

THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

Vol. XL.

OCTOBER, 1928.

No. 1.

FORTY YEARS OF NEW TESTAMENT RESEARCH.

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The forty years that have elapsed since the founding of the UNION SEMINARY REVIEW have been a period of such activity in the field of New Testament research that even the barest cataloguing of what has been done would exceed the limits of the present article. The most that we can possibly attempt here is a brief characterization of certain tendencies that have been at work.

In the field of textual criticism, there has been tireless activity. The really decisive labors, it is true, were performed prior to 1888; for by the researches of Tischendorf, Tregelles and others the principal documentary materials of textual criticism were made available; and the epoch-making edition of Westcott and Hort, which appeared in 1881, established on a firm foundation the principles of the science and the methods of its application to the New Testament. Nevertheless, there has been work in plenty for more recent scholars to do. No new critical apparatus has, indeed, succeeded in taking the place of Tischendorf's monumental eighth edition: for von Soden's apparatus, despite its undoubted value, suffers from an unsatisfactory method of presentation and is generally felt not really to meet the need; while Casper René Gregory, who might well have accomplished what is required, met an untimely end in the Great War. But if a satisfactory critical apparatus is still lacking, the materials for its production are being collected with an ever-increasing fulness. Best known,

pletion of the task; there yet remains the duty of widening and deepening the knowledge of the meaning of the Gospel for personal and social life; and the securing of living that translates that Gospel into daily conduct. The task of the church of the living God does not stop short of a church living the Gospel of God, making its impact upon society like a river of life; a stream so unquestionably coming from the Throne of God that "everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh". It is to such "desired religious changes" that religious education sets its face in dependence upon the Spirit of God, asking nothing more than to be allowed to seek to give the teaching of the Christian religion the place Jesus gave it in His charter of His Church.

"CAN CHRISTIANITY CONTROL THE FORCES IT CREATES?"

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Isaiah 1:2—"I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me."

Christianity is a creative religion. In this it differs from religions like those of India or China, where inaction and meditation are the outstanding features. Gautama under the lotus tree is a definitely different conception from the Man of Galilee who went about doing good. Christianity is dynamic and creative and in sharp contrast with Islam, whose fatalism has held its realm still so long that it is said to be "stiff as a dead man's hand".

The hand of Christianity is not stiff. It is the most skillful and potent factor in human life today. It powerfully stirs to action. Its words of command are "do" and "go". It greatly enlarges personality. It challenges us with a program to "be"

and to "grow". It quickens the step of mankind and begets tremendous personal momentum.

Christianity produces two kinds of results: First, those which are mystical and dynamic, such as spiritual awakening followed by great experiences of faith, and fellowship, of prayer and sacrificial service. These are primary, and are under the control of the Spirit of God. But second, there are other results of Christianity, which are indirect results, or by-products, brought about by the reaction of other life to Christianity. These by-products are growing to such proportions throughout Christendom as to make it worth while for us to seriously consider how we shall control and use them.

That is a striking thought which Mrs. Shelley presented in her novel, "Frankenstein", where a medical student found the secret of creating life artificially. He fashions a man from materials collected from graveyards and dissecting rooms. This creature was a powerful but terrible being. Frankenstein could not control him and was pursued and tormented by him. Finally the product of his own creative power rose up and slew him. This by-product of his biological skill was his undoing. This striking picture of Mrs. Shelley's lives because it is so true to so many serious or even tragic situations in our everyday experience. With this in mind, one may well ask the question, "Can Christianity control the forces it creates"?

I.—Christianity greatly enlarges our physical demands on life. It rapidly multiplies our wants. When you teach a man that he is made in the image and likeness of God you have summoned him from barbarism to civilization. He is not longer contented with a loin-cloth for clothing nor a dirt-floored hut for a dwelling. The stimulus of this ennobling faith goads him to actively seek for improved conditions of physical life. He wants better houses, better streets, better clothing, better food, better transportation, better communication. He wants music and art. He makes requisition for the output of factory and farm. He is a customer for every product which man's industry or skill can bring to him.

He speeds the wheels of commerce, and this in turn creates wealth. Christian nations are the richest nations on the earth,

despite the fact that Jesus constantly warns us against laying up treasure on the earth. The United States Bureau of Internal Revenue recently announced that the highest standard of living ever attained in the history of the world was reached recently by the American people. Our total income in 1926 was \$89,682,000,000. This is an increase of \$27,000,000,000 over our income in 1921. Such vast totals are beyond our power to understand, but we can understand the simpler, concrete facts of our general prosperity when we see such a large percentage of our homes filled with comforts and luxuries which the nobility or even royalty of other days could not possess.

America is not alone in this vast commerce and its resulting increase of wealth. But all Christian nations are in the same state, and down at the bottom of it all is this germinating, springing leaven in that the people of those lands were taught ages ago the dignity of their spiritual nature, and began long ages ago the movement away from an empty, squalid hut to a home filled with comfort and beauty.

Now we face the serious question of the control and use of this vast wealth. We face the dangerous realm of luxury. If we enter it and content ourselves with pleasure-seeking, devoting our great resources to building splendid palaces and gorgeously furnishing them, while we please ourselves by sitting down to eat and rising up to play, we shall find spiritual bankruptcy as our portion.

Can Christianity lead the way in devoting its wealth to the high purposes of Jesus Christ? This is the main question for us to consider. Christian people own a great deal of the wealth of Christendom. You can test this out in your own community. A little observation will disclose to you that Christian people own the great bulk of the property and other forms of wealth of your community. They devote a very small part of it to the work of the Church. All the rest of it they spend on themselves or lay up as treasure. The Christian Church does not use its resources in a sacrificial way. It does not use them in a way to impress the non-Christian world with the idea of self-denial or cross-bearing. It can scarcely, if at all, escape

the charge that it is money-loving and pleasure-loving. How can Christendom control its great wealth when the Church, which is the heart of Christendom, apparently cannot control her own wealth, or her own desire for extravagance and luxury? Unless the Church will sacrificially devote her money to Christ and his purposes, and thus lead all Christendom to a better control and use of its wealth—then the so-called Christian nations will be engulfed by a tidal wave of paganism.

No people, no civilization, can escape the ruin of luxury, effeminacy and degeneracy, which is the last act of a tragedy whose first parts were covetousness, selfishness and worldliness. This wealth of ours is a by-product of Christianity. It is a tremendous force in our life. If we are honest, we will have to confess that we are not successfully controlling it.

II.—Christianity powerfully quickens our intellectual life. When you have taught a man that he is a child of God, you have created for him a new heaven and a new earth. You have introduced him to a realm of thought which is boundless. He is not content to be ignorant. He wants to grow in knowledge, and to go on to know the Lord. Christianity is the Mother of Education. This divine spark which we call the intellect is held in the highest esteem by Christianity. Its care and development and training is accepted as a major task of Christian people.

The Church and schoolhouse grow side by side under the fostering care of the Lord Jesus Christ. His command to make disciples of all nations was bulwarked by the kindred command to teach them all things whatsoever He had commanded. He, Himself, went about all the cities and villages teaching, preaching and healing. Christian people have ever been heroic and sacrificial pioneers in educational enterprises. The book zone and the school zone of the world has been pre-eminently the Christian zone. It is in Christendom that the great multiple printing presses toil unremittingly day and night. Their output of papers, magazines and books is astounding. These are read by people whose intellectual life, racially and nationally, received its primary impulse in their

being taught that they were spiritually and intellectually the children of God.

Christianity has fostered the great systems of education, both private and public, and popular, which now expend billions of dollars and which now use millions of teachers in the training of multiplied millions of children in the schools of Christendom. After religion itself, this is the most potent factor in the control of life. This vast system of education has produced a new world of thought in the last two generations.

Sometimes their output in Philosophy and Science seems to depart from our traditional orthodoxy. Can Christianity control these tremendous forces of the intellectual world? Scientific discovery and mechanical invention have largely altered the outward aspects of our life. Scientific and philosophical theory are asking many troublesome questions of us today. The scientific method of research is challenging the former dogmatic method in every intellectual center. Christianity is openly questioned as to what it has to contribute to our common welfare. Can Christianity prove itself to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world? Can the thought of the Church so wholly enthrone Christ as King that He shall be plainly seen as the Light of the world; and His Church, living in Him, shall be the light of the world in reality as it is in name, and the intellectual life of the world be led out of its present dark maze into the Way, where are both Truth and Life? Christianity's task is not to dispute facts, but to interpret them. Her control of the intellectual world is not one of superior knowledge, but one of superior living. Her leadership is not one of authority, but of influence by example. She best defends the doctrine when she adorns the doctrine with consecrated life. Her control of all modern intellectual life is best accomplished by her consistent following of her Lord Jesus Christ.

III.—Christianity powerfully stimulates personality. When you have taught a man that he is a child of the Almighty God and possessed of an eternal life you have begun a development within him that goes on to a courageous demand for freedom.

He feels his independence of men. He knows an emancipation from subservience. He rises to a new level of manhood. He makes his personal declaration of independence. His individuality emerges. His intelligence, his emotions and his will are all newly engaged. He is really more of a man and he breaks the bonds of servitude and casts away from him the cords of despotism.

You cannot enslave God's free children. Autocracy has largely vanished from the face of the earth. This important transformation has been made possible by the message of the Gospel calling men to fellowship with the infinite God through his Son, Jesus Christ. The world is made safe for democracy.

But a task far greater than this confronts us now. Can we make democracy safe for the world? There is the danger that this tremendous body, in passing from despotism to democracy, may swing too far away from authority and plunge into radical individualism. If democracy is understood by the mass of the people to mean the release from any control of conduct by the government, and that every man has license to do his own will, then the democracy which we have so proudly acclaimed as ushering in our golden age will prove to be the most revolutionary and destructive force in the history of the race.

Restraint is necessary in all life. Restraint means control, and control means safe and efficient action. It is the lack of restraint on the part of the individual which is making possible the present era of law-breaking. To throw off the yoke of oppressive despotism for the freedom of democracy is an achievement in which we rejoice, but to swing away from democracy to an exaltation of the will of the individual against the will of the community, or of organized society, is to plunge into a social maelstrom where ruin is inevitable.

Can Christianity control this awakened and dynamic individual which it has produced? He is challenging all the social and civic wisdom we possess. We cannot say that we are succeeding in holding him in an orbit of orderly and reliable conduct. The reason for the failure is that we have not

succeeded in teaching him that self-control which is necessary to all real social order and progress.

We are not through with this era of change. An ever-increasing number of voices are raised in the cry for a better social order. Men see visions of a more equitable distribution of wealth, of a more just administration of law, of a more fraternal relation between nations and races. They are steadfastly minded to possess this goal. This can be done by the gentle process of education and religion. It can also be reached by the violent methods of revolution and upheaval. Mankind will not rest in its present achievements. It will go on to these desirable changes which already beckon them forward.

Can Christianity control these mighty movements and keep them peaceful and safe, or will they break loose from religion and surge forward with irresistible force and violence in the shock of battle, and with garments dipped in blood?

A More Potent Christianity.

It must be confessed that the present type of Christianity does not seem to be able to control these forces.

If we ask the reason for this, it is because our Christianity is so little like Christ. Christianity is a very different term from Christ-likeness. The Church is Christian in its profession, but it is not Christ-like in its character. How can a money-loving and pleasure-loving church teach self-denial and self-sacrifice to the world?

General Armstrong, of Hampton Institute, said: "A work that requires no sacrifice does not count for much in fulfilling God's plans." But it is very difficult to discover self-sacrifice or cross-bearing in the life of prosperous Christians.

The thought of the Old Testament is centered in the "Altar of Sacrifice". The New Testament is organized around the cross of Service. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me"—and following this thought, George Herbert could say, "Difficulty, sacrifice, even death, are the allurements which act

on the heart of man. Hard things are glorious. Easy things are cheap."

It is easy to see how far the Church is from the altar and the cross. It is also easy to understand her failure. She lacks power because she lacks Christ. The church is hard-pressed. She can with difficulty maintain her position of influence in life. She cannot control its tremendous forces of wealth, education, and democracy in her depleted condition. She must have more power. The Master pleads with her:

"Put on my fetters and thou shalt be free,
Embrace my altar, and thy cords shall fall,
Become Love's captive and thy soul shall be
Lord of itself, and master over all."

Will the Church answer:

"Make me thy captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be."

The Church must not fail humanity. It holds our future in its keeping. Pressure on the Church in the past has always driven her in toward Christ. It will do so again. Christ is ever the Light of the world. In just so far as the Church is true to Him does she also become the Light of the world, the salt of the earth.

We do not need to be pessimistic about the present or the future. We are being fiercely driven to a better type of Christianity—as we perceive that our present kind is inert and unequal to its great tasks.

The power to save the world does not reside in the Church. The power to save itself is not within the Church. The power to save the Church, and with it the world, is in God through Christ. The Church can have that power if she wants it, but she cannot have it apart from Christ Himself.

A Christlike Church can control the whole world. Our present failure will drive us to Him—and in Him we shall find victory.