

# 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 Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

the readers have time to think. The controversy is over those clauses in the Creed which involve interference with the order of nature—especially the Virgin Birth and the Ascension. This month Mr. A. J. C. Allen replies to Professor Bethune-Baker and supports the conservative side; this month also Dr. M. G. Glazebrook replies to the Bishop of Ely and advocates the liberal interpretation. Dr. Glazebrook's title is *The Letter and the Spirit* (Murray; 5s. net).

We must not enter the controversy and receive the redding stroke. It is enough to say that it turns upon a narrow issue. That issue is the use in Scripture of symbolical language. For example: When Scripture says that Jesus ascended into

heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, does it assert a literal physical Ascent and a literal physical Seat? Dr. Glazebrook says No; the Bishop of Ely says Yes—but of course Dr. Chase would explain what he understands by 'physical' and 'literal.' It seems easiest to us in our modern atmosphere to say No, but then Dr. Glazebrook will capture and carry us away. He will carry us to the Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead. And if the Resurrection from the Dead was not physical and literal, what becomes of the narratives—the empty tomb, the clothes, the 'Touch me not,' the honeycomb, and the broiled fish? And what becomes of more than these?

---

## 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

(S. JOHN i. 29, 36).

BY THE VENERABLE C. E. BLAKEWAY, M.A., D.D., ARCHDEACON OF STAFFORD.

In Peake's *Commentary on the Bible* there occur the following comments on Jn i<sup>29</sup>:—

'The "Lamb of God" has been interpreted with reference (a) to the Paschal lamb (Ex xii.), with which the writer, like Paul (1 Cor v. 7.), identifies Jesus, but which was not a sin offering; (b) to the lamb of the morning and evening sacrifice; (c) to the lamb of Is liii. 4 ff., where the connexion with sin-bearing is certain. The Evangelist has probably interpreted and perhaps modified, in the light of later Christian thought (cf. also Gen xxii.), what originally referred to the destruction, not the "bearing" of sin.'

The above summary of opinions, and its concluding comment, sacrifices the veracity of the Evangelist; but is this necessary? The full recognition of Jesus as Messiah by John the Baptist is a well-known difficulty, and I think we must allow a certain amount of interpretative comment by the Evangelist upon the words and acts of Jesus, but it is quite another matter to

credit the Evangelist with incidents and sayings devoid of any foundation. Is there anything, then, which can safeguard the general, rather than the particular, recognition of Jesus as Messiah by the Baptist, without sacrificing the veracity of 'S. John'?

In the Book of Enoch 91<sup>37, 38</sup> we read:

'And I saw that a white bull was born, with large horns, and all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air feared him and made petition to him all the time. And I saw till all their generations were transformed, and they all became white bulls; and the first among them became a Lamb, and the Lamb became a great animal and had black horns on its head; and the Lord of the sheep rejoiced over it and over all the oxen.'

A note on the word 'lamb' in Dr. Charles' Pseud-epigrapha declares that, following Goldschmidt, the author considers the corrupt text ('word' for 'lamb') arose from the natural confusion of מלח = 'word' for מלח = 'lamb,' and refers us to the Testi-

monies of the XII. Patriarchs—Test. Joseph xix. 3-9, where § 8 in the parallel versions runs thus :

cbS 1.

A.

§ 8. And I saw that [from Judah was born]† a virgin [wearing a linen garment, and from her] was born a Lamb [without spot] and on his left hand there was as it were a lion ; and all the beasts rushed against him, and the lamb overcame them, and destroyed them and trod them under foot.

And I saw in the midst of the horns a † virgin [wearing a many coloured garment and from her] went forth a Lamb ; and on his right was as it were a lion ;

and all the beasts and all the reptiles rushed against him, and the lamb overcame them and destroyed them.

. . . . .

§ 11. Do ye therefore, my children, observe the commandments of the Lord, and honour Levi and Judah ; for from them shall arise 'unto you' [the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world] one who saveth [all the Gentiles and] Israel.

And do ye, my children, honour Levi and Judah ; for from them shall arise the salvation of Israel.

Dr. Charles, in a footnote, questions the word 'virgin' on the grounds that it is out of place in the midst of the animal symbolism, though the word occurs in the Armenian as well as the Greek and Slavonic recensions ! Borrowing, I suppose, from Enoch he would read, 'A bull calf became a Lamb.'

Again, Dr. Charles marks, as 'Christian interpolations,' all the words included within the square brackets.

Now what is the bearing of the above passages on Jn 1<sup>29, 36</sup> ?

S. John the Baptist, it would seem, as well as our Lord Himself, was familiar, at least to some extent, with the Apocalyptic writings. There are traces of this in the central portion of John's message, wherein he proclaims a Messiah of 'Fire and Fan,' and here in two books of Apocryphal writers we have Messiah pictured as a Lamb, and may not the expression 'Lamb of God' be derived from these sources ? Certain considerations make it at least probable.

1. Suppose for the sake of argument Dr. Charles is right to bracket all the words he has, the question

at once arises what led the early Christians to interpolate fragments from the Baptist's message derived alone from the Fourth Gospel into a book with the single expression 'the Lamb' ? It at least suggests that this description of the Messiah was current, and if in early Christian times, why not at the time of the Baptist's ministry ?

2. But is it not more likely that the words 'of God' at least were in the original text, and that S. John took over from the Testaments 'the Lamb of God' as a current Messianic title ? Consider one moment a peculiarity of S. John the Evangelist. In his Gospel there is a certain characteristic style which has been called 'spiral.' Again and again he describes our Lord as repeating some phrase or expression, and with each repetition some word or words of enlargement or expansion (cf. Jn 3<sup>3, 6</sup> 6<sup>48, 51, 58</sup>, and passages on the Spirit in chs. 14-16), but in this case the longer form comes first (1<sup>29</sup>), and 1<sup>36</sup> simply has the expression 'the Lamb of God.' From which, perhaps, we may infer that the expansion 'which taketh away the sin of the world' is S. John's own interpretative comment on the original saying. Once again, if this is so, S. John does not proclaim a definition of the Messiah outside the four corners of his proclamation in the Synoptists. We are not compelled to assign to him a consciousness of a suffering Messiah, which consciousness it is very generally held to-day only grew upon our Lord Himself as He became increasingly sure of His own rejection by the Jews.

3. There is one further point. In Jn 1<sup>34</sup> there is, as Professor Peake points out, a strongly attested reading, accepted by Blass, Nestle, Zahn, and Harnack, which reads for Son (*υἱός*), the Elect One (*ἐκλεκτός*) of God. But if this reading be correct, the main contention of this note, that the Baptist was conversant with the Apocryphal writers and from them got his ascription 'the Lamb of God,' receives further confirmation, for 'the Elect One' is a constant title for the Messiah in the Book of Enoch (37-71). And both terms illustrate not only, as Professor Peake says, 'how deeply the Fourth Evangelist is rooted in Jewish theology,' but even more how conversant S. John the Baptist was with the current hopes of those who were waiting for the redemption of Israel, and how accurately S. John the Evangelist recorded that knowledge.