FRANCIS CRAWFORD BURKITT

1864–1935

FRANCIS CRAWFORD BURKITT was born in London at 2 York Terrace, Regent's Park, on 3 September, 1864. His family had belonged to Northamptonshire, but one of his immediate ancestors had moved, in 1643, to Sudbury, in Suffolk, where traces of the family are still to be seen. One of the houses shows the initials 'E. B.' of the Edward Burkitt who built it, and a 'Burkitt Lane' runs down one side of it. The family were strong upholders of the Protector Cromwell, with whom they were connected by marriage, and it is said that one of them, Miles, on the Sunday after the execution of Charles, in his prayer before the sermon, asked God 'if he had not smelt a sweet savour of blood'. Later on, after the Act of Uniformity, he was ejected from his rectory of Hitcham. His second son, William, was vicar of Dedham, and published a commentary on the New Testament which was highly esteemed at the time and can still be found in second-hand bookshops. A large monument to him in Dedham Church bears witness to the respect in which he was held. John Bunyan is said to have been a visitor of the family at Sudbury and to have held meetings in their old-fashioned kitchen, the largest room in the house.

None of the family now remain at Sudbury. Frank's grandfather (Frank was the form of the name Francis used in his family circle) migrated to London and founded a business which his son Crawford (Frank's father) also followed. For two generations there was a break in the succession of Burkitts who were scholars and parsons of the Puritan type. But religion was well observed in the family and from his father came the natural piety as well as the prodigious memory that characterized his son, so he was not striking out so new a line of life and thought for himself when he turned to oriental studies and theology instead of

business, though undoubtedly when he had so turned he showed in his handling of these subjects of his choice a marked originality of his own. But a student of heredity will note with interest the re-emergence in him of characteristics of mind and temperament that belonged to his ancestors and became dominant again in him, determining the line he was to follow.

And there was not only the Burkitt inheritance in him. His grandmother was a sister of the William Crawford (1788–1847) who has a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a philanthropist of eminence in his day and a pioneer of the reform of prisons. Of him it is related that he might have claimed the earldom of Crawford and Balcarres and was urged by his lawyers to let them try to secure it for him without expense to himself. He replied that he did not wish them to incur such large expense if they failed and that he did not want the earldom if they succeeded. The unworldliness and generosity which were characteristic of his great-uncle were part of the Crawford inheritance that came to Francis Crawford Burkitt.

His grandmother (the sister of William Crawford) married one of a Somerset family named Coward that had suffered heavily in the South Sea Bubble, though one of them retrieved his fortune so far as to become a landowner in Bath. And it was from her daughter, Fanny Elizabeth Coward, who was married to his father and became his mother, that he inherited his love of music and the more poetic part of his nature. He was an accomplished pianist and a real musician, though in the view of some musicians his taste was too closely limited to strictly classical music, especially Bach's, and he never cared to go to a concert unless he was to hear the kind of music he loved. In this domain he was no modernist. His knowledge of music served him in good stead in some of his liturgical studies, in his appreciation of ancient hymns and in the hymns he wrote himself. These, too, and his translations in verse, showed him to be possessed of real poetic gifts. Notable among these translations

is one in dignified hexameters of the famous Gnostic *Hymn of the Soul* (at the end of his book *Early Eastern Christianity*). Dom Connolly assures us that it is 'a remarkably faithful rendering of the one really great Syriac poem' known to us, and it is certainly a fine piece of English literature. Equally successful is his translation in the style of the quatrains of Omar Khayyam of a large part of Ecclesiastes —a translation made by him in the leisure moments of his work for the Y.M.C.A. at Rouen during the War. Characteristic of his letters is one he sent with a copy of the little book fresh from the press at Rouen:

> 8 Nov[r] 1918 . . . This was intended for Xmas, but it has panned out in time for 'Stir up' Sunday. What a queer book *Ecclesiastes* is to have found a place in the Christians' Bible! Its great fault seems to me to be its most uncompromising individualism. The Partner is a useful help, not an Object to be worked for. I suppose nice people would call the Preacher 'selfish'. At the same time it is a great thing to see clear and every now and then I catch myself wondering how much our Lord knew of the book: Mk. viii. 36 f. may not be 'selfish' but it *is* 'individualistic'.

So Burkitt's appreciation of the book was a little more sympathetic than Gore's, who once began a sermon by saying he supposed it was in our Bible in order to be contradicted. Burkitt always attempted to do full justice to a point of view for which facts of experience could be claimed.

Although in later life he seemed unusually strong and tireless in energy and industry, of mind and body alike, he had been regarded by his parents as a delicate boy needing home care and he went to the day school of a Mr. Barford near by. He always spoke of this school as having a remarkable set of masters and attributed his own interest in a wide variety of subjects to their early influence on him.

In 1878 he was sent to Harrow on the Modern Side, at first in Mr. Bushell's small house and afterwards in Mr. Watson's. There he made some lifelong friends—Sir F. Montagu Pollock, who contributes a picture of him further on in this Memoir, among them—and some of the masters

inspired him with affection and regard. Foremost among these was Mr. E. E. Bowen.

One of his own most intelligent pupils of later years, asked for a word by which to describe his Lectures at Cambridge, said he should call them 'exciting'. He himself in his early days at Harrow had met with a similar stimulus in the teaching of E. E. Bowen. He used to say that he learnt from him not only that he must verify his references and believe no ready-made opinions without examining them for himself, but also Bowen's Old Testament Lessons seem to have first awakened in him the interest in theological studies that was dormant in his hereditary make-up, and in studying for a New Testament prize with the help of some German books he became aware thus early in his course of the Synoptic and Johannine problems. Bowen also gave him his love for *Kriegsspiel*, and during the holidays his elderly Father and Mother were dragged out to such places as Jena and Waterloo for him to visualize the movements of regiments and the plan of battles.

At school his short sight was a drawback to his becoming proficient in the ordinary school games, for which indeed he had no natural inclination, but he won many prizes, for mathematics, physics, German, music, English Essay, history-cum-literature, and a notable one in 1881 which was founded in 1858 and has been very rarely won (ten times in all in seventy-eight years). It was given *ob studia uno tenore feliciter peracta* and could only be won by a boy who had been top of his form every term until he reached the VI[a] form, and after that had always been classed in the first class in his examinations.

In 1882 he left Harrow, and, as he was young to go at once to a University, he spent a year at home with a coach before entering Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1883, with Mathematics as his subject. In 1886 he took his degree as a wrangler (twenty-seventh) in Part I of the Mathematical Tripos. This discipline has been the basis or the framework of the studies of philosophers and theologians from the

beginning, and, no doubt, it had its influence on Burkitt, though the precision of method and exactitude of thought it demands were common claims of all the Honours courses of Cambridge fifty years ago. For metaphysics Burkitt had no taste, and when in later years he had to deal with theology proper and really, as he did, contributed something to the elucidation of its problems, it was more by clarification and the elimination of nonsense and a kind of instinct than by deep investigation of doctrines and their implications. He brought to bear upon those questions his wide knowledge of facts, of language and history, of the course of events, of the ways in which things that could be measured or chronicled had come about, and so he disposed of theological problems or left them alone.

His interest was always in facts, what people said and did, what actually happened or was going to happen. About ideas, and even about persons—although he was on the friendliest terms with any number of them—he seemed to be little concerned except from this point of view. So, standing as he did in the line of the Cambridge tradition of theological scholarship, his closest affinities were with Lightfoot and Hort, with what Creighton in his inaugural lecture as Dixie Professor said was *the* Cambridge historical school. With Westcott, his 'mysticism' and unwillingness to draw any hard and fast lines, he was not in sympathy. Burkitt's visions (for he had them) always had outlines, and he could describe what he saw clearly and tersely.

From mathematics he turned at once to the study of Hebrew by way of the Theological Tripos, which was the natural avenue for that study in Cambridge in those days. In view of the fact that he became a Professor of Divinity and that some of his most distinguished work was in the domain of the beginnings of Christianity—the Gospels and the history of the Church, it is worth noting that the course of study prescribed for the Theological Tripos was based on the conception that sound Christian theology must have for its foundation a scientific knowledge of the Old Testament

and the New Testament and the early history of Christian thought and institutions. In keeping with this conception none of the five Divinity chairs at Cambridge has ever been more limited in its scope, though from time to time of course individuals have been chosen as professors on account of their special competence in a particular department of the study.

So although it was Hebrew that specially attracted him at first and in the Hebrew section of Part II of the Theological Tripos that he got his First Class in 1888, he was well grounded to begin with. He won University prizes and scholarships in Hebrew, the Septuagint, the New Testament, and Church History and, as he added new knowledge of other languages and other subjects roused his interest, he was able to see them in their true perspective in relation to the whole field in a way not open to the specialist in one particular branch of study, and, for all his sharp sight for the trees, he never failed to see the wood as well and could often find new paths through an apparent jungle.

After the Tripos, under the influence of Professors Robertson Smith, Bensly, and William Wright, and with friends such as Anthony Ashley Bevan, Kennett, and Edward Granville Browne as fellow members of Wright's *seminar*, he was soon studying other oriental languages, Syriac in particular.

He was one of the people with 'marvellous' memories, with unwearied attention to facts and quick appreciation of their values. Wrestling with languages and seeing their connexions and interrelations was wholly congenial to him. He did not seem to be 'wrestling', it was rather an exciting game of adventure and guessing or intuition.

When crosswords came in, he was in his element at once and in his later years every day he expected to solve *The Times* puzzle at breakfast or in a few minutes after. And often he did, waving compliments aside by saying he knew the way in which the man's mind worked.

Apart from all his native gifts and endowments Burkitt was fortunate in having no need to make a living for himself, and so he had his whole time at his own disposal and could follow his bent wherever it led him. Cambridge was just the place for him and he was free from all the duties and ties of College or academic office. He had been elected a Scholar of his College in 1885, but later on when he offered a Dissertation for a Fellowship on the Synoptic problem the subject was rejected as too slight and, though invitations came to him from other Colleges, he preferred to remain, as he soon became, though not a Fellow, one of the most distinguished members of his own College. It was only late in his life that under the new University Statutes of 1926, which required every College to have a proportionate number of Professors among its fellows, he was at last elected a Fellow. By this time he had already received honorary degrees from four other Universities—Edinburgh and Dublin in 1907, St. Andrews and Breslau in 1911. The first of these, that of D.D., gave him peculiar pleasure by its recognition of a layman as one who could be regarded as proficient in Theology. When Divinity degrees at Cambridge were opened in 1914 to others than clergymen of the Church of England, he at once submitted half a dozen published works any one of which might have been deemed sufficient for the degree. Honorary degrees were also conferred on him by Oxford in 1927 and by Durham in 1934.

In 1892 when the need of special teaching in the science and art of deciphering ancient manuscripts was recognized in Cambridge and a University Lectureship in Palaeography was established, Rendel Harris was appointed, and on his resignation in 1903 Burkitt succeeded him and thus for the first time had official work of any kind. Of course he threw himself with enthusiasm into it, at a time when facsimiles and books on the subject were few, supplying photographs of his own taking for distribution to his class, or transcripts as good as facsimiles which his almost uncanny skill in imitating the writing of ancient manuscripts enabled

him to produce. In the year but one after (1905) he thought it 'worth while' (the phrase was his own: for the sake of the study of theology in Cambridge he meant, no doubt) to become Norrisian Professor of Divinity. He had indeed offered himself on a vacancy a few years earlier. It was the one Divinity Professorship in Cambridge that could be held by a layman, as its founder had only prescribed that the Professor must be a member of the Church of England, and Burkitt was the first layman to hold it.

Burkitt's attachment to the Church of England was always that of the layman—not the ecclesiastically minded layman who can be more clerical than most of the clergy themselves, but the man who has been born and bred in a religious tradition which he respects. The writer of an appreciative sketch of him in *The Guardian* (17 May, 1935) under the heading 'A Lay theologian' notes his 'conviction that the Church of England as it had developed in the course of history was a very good field for the cultivation of the spiritual life'. That is true. When, however, he describes the part that from time to time Burkitt took in current controversies and ecclesiastical politics as 'not always happy', he shows that he does not rightly appreciate Burkitt's anxiety that the genuine Anglican tradition should be maintained in its breadth and moderation and full comprehensiveness, and even its own idiosyncrasies, though they might sometimes be embarrassing. His 'incursions into church politics' were always inspired by this motive, that nothing should be allowed which would narrow down or emasculate and spoil this great religious tradition which belongs to the Church of England alone among all the churches of Christendom. And as these 'incursions' were always based on insight and learning, historical, liturgical, and religious, wider and deeper than that of the ecclesiastical politicians he opposed, it was only for these that results 'not always happy' ensued. For example, the fact that he was one of those who were opposed to the new Prayer Book carried great weight in wide circles of churchmen. It is certain, too, that he would

have been no more favourable to recent proposals for the readjustment of the relations between Church and State in England. It was not his business to deal with details of parochial and ecclesiastical administration, but he was concerned that the Church of England should remain the religious home of the English people and not become an ecclesiastical sect. He had no use for the new episcopalianism or any other '-ism'. One of the few things that could make him really angry or sad was clerical pretentiousness or the falsification of history and the ignoring or garbling of evidence in order to buttress some ecclesiastical presupposition.

Professor Kirsopp Lake, who at one time knew him well and writes[1] with intimate insight of his work and outlook, says of him:

'he was not only a loyal but an affectionate son of the Church of England, especially as a national institution. He believed . . . that no verbal modification could make the prayer book or the Creeds or the Articles into an adequate statement of modern thought, and the revised book seemed to imply a belief in words which really express untenable opinion. The English Church appeared to him to be the organism through which educated Englishmen—not Scotsmen—might best express their religion; its beautiful service is the record of the path travelled by our forefathers, which we should not forget though we cannot travel on it ourselves; to abandon it would be a tragedy and to allow it to stand for impossible opinions would be a crime, for this would kill the Church.'

That is well and truly said of Burkitt.

He was a regular attendant at the service of Matins—not indeed at his parish church, but at one of the 'liberal evangelical' type near his home—and read the lessons finely, at the quieter level of his voice, as great religious literature. Of course his sympathies were always with the 'modernist' attitude rather than that of any other school in the Church of England. He often addressed and spoke at the Modern Churchmen's Conference, and at several Church Congresses he brought the results of the modern method of study of the

[1] *Journal of Biblical Literature*, lv, part i, pp. 17–19, 1936.

Bible—New Testament just as much as Old Testament—and the beginnings of the Christian religion before audiences unfamiliar with them and very unwilling to accept any other than the traditional point of view. On one of these occasions, at Manchester in 1908, his address was interrupted by angry shouts of dissent and expostulation from some of the clergy. He stood unmoved until the noise had died down, and then said quietly and earnestly: 'If the Christian cause perishes at last, it will not be because historical critics have explained the Gospels away, but because the followers of Christ are too faint-hearted to walk in the steps of their Master and venture everything for the sake of the kingdom of God.' Not a sound was heard from any one as he sat down.

Other scholars of distinction were working to the same end, some of them less obviously and less emancipated from the conceptions that had held the ground from the middle of the second century onwards; but as regards the Gospels Burkitt really led the way in England. Professor Kirsopp Lake was right in describing his book, *The Gospel History and its Transmission* (1906, 1911, 1920), and a series of smaller books on the Gospels, as the most influential of all his writings—influential, that is, in far wider circles than most of his other books reached. It is due to Burkitt probably more than to any one else that the results of modern scholarship in these matters have won their way as far as they have in the Church of England to-day.

As a lecturer and teacher in Cambridge, with a definite subject to teach, he kept to his brief close enough, and could put a spell of expectancy on his more intelligent pupils—what was coming next? But he never ceased to be surprised at the ignorance of the less intelligent, he did not always make enough allowance for it and he could be devastating in his comments on their work. He was at his very best in conversation with them or with any one else. All his stores of learning in many fields were forthcoming, as it seemed unsought, of their own accord. He put no task on his

memory. It was the same in more formal discussions, if any discussion in which he took part could remain a formal one. It would certainly range over much that did not seem relative to any main issue, there would be Puck-like flashes of humour, and even mischief, and yet in the end the discussion would have gained by his most discursive contributions. Many an undergraduate student he helped and inspired in no common measure, but probably it was men at a later stage of study who gained the most from him. Every one of those who went to him for help came away stimulated and with his horizon widened.

One of the pieces of work on which he expended much time and energy was the *Seminar* for senior students that he conducted term by term. In all his activities he was always just himself, but in this one perhaps he was more fully revealed than in any other.

Dr. R. Newton Flew, of Wesley House, Cambridge, who was a constant attendant and for some years Secretary, contributes the following picture of the Chairman and a typical meeting of the *Seminar*, describing the manner and the method in which what was really serious and solid study was conducted.

There was nothing in the world quite like 'Burkitt's Seminar' for those of us who went regularly and lovingly to it. This was because there was nobody else like the Chairman. There were many learned men around that table in the Library of the Divinity School. But this was Burkitt's Seminar. It was constituted (as many people think that the Church is constituted) from above downwards, through its episcopos or Chairman with all authority and membership cohering in a single visible head. But his papacy was gentle and undisputed. He it was who invited new members with little notes written in his own exquisite handwriting. The impress of his mind was upon every meeting. Indeed without him we dared not and would not meet. Your membership began in awe and was consummated in affection. After all it was terrifying, if you were unlearned and a newcomer, to take your place at that table, or to sit on a chair at the other end of the room and gaze on the learned from afar. But after a time your awe dissolved. Everything was so natural, so easy; perhaps a continental

theologian might call it sometimes desultory. These scholars, not unlike ordinary folk, loved to wander sometimes. They followed their Chairman who could on occasion be charmingly irrelevant. Somebody has dared to say that one of the fruits of the Spirit, which is not found in our text of Galatians, is relevance. The question was one of the few which was never discussed at the Seminar. On the whole we should have dismissed the suggestion unhesitatingly. We had learnt that the license to be irrelevant was divine. Anyhow, your awe went as you saw the Seminar faring down some inviting alley, and you were emboldened to contribute to the conversation your own mite, perhaps even your jest.

Of course we did solid and concentrated work. We did not forget that the first task of all New Testament study is the discovery of the true text. Few problems of interpretation were left unhandled. The minuteness and thoroughness characteristic of Cambridge scholarship were in evidence at every meeting. From 1924 to 1934 only two books were studied, with the exception of a few months in 1929 spent on the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Five years were given to the Fourth Gospel, and five years to the Acts. Many of the notes garnered and the papers read would have enriched any published commentary, but our Chairman was firm in his stipulation that the Seminar did not meet with a view to the publication of results. It is true that in the pre-war period the Seminar had prepared the way for that great enterprise, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, as Dr. Foakes Jackson has explained (vol. v, pp. vii, viii). But in these latter days the Seminar, in Burkitt's intention, was a centre and a meeting place for senior University people, including many incumbents from the town and villages, who wanted to study early Christianity. Among our members in the later years were the Professors of Hebrew and Chinese, two eminent Rabbinic Scholars, a specialist in Coptic, and another in Arabic, some classical scholars, several ex-missionaries, as well as teachers of Biblical, historical, and systematic theology. The Chairman delighted to elicit from the ex-missionaries any analogies or illustrations which might light up the problem before us. The discussions were never better than in the last year. Younger graduates had been drawn in; we seemed to have taken a fresh lease of life. The subject was *Early Jewish Christianity*, and had been carefully planned. Some texts were studied, the sources were sifted, many papers were read. The general conclusion which was gradually being reached would have run counter to certain theories current on the continent, wherein the ghost of the Tübingen hypothesis still stalks abroad.

We had our own ritual. In form we were businesslike. There was a Secretary, a Minute Book and Notes. The meetings were opened by reading the Minutes of the last meeting, wherein the names of the members present were recorded in due academic order, save that (as gallantry demanded) the names of ladies were read immediately after that of the Chairman. After the Minutes came the Notes, recording any fresh theories or conclusions, or any valuable information imparted at the previous meeting which was not readily accessible in published work. Next we proceeded to read the Text on which we were engaged, some one member being deputed to translate from the Greek. Discussion would follow after a paragraph had been translated. A paper might be read. Soon after three o'clock the custodian of the Divinity School would appear. This appearance was an unfailing symbol in the ritual; it meant: 'How many will stay for tea?' The Chairman said: 'Tea?' Hands were lifted up and counted. Back we went to our text or our discussion till tea came in at four p.m. bringing a certain relaxation. Usually we pursued our appointed topic, but in a freer and more human mood. Perhaps some one would introduce a subject of scholarly concern, not visibly related to our appointed task. No question of theological learning was alien to our Chairman. Memory brings back various inquiries on which one or another of us sought for light. Was there anything in the widespread popular misconception that the ten coins in the parable of Luke xv were part of a woman's headdress? Was there any evidence in the Fathers to prove that Christians were opposed to wife-beating, as Jews undoubtedly were? Once our Chairman suddenly said: 'As next Sunday is the second in Advent, may I put in a plea for the omission of a comma?' We sat up, expectant. 'I believe that Cranmer wrote: "Grant that we may in such wise *hear them read*, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them . . .".' He developed his argument that sixteenth-century congregations could not be expected to read and produced his parallel from the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer. If we were not all convinced, we were all enthralled. It was just like him.

On the very day before he was stricken down, he led his Seminar; he was himself, gay, fresh, adventurous, learned, with that unique and indefinable distinction that was ever his. Who could picture the restless, vivid, darting of that mind down some unexpected avenue, the swift following of the fugitive gleam that might mean light on an old problem, the versatile and pungent wit that adorned the vast learning? These characteristics we knew and admired. But what we hardly realized till our master was

taken from us was the atmosphere of affection which had flowed around that Seminar table. The centre and the source of it all was Burkitt himself. The very supposition of the quenching of such a life by death made death itself seem unreal. One of our Rabbinic scholars gathered a flower from the Talmud to lay on Burkitt's grave. 'Scholars' said R. Hiyya b. Ashi in the name of Rab, 'know no rest, either in this world or in the world to come; as it is said "they go from strength to strength till they appear before God in time".' And our Rabbinist added his own comment:

> Earth's dreams proved true, earth's phantoms laid,
> Earth's labours done,
> To visions new, to words unsaid,
> Now call them on.

Side by side with this picture of him at his seminar may be put what Dr. Edwyn Bevan writes of him at the meetings of the London Society for the Study of Religion. Many of his letters must have been kept by his friends, but those that are given here, ranging over a series of years, form a typical group by themselves. They show, as Dr. Bevan says, his thought in working and give a vivid idea of his *Weltanschauung* and the general temper in which he addressed himself to the problems of religion—candid, penetrating, interrogative.

This is a Society of about thirty members drawn from all the principal religious communities in London together with some unattached to any religious body, which was founded in 1904 by Baron F. von Hügel and others and meets six or seven times a year, now regularly in the house of Dr. Claude Montefiore, for the reading of papers and discussion. Burkitt attended the third meeting of the Society on February 7, 1905, and was twice President for the year, in 1912 and again in 1932. It is very hard to put into words the memory which remains of his contribution to our meetings, though the total impression of his personality, his delightful youthfulness, his wide knowledge, his fresh originality, his open-minded candour, is still vivid. He read four papers, in 1908 on 'The Kingdom of God', in 1916 on 'Eucharist and Sacrifice', in 1926 on 'The Prophets of Israel', in 1935 on 'The Value of the Doctrine of the Trinity'. He had one habit that marked him off from the other members. If he could not attend a meeting he wrote a letter to the honorary Secretary making observations on

the subject of the paper to be read. Sometimes, too, he wrote after a meeting comments on the paper or on things said in the discussion. By the courtesy of the Secretary, Mr. L. W. Comper, these letters are now before me, and some extracts—observations on different aspects of religion, written down, one supposes, just as they came to him on the spur of the moment—will perhaps show his mind in its living play more vividly than a studied presentation of his final convictions would.

July 29, 1915. Let me confess at once that I am a Denominationalist. We are all men—we can't help it—but Humanity is an unexciting goddess, tho' in the war of the worlds I could fight with enthusiasm against the Martians or the Jovians. 'I and my son against my cousin, and I and my cousin against the world!'—that is how the Arab proverb runs and it hits human nature exactly. . . . In religion there is a great advantage in being inside a building of some kind, even if the building includes a door that keeps some people out. And, if all the world were 'Catholic', we should soon find ourselves divided into High-Church Catholics and Low-Church Catholics, or else Jansenists and Molinists. Some one or other, I forget who, said that the conversation in Oxford Common Rooms declined from the day that Dissenters were admitted as Fellows. And why? Not because the new-comers were not intellectually the equals—or superiors—of their predecessors, but because every one was unwilling to appear disloyal. So they didn't give free rein to their individual thoughts on the things that matter, and chattered about the River and current politics—being themselves neither oarsmen nor statesmen.

August 8, 1920. If by 'experience' you mean religious or psychic, I can't do it, because I haven't had any. In fact, I don't feel inventive or constructive at all just now, only critical. I don't think it is the aftermath of War, I think it is just the approach of old age. At present I can think of little but the Manichees, a dead religion; but of some interest to me. It is really quite alarming to me that I *can't* get up any interest in present-day movements, neither Sir Oliver Lodge & Co. nor Home Re-union nor Concordats with the Eastern Churches, nor H. G. Wells!

August 18, 1922. I have an uneasy feeling that the 'Church of England' has seen its best days. Perhaps I am wrong and am confusing the days of the C. of E. with the now rather middle-aged days of F.C.B. I like the *via media* as a general theory, but now-a-days so many young folk seem to think that if a service isn't spiky there is no particular reason why it should be held at all. So that anything which has *via media* as its motto is a back-number.

May 26, 1928. The world is very odd: I don't *like* the Solar System or Vortex-Atoms, but they are very beautifully contrived. The sense of 'Sin' arises because we aren't as happy as we want to be, and one explanation is that it is somehow *our* fault. In fairness to this really wonderful notion one ought to dismiss from one's mind the horrid artificial state of an *induced* sense of sin, such as was impressed on our fathers and grandfathers.

May 4, 1929. [The subject of the paper announced being 'Jove or Prometheus'.] I'm afraid that I have a B_1 belief in time. What has been, has been; and neither Jove nor Prometheus nor Almighty God (so far as I know) can prevent it having been, even if He can mutate the logical consequences. 'The primitive appeal [of the senses] is not to mind but to action or desire.' This surely is very true. Nevertheless a most curious sensation, called 'consciousness' or 'self-consciousness', has arisen in man—probably not much more than 30,000 years ago, but geologically late. And animals haven't got so far. What a strange thing this consciousness is! Is it not akin to the state of feeling by which some rheumaticky people feel rain coming in their bones, or some feel (as distinct from see, hear or smell) a cat in the room? Primal good, according to Ecclesiastes (iii. 13, v. 18f) is to have a job and like it. But [he?] regards it as a *bonus* not distributed broadcast—'the gift of God'.

April 30, 1931. There are two things I would have liked to be said. One is, to make clear whether one speaks from the 'secularist' side, i.e. admitting both *Invention* and *Discovery* but excluding real *Revelation* (i.e. real hints from Outside), or whether one speaks from the non-secularist side, i.e. admitting that the 'Wise Life of the Divine Mind' has, occasionally, a real impact on some human minds.

The other thing is that a particular thing may be, in given circumstances, absolutely right, and that in the circumstances anything else would be wrong. (This, I would say, is true of opinions as well as of actions.) Very soon, no doubt, one thing may become only relatively right, because the circumstances have changed. . . . If we are, singly, creatures with only a grasp of relative truth, we have before us the danger of rejecting presentations of truth merely on the ground that it is likely that our grandchildren will have outgrown these presentations. But some of these presentations may be the only way truth can be appropriately presented to *us*. Truth may be a moving target, but our arrow, if it hit the gold-centre, is an 'absolutely' correct shot.

February 25, 1932. As I think I hinted at the Meeting, I feel that the doctrine of the Trinity is too good a conception to be given up.

There is God in Christ, who no doubt came at 'the fulness of time' and involves empirical history; there is also God in us, or in some of us at some times; and the two are one, and are one also with the Power behind phenomena, for it would be a dreadful thing to be really, fundamentally, Marcionite!

June 8, 1932. What I complain [of] about our R. C. friends is that they simply ignore the 'advancement of science'—science taken in the sense of modern knowledge generally. 'We have been forced' said Tyrrell once (see *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, p. 145): it was a very courageous sentence, not saying 'We now see . . .', or 'We always really saw . . .', but 'We have been *forced*' by modern knowledge, e.g. to accept the Solar System against our will and the opinion of the ancients. Thomas Aquinas is all very well, but every conclusion he comes to is nailed down with a text. How many of these nails are loose to-day?

However, apart from that, the old orthodox system *was* coherent, to a great degree. I fear the modern Protestant is not coherent. He accepts our Lord, mainly as an ethical Teacher, but does not obey Him, except here and there, and the kingdom of God, which he (the Protestant) hopes to help to bring in, isn't much like the Kingdom announced by Jesus as 'at hand'!. . . .

What I specially like in Orthodoxy is the Doctrine of the Trinity. The *Son* is God in history, a real Individual who had a Career and is an historical inspiration for us. We are attracted to Him and can (in some measure) answer His call, because we have, or may have, within us something really akin to God, akin—yes—to Mead's ultimate ineffable (or ineffable ultimate). This something is the Holy Spirit, but we don't say we have much of it individually, or that all the Spirit is incarnated or indwelling in men. But the *Father* is, as Mead so often and rightly insists, unknown (or rather dimly known); if we say we grasp or conceive Him (or It) we lie. But through the Spirit in us we are in a sort of real, though not immediate, contact with this great Reality. It seems to me that if we try and say more than something like this we are fair neither to the Bible, nor to Mead, nor to the facts! The advantage of the Doctrine of the Trinity is that with it in our minds we need not try to connect up all Deity into either Jesus, the Prophet of Galilee, or ourselves.

Yusuf Ali, being a Moslem, did not, I think, allow enough for 'the Holy Spirit'. God speaks to us and we (sometimes) listen: I don't think we could do so were we *wholly* unrelated and alien. Possibly there is something of God also even in stones, or how could they obey physical 'laws'? But not much of Him, in comparison with the best specimens of *Homo Sapiens*. Yet not all of Him is in

Homo Sapiens. The fault of 'Sophia' (i.e. Religious Philosophy), according to Valentinus, was that she wanted to 'know the Father' ='to get into touch with Reality'. It was too much to want, and so she got, according to Valentinus, into dreadful trouble!

November 5, 1933. My reaction to Dr. Coit is rather like my reaction to the Johannine writings. When John says 'God is light' I'm not quite sure that I really understand. I know that the Light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun, but that seems to me something different from Religion. And if it's merely a metaphor what is gained? Jesus said, according to John, 'I am the resurrection', 'I am the Way, the Truth, the Life': there is in the Fourth Gospel a distinct effort to raise these Ideals to equivalence with a Person in terms of these abstractions. It doesn't make me enthusiastic, somehow. 'God is Love': to be in love is very delightful, and you can have a sort of mirror of that state by imagining a person (who remains quite imaginary) with whom you can be in love. But if you are *very* fond of an institution, a college, a country, I find I begin to personify it. Or else I think of the collective individuals it contains. Not always 'Britannia', but 'England': the figure of England *is* something like Hobbes's *Leviathan*—only, I hope, a little less monstrous! In orthodox Christianity you have both things—the Principles which are believed to be the eternal attributes of God, His justice, His mercy, His Wisdom; and then there is also Jesus, who exemplified these things in a certain environment. Sainte-Beuve said 'La vérité, si haute qu'elle soit, a besoin de se faire homme, pour toucher les hommes'. He said this of the arid, scholastic style of Antoine Arnauld.

December 2, 1933. I'm not quite sure that the only religious institution (at present) is the Family (Macmurray II, 3). I think the University is something like Religion. Did Jesus try 'to create the Kingdom of Heaven among men'? He tried to persuade men to fit themselves for it, He lost His life in a quixotic effort to compel God to bring it in, but He was not so 'enthusiastic' (in the 18th century sense) as to think that we could bring it in for ourselves.

Can Religion ultimately flourish in a quite immanentist society? Can any Religion which has any right to call itself Christian—or even 'Jesuite'—flourish in a quite immanentist world? The late Baron, *ni fallor*, did not think so . . . .

[P.S.] It is easier to ask questions than to answer them.

Letters of this kind flowed from his pen with perfect spontaneity, as readily as he talked. One in a lighter vein,

written to a friend who had invited him to join him on a holiday in Italy, shows the same readiness on a different plane:

22 April '35 Cambridge. Your proposal was most attractive. Asolo is in charming country, near Citadella which is more like a theatre-town than nature, and nearer still to Castelfranco, where the Giorgione is, but was not when I was there. It had been taken away because the war might come there; as it did, for I saw that country a month before Caporetto. If you go to Vicenza, see how they exploited the talents of a clever young citizen (cheap, no doubt), called Palladio. Also see the family house of the Vespuccis, of whom the best known was a sailor called Amerigo, . . . there is also a very good light 'Hock' called *Soave*, which I remember.

Nothing seems ever to have been forgotten by him of facts or places or persons, nor to have escaped his notice at the time or failed to be indelibly inscribed in its exact position in relation to the rest. He could conjure up at any moment episodes and scenes from the past with everything and everybody and what they said and did remembered. Something said would remind him and off he would go.

He was a lover of congresses and gatherings where he would meet others engaged in his own pursuits. He always moved about freely in this way at home. What has been said already about his activities shows this. He was a constant attendant also at meetings of the British Academy, of which he was elected a Fellow in 1905, by which time much of his work of permanent value had been done, and he took an active part in its affairs. He belonged to two sections, that of Biblical and Ecclesiastical Studies and that of Oriental Studies, and at the time when he died he was Chairman of both of them.

He travelled also a good deal abroad, made many acquaintances among continental scholars, and kept in touch with them. His successive homes in Cambridge were chief centres of hospitality dispensed with equal charm and vivacity by himself and his gifted wife, and there from time to time many of his continental friends were to be met.

He married early, in 1888, Amy Persis, daughter of the

Rev. W. Parry, D.C.L., and grand-daughter of Sir Edward Barnes, G.C.B., sometime Commander-in-Chief in India, and it was with her that he made his tours abroad and from her some of the following reminiscences come.

A few months after their marriage, an Oriental Congress was held at Stockholm, under the Presidency of King Oscar, which attracted a large number of learned Orientalists from different countries. Professor Robertson Smith and Professor Bensly strongly urged their ardent pupil to attend the Congress, and it was noticeable how the elderly and famous Orientalists already recognized, as a worthy colleague, this youth of twenty-four (as a few years later 'young Burkitt' was the one man the veteran Syriac scholar Dr. Gwynn wanted to meet in Cambridge). He greatly enjoyed the drive through Norway, which he and his wife took on the way to Stockholm.

The Cambridge vacations were full of interest as they generally meant visits to foreign libraries or congresses abroad. It was at the library of Rheims that he first experienced the kindness of foreign librarians, which made possible his book on 'Tyconius'. After his stay there, a delightful holiday in the Jura at St. Ursanne led to another library at St. Gall, where other manuscripts claimed his attention. Several interesting and pleasant visits to Italy included studying manuscripts at the Vatican library and making interesting friendships with the librarians and other Italian theologians.

In 1893 a more adventurous journey was taken by him and his wife, with Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson, the Benslys, and Dr. Rendel Harris. The little party set out for the Convent of Mount Sinai to transcribe the Syriac palimpsest of the four gospels which Mrs. Lewis had discovered and of which she had brought back photographs the year before without knowing their importance, until it was pointed out by Burkitt. Five weeks were spent in tents in the Convent garden, and then a short stay at Beyrout and the Lebanon concluded a most interesting experience for him.

The congresses abroad were a keen interest to him, as they meant the making of new or the renewing of old friendships, though it was his fishing holidays in Sutherland in which he found real rest and refreshment. A congress at Rome in 1899 led to his spending a few days in the Benedictine Monastery of Monte Cassino with his friend the Abbot Amielli, not in the Guest House where his wife was lodged, but in the Monastery, keeping its rules.

His light-hearted cheerfulness made him a welcome guest everywhere, and strangers were amazed to find that his simple happy manner was united to such a prodigious store of learning.

An Oriental Congress at Algiers in 1905 gave him the opportunity of seeing the ruins of the ancient Roman town of Timgad and the desert town of Biskra; also Tunis and Carthage. With the windows of his mind open to the past, all these museums and places were of keener interest to him than to the ordinary tourist. In 1911 he was one of two Englishmen to be given an honorary degree at the centenary celebration of the University of Breslau and his journey there to receive it was followed by a walking tour in the Riesengebirge.

Prehistory with which, through his son Miles, his name is closely associated, attracted him as much as history. He was thrilled when he went in 1913 to see the caves in the Pyrenees, undaunted by the most difficult of them, and then those of the Dordogne. In the next year a visit to Sir George Wills and his family in Norway led to his catching his largest salmon. This at the time was to him an event as important as any in his life, and Miss Hilda Wills describes it for us:

> Perhaps the happiest of all happy memories of F.C.B. are connected with his holidays, for then those qualities that so endeared him to his friends—his childlike unself-consciousness, infectious enthusiasm, and enjoyment of simple pleasures—had full play.
>
> That night in Norway, for instance, when he caught his biggest fish! It was long past midnight when he came bounding up the river bank and through the garden to his friend's house, but he impetuously called every one out of bed and into the garden to

admire his fine salmon. The luminous light of the northern summer night, the flower-scented garden, the silvery fish lying on the grass and his (Frank's) eager face of delight, made a never-to-be-forgotten picture for those who saw it.

And next morning, when, before his breakfast, he insisted on drawing the exact outline of the fish with a piece of chalk on a sheet of brown paper, and spent the rest of that hot day on his knees, regardless of the sun blazing down on his back, patiently chipping this outline with a tiny and quite inadequate implement on the hard uneven stone step at the threshold of the house. There it still remains—a characteristic memorial of him in a far Norwegian valley.

One sees him again in the same garden, the centre of a group of excited village children (whose language he could not speak), inciting them to toboggan on a tea-tray down a steep grass slope—taking the timid ones on his back and shooting with them at the bottom right out into the main road, to the amazement of some tourists passing by, enjoying it himself as much as any of the children.

Or in England, when, tired with a heavy term's work, he went to a friend for a few days' rest and quiet, but was not too tired to undertake at a few hours' notice the prize-giving at a school for blind boys and girls and completely charmed and fascinated his pathetic little hearers by talking to them of Music.

His sunny temper and boundless vitality (which could find amusement and humour even in the advertisements among his morning correspondence) seemed to irradiate the most trivial and common-place things he came in contact with, and to light up a dull breakfast table, a formal party, or difficult committee. So his friends love to remember him! and in so doing find it true that 'those whom the Gods love die young' for indeed they never grow old.

This was in 1914. Sir Montagu Pollock who had fished with him in earlier years gives a similar picture:

. . . his surprising keenness as a fisherman; the great amount of unnecessary energy he expended when learning to cast and the consequent strain put on my pet rod; his boyish delight on catching his first salmon, bursting into the hotel dining-room in the middle of dinner with it in his arms with shouts of joy; his long arguments on theology with the ghillies, who were immensely impressed with his knowledge of it, so rare in an Englishman; his constant attendance at the long services both English and Gaelic in the kirk,

which never wearied him. He was an ideal companion, for his high spirits, keen interests, and marvellous memory enlivened every happening. Wherever we stayed he was the life and soul of the place, and—with much gesticulation and voice rising shrilly—the centre of its conversation.

That must have been some ten or eleven years before his great catch in Norway. Some verses published more than twenty years later in *The Cambridge Review*, 19 October, 1928, entitled 'Salmon' with 'ἁλιεῦ μερόπων τῶν σωζομένων . . . Clem. Alex.' as a caption, show that his enthusiasm was still unabated. The first and last of the eleven stanzas in which it was expressed—the last of them very characteristic—are as follows:

I never greatly care to dream
  Of little niggling trout,
I want to hear the big reel scream
  And see the line run out:
You wind the fish up into port—
  And then the reel goes *whizz*!
Oh, Salmon is the glorious sport,
  Best of all sport there is!

. . .

The Bishop's Crozier arose
  Out of a shepherd's crook,
At least, that's what most folk suppose,
  You read it in a book.
But Simon plied no shepherd's trade:
  I'm sure the Bishop's staff
Is not a shepherd's tool remade—
  It's good Saint Peter's Gaff.

Really he could be just as enthusiastic about trout. Sir John Fry with whom he fished from Lochinver and Inchnadamph recalls a day

which began with a car ride and a four-mile climb up-hill to loch Fewin, a long row and fishing up the loch and then the joyful landing of a two-pounder from the Veatie burn. A frugal lunch of bread and cheese (that was all he would take), a rest (little doing on the water at that time of day), and then another two-pounder from the burn: staying for the evening rise and after that more rowing and a long rough walk of seven or eight miles in

failing light. On these expeditions he was essentially 'a good companion', so keen and so extraordinarily versatile. He would discourse on Gaelic or on the rare sub-alpine plants that grow only on the Sutherland mountains and where to find them, or of the Pictish Towers. . . . He would explain that cat's cradle was practised by the Zambesi nations and show a delighted child how they did it. Or he would tell a soldier talking of trajectories what it was for the Brown Bess musket of Peninsula days. He carried with him as a second aura a *joie de vivre*, a freshness and alertness given to few, it pervaded all his talk and stories, his catching fish and choosing the right fly, his playing of Bach or the singing of a comic song.

The marvel was that it went on every day and all the time. On a long day's mountain walk it was only towards the end of a specially steep climb that silence would fall for a few minutes; or in the house over a book, or now and then when his hosts and other guests were occupied he would espy an empty table and pounce on it for a game of patience, especially if there was some one there to show him a new one—another thrill.

When the Great War came the duty of a Divinity Professor was not obvious. Some must remain at their posts while there were still men to teach, and the business of the University had to be carried on side by side with the new activities and opportunities at home that the War produced, and at first Burkitt remained. But by the spring of 1916 he had made as great a change in his life as any one devoted to books and learning and the society of like-minded friends could make. With his wife and son he was organizing a Y.M.C.A. Recreation Hut in a Camp Hospital of 5,000 beds some miles from Rouen. A letter written after his death to Mrs. Burkitt, by 'one of the nobodies' as he calls himself, shows how he did it.

I can never forget him and you and your son. . . . The men just loved him and no wonder. I can see him with them now, playing the piano for their services and their sing-songs, helping them with their games, giving them paper and envelopes; and supremely happy in laying himself out to do everything possible for them. For myself, I loved him too, and reverenced him, I just could not

help it: he was so brimful of love and goodwill for everyone, for humdrum ordinary folk as well as for those who were interesting, and he became my ideal of what a saint ought to be.

More intimate knowledge tells of him as feeling his mental solitude, often tired and weary, with many discomforts, but never heard to grumble. He stayed there steadily until after the Armistice, except for two short leaves of less than a fortnight each which were spent at Hyères and St. Cast. During this time he had one most exciting experience. He was asked to join a small party of six who had been invited to see the Italian Front, in order to present to the English army the difficulties and problems of the Italian war zone. The extraordinary difficulties and hardships experienced by the Italian soldiers, and the cool courage of the Italian officers who accompanied the small party, greatly impressed him. While they were going up the Isonzo Valley, the Austrians fired five shells, one of which fell within 40 yards of the party. They were also taken up the famous 'Telerifico' to the peak of Mount Pasubio, 6,700 feet above sea-level. Mr. Sayre, son-in-law of President Wilson, and Professor Burkitt had already left the last stopping-place on the aerial railway, and the 'cage' was running up the wire rope to the overhanging peak when the cables became entangled and they remained hanging over the abyss for half an hour while telephones worked and a relief party came to repair the damage. What made it worse was that Burkitt had volunteered to go up sitting astride a kind of pack saddle used for carrying luggage, and a slight loss of balance would have meant death. Forty minutes later the spot at which they stuck was under Austrian fire, the gunners being on the next 'tooth' of the mountain, only 450 yards away. He returned to England very tired, and he found post-war England depressing.

He was still to do a little travelling abroad. In 1926 the Archaeological Congress in Syria was a peculiar pleasure to him with the opportunity it gave of seeing Petra, Palmyra, and Baalbek, which he had always longed to see.

The French made things easy for the members of the Congress, and the English Bishop in Jerusalem also arranged that he should see the Easter Services, including the Abyssinian one, which he found of extraordinary interest.

Again in 1931 he went to America to give the 'Morse Lectures' at the Union Seminary, New York. He and his wife landed in Montreal and, as he had by this time lost some of his zest for mere sight-seeing, they spent a fortnight quietly in the Adirondacks, which he thought was a good starting-point for seeing modern America. Owing to the kindness of President Lowell he had a delightful time at Harvard, and then at Hartford and Yale, before reaching New York, where he found many friends.

Holidays henceforth were spent nearer home—happy visits to a friend in Wales, and others in England, and Scotland where he had some of his beloved fishing, though it was not the fishing of pre-war days. Often, too, in these later years of his life he would be running off for a day or two in his car all over England in search of Saxon churches or old barns that could only be reached down disused lanes through which he and his chauffeur would have to hack a way, and the discovery of a bit of Saxon masonry in the walls would fill him with delight.

Always perhaps it was the little things of life which charmed him most. His small Rock Garden claimed his attention and affection whenever he had a few moments to spare. In it he had a 'bank of remembrance' for plants given to him by his friends. He would be as much interested in his friends' gardens as in his own and, when on a visit to them, in intervals between excursions, when he might have lazed, he would gaily take part in building up a bit of rock-work that was giving way, or digging potatoes, or watering young cabbages in a drought.

His love for children and for animals was very marked. A lady giving a party for small children could write to him saying—'I am not asking your boy [aged 10] because he would be bored playing with little children, but I should be

so very glad if you will come.' His love for animals sometimes led to embarrassments. A large dog attached himself to him when at a sea-side place, waiting for him daily, and would not leave his side except to attack some one's pet dog, or worry a cat, after which exploit the dog would return to him. He had the greatest difficulty one day in convincing a policeman, who had been fetched by an irate old lady, that the dog at his side did not belong to him—nor did he know the owner. He was known to turn to other work if he found his cat lying asleep on his study table or on the book he was going to use.

His broadmindedness was a marked trait in his character recognized by all who knew him. So, for instance, when two scholars were needed who could be trusted to be at once sympathetic and sincere to give addresses in the City Temple, one on 'What Jews think of Christians' and the other on 'What Christians think of Jews', it seemed perfectly natural that Dr. Claude Montefiore and Professor Burkitt should give them. In contrast with earlier times Christian scholars who are sympathetic to Jews and their point of view can easily be found to-day, when Old and New Testaments alike are studied without prepossessions. It is clear that no amount of searching of their Scriptures could have led Jews to expect a Messiah in the guise of Jesus and that the picture of the Pharisees in the Gospels—even if true of a considerable number of Scribes and Rabbis of the time—ignores the power of the Rabbinic Love of the Torah to produce good lives. And in Cambridge, long before the restriction of Divinity degrees to clergymen of the Church of England was removed, theological students and scholars of all denominations had worked happily together. But what Jews felt about Burkitt was that he realized more than most Christians the great religious tradition of the Jews and the Jewish environment of the New Testament, and that his sympathy was fortified by far greater knowledge of the facts, so far as they can be recovered and inferred, than was common among non-Jewish scholars. Dr. Claude Montefiore

and Mr. H. Loewe both testify to his learning in the sphere of Rabbinical study and his power of assimilating the material he found there and applying it in due perspective and with complete impartiality. 'He was able to co-ordinate Rabbinics and Patristics and to regard both with equal sympathy and criticism, and to see the unbroken chain uniting Amos, Hillel, Aqiba, and Maimonides, a chain parallel to John, Paul, Jerome, Augustine, Aquinas.' And all through his study and treatment of this Jewish material 'a law of truth was in his heart, and no perverseness was ever found on his lips'. So Mr. Loewe writes. And, on the other hand, Roman Catholics valued his learning and his sincerity, and those who were brought into personal association with him soon became warm friends. The fact that some of them said Mass for him after his death shows the affection they had for him.

Burkitt took endless trouble to be accurate in all he wrote. Finding that the earliest biographer of St. Francis only spoke of one miracle, that of the 'Voice of God' saying the same words as the Saint in the Woods of Fonte Collumba, he went to the centre of Italy to look for a rock in that wood on which St. Francis might have stood to speak to the gathered disciples down below. Finding the rock, he shouted loudly the same words, and heard clearly the same echo, and was rejoiced to find, what he had hoped to find, that he could rely on the historical accuracy of Brother Leo.

He will be remembered by the numberless students that he helped, never grudging time or trouble to do what he could to be of use to them. He said once that our most important books are those which we write on the minds of our pupils. All the same, for one who had so many interests and lived as full a social life as he did, with a genius for conversation and constant activity of it in his own house and garden and the houses of his friends, he was amazingly productive of big and little books and articles and notes and reviews in learned periodicals, especially the *Journal of Theological Studies*, no single volume of which—scarcely even

a number—was without something from his pen, except during the years when he was on war work in France.

The list of his writings published in that *Journal* (October 1935, vol. xxxvi, pp. 337–346) shows the wide range and detail as well as the chronological sequence of his work. From the first it was work such as could be appraised fairly only by specialists in the different fields over which he ranged, and the Editors of the *Journal* marked their sense of the manifoldness of his achievement by obtaining appreciations of his actual contribution to theological studies from no fewer than nine leading representatives of modern scholarship in the special fields of Textual Criticism, Latin and Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, Old Testament, Gospels, Rabbinic, Liturgical, and Franciscan study.[1]

Here it must suffice to indicate his more outstanding contributions to learning.

It has been said already that Burkitt stood in the Cambridge tradition of New Testament criticism, in line with Hort in particular. *Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri* expresses the spirit which all great Cambridge teachers have passed on in their measure to their pupils, and Burkitt was none the less a true disciple of Hort and his methods if his own studies revealed to him some weaknesses in the 'neutral' text which reigned supreme in Cambridge in the generation after Hort. His earliest work of importance was in the field of the textual criticism of the New Testament, especially in connexion with the Latin and Syriac versions, and to the detailed study and exposition of this subject he remained constant all his life, while his amazing memory enabled him even in conversation to give the chief evidence for one reading rather than another in a passage that chanced to come under discussion. Little had been done when he began his studies to straighten out the intricacies of the various Latin versions. Burkitt began by proving as early as 1896, in his *The Old Latin and the Itala*, that when Augustine spoke of the *Itala* he meant the version known to us as

[1] *Journal of Theological Studies*, July 1935, vol. xxxvi, pp. 225–254.

the Vulgate. This at once cleared the ground, and 'Old Latin' could become a scientific term even if its content was not precisely determinable. Burkitt did much to make it so, and as a chief authority on the Old Latin he was, almost of course, as much at home in the problems of the Vulgate.

Equally fundamental, and of enduring value for the solution of textual questions, was his work on the Syriac Gospels. His familiarity with the 'Curetonian' version, of which only a single imperfect copy existed, enabled him promptly to identify the text of the Sinaitic palimpsest of the Four Gospels in Syriac, discovered in 1892, as belonging to a version nearly allied to the so-called Curetonian. It was evident to him that in spite of their many differences these two MSS. were derived from a version distinct from the Syriac Vulgate known as the 'Peshitta', which was 'the sheet-anchor of the defenders of the Greek *Textus Receptus*—the great obstacle in the way both to the disciples of Westcott and Hort and to those who champion what are called "Western" texts'. The problem, then, was to determine the date of the Peshitta, and this could only be done by careful examination of the quotations from the Gospels in the genuine extant writings of the earliest Syriac Father of the Church, namely St. Ephraim who died in 373. It had been generally believed that he had used the Peshitta and that that version had been made between A.D. 250 and 350. Burkitt showed conclusively that St. Ephraim's text of the Gospels was not that of the Peshitta, so he could no longer be claimed as a witness to it. At all events it was not the text in which he read, from which he quoted, the Gospels. But it might already have been in existence. Was it? The answer to this question was made more difficult by the fact that throughout the Syriac-speaking Church it was not the Four Gospels as we have them that were in general ecclesiastical use, but the combination of all four that is known as the *Diatessaron*. It was on the Gospels in this form that St. Ephraim, like Aphraates before him, had written a

commentary, and it cannot be said that he actually quotes from *any* of the known versions. But Burkitt's study of the early Syriac-speaking Christian communities and their literature gave him the historical background that enabled him to assign the origin of the Peshitta, with as much certainty as possible, to the great reforming prelate Rabbula, who was bishop of Edessa from A.D. 411 to 435. This bishop's biographer records of him that 'by the wisdom of God that was in him he translated the New Testament from Greek into Syriac, because of its variations, exactly as it was', and he ordained that in all churches the separate gospels were to be kept and read. The conclusion seems clear that the new version which he prepared of each of the four gospels as units was intended to replace the amalgamation of them all together (the Diatessaron) which had been in use till then. Although divergent versions such as the Curetonian and the Sinaitic might be in existence with a limited currency, it was an 'authorized version' that Rabbula prepared and enforced in his diocese, as also did Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus 423–57, who removed more than 200 copies of the Diatessaron from churches of his diocese and replaced them with copies of the Four Gospels. Considering, then, that before the time of Rabbula there is no sure trace of the Peshitta text, that soon after his death quotation from it is the rule, and that manuscripts of it from that time onwards present hardly any variation, the conclusion that Rabbula's translation and the Peshitta text are identical seems inevitable. To have established this was a contribution of the first order to knowledge of the history of the various texts and versions of the New Testament.

The early history of the Old Syriac, as of Tatian's Diatessaron, remains obscure. Burkitt was attracted to the idea that it was an already existing Diatessaron in Latin that Tatian translated into Syriac (as he was also by M. P.-L. Couchoud's suggestion that the Gospel of Mark was written in Latin), but he never worked out the idea.

His edition of the old Syriac Gospels published in 1904 with the title *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*[1] or 'the Curetonian Version of the Four Gospels, with the readings of the Sinai Palimpsest and the early Syriac Patristic evidence edited, collected and arranged' (perfectly arranged by him and finely produced as it was by the Cambridge press) gives all the evidence there is and will remain, as Dom Connolly says, a monument 'not merely of industry and careful scholarship, but of the individual genius of its author, whom it would entitle to fame if it were his only work'. It will be always indispensable to the student of the Syriac versions of the New Testament.

Similarly in dealing with the Old Testament, though the conditions are different, his genius in the spheres of palaeography and textual criticism found full scope for its exercise. The article 'Text and Versions' which he contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1903) was a masterly survey which remains without an equal. Numerous instances could be cited in which he brought his wide knowledge and originality and resourcefulness to bear decisively on particular passages or texts or theories.

He was singularly well equipped also for dealing with questions on which scholars less widely informed than he was in Jewish and Christian history and oriental languages could go astray. For example, when in recent years the theory that the Fourth Gospel was a product of Mandaism was put forward by some continental scholars, Burkitt was able to show conclusively that the Mandaean terms which might seem to indicate a knowledge of Hebrew or of Jewish tradition were not derived from any imagined Jewish or Palestinian sect but from the Syriac transliterations (in the Peshitta) of the Old Testament. For any one with enough knowledge of history to have acquired the historic sense no

[1] That is, 'Gospel of the Separated' (gospels or evangelists)—a term in use at an early date to distinguish the full translation of the four gospels from the Diatessaron which in turn was styled in Syriac *Evangelion da-Meḥallețe* ('Gospel of the Mixed').

foundation was left for these new theories about the Fourth Gospel.

He lived through the years when the literary and historical criticism of the Old Testament was fighting its way and took an active part, as has been indicated in this Memoir, in expounding the main results of such criticism.

But his own chief contributions to literary and historical criticism of the Bible were made in the field of criticism of the New Testament at a time when many, who had reluctantly accepted the new views of Old Testament history, still held the New Testament to be sacrosanct and exempt from the application to it of the new principles and methods of study. In this sphere Burkitt was one of the pioneers, notably by his book which has been mentioned already *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, but largely also by his insistence on the dominance of the eschatological idea in the Gospels and in the early stages of the rise of the new religion of Christianity. This idea had been so much lost sight of that 'eschatology' had become synonymous with Christian doctrine about the 'last things'—the fortunes of the soul after death. Burkitt's familiarity with the later ('apocalyptic') religious literature of the Jews equipped him peculiarly well for dealing with the new 'apocalyptic' or 'eschatological' reading of the teaching recorded in the Gospels. His Schweich Lectures, for instance, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (1913), show him with complete mastery of the conditions of the transition from the reformed religion of Israel to the Jewish-Christian conditions of the first century A.D. The remarkable survey of a century of German work on the Gospels and the Life of Jesus by the Alsatian scholar Albert Schweitzer (*Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, 1906) introduced him to the *Predigt Jesu* by Johannes Weiss published in 1892 and its second edition of 1900, and he made himself at once the champion in England of the eschatological interpretation of the aims and teaching of Jesus. Weiss had said that, attracted though he had been as a pupil of Ritschl by his teaching about the Kingdom of God, he had 'long

been troubled with a conviction that Ritschl's idea of the Kingdom of God and "the Kingdom of God" in the Message of Jesus are two very different things'. In a memorial notice of him in *The Harvard Theological Review* (July 1915, vol. viii, pp. 291–97) Burkitt recalls these words and adds:

> Here you have the essential point. The important thing is that Johannes Weiss was the first modern New Testament scholar of first-rate professorial rank to see it. To bring men into living contact with Jesus Christ is no doubt in all the centuries the chief aim of the Christian teacher, but during the nineteenth century this task had been attempted in a new way. It had seemed that the real Jesus had been hidden from sight under covering of dogma and ecclesiastical tradition. Behind these trappings it was assumed that there existed not merely a human Personality, but one whose religion was freed from all external and particularistic elements. In the process of unwrapping, much of the traditional Figure had disappeared, for reasons of varied cogency; but it was found that what remained after critical analysis still invincibly belonged to its own time and place. The preaching of Jesus, of the reconstructed historical Jesus, still is occupied with Palestinian conditions of nineteen hundred years ago; the external and the particularistic elements refuse to be eliminated. For a long while the remedy most in favour was to regard more and more of the traditional material as unhistorical and secondary. This was especially the case with what we are now accustomed to call the eschatological elements, that is, all that starts from the belief in the intervention of God to deliver His people in the near future. 'Amen, I say unto you, there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the Kingdom of God come in power'—that is only one of a whole series of sayings of Jesus which announce the near coming of a New Age. Johannes Weiss ventured to sketch a portrait of Jesus in which these sayings, so far from being treated as unauthentic or explained away, are taken as the central nucleus of the Gospel Message. That is his great and lasting achievement.

It was one of Burkitt's achievements to take a lead in showing the inadequacy of the Liberal Protestant ideas of the nineteenth century as regards Jesus and his Gospel—the failure of 'Liberal Christianity' of this brand, and in recalling students to the historical facts, however unwelcome they might be, that Jesus shared the apocalyptic conceptions

current in some circles of religious Jews of his time and that in his teaching he never envisaged a future for human society in the world as it has actually been. It was to Burkitt, too, that the English version of Schweitzer's great book under the title *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* was mainly due, though the translation itself—a masterpiece—was made by Mr. C. W. Montgomery.

As to the historical value of the Gospels, he was constant in his opinion that the Gospel of Mark (the preservation of which made historical criticism of the Gospels not only possible but inevitable) supplied an outline of the actual course of events which was not only probable in itself but also gave sufficient clues to account for the later developments, and so was fundamentally trustworthy. He had put out the case to this effect in *The Gospel History and its Transmission* in 1906; he stated it again concisely in a chapter on the Life of Jesus in a composite work *Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge*, published in 1929 with an eye on the rising German school of 'form' critics, whose methods result in the dissolution of nearly all history; and again in 1932 he republished this chapter as *Jesus Christ: an historical outline* with an Epilogue which Dr. Streeter describes as 'much the most telling attack so far delivered upon this school'. It was no mere conservatism on Burkitt's part that made him an active opponent of this new school of criticism, any more than it was his respect for the 'neutral' text—discriminating as that was—that made him withold acceptance of the new theories of a 'Caesarean' text. The new school of *formgeschichtlich* criticism seemed to him to leave one of the greatest of historical phenomena, the rise of Christianity, in the air without foundation in events and happenings in actual experience. It seemed to him to play straight into the hands of Dr. Arthur Drews and others (best known in England through the books of Mr. J. M. Robertson) who denied the historical existence of Jesus and attributed the whole story to a supposed religious community of unknown origin who invented it to give a literary and historical

foundation to an already existing cult of a mythical Saviour God. On the other hand, although of opinion that the Jesus of the German Liberal 'Lives of Jesus' was a construction of the nineteenth century as imaginative as Renan's or some more modern twentieth-century portraits, and that the Christ of Catholic creeds and institutions was the product of epigenesis in the course of which the historical Figure had been transformed, Burkitt was convinced that really scientific criticism applied to the Gospels revealed a historical Person with a *substratum* of his actual doings and sayings which were adequate to account for the origin and the later developments of the Christian Church.

It was his study of the growth of the Gospels and the sources of early Christian tradition, as well as his interest in the history of the Church and monasticism, that first attracted him to St. Francis and the growth of the Franciscan Legend. The elucidation of critical problems of the Gospels might be helped by analogies in the early sources of the Life of St. Francis. Dr. Coulton alludes to his rare combination of the mathematical and the historical mind as enabling him at once to keep all the relevant facts in order and to put life into the dry bones. His essay on the interrelation of the early Franciscan sources, in the centenary volume of the Franciscan Society, Dr. Coulton says 'seems to me the most exact and living reconstruction of this kind that I have ever read. He was here confronted with a multiplicity of documents, mostly contaminated, but gradually crystallizing by competition and interaction into a sort of official canon, within a couple of generations of the Founder's death; in short, very much the story of the New Testament canon . . . and on all the most important questions he seems to have said the last word.' And after referring to the famous scene at Rieti and Burkitt's discovery of the echo which he had divined, though no one had noticed it before (on the visit made for this purpose which is mentioned p. 472 above), he speaks of his admirably sympathetic appreciation of the Saint and says that his own 'smile and

his vivacity, and his serenity even in controversy, were Franciscan'.

His interest in the history of the Church inevitably embraced the history of its worship, and no account of his contribution to learning would be complete that ignored his work on this subject. Mr. E. C. Ratcliff of Queen's College, Oxford, writes of it[1] as follows:

His publications on liturgical matters are few and slight in comparison with his contributions to other departments of learning. They were, however, by no means commensurate with his knowledge of the subject; and whether they took the form of a note, or an article, or even a review, they invariably illumined some obscure corner, or made a valuable suggestion which pointed a way for other students to open up. It is still believed in certain circles that liturgiology is a proper study only for those possessed of a 'sacristy' interest. Burkitt made no such mistake. None knew better than he the intimate connexion and reaction, throughout Christian history, of *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*. The importance of the study of liturgy, particularly of early liturgy, as he conceived it, lies in the fact that it reveals beliefs, ideas, and aspirations, which, as they belong to the general body of Christians, have contributed to the formation of the Christian tradition as much as, if not more than, the thought of outstanding writers and 'Fathers'. It was from this point of view that Burkitt lectured in Cambridge on 'Christian Worship'. Those who attended the lectures were disappointed if they expected a comparison of medieval uses; but they were compensated by an inimitable introduction to early ideas and theories of worship as expressed in ancient liturgical texts. . . .

His support of Bishop against Buchwald in the controversy over an Epiclesis in the Roman Canon was vigorous and unhesitating. He maintained, and could shew reason, that those who regarded an Epiclesis as a 'primitive' form of consecration were ignorant of the background of the subject. He was fully qualified to write a history of the Epiclesis; but though the Prayer Book controversy stirred him to express his mind to some extent, he was content to write letters to *The Times* which, though they might have stated the bare facts, gave no opportunity of marshalling the evidence which he had at his disposal. He was frank in regarding the rejected Prayer Book as an exhibition rather of 'liturgiolism' than

[1] *Journal of Theological Studies*, xxxvi. 251 ff.

of liturgical knowledge. The would-be revisers of the 1662 Prayer Book, he used to say, failed to understand the Book which they wished to revise. His statements were admittedly often provocative; for, although his interpretation of the Communion Service, set out in the paper 'Eucharist and Sacrifice', and again in 'Christian Worship' (in vol. iii of *The Christian Religion: its Origin and Progress*, Cambridge University Press), called forth objection, it elicited no answer. On this particular subject Burkitt felt as well as thought. Such as heard him discuss it then knew, if they had not discovered it before, that his view of the relation between *lex credendi* and *lex orandi* was not merely an academic maxim, applicable only to a study of the past.

If Burkitt wrote little on liturgical subjects, his loss is not less lamentable to liturgical study. Perplexed students knew that if they consulted him, whether by correspondence or in conversation, he would give more help than they were at first conscious of requiring. Nothing was too much trouble, or took too much time, for Burkitt to lavish assistance; often it must have been at a great cost of his own time. He was a very Doctor in the exact sense of the word, in that he could inspire, and by inspiring could direct.

In all the departments of theological study already mentioned Burkitt's work will live so long as the subjects themselves are studied. So will his fresh and original surveys of Manichaeanism and Gnosticism,[1] both of which were made in view of newly discovered material and new investigations and theories about these widespread systems of religious thought and their influence in Christian circles. As only Burkitt could have replaced, as he did in his translation of Ecclesiastes, the familiar 'Vanity of vanities, all is Vanity' by 'Bubble of Bubbles! All things are a Bubble', so only Burkitt could have described the Manichaean view of this world of ours as a 'smudge' on reality, or have written as he did—throwing new light on the subject—of the astronomical background of Gnostic conceptions and of the reasons that led the church of that day not to accept a new theology that professed to be in accordance with the spirit of the age.

[1] *The Religion of the Manichees* 1925, *Church and Gnosis*, 1932.

Astronomical, or astrological, subjects appealed to him. He believed he was the only man left in England who could use an astrolabe, and his search for a diagram of one in a Syriac manuscript in the British Museum led to one of his many happy discoveries. He found it contained nearly two-thirds of the collection of early Christian Hymns known as the *Odes of Solomon* which had shortly before been introduced to the modern world by Dr. Rendel Harris's edition from a single manuscript, much later than the one that had been lying unused in the British Museum.

He was always on the track of something, often finding what he sought and always quick to seize on anything new he met with by the way. He had the curiosity of the child, along with the other child-like traits in which his friends delighted. In his memoir of Johannes Weiss he picks out a number of what he called his 'wise sayings'. One of them is his comment on the difficult thought of Mark x. 15 ('Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child he shall in no wise enter therein'), 'for it is difficult,' notes Burkitt, 'though the wording is so familiar'. Weiss's comment is 'To be a child is just one of the things that cannot be willed and striven for—it is a gift of God'.

Burkitt had this gift and retained it side by side with the other gifts of the spirit and the mind with which he was so bountifully endowed, and they were all kept in constant and fruitful exercise all his life. Happy in his inheritance and in the conditions of his life, he was happy, too, in the conditions of his death. As regards the two chief subjects which had engaged his attention, the text of the New Testament and the Gospels, he could feel that he had made a contribution to the progress of knowledge that would not be superseded, even though, as regards the Gospels, other lines of study might have their vogue for a time. No one can safely ignore the results he reached. But he had done all this, and while he was still apparently as alert and active as ever, after a full day's work on a Thursday (9 May, 1935), as he was about to go to sleep,

a blood vessel in the brain gave way and without recovering consciousness he died in the early morning of Saturday, 11 May.

[In drawing up this Memoir, apart from personal knowledge, free use has been made of all the sources of information mentioned in it, especially a *Handbook and Guide to Sudbury* by W. W. Hodson, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, *The Times*, and *Notes* of Mrs. Burkitt's reminiscences. The actual words of the various writers have frequently been used.]