

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 Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

ART. V.—RENOVATION.

WE are still living under the shadow of a great sorrow, and when we shall pass out from it we can hardly say. Churches may put off their trappings of woe, because the varied lessons and associations of the Christian life demand it; the days of public grief may come to an end; the year of the mourning of the Court may give place to the splendour of the coronation; but in the hearts of all of us there will remain a quiet abiding sense of sorrow for her who has been with us all our lives long, and who has passed so suddenly to her rest. Fresh proofs accumulate every day to show how wonderfully dear to us all she has been, and our sense of personal loss is absolutely genuine and unaffected. A railway porter said the other day to a Bishop, "It's like losing one's mother over again." Never have such scenes been witnessed in this country as those with which we have been familiar since the blow fell. Day after day, for instance, at the four o'clock service, the whole of St. Paul's Cathedral has been filled with a quiet throng of sincere mourners. They came in spontaneously, without concert, uninvited, from all parts, each day from 4,000 to 5,000. On the Sunday morning after the death the Inspector of Police told us that 30,000 had been turned away from morning service, unable to obtain admission; the throng was even greater in the afternoon and evening. There was no sensation about it; the feeling was quiet, unobtrusive, continuous, and will last. It is the same all over the kingdom and Empire—in some degree all over the world. Why was all this? Because of the intensity of our gratitude for all that Victoria the Beloved was to ourselves and her people during sixty-four untiring and unflagging years—her goodness, her wisdom, her self-control, self-denial, patience, perseverance, her devotion to duty, her sympathy, and her love. We feel now the incalculable value of these gifts in a position of such world-wide influence, and nothing shall ever take from our hearts our deep and reverent appreciation of our inexhaustible indebtedness.

But it is our duty to look to the future as well as to the past. Life has to go forward day by day with its varying calls and duties. Bells cannot always ring muffled peals. There comes an end at last to Church dirges and funeral anthems, however consonant with our feelings they have been. The example of the Queen herself on a like occasion gives us the right note of encouragement and inspiration. We remember how in the same year she lost her tenderly-cherished mother and her ideal husband. When, after a few months, that still deeper and most unexpected anguish came,

we can recall how she declared to her family that, though she felt crushed by the loss of one who had been her companion through life, she knew how much was expected of her, and she accordingly called on her children to give her their assistance, in order that she might do her duty to them and to the country. That is now her message to us from the long and touching record of her life: that we should each recognise the place of responsibility which God has given us in the world, be quick to understand the duty that lies nearest to us, and devote ourselves heart and soul to getting it done as well as our powers admit.

“Lay her to rest. O hour of grief and awe!
 We say not England's happier days are done,
 But who with that magnetic touch shall draw
 And weld our world-spread Empire into one?
 May He, who gave the mother grace the son!

“So simply noble, that almost she made
 Of earth-born sovereignty a thing Divine.
 Love was her law, by purity she swayed,
 A power nor grief nor age could undermine—
 Her throne an altar, and her heart a shrine.

“Queen, wife and mother peerless—even so:
 And this shall be her fame in after years—
 Or alien, or akin, or friend or foe,
 Old jealousies forgot, old feuds and fears,
 The whole earth wrote her epitaph in tears.

“Lay her to rest. Her memory shall be blown
 Like pure sweet air upon a tortured clime,
 She made for peace, and passes to her own
 With those who reign—O recompense Divine!—
 Beyond the folding gates of space and time.”¹

The lessons of Septuagesima are in strong harmony with the leading thought of this sad fortnight. It is a time for looking back and looking forward. We only look back in order that we may look forward. We turn our thoughts to the early days of the world, and the majestic description of the Almighty Being working out His purpose in the Creation, in order that we may consider the meaning of that purpose, which was, in truth, that in the long course of ages the visible earth might be transformed and glorified into the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, or, as St. John describes it: “I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” In reading the description of the Creation we are not to take it literally any more

¹ James Rhoades.

than we are to understand literally the details of the heavenly city. Both are parables, giving suggestive pictures full of spiritual truth. We must remember that the Holy Scriptures are not intended to teach us science either in the future or in the past. Scripture was communicated to us for quite a different purpose: "All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable also for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In other words, the purpose of Scripture is moral and religious, not scientific. Moses had learnt that God's creation went by stages, but he was not inspired to teach us geology. As the greatest of all theologians, St. Augustine, has taught us long ago, the language of Moses is to be taken allegorically and poetically. It would be useless to calculate the length of the six days, or to adjust the order of the successive developments. It would be idle to search for the Garden of Eden, or to trace the course of the four rivers of Paradise. The great truth which these visions are intended to convey is that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, and that He did it gradually, and according to laws of succession, and in regular order and harmony. Man was the final result of the progressive thought of the Almighty; and man God intended to live, like Himself, in virtue, uprightness, and happiness. And it was man's misuse of the Divine gift of freewill that led him so far from his true ideal, the secret of his proper destiny and satisfaction.

It is a vital principle of Divine revelation that from every point of its long roll of truths it teaches us to look forward to the future, from the very fact that we are permitted to see clearly into the past. The same Divine, Omnipotent, Omnipresent Cause of all things, Who called matter into being, Who scattered the star-dust over the eternal universe, Who whirled it together into innumerable suns and constellations, Who ordained that our little earth, exclusively interesting and wonderful as it is to ourselves, should be one of the smallest planets attendant on one of the smallest suns in the whole vast glittering expanse of never-ending space, has also revealed to us, both by science and inspiration, that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. "Behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth," cried Isaiah; "and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind." "I saw a new heaven and a new earth," proclaims St. John in his vision; "for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

Why would not the present material universe answer God's

purpose? Because it was only a process. It was not complete or perfect. Look round, and see what decay there is in all that is of earth: the mountains being gradually carried down to the plains by ages of rain and ice and snow; vast tracts of sun-cursed deserts; animal preying upon animal, "nature red in tooth and claw," as Tennyson described it; the heat of the sun gradually dying out; some constellations and worlds already reduced to ashes; others not yet begun. We are in the midst of a process, an evolution, a progress of change. "The earnest expectation of the creature," said St. Paul, "waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Creation is not complete. Matter is not perfect. The whole shall some day be spiritualized and transformed into redeemed and perfected beings, who shall to all eternity, in endless bliss and happiness, perform the will of God. "*Change and decay in all around I see*"; but a day shall come when God's purpose in the material creation shall be accomplished, and there shall be no more change, no more decay, but security, and ceaseless youth, and untiring activities, and unbroken peace, and pure universal spiritual existence for ever and ever!

In the meantime, God's law for material existence is one of renewal. Lest the inroads of change and decay should be too rapid, there is the Divine process of renovation. Nothing is wasted in God's kingdom, either earthly or spiritual. What is it that you see every year? The glorious changes of the seasons. Lest the burning suns of summer should continue for ever, and dry up the produce of the soil, the earth turns away her face, and the mild days of autumn shine softly, and the cooled surface yields us its fruits. And lest the soil should be too rank and rich, the cold bracing days of winter are given us, to brace the air and to give the fields their time of rest and sleep. Then once more the earth turns to the sun, and the flowers come back, and the meadows flush green with spring, and life returns to bird and beast and man. What is it that you see going on between sea and land? Constant renovation. The bountiful ocean sends up her gracious clouds and mists, and lo! they pass over the hills and valleys, and pour themselves down in enriching dews and rains. And the rain that is not needed flows back through the fertilizing rivers once more into the broad bosom of the ocean. All is in constant renovation.

So it is in the moral world. Sometimes there comes a period of moral corruption and stagnation. High standards are forgotten, great truths are ignored, bad examples are set, evil triumphs over good, decay sets in. Then in the wise providence of God there arises some great character, whose influence stems the tide, and brings back the old reverence for truth and goodness. The process of renovation sets in. It is in the power of each, of all of us ; but far greater is the effect when the position is conspicuous and the power widely known. Such a renovating influence has been that of our beloved and revered Queen. In a profligate and corrupt age she and her husband determined to live a true and sincere life, and devote themselves to duty. She came to the crown when it was overwhelmed with debt, and despised for the evil conduct of its wearers. She and her husband for years led a very frugal life, and paid off the vast incubus of money obligation. They frowned on vice and took virtue by the hand, and the whole face of society was changed. They gave themselves to the consideration of the necessities of the poor, the cultivation of arts and sciences, the promotion of peace and goodwill at home and abroad, the encouragement of all things wise and true, and beautiful and of good report. The Prince Consort was taken early, but during her remaining forty years wonderful indeed has been her gift of renovating power. Her gifts were not of the brilliant kind, but they were better : they were gifts of wisdom, discretion, character and conduct. To her as a woman might be applied much of what was said to Dr. Arnold by his son :

“ We were weary, and we
 Fearful, and we in our march
 Fain to drop down and to die.
 Still thou turnedst, and still
 Beckonedst the trembling, and still
 Gavest the weary thy hand.
 If in the paths of the world
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,
 Toil or dejection have tried
 Thy spirit, of that we saw
 Nothing—to us thou wast still
 Cheerful and helpful and firm.

Then in such hour of need
 Of your fainting dispirited race,
 Ye like angels appear,
 Radiant with ardour Divine !
 Beacons of hope ye appear !
 Languor is not in your heart !
 Weakness is not in your word !
 Weariness not on your brow !

Ye alight in our van; at your voice
 Pain, despair flee away!
 Ye move through the ranks, recall
 The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
 Praise, reinspire the brave!
 Order, courage return!
 Eyes enkindling, and prayers
 Follow your steps as ye go!
 Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
 Strengthen the wavering line,
 Stablish, continue our march
 On to the bound of the waste!
 On to the City of God!"

Our beloved Queen, in her wisdom, her love, her devotion to duty, her high principle, was, in her great place of influence, such a renovator. She belonged to the servants and daughters of Him who sat on the heavenly throne, and said, "Behold, behold, I make all things new." But by the whole power of her life she calls on us to do the same. She exhorts us to devote our whole time and energy to making that little sphere better in which we are placed. She summons us to patriotism, to sympathy, to unselfishness, to devotion to duty, to faith, hope and charity, to love to God and love to our suffering and sinning fellow-men. She inspires us to start afresh with the new century, the new age, the new reign, in the ceaseless campaign against sin, vice, ignorance, ungodliness, intemperance, the greed for gold, the lust for pleasure. Above all, she urges us to transfer to her son, the King, the loving care we had for her; to rally round his throne, and each make the powers of good stronger by our own purity of motive and conduct; never to acquiesce in evil as inevitable, or to accept corruption as excusable, but always to struggle for the recognition and reign of the highest principles, the purest ideals. The renovating power of God! The renovating capacities of man when inspired by God! No limit can be set to them, when we give ourselves to faith and prayer. And when we think of these things we will pray once more, in the words of our own Archbishop: "O God, whose Providence ruleth all things both in heaven and earth, by whom Kings reign, and Princes decree justice: we thank Thee for all the blessings bestowed upon us through our most Gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, of glorious and blessed memory, lately taken from us. We thank Thee for the wisdom of her counsels, for the care and love with which she watched over her people, for the bright example of her noble life, for the prosperity which we enjoyed during her happy reign; and we pray Thee to fill our hearts with fruitful gratitude for all these benefits, and to give us grace that we may use the memory of them as a perpetual call to live according to Thy will, for the good of our fellow-men,

and the glory of Thy great Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

THE GRIEF OF NATIONS.

FLAGS half-mast high on many a castle wall,
 Deep-throated cannon booming hoarse and slow,
 A sable pomp, a ceremonial woe.
 Such sombre gauds may mock a tyrant's pall,
 But in the silence of the royal hall,
 And round the quiet bier where She lies low,
 How vain these symbols half our grief to show!
 How true the tears that round her softly fall!
 The Mother of her people lies asleep,
 Her counsels hushed, her labours at an end,
 Her brave heart stilled, her many sorrows o'er.
 As sisters in their grief the nations weep,
 As one in loving rivalry they blend,
 To honour her dear name from shore to shore.

S. J. SMITH.

SANDIACRE RECTORY.

Short Notices.

A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. By W. M. RAMSAY, D.C.L. London: Hodder and Stoughton. Price 12s.

Professor Ramsay has become our foremost interpreter of St. Paul, and his works are essential to every student. In the present volume he first elaborates and defends his theory (now almost unanimously accepted) as to the Galatian churches to which the Epistle was addressed, and in this matter Lightfoot is superseded. In the second part he brings all his wealth of local and antiquarian knowledge to bear upon the text, and all his suggestions are worthy of study and consideration, and in many cases new. His standpoint—that of regarding St. Paul as the first great Christian statesman—is one that throws a new light on the life and work of the great Apostle. The maps which accompany the volume are the best that can be got. We hope that many more volumes of the same order may come from the same learned and fertile brain.

Christ our Example. By CAROLINE FRY. London: C. J. Thynne, 1900. Has deservedly reached its twenty-fifth thousand.

Holy Matrimony. By the Rev. W. J. KNOX-LITTLE. London: Longmans, 1900. Price 5s.

A new volume of the "Oxford Library of Practical Theology." The practical parts of this treatise are very good. Its theological and ecclesiastical sections are disfigured by an unreasoned and unreasoning partisanship.