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H.H. Rowley (1890-1969)

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Item Type	Article
Authors	Payne, Ernest A.
Publisher	Baptist Ministers Fellowship
Rights	Creative Commons Copyright (CC 2.5)
Download date	2026-09-09 02:26:39
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/156657

pessimism of which young men are strangely capable. The principal said that that morning he woke to find the sun shining and to anticipate his day's work. He realised the unvarying goodness of God.

These are simple incidents speaking of one who lived his days with this large sense of the majesty and mercy of God. But let his own words speak to us:

Oh Thou! whose thoughts and purpose stand
Whose sway is over every land,
Whose goodness holdeth star and flower,
Lord of eternity, God of the hour,
Whose love on all mankind is set,
Whose heart abides at Olivet.
Who loving, longing, lookest still
For man's response, that earthly ill
May turn to his abiding gain,
Through Thy benignant reign:
Oh God of now! and God of then!
Ruler of worlds! and Father of men!
Grant us at least our part to see,
And make us wise to love with Thee
Till love shall meet with love again
And Heaven rejoice in Earth's AMEN.

So we remember this human, invigorating, staunch man of God. Now that he is no more with us in the flesh, let him speak just one more word to us. He is reflecting on the central facts of the Christian faith, the unique revelation of God's grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God's word is last
And God's last word
Is triumph for the suffering Lord.
Defeat is victory.
Death the conqueror conquered is,
And sorrow's tomb is seen to be
The womb of heavenly bliss.

For him now, the heavenly bliss. For us, the grateful memories, the tasks of the present and the abiding grace of God.

L. G. CHAMPION

H. H. ROWLEY, 1890-1969*

We are met here this afternoon—a company drawn from many places and circumstances and representative of a far larger company—to remember a remarkable man and to express our respect and regard for him. Known in scholarly circles throughout the world, H. H. Rowley was one of the outstanding workers in the field of Old Testament studies; and his interests reached out into a number of kindred fields, particularly those of comparative religion and Chinese studies. He became a Fellow of the British Academy. He received the coveted Burkitt Medal for Biblical Studies. He taught in three Universities. A dozen more in this country and overseas honoured him. For nearly half a century he was able to pour out a stream of learned articles in a score of professional journals and books both large and small. He was indeed a prodigious worker, indefatigable in the tasks he undertook, driving himself and others to the last.

All his work had strongly marked characteristics—careful balanced judgment, attention to detail, a passion for accuracy, a comprehensive, and to others daunting bibliographical range. For these things his books and articles will long be valuable tools for the students and research scholars of the future. They will look to see how Dr. Rowley summed up the issues, where the sources may be found. This was indeed a workman who had no reason to be ashamed.

Were this all that could be said—impressive as it is, even extraordinary—we should not be here. But there is more to be said.

Harold Rowley was born and brought up in Leicester. He was one of the bright boys in a Sunday School attached to a large church—Melbourne Hall—which was at that time strongly evangelical in its tradition and emphasis, but open-minded and intellectually alive. As his pastor, during his most impressionable years, young Rowley had the beloved W. Y. Fullerton, an Irishman of rare spiritual as well as physical stature, gifted both in speech and with the pen. In 1907, when Rowley was seventeen years old, Fullerton went on a mission to China, then rapidly opening up to the West. It was no doubt Fullerton who fired the youth to think of missionary service in China under the Baptist Missionary Society.

He went in due course for training to Bristol Baptist College and then to Mansfield College, Oxford, his progress made possible by winning the Dr. William's Scholarship, his stay in Oxford crowned by gaining the Houghton Syriac Prize. It was war-time. He undertook the pastorate of the Union Church in Wells, Somerset, but at length reached China in 1922.

The country was in turmoil. Anti-foreign feeling had been growing since 1919. Russian influence was increasing. In the

* Address delivered at the Memorial Service for Dr. Rowley at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, London, on 29th October, 1969.

countryside civil war was almost endemic. In Shantung, to which Rowley was posted, and around Tsinanfu, the seat of the Christian University, where he was to teach the Old Testament, Chiang-Kai-Shek was fighting the Japanese. In addition, during the seven years Rowley remained in China, Sun Yat Sen died; there was excitement over the revision of the unequal treaties; and then came the difficult issue of the registration of all missionary schools. It was not an easy situation for an eager young academic.

He returned to this country in 1929, greatly exercised—as were many missionaries—as to how far the opportunity of continuing to teach the Christian faith would be available in educational institutions in China. He had added to his biblical and semitic knowledge a considerable insight into Chinese culture and religion. He soon found himself at Cardiff, assistant to another noted Old Testament scholar, also a Baptist, Dr. Theodore H. Robinson. Robinson had himself at one time taught at Serampore College in India. After only four years at Cardiff, Rowley moved to Bangor as Professor, and ten years after that, in 1945, to Manchester University. There, in close association with the late Professor T. W. Manson and with the great Rylands Library nearby, he worked and taught with the greatest diligence until 1959.

But always the convictions of his youth and his missionary passion remained alive. While he was a master of Syriac and Aramaic and produced learned studies on Darius the Mede, on Apocalyptic and—in more recent years on the Dead Sea Scrolls; while he ventured to deal with almost all the main matters of dispute in the field of Biblical scholarship—he wrote and spoke also about Israel's mission to the nations, about the missionary message of the Old Testament, about the rediscovery, the relevance and the unity of the Bible, about the biblical doctrine of election. And as soon as he began to be free of his teaching responsibilities, though he undertook exacting new tasks mainly of an editorial kind, he not only accepted the honours which the Baptist denomination wished proudly to bestow on one of its most gifted and famous sons—President of the Baptist Union, Chairman of the Baptist Missionary Society—he showed himself ready to spend long hours in travel to and from Manchester and later to and from Stroud, in order to serve on committees. For five years he was chairman of the General Purposes and Finance Executive of the Baptist Union. As the General Secretary in those days, I know what it meant to have as colleague and counsellor one as clear-minded, business-like and understanding as was Dr. Rowley.

Even this is not all that comes to mind on an occasion like this. Cautious and disciplined as Dr. Rowley was, sometimes almost magisterial, he could at times be impulsive. He could be generous almost to a fault, of his time, his substance, himself. As soon as World War II was over, he set about restoring links with the Old Testament scholars of Europe, supplying them with books, helping many who were in dire material need. The Society for Old Testament Study, always one of

his special interests, became thereby an international body. It was fitting that he should be called to preside over its fiftieth meeting. But the help he gave to foreign scholars was an act of compassion. It brought Dr. Rowley something he cherished more than the accompanying honours, namely, friendship. To many in this country little expecting his notice or interest, he did many unexpected kindnesses; a book, a letter, a box of chocolates, a five-pound note. Several of you could tell of these things. He was a witty companion, ever ready with good stories, no dry-as-dust scholar, truly a human being.

He owed, of course, a great deal to his home. Twenty-five years ago he dedicated one of his books to Mrs Rowley. I hope she will not mind my reading to you what he wrote. It was, after all, a public acknowledgment and, as we know, richly deserved. "To my wife, whose patience and help never fail and whose courage has never faltered in our adventures, this study is dedicated in love and gratitude". Since those words were written the enormous and ever-growing collection of books and papers has been moved at least three times. He was proud of his children and often spoke of them to his friends.

The secret of this life lay deep, in the inner recesses of the mind and heart, in the commitment he had made in his youth and in what he had come to hold on to through the chances and changes that had been his. In a footnote to the printed version of lectures he gave at Spurgeon's College, he quotes a sentence of Eduard Schweizer, of Zürich: "There are in the Church no idle members, as there are in the body no members without function." No drones, only workers in the true Church. This is what became his master conviction and motive; and it kept him active to the end, ready, even when subject to disabling weakness and pain, to wrestle on with the editing of the English edition of Léonard's history and many other tasks. He thought the Almighty wanted still more from him. There he was wrong. He was spared further anxiety and suffering. He has been taken to a place where, we believe, there is rest, refreshment and enjoyment.

Dr. Rowley spent much time in intensive study in order to tell us about the hopes and fears of men many centuries ago. He believed that the Old Testament is of enduring importance because it has throughout it a forward look, because it points beyond itself, because it speaks of a Golden Age in the future which is to be the Day of the Lord. He found the key to the meaning of the Old Testament in the New. This was the faith which sustained him in his labours as a scholar and in life's joys and ordeals. In the last of a series of lectures on "The Faith of Israel", which he gave in Richmond, Virginia, he spoke about the Day of the Lord and the deep concern for others which it engenders in all who are moved by the thought of it. These were the closing words of the lecture:

"How little does the world, with all its anxiety for itself and its future, heed the great message of this book, that if it would but forget itself in its desire to seek God and to

understand and do his will, it would best serve itself. In losing itself to him, it would find itself in him."

Of the one we remember this afternoon, we can in truth say: he lost himself to God. He has surely now found himself in Him.

ERNEST A. PAYNE

NONCONFORMITY AND THE NEW AGE*

It would not be fitting for me to offer any opinion as to whether or not the Committee of Deputies has now exhausted its usefulness as such. The eminent German theologian, Dr. Hans Küng, has rightly reminded us that "a protest, even though justified in its time, should not necessarily be repeated for ever". But when Dr. Küng goes further, and seems to doubt whether Protestants have given enough thought to this, I am constrained to make three brief comments. As a Roman Catholic, Dr. Küng may not perhaps be aware how great is the need still in some parts of the world for such skilled and resolute advocacy as the Dissenting Deputies have provided for the cause of civil and religious liberty. Secondly, no-one should suppose that the work of the Deputies exhausted itself in negotiations. Nonconformity, like the Protestantism of which it is one expression, took the form of a protest movement because it was not allowed by its opponents to do otherwise. But its essential witness has always been positive and constructive. To quote Mr. Bernard Manning: "Protestantism is not a negative thing; it is a positive re-statement of catholic truth". Nor is Nonconformity concerned merely with Church-order in the narrower sense. "Our reasons for dissenting from the Church of England" wrote Principal Fairbairn, "are too fundamental to be merely or mainly ecclesiastical. We dissent because we believe that she fails adequately to interpret and realise for the people of England the religion of Christ". Speaking in all charity towards our Anglican brethren, I believe that that judgement is still valid. And therefore I say, thirdly, that we shall not discover what contribution Nonconformity has to offer to the future of English religion by rejecting the insights and convictions of our forefathers, but rather by trying to understand and apply in the changed conditions of our day, the principles that they defended. It is these principles, surely, that entitle us, who belong to different Denominations, to speak of "Nonconformity" as a single concept.

* The substance of an address given at the Annual Meeting of the Deputies of the Three Denominations, March 1968.

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