

**CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY  
AND SOCIAL  
PROGRESS: THE BAMPTON  
LECTURES FOR 1905**

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Christian Theology and Social Progress: The Bampton Lectures for 1905 by F. W. Bussell

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**F. W. BUSSELL**

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# CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

THE BAMPTON LECTURES FOR 1905

BY

F. W. BUSSELL

BRASENOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD  
RECTOR OF SISLAND, NORFOLK



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TO  
T. HERBERT WARREN, MASTER OF ARTS  
PRESIDENT OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE  
AND  
VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD  
THESE LECTURES ARE INSCRIBED

EXTRACT  
FROM THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

—“I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University of Oxford for ever, to have and to hold all and singular the said Lands and Estates upon trust, and to the intents and purposes hereinafter mentioned; that is to say, I will and appoint that the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford for the time being shall take and receive all the rents, issues, and profits thereof, and (after all taxes, reparations, and necessary deductions made) that he pay all the remainder to the endowment of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be established for ever in the said University, and to be performed in the manner following :

“I direct and appoint that upon the first Tuesday in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by the Heads of Colleges only, and by no others, in the room adjoining to the Printing-House, between the hours of ten in the morning and two in the afternoon, to preach eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St. Mary's in Oxford, between the commencement of the last month in Lent Term, and the end of the third week in Act Term.

“Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either of the following Subjects—to confirm and establish the Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics—upon the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures—upon the authority of the writings of the primitive Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the primitive Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the Christian Faith, as comprehended in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.

“Also I direct that thirty copies of the eight Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be always printed within two months after they are preached; and one copy shall be given to the Chancellor of the University, and one copy to the head of every College, and one copy to the Mayor of the City of Oxford, and one copy to be put into the Bodleian Library; and the expense of printing them shall be paid out of the revenue of the Land or Estates given for establishing the Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the Preacher shall not be paid, nor entitled to the revenue, before they are printed.

“Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall be qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons, unless he hath taken the degree of Master of Arts at least, in one of the two Universities of Oxford or Cambridge; and that the same person shall never preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice.”



## P R E F A C E

MY DEAR MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR,—There is something peculiarly fitting, I think, in this dedication to yourself, which you are good enough to accept. You were my first tutor in this University; and you now worthily represent to the world its authority, its traditions, its learning, its religious spirit. Your kind words of appreciation after the first lecture of the course did much to encourage me.

I began with a profound sense of the chasm which separates theory and practical life: of the increasing difficulty we find in justifying or explaining the moral scruple, the generous venture, the religious hope. In spite of our disclaimers, we are to-day 'Galileans,' betrayed by our phrase and accent; pensioners of a past tradition, a past belief, which some try in vain to adapt to the altered conditions of knowledge and the new teaching of science,—some again maintain unquestioned, in illogical content, side by side with alien facts and theories of life, silent now, indeed, but none the less uncompromisingly hostile. Few seem to me to realize how far we have drifted on the downward grade, towards a purely arbitrary state, which is 'no respecter of persons';—towards an unknowable God or Root of Being, which is after all mere Force, and gives no answer to prayer.

I find in the mouth of every one a vague word, 'democracy,' a term (whether as fact or hope or movement) to which I have hitherto repeatedly failed to attach a clear and precise meaning. I see personal liberty everywhere threatened, personal value everywhere

denied; and men set aside as an old wives' fable the Gospel-teaching of the worth of souls. Many may find wearisome my constant retrospect on the past records of thinkers or statesmen; but I must plead in excuse the gravity of the lessons I find there, the continuous, unbroken life of European development, each phase big with its future, the secret yet very real influence of academic speculation, as it gradually filters down to the level of practice.

Too many seem to-day to approach social questions with much sympathy but no genuine conviction, with but little knowledge of average human nature, and less of its past experience or discoveries. The Gospel, the People, the average man;—these to-day are the 'weaker brethren.' It is my aim to show how general welfare is bound up with the faiths and hopes of Christian belief; and again, how the general welfare can only rightly be secured by justice to the particular, by respecting the units which make up the whole: a heap composed of valueless atoms is itself without value.

In the *first* lecture, I deal with the *function* and *limits* of Christian Apologetic,—making it clear, I trust, that the aim is no symmetry of speculative reconstruction, no triumph of merely dialectical overthrow. In the next three, man's relations are traced to himself, to God, to the Body Politic: the *second* examines the simplest rudiments of his *moral instinct* (prior to reflection), his amazing enterprise of unselfishness,—that is, if overmuch meditation does not convince him that all effort is fruitless. In the *third*, he is shown in his attempts to find God,—not as Power or as Wisdom, but as personal friend: (it is this personal side in religion which is prominent throughout.) In the *fourth*, his social development is traced; and the conceptions contrasted of the mediæval and the modern State.

Thus, in the former half of the course, we confront the ordinary man at his average level, in his simplest

impulses to righteous conduct and religious hope and belief; we see him also in his social development under the guidance of an unconscious evolution, and quite apart from the control of calculating statesmen. We examine his condition to-day; and in the *fifth*, discover the vast but largely unacknowledged debt to Christian influences, and recognise the vainness of the common presumption, that Christian ethics will outlast Christian dogma. In the *sixth*, we trace one indispensable presupposition of genuine religion; worth and work must be guaranteed to the individual; the conflict must be real, the victory one to which each contributes, in which each will some day share. The *seventh* dwells in greater detail upon a subject already intimated in earlier lectures,—the curiously downward grade of European thought, scientific and political, in the nineteenth century,—the strange denial of all humanistic standards,—the demoralising of the State, and the demoralising of God. In the *last*, I plead for the only alliance which can give aim and self-confidence to the 'democratic' movement so strangely arrested to-day, any stability to European society and culture:—The Gospel and the People.

For, as it must seem, it is the Gospel alone, which in the face of scientific facts and intellectualist theory, still clings to the belief in the eternal value of the simple and humble soul; and, while allowing that every venture of moral action or religious aspiration is and must be an 'act of faith,' still encourages those for whom to-day we have no hope, no consolation, and no use, to believe in God's goodness and their own imperishable worth.—Believe me, dear Mr. Vice-Chancellor, very sincerely yours,

F. W. B.

*Mundham House,  
near Norwich,  
Christmas, 1906.*