

**THE PREPARATION FOR
CHRISTIANITY IN THE ANCIENT
WORLD: A STUDY IN THE
HISTORY OF MORAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649238514

The preparation for Christianity in the ancient world: a study in the history of moral development by R. M. Wenley

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

R. M. WENLEY

**THE PREPARATION FOR
CHRISTIANITY IN THE ANCIENT
WORLD: A STUDY IN THE
HISTORY OF
MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

The
Preparation for Christianity
In the Ancient World

A Study in the History
of Moral Development

BY

R. M. WENLEY, Sc.D. (Edin.), D. PHIL. (Glas.)

Professor of Philosophy in the University of Michigan
sometime Honorary President of the Glasgow
University Theological Society



NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
Publishers of Evangelical Literature

Preface

SCHOLARS who have themselves passed through a similar experience are well aware that the production of a small book of the class to which this belongs is more difficult, in some respects, than the composition of the customary exact academic monograph. Except in an attempt to make the past vivid, these pages lay no claim to special originality. Processes are entirely suppressed, results alone appear. The selection and compression, inseparable from the presentation, have been directed toward rendering the picture as a whole more impressive and less easily mistaken.

For the information of American readers I may add that this little book has been prepared for the Church of Scotland, "Guild Series."¹ The Guild is an organization of the young people of the Church. Among its many admirable activities none is more praiseworthy than the provision of this series of volumes designed to deepen the intelligent interest of the laity in all questions connected with the origin, nature, history, and extension of the Christian religion.

Although no similar organization exists in the United States, so far as I am aware, the numerous colleges and societies connected with the various Churches are well calculated to carry on parallel work. It is in the hope that this sketch may be found useful by their members that I have ventured upon the present issue.

Portions of the fifth chapter are reprinted from *The Jewish Quarterly Review* (London), a magazine far too little read by the Christian community, one containing some admirable studies of aspects of the Jewish faith in all ages.

R. M. WENLEY.

ANN ARBOR, MICH., *January*, 1898.

¹The series of Guild Text-books are published in America by Fleming H. Revell Company. See list at end of this work.

Contents

CHAP.	PAGE.
I. INTRODUCTORY	9
II. SOCRATES AS A MISSIONARY OF THE HU- MAN SPIRIT	24
III. GREEK SELF-CRITICISM	50
IV. SALVATION BY WISDOM	71
V. THE MISSION OF THE JEWS	93
VI. THE ADVENT OF THE SAVIOUR	113
VII. THE PREPARATION OF THE WORLD	143
VIII. THE PREPARATION OF THE SPIRIT	158
IX. CONCLUSION	183
INDEX	191

The Preparation for Christianity in the Ancient World; A Study in the History of Moral Development

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

"The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."—ROM. viii. 19.

WHATEVER else it may or may not be, Christianity is one of the great historical religions. It centres in a stupendous fact; it was born into a universal empire, the state of which at the moment is matter of history; all the circumstances of the time imperatively demanded the new revelation, and conspired to the successful propagation of the "good news." Accordingly, historical inquiry may be directed to one of two points: either to the Person and Life of the Founder, or to the conditions that prepared the way before Him and speedily, when the immense obstacles are duly weighed, laid the old Roman world at His feet. Consideration of Christ's person and work is an altogether subordinate part of our present purpose, and attention must be concentrated mainly on pre-Christian customs and their meaning. For our problem is:—What were the essential features in the development of man's religious, moral, and social needs throughout the ancient Classical and Hebrew civilizations that ultimately ended in a spiritual impotence curable by Christianity alone?

Obviously, in a study like this, everything turns upon the view of history adopted at the outset. If the past be no more than a series of haphazard occurrences, without inter-relationship and devoid of influences whereto results may be traced, then any discussion such as is now proposed becomes meaningless beforehand. A mere series fails in a deep sense to be a series at all. On the other hand, if the word Providence—old-fashioned as many now deem it—possess significance, if history be a single whole wherein events take their places as parts of a developing organism, and consequences may be read dependent upon numerous incidents that slowly but distinctly lead up to them, then a problem of enormous interest and fertility confronts us. There can be no question that the entire trend of modern inquiry has been in this direction, and, without further parley, its adoption may now be proclaimed. But, by way of introduction, one is compelled to analyze this doctrine somewhat more fully.

Like all other subjects, history has its peculiar presuppositions. At first sight, these naturally appear to be very numerous. Nationalities, with corresponding divisions of territory, are immediately conjured up. Battles and other mighty doings in endless kinds float vaguely through the brain. Fixed institutions, themselves the result of tedious conflict of opinion, occur to one. Man's sufferings and aspirations, his triumphs and disappointments and defeats successively, or together, put in their several pleas for a hearing. The rise and fall of principalities and powers unfold before the eye, or the clash of mighty forces, involving the rupture of momentous empires, breaks thunderously upon the inward ear. Yet after all, these, and such as these, may be summed up in a single and comparatively simple ex-

pression. History exists because man is a social being. Society, in the broadest sense, is its one presupposition. Till men have entered into combinations with one another, history remains unenacted, impossible. Nor can this association be viewed as accidental. No doubt, some few instances of it present unaccountable features; but, nevertheless, association itself furnishes the prime condition under which men act, by a force that cannot be called compulsion, when, as individuals or as groups, they rise to possession of significance worthy the name historical.

We are so wedded now to analogies derived from scientific or quasi-scientific apparatus, that we often find it difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend what precisely "a force that is not compulsion" implies. A man, we say, is the creature of circumstances, whether nearer, like his parents and upbringing, or remoter, like the institutions of his nation and the general temperament of his century. Or, again, we think we have explained him when we call him the child of his time. This idea, seductive by its very ease, fails to find warrant in the facts. If it be abundantly true that "God has so arranged the chronometry of our spirits that there shall be thousands of silent moments between the striking hours," it is abundantly false to suppose that the "silent moments" are therefore lost or useless. The impression of compelling force so distinctly left upon us by historical movements may be traced to a similar "chronometry." Millions of silent souls there are, have been, and always will be,—only some few strike. And the important fact lies, not in the silence of many and the sonority of some, but in the utterance by the few of the innermost thoughts of the many. "He told me all that ever I did," said the