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THE MAN OF KERIOTH, by E. B. Pollard

PSALM HUNDRED AND TENTH, by Geo. C. M. Douglas

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VOLUME III. New Series.

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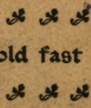
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Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.



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The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

The Bible Student and Religious Outlook.

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Number 1.

**Christianity
The Truth.** It is the primary claim of Christianity that it is "the truth." Jesus Christ, its founder, calls Himself significantly "the truth" (Jno. xiv. 6), and sums up His mission in the world as a constant witness-bearing to "the truth" (Jno. xviii. 37). It is accordingly as "the truth" that the Gospel offers itself to men; and it seeks to propagate itself in the world only as "truth," and therefore only by those methods by which "truth" makes its way. Not the sword but the word is Christianity's weapon of defence, and instrument of conquest. "Cut me off that old man's head" was Caliph Omar's answer to the arguments with which the aged Christian priest met him as he triumphantly entered Jerusalem: and in this scene we have revealed the contrast between Christianity and all other religions. "That old man," says Dr. JAMES MACGREGOR, "with no shield but faith, no sword but the word, setting himself alone to stem the then raging lava-torrent of fanaticism, with its brutish alternative of the Koran or death, is typical of the fact that Christianity is an *apologetic* religion." Confident that it is the only reasonable religion,

it comes forward as pre-eminently the reasoning religion. The task it has set itself is no less an one than to *reason* the world into acceptance of the "truth."

**Mere
Proclamation
Of Truth
Insufficient.**

If the world were only as eager to receive the truth as the truth is to win the world, the function of Christian men might well be summed up in the one word, *proclamation*. But the typical responses of the world to the proclaimed truth are the cynical sneer of Pilate "What is truth?" and the brutal command of Omar, "Cut me off that old man's head!" So, proclamation must needs pass into asseveration, and asseveration into contention, that the truth may abide in the world. "Bear witness to the truth;" "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints:" these are the twin exhortations by which every Christian man's duty is declared for him. How early did the Christian proclamation produce its double fruitage of martyrdom and controversy! The old Greek word "martyr," "witness" soon took on a specific Christian meaning, and became more and

more confined to those who had sealed their testimony with their blood; and everywhere the irritated world complained of these persistent reasoners that they were turning the world upside down.

**Martyrs and
Controversial-
ists.**

"Martyrdom" and "Controversy!" If the collocation sounds strange in our ears it can only be because we have failed to realize how inevitable is their connection, how necessarily they appear as twin fruits of the one fair tree of faithfulness. There never was a martyrdom save as the result of controversy. The spirit which would still contention for the truth never yet went to the stake. There is a sentiment abroad indeed which decries controversy. The same sentiment should certainly decry martyrdom also. An anemic Christianity which is too little virile to strive for the truth can never possess the nerve to die for it. And the contradiction of loving the one and hating the other is glaring. Says Dr. MANDELL CREIGHTON strikingly: "The age of the martyrs has a powerful attraction even to the casual reader; the age of the heresies leaves him bewildered and distressed. Yet the agents in both were discharging an equally necessary function. Both were upholding the truth of the Gospel; the one against the power of the world, the other against the wisdom of the world. The martyrs had this advantage, that the force of their testimony was concentrated in one supreme moment, was expressed in one heroic act, which commands universal sympathy. The controversialists had to live through a protracted struggle and are judged by all their utterances, and all their human weaknesses which the conflict remorselessly revealed."

**The Spirit of
Faithfulness.**

The spirit of the martyr and the spirit of the controversialist is therefore one. Both alike are the sport of the indifferent, and the scorn of the worldly-wise to whom opportunism is the last word of wisdom, and "convictions" the disease of fools. "Conviction" cries the "Master-Devil" of GILBERT PARKER'S *The Seats of the Mighty*—"conviction is the executioner of the stupid. When a man is not great enough to let change and chance guide him he gets convictions and dies a fool." Christian men may call him a martyr: but the world at best a fanatic, at worst a well-punished disturber of the peace. The issue does not seem to the world worth fighting for and certainly not worth dying for. If it did, the verdict would assuredly be different. At least whenever the issue seems to it worth fighting and dying for, even the worldly-wise can find ground enough for admiration and praise of that spirit of faithfulness, by which it is that the martyr and the controversialist alike are dominated. We find this anecdote in General SIR JOHN ADYE'S *Recollections of a Military Life*: "An English soldier coming on duty was heard to say to his comrade, 'Well, Jim, what's the orders at this post?' Jim replied, 'Why, the orders is you're never to leave it till you're killed, and if you see any other man leaving it, you're to kill him.'" There burns (in its own coarse form) the spirit both of the martyr and of the controversialist,—or, to put it in one word, the spirit of the faithful man ready to do his duty, all his duty, and his duty to the end. Let us permit one who himself trod the thorny path to its goal make for us the application. "In Tynedale, where I was born, not far from the Scottish border," writes NICHOLAS RIDLEY, "I have known my country-

men watch night and day in their harness, such as they had, that is, in their jacks, and their spears in their hands (you call them northern gads), especially when they had any privy warning of the coming of the Scots. And so doing, although at every such bickering some of them spent their lives, yet by such means, like pretty men, they defended their country. And those that so did, I think that before God they died in a good quarrel, and their offspring and progeny, all the country loved them the better for their father's sakes. And in the quarrel of Christ our Saviour, in the defence of His own divine ordinances, by the which He giveth us life and immortality, yea, in the quarrel of faith and Christian religion, wherein resteth our everlasting salvation, shall we not watch? Shall we not go always armed, ever looking when our adversary (which, like a roaring lion, seeketh whom he may devour) shall come upon us by reason of our slothfulness? Yea, and woe be unto us, if he can oppress us unawares, which undoubtedly he will do, if he find us sleeping."

Necessity of Controversy.

NICHOLAS RIDLEY would fain persuade us then, of the duty of controversy. He walked in that path himself and it led him to the stake. Was he a "martyr?" Or, as many prudent men of his day declared, only an inextinguishable fire-brand? It is greatly to be feared that to-day also he would be judged by the wise among us merely "a stirrer up of strife." It is certain that there are many in our midst who fear controversy more than error. These assuredly do not stay to remember that Christianity's sole weapon is reasoning, its supreme effort to reason itself into the acceptance of the world. What then will happen if it renounces the duty of reasoning? To be sure

constant reasoning is a weariness to the flesh, and the temptation lies very close to purchase longed-for and needed peace by calling a halt for a time and resting on what is already attained. This were much like seeking rest from the labors of life by ceasing to breathe for a season. Let us learn here from a remark of COLERIDGE'S. "For a nation to make peace only because it is tired of war," he says, "in order just to take breath is in direct subversion to the end and object of the war, which was its sole justification. 'Tis like a poor way-sore foot-traveler getting up behind a coach that is going the contrary way to his." Christianity is in its very nature an aggressive religion; it is in the world just in order to convince men; when it ceases to *reason*, it ceases to exist. It is no doubt the truth; but the truth no longer proclaimed and defended rots quickly down. The lawyers have a very instructive maxim which it will do us all no harm to heed:—"A lie well stuck to," they say, "is better than the truth abandoned." "I have often asked my Radical friends," Mr. FROUDE writes in one of his latest books, "what is to be done if out of every hundred enlightened voters two-thirds will give their votes one way but are afraid to fight, and the remaining third will not only vote but will fight too if the poll goes against them. Which has the right to rule? I can tell them," he adds, "which will rule. . . . The brave and resolute minority will rule. The majority must be prepared to assert their Divine Right *with their hands*, or it will go the way that other Divine Rights have gone before." Mr. FROUDE is dealing with political matters, and speaks of that strife with the sword which the Christian religion has renounced. But strife it has not renounced: and whenever it shall have renounced strife against

its perennial foe with its own appropriate weapon—the Word—it will have renounced hope of ruling over the hearts and thoughts of men. Controversy is in this sense and to this degree the vital breath of a really living Christianity.

Limits of Controversy. Are there then to be no limits set to the controversial spirit?

Assuredly there are. These limits are, however, not to be sought in motives of convenience or prudence. Christianity thrives on controversy, and exists only by virtue of it,—it is in the world to *reason* the world into acceptance of itself, and it would surely be vain to expect the world to take its reasonings without reply. "It is the native property of the Divine word," says CALVIN, rather "never to make its appearance without disturbing Satan, and rousing his opposition. This is the most certain and unequivocal criterion by which it is distinguished from false doctrines, which are easily broached since they are heard with general attention and received with the applause of the world." "If the presence of controversy," therefore, adds VINET, "is not in itself the criterion of the truth of a doctrine, a doctrine which arouses no contradiction lacks one of the marks of truth." And surely subjective motives cannot exonerate us from bearing our witness to the truth. Indeed it may be fairly argued that even subjective considerations would rather bid us advance valiantly to the defence of the truth, if it be at all the case as Dr. HORT tells us it is, that "smooth ways" in this sphere too "are like smooth ways of action: truth is never reached or held fast without friction and grappling." And surely we will give quick assent to the same writer's dictum that "there are other and better kinds of victory than those that issue

in imperial calm." Even a certain amount of heat in controversy may thus find its justification,—in the consideration, to wit, that it is not merely the chill logical intellect which may well be enlisted in this war. The poet's line: "And God's calm will was their burning will," is no libel on the spirit of God's true martyrs and saints.

Objective Limits Only. The limits of controversy for the saving truth of God must be sought then solely in objective considerations. ARISTOTLE, perhaps as well as another, lays down the principles which should govern the matter. "It is not necessary," he remarks, in his formal manner, "to examine every proposition or every thesis; but only those concerning which there really exists doubt in some one's mind, so that it is instruction and not rather rebuke or sense that is needed; for (for example)," he adds, "it is rebuke that is needed when doubt is expressed whether the Gods should be served, and it is sense that is lacking when doubt is expressed as to whether snow is white." His meaning is apparently that there are some opinions which are so senseless that those who broach them proclaim themselves by that very fact beyond the reach of argument; and some so immoral that those that broach them exhibit in them an evil heart beyond the cure of reason: with these controversy may well be declined because from the outset useless. But whenever opinions are broached which do not argue utter depravity or utter senselessness,—they claim, of right, instruction from those who are in the world for the express purpose of bearing witness to the truth. Questions beyond this concern only the manner of controversy and the tone of controversy: they cannot touch the duty of controversy. He

that declines controversy "on principle," or from motives of convenience or prudence has thereby renounced his confidence in the truth—that truth of which it has been truly said, that it is "like a torch, the more it's shook, it shines".

B. B. W.

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Progress in Bible Study During The Nineteenth Century. The nineteenth century has witnessed a mighty advance in the knowledge of the Bible. Amid all its great achievements, none is more interesting than the progress of biblical study, and certainly none is of more importance to the religious world. We cannot look back upon the history without profound gratitude to God. It is true that the century has witnessed the rise of not a few speculative theories and schools of biblical study which have been in their principles subversive of the truth of the Bible itself. Criticism of the books of the Bible and of the Bible as a whole has been unbounded and unlicensed. In many quarters the doctrine of inspiration has been abandoned, and some regard its abandonment as the chief cause of the best advance made in knowledge of the Bible. We are not of that number. Still it must be admitted that even the most radical theories in this department have brought with them incidental benefit by calling the attention of the church to phases of truth which had been neglected. Side by side also with the rise and decline of more or less sceptical theories, there has been a steady and sober advance along the lines of genuine investigation. Amid the conflict of schools of thought and with all the vagaries of individual scholars, more light has broken out of the word of God; so that the beginning

of the twentieth century finds biblical scholarship far ahead of the position which it had gained at the dawn of the nineteenth, while the popularization of biblical study has reached a degree never thought of a hundred years ago. It may be well to note some of the directions which this advance has taken.

Purification of Greek Text. The purification of the Greek text of the New Testament has made wonderful progress. Even forty years ago the texts commonly in use,—Mill's, Stephen's or the Elzevirs',—were, as we now know, full of the errors of scribes and were based mainly on late and corrupt manuscripts. This, however, has been entirely changed. Few now use the old "Textus Receptus". The change has been made possible by two causes. On the one hand there has been the discovery of old manuscripts and the re-examination of others formerly but imperfectly known. A vast mass of material has thus been placed at the disposal of scholars by which the history of the transmission of the text has been laid open and which has provided a sure basis for its purification. On the other hand the scientific principles on which the use of this material should proceed have been more clearly apprehended and applied. We owe the latter result mainly to the prodigious and accurate labors of Westcott and Hort. No one of course will say that all their results are correct. Much remains to be done in the way of the ascertainment of details. But we think it unquestionable that these great scholars have outlined the true principles of textual criticism, and we now possess the Greek text of the New Testament in a form which very nearly reproduces the autographs. This achieve-