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George Gillanders Findlay.

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The news of Dr. Findlay's death brought a grievous sense of loss to a multitude of his old students and friends. At the editor's desire this sketch was planned whilst Dr. Findlay was still with us. One's thought was then that it was hard to write anything to which his sensitive modesty would not object when he read it. Now the difficulty is to find words to express one's debt of obligation to a colleague and a teacher so much honoured and so much loved.

George Gillanders Findlay was born in 1849, the son of the Rev. James Findlay. He was educated at Woodhouse Grove School, then a school for the sons of Wesleyan ministers only, at Wesley College, Sheffield, and at Richmond College. At the age of 19 he won the scholarship in Classics at the B.A. Examination at the University of London. Then he turned aside to Biblical work, seeking no further academic distinctions, until St. Andrews honoured him with the degree of D.D. in 1901.

From the time of his entering the Wesleyan ministry in 1870 his whole life was devoted to the teaching of the theological students of his Church. For the first four years of his ministry he served as an Assistant Tutor at Headingley and Richmond Colleges. In 1874 he was appointed Classical Tutor at Richmond. In 1881 he was appointed Professor in Biblical Languages and Exegesis at Headingley College, Leeds, and there he remained until his death on November 2, 1919.

Life at a Wesleyan Methodist College in those earlier days was specially strenuous. The Biblical Tutor was responsible for the teaching of both Old and New Testaments, whilst in addition, with a junior colleague to assist him, he gave such instruction in philosophy and classics as time and strength permitted. For many years Dr. Findlay taught regularly for eighteen hours a week, through three terms that lasted for eight months, whilst at the same time he gave much private help to men who were reading for special examinations. The Methodist tradition ranks previous service in the Church as the chief qualification for admission to its Colleges. Hence the tutor sees seated before him men whose University has been the factory and the workshop, and whose schooldays are far behind them, side by side with graduates from Oxford and Cambridge. To provide an adequate curriculum for so varied a group is a herculean task, yet Dr. Findlay fulfilled it alone till 1904, when the present writer relieved him of the Old Testament work. Out of this crowded life, with its scanty intervals of leisure, came the work by which his name is known to the world outside. The marvel is that he accomplished so much.

From his work in the class-room came first a series of works on the life and teaching of St. Paul. They include the volumes on *Galatians* and *Ephesians* in the 'Expositor's Bible'; on *Colossians* in the 'Pulpit Commentary'; the Epistles of Paul the Apostle in the 'Books for Bible Students'; the Thessalonian Epistles in the *C.B.* and *C.G.T.*; the article on 'Paul' in Hastings' *D.B.*; 1 Corinthians in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*; and Romans in Peake's *Commentary on the Bible.* In addition there is the priceless exposition of the Epistles of St. John published under the title *Fellowship in the Life Eternal.* On the Old Testament there are three volumes on *The Books of the Prophets* in the 'Books for Bible Students.' Then there is the Fernley Lecture of 1894 on *Christian Doctrine and Morals*; one or two volumes of sermons and addresses; and a multitude of magazine and smaller dictionary articles. This mass of work reveals a tireless devotion to sacred study which neither bodily weakness nor the pressure of the details of teaching could ever subdue.

The first impression that the student gained in Dr. Findlay's class-room was that of the need of accuracy and exactness. In the study of the Greek Testament in particular exposition was based upon the strictest and most minute grammatical analysis of the text. Winer and Meyer, Ellicott and Lightfoot, were the masters to whom he turned. His preface to his edition of Thessalonians in the *C.G.T.* is illuminating. After speaking of 'the precious Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul of Lightfoot,' and of the 'able and

judicious work of Bornemann in Meyer's *Kommentar*,' he continues: 'At the same time one reverts with increasing satisfaction to the old interpreters; frequent quotations are here made from the Latin translators—Erasmus, Calvin, Beza, Estius, Bengel, beside the ancient Versions—who in many instances are able to render the Greek with a brevity and nicety attainable in no other tongue.' As he always followed 'the golden rule of quotation'—never to quote from a book till he had read it from cover to cover—this gives a revealing glimpse of the depth of his scholarship.

Yet at the same time he was far removed from slavery to the letter. He agreed with Simcox that 'the Greek of the New Testament was a real language that had a grammar, not a jargon in which any construction, any case or tense, any particle or preposition might be used instead of any other.' But he agreed with him further that 'textual criticism and grammar must be servants not masters to exegesis,' and so after the exact significance of words and tense and order had been sought out he went on to trace the real thought of his author, never satisfied till this shone out in its own light.

The same characteristics appeared in his private conversation. One would suggest to him some novel interpretation. He would listen with grave and courteous attention, ask one or two searching questions, and then change the subject. Days afterwards he would say, 'I have been thinking of the point you suggested.' Then he would give an answer revealing a consideration so deep and comprehensive that one was ashamed to have troubled him at all. In this, as in other respects, amongst the scholars of our day, he seems to have resembled most closely Dr. F. J. A. Hort.

An illustration of both these points may be found in his treatment of the South Galatian question. One well remembers the joy with which he greeted Sir. W. M. Ramsay's lectures on *The Church in the Roman Empire*, and commended them to all his students. He spoke of the way in which they threw open study windows and let in the fresh air of the busy Græco-Roman world. Yet whilst some wrote as though the position of the Galatian Churches had been determined once for all, his mind was unconvinced. For long it seemed to him that Greek usage made Ramsay's rendering of 'the Phrygo-Galatian region' untenable. A footnote to his article on 'Paul' in *D.B.* iii. p. 707, shows that he modified this view on later reflexion. But what weighed most powerfully with him was the conviction that the Galatian Epistle comes from the same period in the apostle's life and thought as the letters to Corinth and Rome. And in his latest published work, in his introduction to Romans in Dr. Peake's *Commentary*, he gives his final judgment. 'In the view of the present writer, Galatians and Romans, though differing in temper, were the offspring of one birth in Paul's mind and closely consecutive in time of origin. Romans is the calm after the storm; it gives a comprehensive, measured development to the principles argued in Galatians with polemic vehemence.' One cannot yet say that this question is decided. But to many of Dr. Findlay's students this last convinced and measured statement of their master's judgment weighs heavily against any other view.

As a further illustration of his power we may turn to his masterly exposition of Paul's argument as to the place of the Law in the divine discipline of mankind. 'This part of the Epistle' (Galatians), he writes, 'is in fact a piece of inspired *historical criticism*; it is a magnificent reconstruction of the course of sacred history. It is Paul's theory of doctrinal development, condensing into a few pregnant sentences the *rationale* of Judaism, explaining the method of God's dealings with mankind from Abraham down to Christ, and fitting the legal system into its place in this order with an exactness and consistency that supply an effectual verification of the hypothesis. . . . This passage finds its counterpart in Romans xi. Here the past, there the future fortunes of Israel are set forth. Together the two chapters form a Jewish theodicy, a vindication of God's treatment of the chosen people from first to last. Romans v. 12–21 and 1 Cor. xv. 20–57 supply a wider exposition, on the same principles, of the fortunes of mankind at large. The human mind has conceived nothing more splendid and yet sober, more humbling and exalting, than the view of man's history and destiny thus sketched out' (*Galatians*, pp. 197–198). The spaciousness and the grasp of such writing give its author an honoured place amongst the great expositors of all generations.

The volumes on *The Books of the Prophets* contain a continuous historical Introduction to the prophetic writings up to and including Jeremiah. They are written in the spirit of progressive con-

servatism, maintaining fully the right of modern knowledge to deal with the sacred text. 'It is now more generally understood that the old criticism (higher and lower) of rabbis and scribes, and of pre-scientific editors and commentators, from which many of the views inculcated in the childhood of the older of us were derived, is bound to be amended under the new light which God has given to our times. The light is bewildering, and the process of readjustment is disquieting for the present. But let us possess our souls in patience; "the firm foundation of God standeth."' Throughout these volumes the same thoroughness and mastery of authorities is manifested as in the New Testament work. Thus in the chapters on Jeremiah the works of Giesebrecht, Duhm, and Cornill, as well as the leading English commentators, are fully digested and reviewed. The chapter on the discipline of Jeremiah, sympathetic and penetrating, shows Dr. Findlay at his best. We may quote one pregnant passage: 'In Jeremiah the tragic mystery of God's dealings with the individual man stands over against the mystery of His dealings with nations in the larger play of human life. . . . Besieged by every sort of hostility, assailed by contradiction, ridicule, injury, with the whole force of religious authority and popular feeling enlisted against him—though his heart quaked all the while—Jeremiah stood faithfully alone for God and truth, as a lighthouse on its solitary rock breasting the storms of more than forty of the darkest years that God's kingdom on earth has known' (vol. iii. p. 184).

In the main, as these books show, Dr. Findlay adhered to the general critical reconstruction of Old Testament history, though, as often manifested in private conversation, he was not satisfied with the late dating of much of the Priestly Code, believing that more of it was pre-exilic than was commonly allowed.

In the closing years of his life Dr. Findlay accepted a commission from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to write its Centenary History. Foreign Missions had always been one of the ruling enthusiasms of his life. His family was notable for devotion to this cause. His younger brother, Rev. W. H. Findlay, whose death is just announced, after a distinguished career as a missionary in India, became one of the moving spirits in the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, and afterwards did much to spread the spirit of the Conference through the Churches of Great Britain. One of Dr. Findlay's sons and two of his daughters have served in India, whilst he himself as a young man offered for foreign service only to be rejected on grounds of health. Whilst some of his friends regretted the loss to Biblical scholarship of the fruits of his ripened knowledge, it was felt that no more fitting choice could have been made. The task was an enormous one involving the reading of many thousands of letters and journals, and remained incomplete at his death. With the help of his gifted daughter, Miss M. G. Findlay, M.Sc., he published in 1913 one small volume—*Wesley's World Parish.* Condensed though this work is it abounds in happy portraiture. Thus: 'Thomas Coke possessed the imagination and audacity of the old sea-rovers. Where dreams of empire and the lust of gold, or the mystery of the fabled seas, lured those adventurers, this hero of the Gospel was drawn by the vision of the lost treasures of God's kingdom and the masses of mankind estranged from Him.' Another pregnant sentence reveals the method of the growth of the missionary enterprises of all the Churches who have been led through the daring experiments of pioneers to see the vastness of their world-task. 'Methodism's growth on Colonial soil resembled that of the British Empire, the extension of which came about in the first instance through sporadic private adventure, this being followed by local association inviting the control and fostering care of the Mother Country, through which the dependencies have been reared to adult nationhood.' The Church of Christ has had its Drakes and Frobishers and Clives who have forced new responsibilities upon it.

The Fernley Lecture on *Christian Doctrine and Morals viewed in their Connexion* was inspired by Dale's famous sermon on 'The Evangelical Revival,' which suggested that Methodism had failed to work out the ethical consequences of John Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification. The Lecture expounds the central doctrines of Christianity and draws out their ethical implications. It reveals the deep interest of this quiet scholar in the wider social and moral questions of the day. Its programme for the twentieth century lies still far beyond us—'The abolition of war, the confederation of the Christian peoples, the organization of the forces of science for the uplifting of the

human race, and the establishment of a world-wide brotherhood of souls in the fellowship of God's Son Jesus Christ.' How deeply their master felt on these great themes will be known to those of his students who remember him in the autumn of 1914, with tears running down his cheeks, confessing his personal share of responsibility as a Christian teacher for the state of mind that had made the world-war possible.

For public life Dr. Findlay had little inclination. He is probably the only Wesleyan minister who has ever declined the highest honour in the power of his brethren to give him, the Presidency of the Wesleyan Conference. At times, when such questions as the preservation or renewal of the Methodist class-meeting fellowship were in debate, he gave much time and thought to work in Committee. On the rare occasions on which he spoke in Conference he was listened to with profound respect. But he loved to get back to his study, to influence by his pen those whom his voice was not strong enough to reach.

As a preacher he had none of the gifts of the orator. He had, it is true, the command of a pure and beautiful English style. It was an education and often a humiliation to take him some article and receive it back again with innumerable slight corrections, every one of which had to be acknowledged as an improvement. He had, as all his readers know, an almost infallible instinct for the right word. But a voice which at best was not strong, and a delivery that was halting and nervous, marked by long pauses, made him shrink from great assemblies. His happiest times were in little village churches, or at the College Communion Service with his students ranged before him. Many will remember the Quiet Days at Headingley when classes were put aside and the day given up to devotion. One thinks of Dr. Findlay then—the tall figure with the scholar's head, the voice breaking into tenderness or passion as he pleaded the cause of his Lord. One of these Communion addresses at least is preserved in the *Expositor*, seventh series, vol. v., under the title 'The Parable of the Pearl Merchant,' though the most intimate touches are omitted. Here the Pearl Merchant is the Lord Himself. 'Jesus grudged nothing, He hesitated at nothing; the whole wealth and capital of His being—His sinless manhood, the glory of His Godhead—He staked upon the enterprise; He invested and sunk *Himself* in the work of man's salvation; 'He loved us, and gave *Himself* for us,'—He 'went and sold all that He had' for His one pearl, 'and *bought it*.' That clinched the bargain, and fetched home the purchase: 'Thou hast redeemed us to God with Thy blood!'

This last quotation will do as well as many others to reveal the secret of Dr. Findlay's life. Through all his writings there runs, like a deep under current, the thought of the Cross of Christ. 'The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, sitting on that thorn-crowned brow, clothing that bleeding Form rent with the anguish of Mercy's conflict with righteousness on our behalf—it is this which "shines in our hearts" as in Paul's, and cleanses the soul by its pity and its terror.' It is because of words like these that many of Dr. Findlay's students remember him even more as a great Christian than as a great scholar. By birth and by conviction he was a Methodist—'a Catholic Methodist' he would have liked to say—and the Evangelical faith was the very core of his being. We may close this imperfect appreciation of a noble and gracious Christian scholar with the closing words of his Will. 'I commit my soul to my Redeemer's care, and my earthly memory to the hearts of my children and my friends.'