

## Books that Remain from 1904-09.

THIS article arises from a suggestion made by the Editor, who asked for something on books which had been a help to me in the ministry. I soon found that this would lead to an article of far greater length than is possible in this *Quarterly*, so I have confined myself to the books of the first five years of my ministry (1904-09) which are still read.

Those who started their ministry at that time had two great advantages. One was the emergence of the New Theology, leading to a controversy which became popular: daily newspapers found it good copy; the editors of religious journals called for declarations from all ministers. A man had to decide and announce where he stood. This meant that theology was in the air, and theological sermons were expected and listened to. The other advantage was the Welsh Revival which broke out in the early autumn of 1904. I had been reading Benjamin Jowett's *Dissertations on Paul's Conversion*, where he seemed to suggest that conversion on a large scale of a sudden character was no longer to be expected, that education was doing the work. When I read it I thought it all so sane. Then came the Revival, with its evidence contrary to Jowett's statement. The Revival claimed us all for evangelism, and probably its effects in this direction were permanent.

It was a flowering period in religious and theological literature. *The Dictionary of the Bible*, issued by Hastings, was being completed. It was being followed by *The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, to be followed by *The Dictionary of Christ and the Apostles*. *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* was starting its magnificent way. *The Expositor's Greek Testament* was available (with the exception of the last volume), with its notable contributions, especially by Denney on the *Romans*, and Moffatt and Dods. *The International Critical Commentary* was establishing itself, being led greatly by Sanday and Headlam on the *Romans*, and a notable contribution by Harper on *Amos and Hosea*. *The Expositor's Bible* was also completed, but we were all reading the remarkable volumes by George Adam Smith on *Isaiah* and the *Minor Prophets*. Ramsay was bringing out his volumes on *Paul* and on *The Letters to the Seven Churches*; and the International Theological Library (T. and T. Clark) had already issued some volumes.

The above are mentioned because they still remain fresh and powerful to-day, while the Dictionaries have not yet been superseded.

I make no reference to devotional literature, although it

was at that time that a good friend put me into touch with Dora Greenwell, whom I still find inspiring. Nor do I mention the biographies procured at that time.

When I came to make my choice of books I found there were ten or a dozen that retain their places on my shelves, and which I read constantly. These I reduced to six or seven. I would have liked to have said something of the thrill that came to me when it was made so clear by Deissmann that the language of the New Testament was that of the common folk; and I wish I could say a word about Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity*, especially the two chapters on "The advance of our faith through unknown witnesses," and "Social work undertaken in the first three centuries." Considerations of space, however, permit of four books. They are:

1. *Christ in Modern Theology*, by Fairbairn. It was published in 1893, and I had some contact with it in college days, but had not read it with any closeness until I had settled in the ministry. Some object to its terseness; they cannot see how a movement can be summed up in a sentence, or a man's place in theological thought, if it is worth anything at all, determined by a phrase. They have a suspicion that truth is being sacrificed to an epigram. But Fairbairn never played with words, and made no attempt to be clever. He always writes with clearness, and always gives the impression of vast learning. Nothing seems to be gathered at second-hand: the footnotes show that he had gone to the original sources. What he did for me was to establish my feet in History, and to show that the most effective way of learning Doctrine was through Church History. In these later years I have found it necessary to emphasise the need of a thorough course and good grounding in Church History for all our missionaries. Perils and dangers arise from heresies, and heresies are within the Church. They vary in form, with change of place and generation, but really they are substantially the same, and repeat themselves. So missionaries, who have to guide the ways of a Church in its second or third generation, are greatly helped by their knowledge of what happened under similar conditions in other days. In any case, Fairbairn retains, after all these years, a freshness and a fascination.

Take a typical passage concerning Calvinism: "Calvinism was thus the conscious and consistent antithesis to Rome. For one thing, a rigorous and authoritative system was met by a system no less rigorous and authoritative. The Roman infallibility was confronted by the infallibility of the *Verbum Dei*; the authority of tradition by the authority of reasoned, yet Scriptural, doctrine; salvation through the Church by salvation through

Christ; the efficacy of the Sacraments by the efficacy of the Spirit; the power of the priesthood by the power of the ever-present Christ. The strength of Calvinism lay in the place and pre-eminence it gave to God: it magnified Him; humbled man before His awful majesty, yet lifted man in the very degree that it humbled him. Catholicism is essentially a doctrine of the Church; Calvinism is essentially a doctrine of God. In days when men have little faith in the supernatural and transcendental, Catholicism is an enormous power; its appeal to history is an appeal to experience, and men will cling to its traditions in the very degree that they have lost faith in God; but in days when men are possessed by faith in an all-sufficient Reason that knows all and never can be deceived, in an all-sufficient Will that guides all and never can be defeated or surprised, then the theology that holds them will be the theology that makes God real to the intellect and most authoritative to the conscience. And it was at this point and by this means that Calvinism so seized and so commanded men, faith in God being ever a less earthly and a sublimer thing than faith in a Church. Then, for the second thing, Geneva served in an equal degree the cause of freedom and of order. Calvinism was the very genius of system in theology and of order in polity. These two stood together; the one was a logical corollary from the other, yet appeared also as a copy of the ancient Scriptural model. But while order was as necessary to Geneva as to Rome, it was for reasons so different that the order did not remain the same. The order Rome maintained was autocratic, personalised in the Pope, incorporated in the Church, realised by its authority; the order Geneva created was democratic, personalised in God, incorporated in the Apostolic Society, realised by the authority of conscience. Roman order was external, imposed from without; Genevan order internal, evoked from within. Hence, while Rome could, in alliance with an absolute monarch, realise its order, the Genevan could be realised only by and through the people. It might be tyrannical in exercise; it must be popular in basis, and the basis was determinative; in it lay all the possibilities of freedom and progress."

2. *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, by Forsyth, published 1906. The period 1900 onward had as one of its features the interpretation of the Gospel in social relationships. Rauschenbusch and Peabody were writing their books, within the Anglican Church men were giving themselves to special forms of social service, and this was true both of the school which emanated from Maurice and Kingsley, and also of the Tractarians. The Brotherhood movement was laying hold of large sections of the Free Churches, social legislation,

especially in the way of health and insurance, was being promulgated, and all this was to the good.

Moreover, there was a general optimism coming over from the Victorian period that nothing could hinder progress, and while we had come through the Boer War, nobody really believed that there would be another "great" war. The Socialist movement was gaining strength, and it had in it a religious note. Hymns, like "These things shall be," and "When wilt Thou save the people?" were sung at political meetings. In theology the "liberal school" was gaining ground. Against these three tendencies Forsyth gave a warning. Concerning "liberal" theology he said: "It is fatal to the old faith. For all its varieties in common, it does not take either the measure of holiness or the weight of sin. It makes the Cross not necessary but valuable; not central but supplemental; not creative but exhibitiv; a demonstration, but not a revelation; a reconciliation but not a redemption. It makes the Church a company of workers and not believers, the brethren of Christ rather than His flock and His property, a genial body rather than a regenerate, a band of lovers rather than of penitents."

He also showed how the disease that held mankind was a deeper thing than was being imagined, and that the cure had to be more drastic than was being offered.

The charge is sometimes laid against Forsyth that he is obscure, that he adds picture to picture in a bewildering way, and that sometimes the last picture used is a contradiction of the first. But he wrote for "those who do not resent an unfamiliar word, who are attracted rather than impatient towards a dark saying, who find the hard texts the mighty ones, and who do not grudge stopping the carriage to examine a mysterious cave, or to consider a great prospect."

He wrote concerning the Bible, the Church, the Ministry, and claimed that everything had to be interpreted by the Gospel; and by the Gospel he meant that which was set forth in the Cross of Christ. Here was one who had faced all the questions of criticism, and yet his faith seemed securer than that of many. Here was one who was well acquainted with Art, for had he not written an understanding book on it, and yet declared that Art and all related to it in all forms of culture, could not save, "that there is no reconciliation possible between the Cross and culture, when each knows its own mind, except as culture itself submits to be redeemed. As if Christ did not come to redeem us not from sin only, nor from worldliness, but from the world. I once addressed a meeting of ministers on the necessity of the evangelical consciousness, by which I meant the central or even daily life of forgiveness, repentance, humiliation, and their fruits,

in contrast with what is vaguely known as the Christian spirit. And I created a good deal of bewilderment. For one of them came to me afterwards, and asked me if he had understood me right, as, to his knowledge, the experience was one that few ministers possessed. If that was so I need not say another word to account for the loss of pulpit power and authority. It is not more religion we need so much as a better order of religion, and a more serious idea of the soul, its sin and its salvation. For an ill like this there is but one cure. It is a deeper, daily, though perhaps reserved sense, not only of our unworthiness, but of our perdition except for the Grace of Christ, the mercy of the Cross."

And is not this a relevant passage for to-day? "Christianity comes to-day, as it came in the first centuries, to a paganism which is disillusioned about itself and is sinking into pessimism. In those first days Christianity took the world at its own estimate, and brought the message that the situation required. Even Stoicism then despaired of the mass of mankind in spite of its high conception of Humanity. It could not make a religion of that idea. It had the dream but not the power. It had not the Redemption, the secret of a new creation. This was the one thing the age craved, and it was the one thing Christianity brought. And it was to this outworn world Christianity came. It was not to the northern world of the fresh Teutonic races. Its method was not to save an old civilisation by the infusion of a new and hopeful race. Or do you think that what saved antiquity was not the Christian redemption but the incursion of the Northern peoples? Well, Europe to-day is rapidly moving to where antiquity had come, to moral exhaustion, and to the pessimism into which natural optimism swings when the stress and burden are extreme. Do you think that that situation is to be saved by the spontaneous resources of human nature, or the entrance upon the *Weltpolitik* of a mighty young people like America? Is there no paganism threatening America? [The words were addressed to Americans.] What is to save America from her own colossal power, energy, self-confidence and pre-occupation with the world? Her Christianity, no doubt. But a Christianity which places in the centre not merely Christ but the Cross and its redemption, in a far more ethical way than America is doing; a Christianity which is not only set in the presence of Christ's person, but caught into the motion of Christ's work, which is not only with Christ, but in Him by a total moral and social salvation."

When Barth broke upon Europe, and many rallied to his call, it seemed surprising that it came as if a new thing were being declared. For what of value Barth emphasised was already found in Forsyth. To those who knew and accepted the teaching

of Forsyth there was no necessity for Barth, and, moreover, such were delivered from those limitations which seemed to hold Barth. It is remembered that both Barth and Forsyth owed much to Kierkegaard.

3. *Vision and Authority*, by Oman. The continued value of this book is evidenced by the fact that a new edition has come out in these last years, and has had a great sale. It has its own interest, because it reveals the seed from which other great books written by Oman have sprung: in particular, *Grace and Personality*; *Nature and the Supernatural*, and, last of all, *Honest Religion*. When *Vision and Authority* appeared it burst upon the Christian-thinking people in this country with a glad surprise, for here was one uttering the fundamental things in a great fashion, being persuaded of two great realities, namely, that God will not storm the soul of man, but will deal with him by the way of persuasion and with patience, and that on the other hand the final worth in man lies in his individuality. It is not surprising that the articles on *Individual and Individualism* in the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, were written by John Oman, where he says: "The only influences our Lord used were the appeals of wisdom and love. In every case He respected the individuality of another, and sought to make men realise how much they were to themselves as well as to God. When any influence appeared as a substitute for personal choice He sternly repressed it. He trusted no general movement, and appealed to nothing occult. He was always willing to leave a crowd for an individual. The only miracle He ever wrought for the multitude He used for sifting them and for gathering individuals from among them. And when a crowd did gather to hear Him preach He gave them most individual teaching. He never departed from the method of being an individual dealing with individuals, and requiring of them the most individual of actions—repentance and obedience to one's own call." To Oman, "the central fact of experience and the central fact of revelation are found to be one. God's tolerance is the key to experience and history. The central fact of human life is God's patience. He will not force His mystery on us. He will lead us up to it. Force is the destruction, the contradiction, the absolute opposite of this mystery. Force belong to the things seen, God's mystery to the things unseen. . . . God's tolerance is not like man's. It is not mere endurance of what we ourselves think right or not very far wrong. It is real tolerance—the recognition of the freedom of the possessor of a mind and conscience to err, the determination not to replace man's own dim search for light and man's own vacillating discipline of a wayward will even by omniscient wisdom and omnipotent righteousness."

To this patience of God the answer of man is to be found in discipline and duty. "Those who have made discovery of them are the meek who inherit the earth. They alone discover their true and complete inheritance. . . . They can accept all experience with the assurance of meekness, being those whom trial cannot daunt or opposition dismay, the absolute opposite of the timorous whom trial easily daunts and opposition easily dismays. They are meek, not because they are feeble, but from a sense so overwhelming of the all-pervading operation of God's wise love, that conflict dies out of trust and fear out of obedience. Submission for them is strength and obedience is peace."

Hence his warning against the acceptance of a creed which is merely the conclusion of others: "Mere acceptance of the conclusions of others, mere uniformity of creed or conduct with those who have gone before us, mere unity through suppression of difference, is not the way by which we profit from the labours of the saints, or lay broad and deep our foundations on the whole experiences and discoveries and victories of mankind." So also arises his fear that the Church may use to achieve her ends means totally unworthy. "Under the delusion that success must be hers, that her failure is God's failure, that, because a cause deserves to win, she must find means to make it win, the Church has too frequently been mixed up in matters outside her province, and has used means God would hate. She must learn that God has made in every heart a sanctuary into which only the persuasion of love has a right to enter, a sanctuary into which He Himself will not, with any other means, force an entrance; and she must be taught how to fail, how to make failure her last and greatest appeal, how to fail, not in discouragement, much less in indifference, but in faith and hope and love."

Similarly, concerning the movement towards unity, he says: "Too frequently the impression is conveyed that in spiritual matters agreement alone is the supreme necessity, whether it is agreement in the truth or not being of quite subsidiary importance. The feeling has thereby been created that religion is not an affair of truth, but merely of certain helpful ideas to be accepted and certain profitable things to be done. . . . The insistent demand for immediate and outward unity arises partly from a certain distrust of truth, and partly from a right understanding of the evidence which should accompany truth." All this is urged with clear conviction, with a piquancy not afraid occasionally of irony or satire, but never descending to scorn or contempt; and sometimes arising to great heights of eloquence. Here is an eloquent passage, when he speaks of the Hebrew Prophets and Christian Apostles: "They are the royal race who have grasped firmly the kingdom which others have aimed at dimly. Moreover

they are, in a special sense, our own spiritual ancestry, of whom we should have a better right to be proud did we bear them more resemblance. In comparison with them, the influence of kings and conquerors has been superficial and fleeting. They were weak, but out of weakness were made strong. They were often destroyed, but their destruction was their victory. Though humble and poor, lacking all the advantages of possession and of place, uncrowned by any dignity except the glory of their own faithfulness, they were yet set over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. Vast armies marched up and down with noise and tumult. Mankind were used in masses as mere pawns to play with in the game of might and dread. The prophets stood alone, assured only of God's aid, but speaking to men as souls conscious of right and capable of high resolve. While the thunder of the armies has passed like the roar of the billows that waste their strength on a rock-bound coast, their word still echoes through the fruitful earth like the murmur of the brooks." Surely a prophet for this very day is Oman, and more than a prophet!

4. *Studies in Mystical Religion*, by Rufus M. Jones, published in 1909. I shall ever be thankful to the good deacon who presented me with a copy of this book as soon as it appeared. It opened to me an entirely new world, for consideration of the mystical element in our religion had never been dealt with in college days. A name here and there was known, but no more. This book of Rufus Jones' brought to mind again and again the saying of Jesus: "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth." It certainly gave a continual reminder that there are religious folk outside all religious bodies, that there are believers in Christ outside the organised churches. I recalled a word of Thoreau, "that if we find any one out of step we must not be in a hurry to condemn him, for it may well be he has heard the sound of another drum." On the other hand it showed clearly the worthlessness of any creed, or absence of creed, that did not reveal itself in true character; and, further, that there was always a danger of that "excess" which contradicts the good initial movement. For example, he says concerning Montanism: "Montanism, as a movement, 'failed'; its books were destroyed, its prophets were thrown to the beasts. Both the world and the 'Church' arrayed themselves against it, and finally stamped it out. It would have 'failed,' however, without the stern methods which were used against it, for it had not within itself the inherent power of ministering to the condition of the world and the soul of man." Similarly, concerning the Ranter movement, he says: "It brings forcibly to light the dangers involved in

*extreme* mystical doctrines, that is, doctrines by which the individual is assumed to be an infallible embodiment of God, to be superior to all previous revelation, and to be able to arrive at final truth without the help of the Church of the social environment."

The chapters on "John the Scot," under the title, "A Great Light in the Dark Ages," and on "The Waldenses," is most illuminating reading. So is also that on "The Pre-Reformation in England," and, particularly for us, the two chapters on "The Anabaptists." If it were not for the wholesome rule that this *Quarterly* does not reprint that which has been issued elsewhere, I wish that, over a space of one year, say, the two chapters on the Anabaptists could find a place in these pages. As that is not possible, I wonder whether they could be issued in a separate document?

Here is given the story of Menno Simons. "He became the leader and organiser of a new stage of Anabaptism, and the prophet of the type out of which the modern Baptist sects sprang—a type of Christianity which profoundly affected the religious life of Holland, the inner life of the religious societies of the English Commonwealth and the spiritual destinies of America."

John Smyth and Thomas Helwys have their place in the record, and the inevitable quotation from Masson concerning Leonard Busher and his reference to "the most extreme and despised sect of the Puritans." "The despised Independents," he continues, "and the still more despised Baptists, or thorough Separatists of the school of Smyth and Helwys, were groping for the pearl between them; and, what is strangest at first sight, it was the more intensely Separatist of these two sects that was groping with most success. How is this to be explained? Partly, it may have been, that the Baptists were the sect that had been most persecuted—that they were the ultimate sect, in the English world, in respect of the necessary qualification of pain and suffering, accumulated in their own experiences."

A final word of Rufus Jones: "They (i.e. the Baptists) insisted, however, that Christ Himself is Head and Governor of the Church, and they made it a principle of the first importance that in order to 'restore the primitive way,' there must be 'men professing and practising the order and form of Christ's doctrine who shall beautify the same with a holy and wise conversation in all godliness and honesty.' They were the ringing champions of a free conscience, a free ministry, a spiritual Church and a pure daily life. They were the beginners of a new order, which did much to prevent old customs from 'corrupting the world.'"

So these books remain. Others have come, some to take their place along with these, and others have passed on.

Theologically, Fairbairn proclaims the unique and un-exhausted revelation of God in Christ given to generation after generation: Forsyth the centralising of the redemptive act of God in the Cross: Oman the persistent patience of God: Rufus Jones the freedom of His spirit. On the human side, Fairbairn makes clear how each generation has found Christ sufficient: Forsyth has emphasised the holiness of Christian character: Oman the supreme worth of the individual, and Rufus Jones the variety of the religious experience.

It may be that they are being read. If so, then the readers will not demur to what I have said, except that there may be something lacking in appreciation. If they are not being read, then those who will read them for the first time will find in them far more than I have been able to set forth.

B. GREY GRIFFITH.

GERMAN BAPTISTS in America owe much to Mueller of Bristol. In 1883 they organised a missionary society which has sent help to every continent, and workers to the Camerouns and to Canada, many of them trained at Rochester. Immigrants from Poland, Mennonites from Holland, have been evangelised and organised. Look at F. A. Mueller of Konigsberg, converted by reading a sermon of Spurgeon's in 1874, he at once preached, till on Whit-Sunday in the next year eighty-four converts were baptised. Seven years in the army saw great success among his comrades till Koebner persuaded him to give himself wholly to missionary work. Trained in his native city, he refused a call to Australia, and went to superintend twenty colonies in Russia. In eight years he baptised a thousand, so that Lutherans and Russians combined to secure his expulsion. He decided on Canada, with only a promise of a hundred dollars a year. Retiring at the age of seventy-two, he wrote that in the new land he had baptised 1,237 persons, organised ten churches, and built thirteen chapels. When a chapel was dedicated at Onoway, people of six nations were present; a German preached in English, a Pole in German, and C. Martin in Russian.