

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING
AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

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Published monthly by
THE PRESBYTERIAN AND
REFORMED PUBLISHING CO.,
501 Witherspoon Bldg., Phila., Pa.

MID-MARCH, 1931
Vol. 1 No. 11

\$1.00 A YEAR
EVERYWHERE

The Bodily Resurrection of Our Lord: Its Importance

THE General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that it is an essential article of Christian faith that our LORD JESUS CHRIST "rose again from the dead with the same body with which He suffered." The fact that the General Assembly has deemed it necessary to make such a pronouncement bears witness to the fact that even within the Presbyterian Church there are many who do not hold this opinion concerning the place that the bodily resurrection of CHRIST occupies in Christian thought and life. Within the memory of living men His resurrection—meaning of course, His bodily resurrection—was regarded by friend and foe alike as an article of a standing or falling Christianity. Our fathers, certainly our grandfathers, whether they were Christians or non-Christians, would have been practically unanimous in approving the representation of the late DR. FAIRBAIRN:

"The resurrection created the church, the risen CHRIST made Christianity, and even now the Christian faith stands or falls with Him. If it be proved that no living CHRIST issued from the tomb of JOSEPH, then that tomb becomes the grave not only of a man, but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasms it has inspired."

Today, however, there are many calling themselves Christians—and apparently their number is on the increase—who, so far from looking upon CHRIST's resurrection as an article of a standing or

falling Christianity, maintain that it can be discarded altogether without sacrificing anything essential to Christian faith. This, if we mistake not, is one of the fruits of that anti-supernaturalism of thought and sentiment that has become so dominant in recent years even among those calling themselves Christians. In the nature of the case, just as the "non-miraculous Christianity," so much in vogue today, cannot allow that an event so obviously miraculous is needed to account for the origin of Christianity, so it cannot possibly allow that confidence in its reality is fundamental to the Christian's life and hope. Be this as may, we are fully persuaded that those who take this new attitude toward the resurrection of CHRIST are profoundly mistaken, and that as a matter of fact His resurrection

is so essential to Christian faith and hope as to warrant the strong language of PAUL:

"If CHRIST be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and our faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of GOD; because we have testified of GOD that He raised up CHRIST whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not CHRIST raised: and if CHRIST be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

The basic question at issue in this connection is, of course, the question, Did JESUS really rise from the dead? That is not the question before us now, however. The question before us is rather, assuming the reality of this event does it so enter into the substance of Christianity as to constitute an indispensable element in the religion we profess? It need not be overlooked, however, that, if the resurrection of JESUS is essential to Christianity, the whole mass of that evidence that evinces the truth of Christianity also evinces the reality of the resurrection.

It is impossible in the space at our disposal to even mention all the ways in which the resurrection of JESUS enters as a constitutive and indispensable element in making Christianity what it is. All we can hope to do is to direct attention to some of the more outstanding considerations which make clear that the resurrection of CHRIST is essential to Christian faith and hope.

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Christ and the beginnings of the Christian Church is shown to be untrustworthy.

This method of attack falls to the ground if Galatians was actually written before the Apostolic Council of Acts 15:3-29 took place; for in that case Gal. 2:1-10 is an account of an entirely different event from that which is narrated in Acts 15:3-29, and differences between the two accounts cannot possibly be regarded as contradictions. Thus the dating of Galatians before the Apostolic Council, which becomes possible on the South Galatian theory, constitutes one way, and a very effective way, of refuting what is perhaps the most serious modern attack upon the trustworthiness of the New Testament. This early dating of Galatians can no longer be regarded as a mere curiosity or baseless vagary of criticism; for it has received the support of several able modern scholars of widely differing views.

We do not, indeed, desire to create the impression that we adopt the early dating of Galatians. In particular, we do not desire to create the impression that we think it provides the only way of defending the trustworthiness of Luke-Acts. Even if Galatians was written after the Apostolic

Council, and even if Gal. 2:1-10 and Acts 15:3-29 do constitute, as the vast majority of scholars think they do, two accounts of the same event, still we hold most emphatically that there is no contradiction between them but that they present only those differences which are natural in two independent, but equally trustworthy, witnesses.

However, the early dating of Galatians, with identification of the event of Gal. 2:1-10 with the famine visit of Acts 11:30; 12:25, constitutes one possible, even though perhaps not probable, way of exhibiting the harmony between Acts and Galatians. It must be treated, therefore, at least with respect, and unquestionably it would serve to solve some of the problems. If there were no other way of defending the trustworthiness of Luke-Acts, then, because of the great weight of independent evidence to the effect that Luke-Acts is trustworthy, and that it was really written by a companion of Paul, we should regard as thoroughly scientific the adoption of this view.

The possibility of this early dating of Galatians is open only on the basis of the South Galatian theory. That constitutes, we think, the chief interest of the much

debated "Galatian question" as to the destination of the Epistle.

We shall not endeavor to decide that question here, and indeed the decision is exceedingly difficult. Plausible arguments may be adduced on either side. The North Galatian theory has the advantage of placing the Epistle chronologically together with the Epistles of the third missionary journey—I and II Corinthians and Romans—with which it is very closely connected in thought and in style. Perhaps that theory may provisionally be adopted, though the South Galatian theory, with or without the dating before the Apostolic Council, must be kept in mind as a possibility which ultimately we might be led to adopt.

Fortunately the essential teaching of the Epistle is quite independent of the question where the churches to which it is addressed are to be found. Whether those churches were in North Galatia or in South Galatia, they were falling into a very modern, as well as a very ancient, error, and the Epistle which Paul wrote to them in the first century is eminently a tract for our twentieth-century times.

Books of Religious Significance

MORALS OF TOMORROW. By Ralph W. Sockman, Ph.D., LL.D. Harper & Brothers, publishers, New York and London. Price, \$2.50.

FREEDOM AND RESTRAINT. The James Sprunt Lectures, 1930, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va. By Robert F. Campbell, A.M., D.D., Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Asheville, N. C. Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, Chicago. Price, \$1.75.

FROM the well-written book of Dr. Sockman it appears anew that Liberalism has determined upon the destruction of historic Christianity and theism. The God of Dr. Sockman is an immanent principle within the universe instead of the Creator and Sustainer of it. The Christ of Dr. Sockman is an exceptionally wise man but not the Son of God. The Scriptures are for Dr. Sockman the precipitate of past experience but not the word of God. Accordingly God no longer judges men.

Now it will at once be said that on such views of God, Christ and the Scriptures, there is no longer any authority for moral law. And this is true. Moral chaos is the logical result if Christian theism is relinquished. It is pathetic to see the author grasp in vain for some sort of authority. What he finds is the "authority of the expert." As one calls upon the doctor so one may still call on God, on Christ and on Scripture till nature takes its course in us.

That is "moral authority for free minds." The "democratic temper of our time" can allow no other authority. Thus the church's business is to help men outgrow their "growing pains." And in doing this the church must make no mention of eternity. "When the children of the psychological era cry for the bread of happiness here and now, it will scarcely do to offer them the stone of a promised bliss hereafter" (p. 128). Such is said to have been the view of Christ himself.

Now against such a position it is useless to fight unless one uproots the foundations upon which it is built. Or rather, one must show that such a position has no foundations. Its foundations are the shoreless and bottomless waters of human experience. Whence has human experience come? The answer must be, "From the void." Whither is human experience going? The answer must be, "To the void." Upon what is human experience resting? The answer must be, "Upon the void." The whole of human experience then, is meaningless. And expert advice on moral questions too, is meaningless. Granted there were experts there would be no patients but corpses. Modernism is as the jackdaw pluming itself with feathers stolen from Christian theism.

In Dr. Campbell's book the question of authority comes to the foreground again. But if one expects to find in this book a good refutation of the position maintained by Sockman and Liberals in general, he will be

disappointed. Dr. Campbell halts between two opinions. We would expect to be shown that except man moves in the medium of implicit obedience to God, and therefore to Christ and the Scriptures, he is as a fish on dry land. We would expect to be shown that tyranny and chaos are the twin monsters that face us if we do not face God. We would expect to be shown that we are slaves to sin if not slaves to Christ. We would expect to be shown that we are slaves to the word of the spirit of man if we are not obedient to the Spirit of the Word of God.

Instead of all this we have what looks very much like "authority for free minds." We are once more told that the authority of the Bible is that of the expert and not that of a judge (p. 17). Now this way of putting the matter is misleading. It implies that orthodox theology has been accustomed to think of God as a sort of judge who merely administers law that exists beyond Himself. It is thus misconceived and then caricatured that Sockman presents the matter. It is thus that Campbell misconceives the matter. As though the words of Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" have not found their echo in every believer's heart! Yes, we believe God's authority is expert. God is the expert not an expert. Therefore too, He has the authority not of a judge but of "the Judge of all the earth." It is for this reason too, that both guilt and pollution are involved in sin. Dr.

Campbell has omitted guilt. But if one omits guilt and thinks almost exclusively of pollution it is only a matter of time before one lands at the "growing pains" of Liberalism.

Dr. Campbell has sought to prove his view of the authority of Scripture by showing that Scripture itself appeals to us as judges as, for example in Isaiah 1:18, "Come . . . and let us reason together." But this appeal so far from proving rather disproves the author's point. There is in the first place a great difference between the Scripture's approach to covenant people and its approach to others. But, waiving this, we hold it evident that Scripture consistently speaks to the sinner as the sinner's judge. If sin is what the Shorter Catechism says it is, "want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God," God must always and everywhere be the sinner's judge. But the marvel of God's grace is this that the Judge offers pardon and even persuades men by His Spirit to accept it. And this is quite the opposite from the words of Coleridge, "the Bible finds me." Yet Dr. Campbell quotes these words with approval (p. 14). Coleridge meant that the Bible finds us at our greatest depth, as though our sinful nature were at bottom in harmony with instead of at enmity against God. So one cannot accept Coleridge's view of the Bible without giving up the Bible's view of itself. Modernism, we may be sure, is much pleased when orthodox writers waver on this pivotal point and send forth an uncertain sound.

A deflection at this point will soon lead to further and greater deflections. First the authority of the Scriptures is reduced to that of an expert. Thereupon the authority of Scripture is limited to certain fields. Experts should not presume to speak on all matters. They are experts by virtue of specialization. Now Scripture is, on this view, a specialist on religious and moral concerns. Hence we do well to listen to it on these matters, but we would be misinterpreting Scripture itself if we claimed its authority for positions held with respect to non-religious and non-moral questions. This view of inspiration as held by Dr. Campbell is historically known as the dualistic view of inspiration. It has been held by others and is held by Dr. Campbell because it seems to safeguard all that is necessary to believe concerning inspiration without making one an unnecessary target of higher criticism.

With respect to this theory it should be said that it involves a concession that is fatal to belief in the self-testimony of Scripture. Scripture testimony about its inspiration is unqualified and allows for no dualism of which man is to be the judge. Moreover, even if man were to be the judge he could not possibly extract the religious-ethical content of Scripture from its historical garb. And this is true not only because there would be endless diversity of opinion as to what should or should not be

accepted but especially because redemption itself is historically mediated. One would first have to reduce special revelation to the mere communication of information before such a dualistic theory of inspiration could be countenanced. Jesus and the Apostles did not so conceive of the Old Testament.

Or if the author should complain that our interpretation of his view of inspiration charges him with an intellectualism that he does not want, we are glad to give him the benefit of the doubt between the theory just described and the dynamic view of inspiration as held by Schleiermacher the "father of modern theology." In either case the consciousness of man must decide what it will accept and what it will not accept of the Scripture. This view is not at all to be identified with that of those who hold to unreduced and unlimited inspiration but who allow for the possibility of minor errors in the text of Scripture. The author claims the authority of such writers for his views but it is a simple case of the jackdaw's stealing peacock feathers once more.

The whole issue is beclouded by the author in his second chapter on, The Letter and the Spirit. Paul's words from 2 Cor. 3:6, "for the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life," are wrought upon till they are made to tell against those who believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture. But even a cursory reading of the context reveals that Paul is contrasting those who ministered under the old covenant with those who, like himself ministered under the new covenant. Paul glories in "the glory that surpasseth." What person is there among those who believe in verbal inspiration who does not believe what Paul says in Rom. 7:4-6, that we are made "dead to the law by the body of Christ"; and therefore "we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter?" The words of Paul about the letter and the spirit have no connection with the question of verbal inspiration. The author's argument here is Quixotic indeed.

Again the author spreads confusion when he holds that the theory of verbal inspiration militates against the Protestant view that each Christian must interpret the principles of Scripture for himself. But the author should have said that verbal inspiration militates against the modernist view of "interpretation" but is in complete harmony with the Protestant view of interpretation. The modernist means by "interpretation" that each person picks out what he wants of the Bible. The Protestant view of "interpretation" is that each person seeks to find out what exactly the Bible wants of him. Interpretation according to the spirit of the Holy Spirit is in consonance with and demanded by the theory of verbal inspiration but interpretation according to the spirit of the sinner's evil spirit, to be sure, agrees with the theory of verbal inspiration as fire agrees with water.

Even this is not enough. According to

Dr. Campbell, believers in verbal inspiration cannot observe the need "of discrimination in drawing lessons from the inspired record . . ." (p. 50). But must we really follow the "sons of thunder" in praying down fire from heaven upon our adversaries because we believe in verbal inspiration? What person, believing in verbal inspiration is there that does not seek to condemn what God condemns and approve what God approves? And what believer in verbal inspiration is there who does not make the difference, made by Scripture itself, between the externalism and nationalism of the old covenant and the internalism, individualism and therefore universalism of the new. The author is beating the air once more.

Finally, to mention no more, literalism, if we may believe the author, is also a child of verbal inspiration. In this case it would be necessary for those holding to verbal inspiration to think the disciples were wiser than Jesus when they thought the "leaven of the Pharisees" meant some species of baker's bread. But does verbal inspiration have anything to do with figures of speech? What does the whole question of symbolic or literal interpretation have to do with verbal inspiration? Premillenarians, Amillenarians and Postmillenarians often agree heartily on verbal inspiration but differ heartily on symbolism.

Such a confusing of the main issue produces troubled waters in which the Modernist will find his fish.

One more point we would note. After observing the author's first major deflection on the matter of reducing the authority of Scripture by virtually qualifying the "natural man" as the judge of its truth, and after noting the author's second deflection of limiting whatever authority the first deflection left untouched, to matters of religion and morals, we do not expect that the author will thereafter be very much concerned about what the Bible says on such subjects as the home, the state and the church. In no case does the author determine what these institutions should be according to the Scripture in order thereupon to test in how far they have lived up to the Scriptural idea of them. On the contrary, the author argues chiefly from the basis of history as its own standard. Thus his method is scarcely open to the charge made by Dr. Sockman of being traditional in the sense of having neglected the empirical method. Dr. Campbell's method is scarcely distinguishable from the method of Dr. Sockman. This, we believe, is hobnobbing with the enemy.

We hope and trust that the compromising attitude revealed by Dr. Campbell is not symptomatic of the condition of affairs in the South. If it is we fear greatly that the waters of the Auburn Affirmation will meet with little resistance as they come rushing down toward the Gulf of Mexico.

C. VAN TIL.