURCH.

SIR HENRY H. HOWORTH'S name is known in widely separated branches of study, and it is always and everywhere known as the name of a scholar. Recently he published two volumes on Gregory the Great and Augustine the Missionary, so that his new book in three great volumes on *The Golden Days of the Early English Church*. (Murray; 12s. each net) will not be the surprise it would have been had it been the first-fruits of his interest in English history. Nevertheless it is a surprise. Three such volumes in a new study and for a man of his years is an achievement of rare enough occurrence. We can compare it only with the work of that yet more venerable veteran, Dr. E. A. Abbott, whose work, however, has nearly all been done in the department of the Gospels. Dr. Abbott was born in 1838. Sir Henry Howorth was born in 1842.

Sir Henry Howorth has had the joy of a great discovery. He has discovered that the historians of Early England have neglected the ecclesiastical writers—hence poverty of material and misrepresentation of life. They have even neglected Bede. Now 'we alone in all Europe possess a work of the matchless worth of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, unequalled in its time in style, picturesqueness, and extraordinary general accuracy, and presenting an historical and moral outlook of a very ideal kind. It is the one matchless literary work of art in the European literature of the first half of the eighth century A.D., and it forms a splendid scaffolding upon which to raise our building, and on which to hang the various illustrative decorations or additions which lesser lights have provided for us.'

That discovery is enough to send a man to the writing of a great book. And that 'explains the object and purpose with which, at the close of an

exceptionally strenuous life and by the evergreen kindness of my old friend, Mr. Murray, I have written five volumes of closely packed matter dealing with the beginnings of the English Church during less than a century and a half of its early career.'

But what were the Golden Days of the Early English Church? They were the days which began with the arrival of Archbishop Theodore and ended with the death of Bede. Bede himself is the great figure, and Sir Henry Howorth is never done speaking of him. In a long Introduction to the first volume he describes the whole of Bede's writings and gives an estimate of their historical value. And even in the Preface he names two matters for which he deserves particular credit. 'First, so far as we know, he was the first to introduce into the Church's creed north of the Pyrenees the clause about the double procession of the Holy Spirit of which the first authoritative pronouncement was made at the third Council of Toledo. At all events, so far as our evidence goes, it first occurs in Bede's writings. Secondly, he was the first Western scholar, so far as we know, to use the two Latin versions of the Bible systematically, the older Vulgate, sometimes called the Itala, and Jerome's edition; Cassiodorus and St. Gregory had both done the same in part, but Bede did it systematically, being tempted to do so in all probability by the presence in the library at Jarrow of a splendid codex of either version.'

After he got the command of his sources Sir H. H. Howorth seems to have written his book with ease. Such a book is usually read with difficulty. It is not so with this book. It may be read as easily as it was written. For the author's mind is orderly, and his orderly mind controls the use of his copious vocabulary. Now and then he seems deliberately to disregard the scholar, as he translates familiar Latin phrases and tells good stories