

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

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge has written a book on *The Last Supper* (Heffer; 2s. net). It is unexpected. It is not unwelcome. For in the story of the Last Supper, as related in the New Testament, there are points which are most surely appreciated by one who is a Hebrew scholar.

And it is just the story as it is related in the New Testament that Dr. R. H. KENNETT seeks to explain. He is much surprised that, 'in view of the great number and diversity of Biblical problems which stimulate research and are freely discussed at the present day, the institution of the Holy Communion, as it is recorded in the New Testament, is in general comparatively ignored.'

He may well be surprised. What is the explanation of it? The explanation is that those who take the words 'This is my body, this is my blood' literally are content to call it a mystery and stay there, while those who take them symbolically are unwilling to go further and examine the symbol, so far removed is it from their ordinary ways of thinking. But it is clear to Professor KENNETT, and 'cannot be too strongly insisted upon,' that what our Saviour said to His disciples on that memorable night was meant to be intelligible to them then and there. And it is to

search and see what that meaning was that he has set himself in this book.

He touches that word 'mystery' first. Is the Holy Communion a mystery? Not if it is Christian. The religion of the pagan world, at the time when Christianity was winning its way with the Romans, was a religion of mystery. And Professor Kirsopp Lake would have us believe that the New Testament was written within the atmosphere and under the incubus of the Greek and Oriental mystery religions. But Professor KENNETT knows better than that. 'In seeking an interpretation of the words of Christ, we must not go outside Jewish literature and Jewish custom, and, further, we must remember that we are considering an event which took place not when the influence of the "mystery" religions was at its height, but in the first half of the first century of the Christian era. Even if our Lord and His apostles had any acquaintance with the "mystery" religions of the time, these would have been to them so foreign that we may safely ignore them when inquiring into the meaning of the Institution of the Holy Communion in the Upper Room.'

The Christian religion is not a mystery. It is a revelation. Mystery in the sense of incomprehensibility 'there must be in every statement about God, for it is a mere truism to say that our finite

intellects cannot attain to the inscrutable things of God. Christ, however, came not to obscure, but to reveal the Father; and we have therefore no right to import into any of His utterances any mystery over and above that which is inherent therein by reason of the fact that it deals with the Divine. The words "This is My Body" are, and were intended to be, just as simple—and just as mysterious—as "Our Father which art in heaven": simple, for they were meant to be intelligible to simple people; mysterious, inasmuch as they refer to the Everlasting Son of the Father.'

Pass, then, to the night of the Supper. What night was it? Professor KENNETT is convinced that it was not the night of the Passover. It is important, in face of the controversy over the value of the Fourth Gospel for the facts of the life of Christ, that the Regius Professor of Hebrew, standing outside the controversy altogether, finds the Synoptists wrong here and the Fourth Evangelist right.

Moreover, it is this conviction, reached, we say, independently, that gives Professor KENNETT the key to the whole situation.

And first of all, it enables him to understand the words, recorded by St. Luke, 'With desire I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.' These words are usually taken to settle the controversy between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics. 'This passover'—clearly, it is said, they were at that moment engaged in celebrating the Passover. But that is to misunderstand the words and mistranslate them.

They are misunderstood and mistranslated in both our English Versions. Not only have the translators rendered the aorist ('I desired') as though it were a perfect ('I have desired'), but they have also 'failed to recognise the force of the un-Greek phrase "with desire I desired." It is evident that we have here an attempt to represent in Greek an idiom which is found in both Hebrew

and Aramaic, whereby, when it is desired to put emphasis upon a finite verb, the infinitive of the same verb is added to the finite tense. Whenever this idiom occurs in Hebrew or Aramaic it is always possible to represent the sense in English, without employing any adverb, merely by an emphatic pronunciation of the verb. Thus "With desire I desired" means simply "I *desired*." But as soon as the sentence is read with this emphasis its original meaning becomes clear. The emphasis on the word "desired" suggests that in the present case the desire is contrasted with its non-fulfilment; in other words, that the desire cannot be carried out. It was unnecessary for our Lord to add, "But what I desired will not be fulfilled"; for after the emphasis on "I desired," the non-fulfilment of the desire is naturally expressed by an *aposiopesis*. Accordingly our Lord goes on to develop the thought suggested by the words, "before I suffer"; "for I say unto you that I shall not eat it until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

We come to the words of the institution. Dr. KENNETT discusses the different forms in which they appear in the different Gospels and in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The discussion is not necessary for his purpose, and we may pass it by. The essential words, witnessed to by all the sources, are, 'This (the bread) is my body' and 'This (the wine) is my blood.' What is the meaning of them? What meaning could the assembled disciples of Christ have taken out of them?

They could not have understood them literally. Professor KENNETT is quite convinced of that. 'For apart from the difficulty of supposing that the Apostles could understand the bread to be literally the Body of Christ and the wine His Blood, when He stood before them whole in His human Body, His Flesh unwounded, and His Blood unshed, the Jewish horror of eating blood and of everything savouring of human sacrifice would have been sufficient in itself to exclude a literal interpretation.'

Nor could they have understood 'my body' in the sense of the Church. 'In St. Paul's teaching indeed the Church is the Body of Christ, and in 1 Co 10¹⁷ he sees in the one bread of the Communion Service a type of the oneness of the Church. But the conception of the Church as a body having different members with different functions, which was not unnatural in the days of St. Paul, when the Church included many diverse elements, was scarcely natural before our Lord's passion, when the Christian Church did not exist. Moreover, if the Apostles had understood Jesus to mean "This bread symbolises the Church which is my Body," we should have expected that they would have recorded some other saying of Christ which would have prepared the way for such a conception; the Synoptic Gospels, however, have nothing to tell us about the unity of the Church, nor do they identify it with the Body of Christ.'

We come nearer the meaning when we take it that 'This is my body' is a way of saying, "'This symbolises My actual human Body, which, as the bread is broken, is to be broken on your behalf.'" But in this case we should have expected greater emphasis to be laid on the breaking, whereas the statement that our Lord after blessing broke the bread merely implies that He distributed the bread.'

Has Dr. KENNETT forgotten here that in 1 Co 11²⁴ we read, 'This is my body which is broken for you'? No, he has not forgotten. He knows that in the best text the word 'broken' does not occur. And although he is dissatisfied with 'This is my body which is for you,' which is neither Greek nor Aramaic, he does not think that we are entitled to help out the sentence by inserting 'broken,' as some early copyist did; all we can insert is some colourless word like 'given.'

What, then, do the phrases 'This is my body; and 'This is my blood' mean? They mean, says Professor KENNETT, that inasmuch as it was impossible for Christ to eat the Jewish passover with

His disciples, as once He earnestly desired to do, inasmuch as the Jewish authorities are to make that impossible, and He knows it, He has determined to make this supper a passover, a better passover than the Jewish Passover had ever been, and He is to offer *Himself* to His disciples as the Passover Lamb. They take the bread—let it be as if it were the unleavened bread of the Passover—nay, let it rather be as the flesh of the Passover lamb. They take the cup—let it be to them as the blood of the Passover lamb. And then—most momentous and most marvellous step—let their minds pass from the Passover lamb and rest upon Himself. Whatever the Passover would have been to them this Supper will be, and much more.

We have agreed—Professor KENNETT represents the Lord as in effect saying—'We have agreed that this bread shall represent to us the passover flesh, and this wine the passover blood—that is, if I am the true Passover Lamb, My Flesh and My Blood. Take, eat, therefore; this is My Body; drink ye all of this cup; this is My Blood. And as the passover in Egypt was the beginning of a new relation between the Lord and Israel, or, in Hebrew language, a "covenant," which was afterwards ratified by sacrificial blood, this wine will also be to you a symbol of that new and better relation with God which will be theirs who come with faith through the crisis of My death. I am indeed your Passover Lamb slain for you. Henceforth when you eat bread and drink wine, remember what I have said and done this night, and do it in remembrance of Me.'

Of the 'reversals of human judgment' which take place even in this life, it is probable that one will be the judgment which has been formed of the Samaritans. It is more a Jewish than a Gentile judgment. To the Gentiles, who read the New Testament, the Samaritans are represented most memorably by the 'Good Samaritan' of the parable—so memorably, indeed, that 'Samaritan'

has become a symbol for pity and help. But when even Christians turn their attention to the Samaritans of the Old Testament they acquiesce in the Jewish judgment. The Samaritans were a mongrel race, who spitefully tried to prevent the rebuilding of the temple because they were not permitted to take part in it.

The reversal of that judgment is most probable. It has been challenged in our day. The first to challenge it was an American scholar, Mr. J. A. MONTGOMERY. In a volume entitled *The Samaritans*, published in 1907, Mr. MONTGOMERY threw doubt upon the historical accuracy of the narratives which describe the Samaritans as a different race from the Jews, and said: 'When at last we come upon definite information concerning the Samaritans, of the kind that gives some description of them—and these authorities belong to the Christian era, the New Testament, Josephus, the Talmud—the Samaritans appear as nothing else than a Jewish sect. The one essential difference between them and Judaism is that their cult centres on Gerizim, not on Zion.'

A thorough investigation of the whole subject has now been made by a Cambridge scholar, Mr. Laurence E. BROWNE, M.A., Fellow of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, who has published a book on *Early Judaism* (Cambridge University Press; 14s. net). He supports Mr. MONTGOMERY, and goes further. He finds for himself that the Samaritans were not a mixed people, who worshipped sometimes the God of Israel and sometimes the gods of the heathen, and sometimes both together. More than that, and more surprising than that, he finds that their worship was purer than the worship of Israel had been before the Exile, for they had given up the use of the golden calf.

Mr. BROWNE'S conclusion is that the rejection by the returned Jews of the Samaritans' offer to co-operate in the building of the temple was due to the fact that they would not look upon

Jerusalem as the only place where men ought to worship. They had their own place of worship on Mount Gerizim. As the woman of Samaria put it: 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.' The returned Jews showed their religious inferiority to the Samaritans by insisting on worship being possible in one place only. And they showed their moral inferiority by blackening for history the character of those who had so generously offered to assist them in the day of their distress.

Is this 'reversal' only another attack upon the Jews? It does not seem so. Mr. BROWNE'S book is examined in the *Jewish Guardian* by Dr. Claude MONTEFIORE. The book, says Dr. MONTEFIORE, 'is written by a true scholar.' It has 'many aspects of interest, and is of considerable value.' 'Students will find in it an excellent account of the events which happened in Judæa after the "return" from the Babylonian captivity, and more especially of the years 520 to 400 B.C.' And then: 'Our author believes (as, indeed, seems most probable) that the Samaritans were far more Israelite by race, and far more simply and purely "a Jewish sect," than is usually supposed to be the case.'

Now that unexpectedly favourable verdict is an encouragement. It is an encouragement to take Mr. BROWNE seriously when he makes a much more startling proposal than the reversal of our judgment on the Samaritans.

There is in the Book of Isaiah a prophecy which stands by itself and hitherto has been the despair of the commentator. It is the prophecy which begins at 63⁷ and ends at 64¹². The most baffling verse is 63¹⁶: 'For thou art our father, though Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us: thou, O LORD, art our father; our redeemer from everlasting is thy name.'

As we read the verse in the Revised Version (just quoted), there is little difficulty in it. 'Know'

and 'acknowledge' must mean 'help' or 'succour,' and all that the prophet means is that the patriarchs, being dead, can no longer help their descendants, but the Lord, who lives, is their true father, and can bring them succour at all times. But there is no justification for taking 'know' and 'acknowledge' in the sense of 'help' or 'succour.' More than that, the Hebrew word translated 'though' cannot be so translated. It can only be translated 'for.' And the whole interpretation falls with that. This is Mr. BROWNE'S translation: 'For thou art our Father, for Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us; thou, O Yahweh, art our Father; our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name.'

But this verse is not the only difficulty. Almost as puzzling is the phrase in 64¹⁰, 'thy holy cities.' No one has been able to explain that phrase. Cheyne says: 'The phrase is remarkable; elsewhere Jerusalem is "the holy city."' Then again, it is unusual, it is even unique, to find this prophet throwing the blame on Yahweh for the misdeeds of the people. What other prophet dares to say: 'O Yahweh, why dost thou make us to err from thy ways?' And once more—and perhaps the most obviously perplexing passage of all—there is that incomprehensible verse, 63¹⁹. The translation of the Authorized Version is: 'We are *thine*: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.' The Revised Version is: 'We are become as they over whom thou never barest rule; as they that were not called by thy name.' That is to say, the Authorized Version adds the word 'thine,' and the Revised Version twice adds the word 'as'; and the meaning provided depends in each case upon these added words.

What are we to do with a prophecy like that? Says Mr. BROWNE: Give it to the Samaritans. It fits them; it fits none other. Give it to a great unnamed prophet. There is more than one unnamed prophet in this book already. Admit another, but let him be, not a Jewish, but a Samaritan, prophet.

The Samaritans had made their offer to the Jews, and were rejected. It seemed 'that they, the "Ten Tribes," were being driven away from the inheritance of Yahweh and caused to forsake Yahweh. "O Yahweh, why dost Thou make us to err from Thy ways, and hardenest our heart from fearing Thee? Return for the sake of Thy servants, for the sake of the tribes of Thine inheritance." Cheyne's comment is: "It is as if the Jews would throw the responsibility of their errors upon Jehovah; and this in spite of the encouraging invitations contained in this very book. They speak as if it is not they who need to return to Jehovah (lv. 7), but Jehovah who is reluctant to return to them; as if, instead of 'feeding his flock like a shepherd' (xl. 11), he has driven it out of the safe fold into the 'howling wilderness.'" How accurately, though unintentionally, does Cheyne's description fit the case of the poor cast-out Samaritans!

The Venerable R. H. CHARLES, M.A., D.Litt., D.D., F.B.A., Archdeacon of Westminster, having finished his commentary on the Apocalypse, has turned his attention to the subject of divorce. What connexion has divorce with the Apocalypse? He does not say that it has ~~any~~ connexion. But his mind was free and divorce is a living problem. Then he hit accidentally—he says it was accidentally—on a passage in the Talmud, and he saw his way through the whole bitter controversy.

He believes that he has settled the controversy about divorce. Those who read his book, and it is easily read, will agree. In his usual way Dr. CHARLES leaves nothing to be done by another. He overdoes the doing indeed, several times repeating what he has already said. But that is the pardonable sin. Within quite a small book after all—*The Teaching of the New Testament on Divorce* (Williams & Norgate; 6s. net)—he has solved the Scripture difficulty, and, as we have already said, laid the controversy at last to rest.

There are four passages in the Gospels to be dealt with, two in St. Matthew (5³² and 19⁹⁻¹⁰), one in St. Mark (10²⁻¹²), and one in St. Luke (16¹⁸). To understand these passages, we must understand the passages that they are based upon. These are Dt 22²² and 24¹⁻². In Dt 22²² death is prescribed as the punishment of the adulterous woman and her paramour. That law remained in force throughout our Lord's ministry and for one or more years after its close. It was then abolished, probably owing to the pressure of the Roman authorities.

That that law was in force during our Lord's ministry is evident from the story of the woman taken in adultery which is found in the Fourth Gospel. It does not belong to the Fourth Gospel, but that it is a genuine piece of history and the record of a real incident in the life of our Lord no great scholar or critic, says Dr. CHARLES, entertains any doubt. Very well, if the woman was put to death, that was the end of the matter as far as she was concerned. No divorce was necessary.

But if the woman was not put to death—if the Deuteronomic law was felt to be too severe and was evaded, as no doubt often occurred, and as actually occurred in the case given in the Fourth Gospel—what then? Certainly then the husband could divorce her. After 30 A.D., when the death penalty was abolished, he was even bound to divorce her. He was allowed no other option. How is it, then, that the Pharisees came to Jesus, tempting Him, and asked Him if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife?

Turn to the other passage in Deuteronomy. The passage (Dt 24¹⁻²) runs as follows: 'When a man taketh a wife and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favour in his eyes because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement and give it into her hand and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house she may go and be another man's wife.'

That passage 'gave the Jew the right to divorce his wife on the ground that he had found in her "some unseemly thing." Now, that this unseemly thing did not mean adultery is clear from the fact that the adulterous wife and her paramour were to be put to death, whereas the wife in this case is only divorced, and set free to marry another man. The meaning of the phrase "unseemly thing" is obscure. It seems to have involved something indecent, but certainly something short of adultery. Of the confessedly obscure character of the phrase the Jews took full advantage, and held themselves justified in divorcing their wives on the slightest pretext. The hopelessly lax interpretation of this verse, and the scandals that followed inevitably thereon, led, shortly before the Christian era, to a controversy that lasted for full a hundred years within the Jewish Church. This controversy was raging during the public ministry of our Lord, and the question put to Him by the Pharisees regarding divorce was the burning question of the day.'

Accordingly, when the Pharisees came to Jesus, tempting Him, they did not ask Him if a man could divorce his wife for adultery. They knew that. They were all agreed upon that. What they asked was whether he could divorce her 'for every cause.' The phrase was the accepted one in the controversy between the schools of Hillel and Shammai. It referred to the 'unseemly thing' of Deuteronomy, to which the Hillelites gave a wide interpretation, while the Shammaites tried to stem the degradation of marriage due to that interpretation by insisting on the unseemly thing being something serious. In short, the Pharisees came to Jesus in the hope that He would make an enemy of the one school by deciding in favour of the other.

What was His answer? His answer was that since God in the beginning made man male and female, in marriage they became one flesh; it was therefore unlawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause. As for adultery, adultery was itself divorce, and the legal proceedings should follow as

of course. But that was not the question which He was asked. And that was not the question which He answered.

How then do we read in St. Mark's Gospel that the Pharisees simply asked Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?' It is quite possible that the Pharisees put it that way. But if they did they could only mean 'put her away for every cause.' For there was no dispute or doubt about a man's right to divorce his wife for adultery. It may be that St. Mark gives the question in an abbreviated form; it is much more probable that he gives it in the form in which it was actually asked, for the Pharisees would take it for granted that Jesus understood. It is also probable that St. Matthew added 'for every cause' to prevent his Gentile readers from misunderstanding.

Since therefore—this is Archdeacon CHARLES'S conclusion—'since, therefore, our Lord's state-

ments on divorce condemned only those who put away their wives on inadequate grounds, and since these statements explicitly in Matthew and implicitly in Mark admit the right of divorce on the ground of adultery, it follows that there is no justification whatever in Christ's teaching for the attitude assumed by a large body of ecclesiastics who, at the present day, deny the right of divorce in the case of adultery, and the right of subsequent remarriage to the guiltless person, and, in the case of such remarriage, refuse such persons Communion—in other words, excommunicate them. Of these ecclesiastics, who lord it so mercilessly over the heritage committed to them, we may say, with the Old Testament prophet that by their misrepresentations, unconscious for the most part, "they have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad," and that, like their forerunners in the New Testament, they are making void the teaching of Christ by their traditions.'

The Minister's Message for To-day as inspired by the New Testament.

BY THE REVEREND H. R. MACKINTOSH, D. PHIL., D. D., PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY,
NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH.

IN the last resort, the New Testament message for to-day is just the message for yesterday and for to-morrow. We heard more than enough, probably, three years since about everything being different after the war. Without paradox or perversity, it may be argued that everything rather is the same. The war has not changed the nature of God or the moral law; it has not created sin; and the longing for immortality which it released into thrilling expression had been there, latently, all the time. We are not discovering man's need or God's gospel, but only returning to them. And yet out of that infinite reality which we call the Gospel, each generation, each period of crisis, inevitably makes its own selection. Out of the great organ note of redeeming Love, the present-day Christian ear is catching certain undertones

and overtones—lifting them into prominence, valuing them afresh. All I can hope to do now is to mention one or two of these in the belief that they have a special timeliness, a palpable suitability to our position. The only general remark that need be made is that the New Testament is, at bottom, the most hopeful book ever written; so that the man who preaches pessimism to-day, or disseminates it by his talk, is badly out of line with the Apostles.

This, too, may be added—that if a message is to help men, it must be capable of being described as doctrinal. 'No preaching,' said Phillips Brooks, a fairly good judge, 'ever had any strong power that was not the preaching of doctrine.' What we are discussing is a *message*—not hints, or rumours, or even aspiring ideals, but great affirmations that