

it. The Epistle to the Philippians is, in Professor Findlay's words, "a true love-letter, full of friendship, gratitude, and confidence." And the same expositor adds: "His intercourse with them was never marred by the offences and suspicions with

which other churches had troubled him. This is the happiest of St. Paul's letters. 'Summa epistolæ, *Gaudeo, gaudete*' ('I rejoice; do ye rejoice! is the sum of this letter'), says sententious Bengel. It is a free outpouring of the heart."

Benjamin Jowett.

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IN all the notices of the late Master of Balliol which have yet appeared, one point is specially dwelt upon, and that is the *personal* character of his work and influence. Written treatises indeed remain. His *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles*; his contribution to the *Essays and Reviews*; above all, his incomparable translations of Plato, Thucydides, and the Politics of Aristotle. But beyond these, far more subtle and wider reaching, was the impulse which some of the ablest men in Oxford, year by year, received from his personality, and as they left Oxford carried far and wide into the world. How potent was that impulse, the assembly round his grave signified. If, however, I attempt to form some independent estimate of the character of his teaching, it must be chiefly from my own experience during the last thirty-five years, especially where I have myself most felt his influence, in theology, which of late years has not occupied so prominent a place at least in his writings.

When the storm raised by *Essays and Reviews* was at its height, it is recorded of Bishop Tait that he said to Jowett: "After all, Jowett, it is a poor thing to pull down; we ought all to try and build up." True indeed, certainly, but as certainly only a half-truth. To "pull down" or remove stumbling-blocks may "build up" faith; not of course necessarily, as the ground may be left bare: but to what extent the doubtful tendencies, which Tait dreaded, had also in Jowett a constructive value, this paper is an attempt to show.

There are three sources from which doubts may touch theology—(1) The inadequacy of abstract ideas; (2) the imperfection of all human institutions; (3) uncertainty as to historical fact. It was because Jowett gave free scope for these three principles of criticism that Bishop Tait regarded his influence as negative. But the Bishop did not seem to realise that such concessions were already

inevitable, and that the religious problem already was, What basis is there for life and conduct, if we cannot assume either the theology of tradition, or the infallibility of a book, or the authority of any existing person or society? That such assumptions could not pass unquestioned was growing more and more evident. The theology which was sanctioned by scholastic tradition, proceeded by an *a priori* method which science had already discredited; those who sought infallibility in the Church Visible were compelled, with Newman, to resort to a Church which at least did not disclaim such prerogative, whilst those who placed all authority in a book could not logically accept that book on the authority of the Church, whilst rejecting the Church's interpretation. The theological work of Jowett's life was to show that religion was not weakened but strengthened when such theoretical grounds for belief were regarded no longer as certain.

Theology, in its transcendental character, that is, apart from beliefs which rest, or are supposed to rest, on testimony, is a branch of metaphysics and ethics. If we examine the three Creeds or the Westminster Confession, or any other summary of dogma, we find, on the one hand, statements as to the life of Christ, accepted without question from tradition; on the other hand, ideas evolved by the mind from within, notions of being, personality, final cause, right and wrong, predestination, free will, responsibility, and the like, which can in no sense be proved, as they are prior to all proof, but without which no proof of fact can have other than a finite and relative import.

When I first became acquainted with Jowett's writings, it was as a schoolboy in Islington, reading the Epistles of St. Paul, under the influence hitherto of an education of the most pronounced Anglican Evangelicalism. That was soon after the appear-

ance of his *Commentary on the Epistles to the Thesalonians, Galatians, and Romans*, about the year 1856, when my attention had been called to it by hostile notices in the Reviews. I can well remember the keen speculative impulse which I received from the study of the dissertations in those volumes, as well as the sense of theological emancipation. Certainly for me, at any rate, the effect of such perusal was not destructive but conservative. There were the essays on "Righteousness by Faith," on "The Atonement," on "Predestination and Free Will," on "The Character of St. Paul," on "Natural Religion." Every Sunday I heard set forth in church a scheme of doctrine which involved moral contradictions and intellectual impossibilities, which must have led me finally to reject it altogether. We were taught, as if revealed from God directly, a theory of "imputed righteousness," by which moral qualities were transferred as a garment; a doctrine of "atonement" resting on a supposed necessity in Divine Justice to punish, but not to punish the offender; with a scheme of semi-Calvinism which transformed (though hesitatingly) the Highest Goodness into an omnipotent tyranny. The point of my remarks is not that I found such notions rejected by Jowett,—that was easy enough,—but that from him I learnt first to regard them as partial and transitory conceptions by later commentators, whilst to get at the real meaning of the apostle we must try to understand him in the light of his own writings; as the expression of his individual character; educated as he was at one special epoch of the world. And more than this, however near we might get to St. Paul's teaching, we must not yet accept it as a perfect transcript of his Master. Christ was greater than St. Paul, and is still studied best and known best from what remains of His own words and works. St. Paul is one glass, but only one in which we can still see Christ reflected.

The principles which Jowett applied to the study of St. Paul received a wider application in his essay on the "Interpretation of Scripture," which formed part of the collection entitled *Essays and Reviews*. It is difficult at this distance of time to realise the excitement which that volume produced in the religious world. Perhaps it was not so much the book itself, as two reviews of it in the *Quarterly* and *Westminster*, both of which identified it with the rejection of Christianity—the former by way of denunciation, the latter in

welcome of its appearance. Legal proceedings ensued against two of the writers, as holding office in the Church of England, but failed to carry effect in the calm judgment of English law. No steps were taken against Jowett, as indeed it is not clear what objection could have been made to his contribution. The main drift of his essay was "interpret the Bible as any other book." This was taken by many as equivalent to placing it on no higher level than literature in general, and denying the doctrine of "Inspiration" or "Revelation." Jowett's object was to show of the Bible generally what he had argued with more elaboration of St. Paul, that the Bible being a book or collection of books, we must begin our interpretation by ascertaining the meaning of any passage in the mind of the writer, as again we must study his mind in relation to his age and antecedents. That to study Scripture not as the expression of a particular human mind, but as inspired by Deity, or part of a Revelation, amounts in fact only to reading into it our preconceived notions of what Deity or Revelation ought to say. It is not to be taught of Scripture, but to tell Scripture what to teach.

When I went up to Oxford, not being a Balliol man, I first made Jowett's acquaintance after an interval of two years, when I began to attend the lectures on Plato, which he delivered as Greek Professor, as well as to receive the help which he so generously gave to all who cared to avail themselves of it, from whatever college they might come. I do not remember any direct theological impression, but two influences were indirectly very powerful—*one*, the enthusiasm stirred in all of us who felt how much we owed to him, by the annual invasion of a body of non-residents to vote against assigning more than £40 to his Professorship; *the other*, the increased force which his theological method acquired from finding it applied by him to philosophy. For me, at least, his theology prepared the way for metaphysics, and from his interpretation of St. Paul I learnt to study Plato. As I had learnt from him not to make Calvin the exponent of Luther, or Luther the interpreter of St. Paul; so at Oxford he made us study Plato, not from Aristotle or the Aristotelian systems which claimed authority from his name, but from himself and his own works, with such assistance as can be derived from the fragments which remain of earlier philosophers, who had moulded him; Heracleitus, Empedocles, the Eleatics.

I have dwelt (some may think at disproportionate length) on the first point suggested in this paper—the *inadequacy of abstract ideas*. It was the most characteristic of all Jowett's critical tendencies, and was in fact his application to theology of Bacon's aphorism, "Subtilitas naturæ subtilitatem intellectûs humani multis partibus superat." To others it may occur that a much larger share of his attention was bestowed on Low than on High Church doctrine. This was, I think, the case, and may serve to introduce the second point mentioned—the *imperfection of all human institutions*. It must be evident to every student of Jowett's writings, that his own early training was in the Evangelical school. Now what the Bible is to the Low Churchman or Dissenter, the Church as a divine organisation is to the Catholic whether Roman or Anglican. It is possible also for a Rationalist, whilst disclaiming a supernatural authority for either, yet to find in the Bible a book of incomparably higher value than the rest, or in the Church a society far above all others. Of the former feeling there is ample evidence in all Jowett wrote; of the latter, no sort of indication. If by Church is meant an Episcopal institution, I can myself recollect his once saying, referring to the "Snell" exhibitioners from Glasgow, how thankful he was for his little Presbyterian church at Balliol. I see, too, that it is mentioned in the Life of Archbishop Tait, that when Jowett was on a visit to Addington, Tait expressed himself as amused to see how absolutely indifferent Jowett showed himself to all the controversies which were agitating Churchmen.

As to the last point named,—the *uncertainty of history*,—it is only in relation to Christ's person and His unique position in the human race that criticism can touch theology, because here only facts, which depend on external evidence, are hitherto, at least in the judgment of Christendom, inseparable from its creed. As to Jowett, I think we may say that doubt was doubt, and not denial. He hesitated because he felt the evidence to be insufficient; but doubt and hesitation here, too, had a constructive value. I can well remem-

ber his saying in a London church, the records which we have of Christ are fragmentary and imperfect, "Not because He was less, but because He was infinitely greater than any around Him could comprehend." Many minds may find it easier to accept what remains, if not compelled to receive everything recorded; and to some it will be a great consolation to reflect, that if we only knew enough, though we might see the natural order of things differently, yet the spiritual centre of the universe would stand out in clearer light than before.

Towards the end of Plato's *Republic*, there is a passage in which a disciple asks Socrates, "Where is this city we have been talking about? surely there is no such city in the world." "Well," answers Socrates, "in heaven I suppose the exemplar of it is laid up for him who would see, and seeing become a citizen; and it makes no sort of difference whether it exist or ever shall exist in fact: for he will live by its laws, and not those of any other." Jowett was before all things a Platonist, and his great work has been to make Plato better known to students, and by his translation to the English-speaking world. In the impress of his wonderful personality on Oxford, there was something to remind us of Socrates and his vaster power of stirring thought in Athens and by Athens for mankind. He would not certainly have said with Socrates, in the passage quoted, "it makes no sort of difference," whether the Ideal be yet realised or be capable of realisation at all. With criticism and physical science everywhere about us, he assigned as much importance as any man to getting at all facts that are ascertainable. But yet his work here was to show by his teaching, and still more by his example, that the Ideal does transcend the actual in no measurable ratio; that the letter exists for the spirit, not the spirit for the letter: and if at the present day there be, more than ever before, a shaking of the things that can be shaken, it is that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. This it is which I have ventured to call the constructive value of doubt.