

## THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF F. J. A. HORT.<sup>1</sup>

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THE motto for a biographer should be *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, nothing in excess, above all not too much of the biographer himself. This condition is admirably fulfilled in Mr. Arthur Hort's personal contribution to the biography of his father. He has kept himself wholly in the background and has allowed the figure of his father to define itself by degrees, mainly in his own words. Fortunately a great number of Dr. Hort's letters have been preserved, and a copious selection of these has been printed with brief connecting summaries by the editor. It is just these which we think could not have been better done. Easily, gracefully, clearly and reticently written, it seems to us that they at once leave nothing unsaid that ought to be said, and yet do not say a word too much. The heightening of the lights and the deepening of the shades, the general enforcing of the impression, is done by the father himself, and not by the son.

This is as it should be, and the merit of the performance is great because it is by no means easy—not the more easy from the fact that the qualities most required are in a sense negative qualities, the instinctive tact and good feeling which tells a writer what he ought not to say. The son has in this case discharged his duty as we may be sure that the father would have wished to see it discharged. We could not give it higher praise.

There is perhaps more room to question whether the canon *μηδὲν ἄγαν* has been strictly observed in the other contents of the volumes, the letters which do so much to draw the portrait of the writer. It is no doubt the fashion to publish rather long

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort, D.D., D.C.L., LL.D.*, etc., by his son, ARTHUR FENTON HORT. 2 vols. London: Macmillan. 1896.

biographies—even of scholars, whose lives are as a rule not eventful; and the biography before us does not exceed the standard length. Still we are inclined to think that much might be said for making the standard one octavo volume of some five hundred pages rather than two. The temptations that a biographer is under are intelligible enough; it is easy to see how he must be drawn different ways. He has in fact several distinct publics to satisfy which it is difficult if not impossible to satisfy all at once. There is first the domestic circle, then the wider circle of friends, then the local interests, then the *Fachgenossen*—and where, as in the present instance, the subject of the biography has more than one *Fach*, the interest of colleagues in each—and last of all the educated public in general. We speak under correction and as expressing merely an individual opinion, but it seems to us that the present life concedes rather too much to some of the smaller of these classes. We should have been inclined to cut down the correspondence so as to bring it within a single volume. And we should have done so by omitting (1) a number of letters the interest of which is mainly domestic, and (2) a number of others which are taken up with details of travel—especially botanical details and those which relate to mountaineering in the Alps. In regard to the first class we are exceedingly glad that some of the letters should have been included. We are exceedingly glad that a picture should have been given of what Dr. Hort was in his home. Those who, like the writer of this, have had a glimpse of that home may well regard it as the very ideal of what the domestic life of a scholar ought to be—a combination of “plain living and high thinking,” absolute simplicity with absolute refinement, in the spirit of Dr. Hort’s own words printed on the title-page, “A life devoted to truth is a life of vanities abased and ambitions foresworn.” Such a life with the quiet orderliness and discipline with which it was surrounded—a discipline which in spite of its tender and affectionate domesticity had yet, one could see, a certain severity (*cf.* what is said in vol. ii, 189)—was well worth portraying. We think, however, that a rather smaller selection of letters would have been

sufficient. And in like manner as to the botany and mountaineering, we are inclined to think that one or two typical letters might have conveyed the impression. We say this from no jealousy of the subjects in themselves. Dr. Hort was an observer as well as a critic, and we have no doubt of the accuracy of his observations. Still where these relate to facts otherwise fairly well known, it does not seem to us to have been so necessary to record them. The most unique and valuable attitude of his mind was the critical; and for ourselves we should have been tempted to take this as a test. All expressions of opinion we should have tried to preserve, even in descriptions of travel where the facts might otherwise be got from a guide-book (*e. g.*, on the French tour ii, 295 ff. and the Italian ii, 346 ff.). The criticisms of music, painting, and architecture, though coming from an amateur, nearly always seem to us valuable. But there seems to us to be a good deal less of really permanent interest, *e. g.*, in the Alpine letters of vol. i, 327 ff. They are simple records of transitory incident such as might have happened to anyone else.

The practical upshot of what is in our mind would be this—that while we are by no means sorry that the two volumes should have been published for the public satisfaction of those who desire it, we should be still more glad to see by the side of them an abridged edition in a single volume which we should think distinctly better adapted for two important uses, (1) to put into the hands of young students, and (2) to put into the hands of foreign scholars as showing what manner of man our greatest English theologian of the century was.

Our greatest English theologian of the century! It is, we are aware, a somewhat audacious phrase, and one which perhaps only a limited circle would consent to use. The *Memoir* begins by saying that he “was little known outside the world of scholars,” and that his published work could give but a partial view of the man. Those who measure greatness by tangible and immediate results would of course not choose such a subject for their highest homage. By “greatest theologian” we do not mean the one who has moved the greatest number of minds, or

the one who has wielded the most powerful and effective pen, or the one whose finished work is greatest in bulk and general utility. We mean rather the one whose insight into truth was at once the largest and the most penetrating; we mean the one who was possessed of the most extended knowledge and who combined with that knowledge the surest method; we mean the one who while not behind the foremost in depth of religious feeling united with this a higher and a juster claim to the epithet "scientific" than any of his fellows. If we were to take the most moving of English theologians of the century, the most distinguished before the world as preacher and writer, the first name must be Newman's. If we were to take the greatest mass of satisfactory production and work done, the first name should probably be Lightfoot's. There are other names of weight, such as Keble, Pusey, and Church on the one side, and Arnold, Stanley, and Jowett on the other. But if we look not so much at achievement as at power, if we think of originality and depth, and if we measure the quality and inner coherence of truth perceived, then there would at least be some of us to whom the name of Hort would be second to none. His own two teachers, Coleridge and F. D. Maurice, might to some extent enter into competition. They both influenced some of the minds which were best worth influencing, and they both had the philosophical gift as he had. But he had an equal grasp on philosophy, scholarship, and science. He was not less great in exactness of detail than in largeness of view. And the consequence is that as a constructive thinker his work is more sound. When all has been allowed that needs to be allowed for, difficulty of expression and comparative scantiness of published material, it seems to us still that Hort stands first. He saw further than any other English theologian, and saw as we think on the whole more soundly, at least within the range within which we can follow him.

There are five points to which perhaps it is right for us to bestow particular attention: (1) As these pages are addressed to transatlantic readers a few words, but only a few, should be said as to the outlines of his life and career. (2) It will be

interesting to note some of the special influences to which he was indebted. (3) A special interest also attaches to the causes which limited the amount of his production. (4) Some estimate should be made of the work actually produced. (5) And lastly, if we may take Hort as a typical English theologian, we may well ask ourselves both what there was distinctive in his position, and in particular how that position compares with the position commonly taken up by leading theologians on the continent and more especially in Germany.

(1) The story of the life is soon told. It had very few external events. Hort would count as an Irishman, having been born at Dublin on the 23d of April, 1828. But the blood in his veins was mainly English. His great-grandfather, Josiah Hort (who had been a nonconformist and a schoolfellow of Isaac Watts), crossed over to Ireland in 1709 and ultimately became archbishop of Tuam. He and his second son, John, both married Irish ladies of good family. This son spent much of his life in Portugal and was knighted for political services there. Sir John's third son, Fenton, married the daughter of a Suffolk clergyman, who was believed to be descended from Dean Colet and bore his name (Collett), and these two were the parents of the Cambridge professor. There were thus two Irish strains in his ancestry; the rest were English.

Hort was educated at Rugby, partly under Arnold and partly under Tait. He became a scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge; and under some disadvantages from illness was bracketed third in the classical tripos besides being placed in the first class in each of the two newly instituted schools of moral and natural sciences. To gain such high honors in such widely separated subjects was in itself a remarkable feat, and was characteristic of the extraordinary range of Hort's mind. He became a fellow of Trinity in 1852.

The years which he spent in Cambridge as a graduate till the end of 1856 were evidently a time of intense activity. It would be too much to say that he was for once producing knowledge as fast as he was acquiring it, but he brought out a number of papers in the *Journal of Classical and Sacred Philology* (of which

he was one of the editors) and an essay on Coleridge in the *Cambridge Essays*, all of which were strikingly mature. It is to be feared that besides broadening the foundations of his vast erudition he also laid the seeds of future ill health at this period.

In 1854 Hort was ordained; in 1857 he married, and from that year till 1872 he held the small college living of St. Ippolyts, Great Wymondley, near Hitchin, in the pleasant county of Hertfordshire. About the middle of this period (1863-65) he was seriously disabled in health and compelled to give up parish work for a time.

This work, although he threw himself into it with zeal and earnestness and with a thoroughness which distinguished everything that he did, was yet not the kind of work for which he was best fitted. His true vocation was in the university. And by a happy inspiration on the part of the master and fellows of Emmanuel College—the old Puritan foundation which sent out not a few of the “Pilgrim Fathers” across the seas, and among them the founder of Harvard—he was called back to Cambridge in 1872 as tutorial fellow of Emmanuel. At last in 1878 he entered upon the position which was his own by right through his election to the Hulsean professorship. In 1887 he became Lady Margaret professor, and, after two years of very broken health, on the morning of St. Andrew’s Day, November 30, 1892, he died.

(2) What, it may be asked, were the influences which made him what he was? It is necessary to go far back for them; for Hort was one of the most independent of men, and he formed himself much more than he was formed. But in his case more than in most it is worth while to look at his home and at his school. Here is a charming sketch by Hort himself of his father:

“The points in his character which seem to me to stand out above the rest, as I look back over more than forty years, are, I think, his simplicity, his strong patience, and his unselfishness. He thought little about himself, and still less did he talk about himself. He had no small restless vanities. He never craved to be admired; he did not even crave to be appreciated. He

had no regular profession in life, but that did not make him idle or self-indulgent. All his life long, as I remember it, he worked hard in his own way without expecting or wishing any reward, partly at public business, partly in charitable and such like institutions, partly in long and anxious private business as a kindness to relations who trusted his faithful justice and affection. All this he did quite quietly and as a matter of course as the plain duty and honor of a Christian man and a gentleman, without taking any credit for it" (ii, 200). Elsewhere we are told that "he bequeathed to his son a fastidious love of order and method" (i, 6). We may see here and in the "strong patience" and hard work of which mention has just been made the raw material of the scientific habit of mind. And yet more forcible must have been the influence of the mother.

"In bringing up her children she was strong enough to be able to combine the enforcement of very strict domestic discipline with close sympathy in all childish ways and interests. The very keynote of her character was truthfulness; untruth in any shape was her abhorrence. Almost equally characteristic was her hatred of all half performance. 'I hate mediocrity' was one of her many favorite sayings" (i, 8).

Now the master motives with Hort were just this "hatred of half performance" and the same intense veracity—a veracity which puts to shame many who would not be called untruthful, but with whom truthfulness is a far more conventional thing and not by any means so much part and parcel of their being.

These were qualities in part natural, but strengthened by education, which Hort brought with him from his home. They must have been driven in and others must have been added to them at school. Hort had the advantage of what must have been the very best training possible for an English boy in his day. He was educated first at Laleham,—a well-known preparatory school founded by Arnold himself,—and then at Rugby in the last days of Dr. Arnold and the first of Tait, afterwards bishop of London and archbishop of Canterbury. The mere atmosphere of Rugby at this time must have been much. We are told incidentally that he entered at the same time as H. J. S. Smith

(afterwards Savilian professor at Oxford, a most accomplished man, capable of the greatest things but cut off too soon), W. H. Waddington (the epigraphist and French ambassador and premier), and J. B. Mayor (ex-professor of Latin at King's College and editor of the *Classical Review*). It is evident that Hort entertained a high regard for both his head masters; but there are two significant sentences in the *Life*:

"Of Mr. Bonamy Price's teaching (in the Twenty) my father always spoke with enthusiasm; he regarded him as the man who, at school at all events, had taught him more than anyone else; 'To him,' he said in 1871, 'I owe all my scholarship and New Testament criticism.' Mr. Bonamy Price, in his turn, after an interval of more than forty years, remembered him as the brightest pupil whom he had ever had, and delighted to recall the boy's keen eyes, the thoroughness of his work, and his eagerness in the pursuit of knowledge" (i, 28).

In the seventies and eighties Mr. Bonamy Price was a conspicuous figure at Oxford, where he became Drummond professor of political economy; and the writer of this has often thought that for boys especially he must have been an ideal teacher. He had all the keenness of his pupil and a somewhat more assertive vivacity. He was a formidable person to meet in the street, as the chances were that you would be put through a Socratic cross-examination on some question, more or less profound, which happened to be in the mind of the speaker, but which, in the way in which he handled it, seemed painfully to bring out the nakedness of your own. Perhaps for men this Socratic method too much took the place of deeper reading and study, but it is easy to see how admirable it would be for boys.

In later life the strongest influence that Hort came under was from F. D. Maurice. His *Cambridge Essay* (1856) shows how deeply he had studied the writings of Coleridge. He was thus fortified in what must have been a natural bent towards a spiritualistic philosophy. At the same time his thorough acquaintance with more than one branch of natural science gave him an insight into its methods which is unusual on that side of the question. Accordingly he welcomed Darwin; and his grasp

on the whole materialistic argument is seen in a note of singular breadth and boldness (*Hulsean Lectures*, 187 f.).

The fact was that Hort was disciple to no man. He learned from every side, and digested all that he learned; but he took nothing on a simple *ipse dixit*. Full of enthusiasm as he was for anything that he felt to be really great, the attitude of his mind was essentially critical, and he applied the same strictness of judgment to nominal opponents and to those whom he admired and loved.

Read with all its context and with one part of the life balancing another, the character of Hort was evidently capable of much sympathy. He was especially sympathetic towards the latent germs of real merit in unpopular men and unpopular causes. His catholicity of view nothing could surpass; but at the same time his own standard was so exalted, and he applied it so entirely without respect of persons that many of his judgments will have the appearance of being severe.

Again, Hort was really a man of humble mind. But the standard by which he measured men and things, himself included, was his own. If he was humble it was because he was well aware that his performance fell short of his ideal. He was as free as possible from the illusions of unacknowledged vanity, and his keenness of insight made him aware of shortcomings which to most people would have been invisible. "I don't in the least know what that means" was, we are told, a familiar phrase of his over the Revision table (ii, 233), where it is probable that others would not be conscious of any special obscurity. But all this was compatible with great strength of quiet conviction when once his mind was made up. He was a wise man, he did see further than most of the rest of the world, and he could not help knowing it. Of him, if of anyone, it was true (omitting only the complacency implied in *dulcius*):

Sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere  
 Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,  
 Despicere unde queas alios passimque videre  
 Errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae.

Further, it should be borne in mind that the vast majority of

the letters contained in these volumes were written in the closest intimacy of friendship, without the slightest thought of publication. It is very often clear that the writer "let himself go" in a way which he certainly would not have done in any public utterance. And, as has been said, he had no respect for persons apart from the respect which they won for themselves by their own intrinsic merits.

These considerations will account for nearly all the instances in which we feel inclined to invoke them. There are two letters addressed to his parents which do not quite hit the perfect tone. One is a controversy with his father on the subject of spelling. The other is a letter, admirable *in substance*, in which he announces to his parents his decision to take holy orders. On these points let him who is without sin cast a stone.

American readers will find it harder to forgive two pages of a letter written early in their Civil War. Hort was a Liberal in politics and a great admirer of Gladstone, though at the end of his days a Unionist. But he was no friend to democracy. Of anything like mob rule he had a perfect horror. The loftiness and refinement of his own ideals made him at heart an aristocrat; and these deep-seated feelings nowhere else come out so strongly. There are two pages which a wellwisher would rather had not been written; and yet to have suppressed them would have given an imperfect picture of the man. It is greatly to be hoped that no American whose eye happens to fall upon them will be deterred from reading further. The excellences of a man like Hort are just those which the members of a young and vigorous nation would find best worth their contemplation. It would be difficult to grow such flowers except in an old and long-tilled soil.

The passage in question might almost claim the privilege of the confessional, as the writer says to his correspondent (Mr. Ellerton, the hymn writer), "I am afraid you will think all this rank heresy, and I confess I should be puzzled to know how to speak wisely before the public." It should also be mentioned that in the latter part of his life Hort had many friends and was much appreciated in America (ii, 369). After the death of

Ezra Abbot he became the constant helper and adviser of Dr. Gregory in his great work, the last volume of which contains a warm and ungrudging tribute of gratitude to him (*Nov. Test. Græc., Prolegomena*, iii, pref. viii).

(3) It is a matter of very general regret that Hort did not produce more during his lifetime. Referring to the wish that he had done so, the master of Emmanuel said at the meeting held after his death: "I cannot so wish it myself. It is to wish him other than he was; to wish him, it seems to me, smaller; unless indeed it be a weakness to be careless of any conspicuous personal achievement, caring only to be true to his principle, *Fidelis in minimis et maximis*, in all that he wrought" (ii, 476). This is a natural feeling for a Cambridge man who had had the oracle at his side for twenty years. It might well be a natural feeling for one who considered only the question of personal dignity. But it was not the feeling of Hort himself. We are told that in the last years of his life "he suffered much distress from the feeling that on the highest debated questions of the time he had something to say, but could not say it. . . . Among those who knew him best there had long been a feeling that he ought to make his voice heard, and the consciousness that the claim was a just one caused often deep depression" (ii, 370).

Let us say at once that the biography before us with its free expressions of opinion on such a variety of subjects has done something towards supplying what was wanted, and that we are proportionately grateful for it. Let us say also that the last complaint that could possibly be made was a complaint of indolence. Hort was in truth always working. If ever there was a case in which the blade wore through the scabbard it was his. And when we consider the total amount of his life work in all its varied departments it was really very far from small. And yet it was a long way from being all that he was capable of doing. The *Life* is a melancholy record of schemes that came to nothing or did not get beyond beginnings. Some fragments of these are being gathered up by the loving care of disciples since his death. But what we miss most of all is a fuller presentation of the leading ideas which lay behind his work.

There is something to be explained, and we ask what is the explanation?

The writer of this notice ought to have been able to supply it in a more satisfactory manner than he can. He was one of those who had ventured to urge upon Dr. Hort the immense value of a public utterance from him on the many searching questions by which men's minds were agitated. He did this in an article in the *Contemporary Review* for July 1889, in reply to some criticisms by Mrs. Humphry Ward. And the article drew from Hort a long and pathetic letter of the nature of an *apologia*, confessing his own wish to respond to the appeal made to him and setting forth a number of the hindrances which had stood in the way of his doing so. Most unfortunately this letter is not forthcoming, though a portion of a rough draft of it is printed (ii, 405 ff.). The letter is supplemented by other statements in the volumes before us, so that the full state of the case is now sufficiently apparent.

It is clear that ill health was one terrible drawback. This began even before Hort took his degree. He attributed much of it to the late hours which he kept after this event at the time of his most eager study. He used to point by his own case the warning which so many scholars need.

Then Hort was one of a large family and had a large circle of intimate friends. There is reason to think that he succeeded to not a little of the "long and anxious private business" in which we have seen that his father was involved. He took nothing lightly, and it is easy to understand the inroads which were thus made upon his time. These volumes alone would show that many hours in each week must have been spent upon correspondence.

To private business was added public business. Those who are familiar with the working of universities know what an amount of labor falls to the lot of certain individuals with little to show to the outside world. Hort was a member of many syndicates, and was especially active on that which managed the affairs of the university press, and he threw himself into work of this kind with the most conscientious thoroughness.

In an estimate of Hort's life a large place must be given to his work on the Revision of the New Testament. There was probably no one to whom the English Revision owed more. He was one of the most regular attendants at the meetings, and took a leading part in the discussions, especially on points relating to the text. In view of what we know of Hort's method of preparing himself for work of this kind it is easy to understand that the Revision will have used up most of the available margin of the ten years during which it was going on.

All this time he was most lavish in the help which he gave to other scholars and students. It is truly said that the only record of much of Hort's work is to be found "in the little-read prefaces of obscure books" (ii, 192). And his letters show at once the readiness and the thoroughness with which he set himself to answer the questions that were put to him. In this, as in some of the prominent qualities of his mind, he resembled the great American scholar, Ezra Abbot.

When we remember all these things we can see only too well how the years of a life might ebb away with less direct production than might have been expected. But there were yet deeper hindrances than these. There were hindrances which were not external, but part of the man.

One was the extraordinarily high standard which he set for everything that he did. And this high standard was not merely the fastidiousness of a great scholar jealous of his own reputation—that kind of fastidiousness was not Hort's. His jealousy was not for fame but for truth. He comments thus upon his articles on Gnostics for the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, which involved a cruel consumption of time. "*A perfunctory sketch taken from the surface would be simple falsehood.* As far as I can see, none of the German investigations can be even roughly and provisionally trusted; they are full of good pioneering and no more. Minute verbal criticism appears to give the most hopeful clue" (ii, 107). And here is another extract from a letter which may help to define a state of mind which is very rare and very noble, though no doubt an impediment to the kind of rough makeshift performance which most of us are content with.

“I am afraid you still do not quite understand my Dictionary difficulties. They do not arise from too high a standard of completeness. I am quite content to come short there. But I cannot write anything on gnostic subjects, however roughly and broadly, without considerable minute study, *because otherwise what I wrote would be substantially untrue*. I doubt whether you can fully enter into the embarrassments of a slow reader with a wretched memory” (ii, 109).

It is this inexorable sincerity, this severe and lofty ideal of truthfulness which stands in the way. Hort's attitude to everything which he took up was the same.

At the end of the last extract he speaks of certain “embarrassments” which hindered rapid progress in study. We may no doubt discount these a little. To be a “slow reader” only means to be one of those who really read; and the “wretched memory” is only another instance of his exacting standards of comparison.

“He often complained of a bad memory; it was indeed true that he had not a memory like Macaulay's or Conington's, but he knew where to look for required information, and could at a moment's notice turn to the right passages in the right books. Nor could his memory be called bad in any save a relative sense; the knowledge which he had acquired seemed always to be ready at hand. I can remember, for instance, his giving in the course of conversation a clear twenty minutes' sketch of the history of the Scotch Established Church, and of its offshoots” (ii, 375 f.).

There was another more serious difficulty than this. Among all his remarkable gifts and powers Hort had only in a limited sense the gift of “utterance.” He had it, and he had it not. It would hardly occur to anyone who took up these copious volumes that he was in any way tongue-tied or slow of speech. He was not in letter writing or in conversation; but it was another matter when it came to formal composition for the press. The contrast, indeed, is strange. Dr. Westcott bears witness to what he was in the one sphere: “Keen, fluent, fertile, subtle, he raised point after point in a discussion, and where

he failed to convince at least quickened a fuller sense of the manifold bearings of the question in debate."<sup>2</sup> And yet the note in which these words appear serves to introduce a course of Hulsean lectures delivered in 1871, but, though always more or less in hand, not published, and then in an unfinished state, until after his death in 1893. This fact alone tells a story. And the *Life* has many others to the same effect. Indeed nothing could be more pathetic than the way in which this great man was hampered by the want of the gift of speech.

"It was in the production of sermons that the difficulty of finding expression for his thoughts was most felt. It seemed as though the message which he longed to give lay too deep in his own heart to be uttered abroad. The difficulty was also doubtless of physical origin. The subject of a sermon was generally chosen early in the week. It was thought over perpetually, and towards the end of the week he began to write; but he had hardly ever finished before the early hours of Sunday morning, and he would often sit hour after hour, pen in hand, but apparently dumb till the words came at last, sometimes in a rush. Extreme fastidiousness was in part the cause of this remarkable *aphasia*, a habit of mind which, while it secured that nothing from his hand should see the light which he might afterwards wish to recall, yet deprived his hearers of much which they would have welcomed, even in what he considered an imperfect shape, since the perfection at which he aimed was always indefinitely beyond his present achievement. But it would be easy to exaggerate the importance of this fastidiousness; at all events the peculiarity was more moral than intellectual, the sense of responsibility was almost crushing. Nor did the difficulty decrease with time; he had always felt it, and he came to feel it not less but more as time went on, and the greater the occasion the more terrible became the struggle to put his thought into words" (i, 360).

The suggestion is probably true that the cause of this extreme though partial difficulty in production was in large measure physical. Those who in any degree share Hort's highly strung

<sup>2</sup> Prefatory note to *The Way, the Truth, the Life*, p. xii.

and nervous temperament will know how much the power of writing varies at different times ; they will not be unacquainted with the sensation of sitting with pen in the hand unable to string coherent sentences together. And the special weakness from which Hort suffered seems to have had its seat originally in the brain (i, 178). The sense of responsibility and the harassing pressure of having to complete work in a limited time may account for the difference which is so marked between set and informal composition. It is not as if Hort was a bad writer. He was always scholarly and accurate in style; and we are told expressly that in his village sermons (though no doubt by an effort) he succeeded in attaining to a real and unforced simplicity. We are glad to see that some of these sermons are to be published. It could not be said that the style of the famous *Introduction* is altogether happy. The difficulty there (as in most of Hort's writing, but conspicuously in this technical region) seemed to be caused by the endeavor to express in abstract terms facts and tendencies which would be more easily handled in the concrete. But in the *Hulsean Lectures* there are many passages which are nothing short of classical in their grave and measured eloquence. The temptation is great to quote examples, but this article is reaching such a length that the temptation must be resisted. The difficulty in these lectures arises mainly from the novelty and originality of the ideas and our imperfect knowledge of the hidden context in the mind of the writer. By revealing this to some extent the *Life* will often throw back light upon the earlier work. In the posthumously published lectures (*Judaistic Christianity*, and *Prolegomena to the Romans and the Ephesians*) the style is for the most part remarkably clear, direct and appropriate, though some of the subtler distinctions and conclusions are not always formulated altogether successfully. But in all the writings which have been mentioned (least perhaps in the *Introduction*, most in the *Hulsean Lectures* and the *Letters*) the reader cannot help being struck by the terse and aptly chosen epithets. He will not fail to note a great number of felicitous and memorable phrases. And we cannot resist the remark in passing that if the father could have seen the handiwork of the son he would

have rejoiced at the cultivated yet unaffected ease which he aimed at but found it so hard to attain to himself.

(4) Having reached this point it appears to be our duty to attempt some estimate of Hort's actual production in his own name. We heartily agree in the verdict that the man was greater than his work, and that the work does not do him justice. What might he not have done with ten more years of vigorous health? Still, when every deduction has been made, the work, too, is great, and we ought to try to summarize it.

In the first place, there is the one great and complete achievement on the text of the New Testament, built up throughout from beginning to end. We do not forget that this work was shared with Dr. Westcott; and both authors must have their full meed of praise. This work is the one most satisfactory piece of critical and scientific construction that in the present century English theology has to point to. Some demur to it may still be heard in England. On the continent it is very generally if not quite universally accepted. The various efforts which are being made to penetrate yet deeper into the character and relations of single authorities and groups of authorities are only what Hort himself would have encouraged. He would have been the last to claim finality. And yet it is extraordinary how little the mighty edifice has been shaken by the discoveries of recent years. The last discovery of the Sinaitic Syriac falls into place in it most exactly.

*The Life and Letters* enables us to trace the growth of this work on the textual criticism of the New Testament from its inception to its close. In Hort's career it forms a large parenthesis. The following is, we believe, the passage which traces the genesis of the idea. The year is 1851, and the age of the writer twenty-three.

"I have been two nights at 2 Thess. 2, and have at last got some light, which has much pleased me and encouraged me; I find it altogether a most interesting and all-ways profitable study. I had no idea till the last few weeks of the importance of texts, having read so little Greek Testament, and dragged on with the villainous *Textus Receptus*. Westcott recommended me to get

Bagster's *Critical*, which has Scholz's text, and is most convenient in small quarto, with parallel Greek and English, and a wide margin on purpose for notes. This pleased me much; so many little alterations on good MS. authority made things clear, not in a vulgar, notional way, but by giving a deeper and fuller meaning. But after all, Scholz is very capricious and sparing in introducing good readings, and Tischendorf I find a great acquisition, above all because he gives the various readings at the bottom of the page, and his Prolegomena are invaluable. Think of that vile *Textus Receptus* leaning entirely on late MSS.; it is a blessing there are such early ones" (i, 211).

The definite plan of a joint revision of the text of the Greek Testament was agreed upon in the course of a walk with Dr. Westcott in 1853 (i, 240). It is well known that the completed edition appeared within a few weeks of the Revised Version of the New Testament in 1881. The editors showed their wisdom in taking no notice of the attacks upon them. They could afford to leave the vindication of their work to time.

By the side of this masterly treatment of the textual criticism of the New Testament we have a number of detailed contributions to theological scholarship, all of them absolutely at first hand, several breaking new ground, and those which do not do this restating old arguments with conspicuous freshness, exactness and thoroughness. Perhaps the most important of these contributions would be the *Two Dissertations*, published in 1876, especially that on the Constantinopolitan Creed and the article "Basilides" in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*. Incidentally there was also the brilliant little confirmation of de Rossi's discovery in regard to the Codex Amiatinus; along with which may be mentioned the identification of the Latin version of the commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on St. Paul's epistles.<sup>3</sup> In the way of thorough and searching, if less original and less decisive works, we have the essays on Justin Martyr, and on the close of the epistle to the Romans (reprinted in Lightfoot's *Biblical Essays*) with the recent volumes on *Judaistic Christianity*, and on the *Introduction to the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians*.

<sup>3</sup>SWETE, *Theod. Mops. on the Minor Ep. of St. Paul*, i, xv.

The vindication of the Pauline authorship of this last epistle is notable not only as the fullest, most carefully weighed, and best in English, but also from the interest of the question as a turning point in critical controversy. We look forward still to the lectures which are promised on the *Conception of the Ecclesia* and on the epistles of St. James and St. Peter. It is much to be regretted that the greater part of this material should not have had the revising hand of the author; but he set down nothing carelessly and hardly anything that had not been the subject of long reflection.<sup>4</sup>

Of all this mass of work—which when complete will be found to be far from inconsiderable—the value is patent and certain. There may be something rather more problematical about the contributions to speculative thought, which Hort had nearest to his heart. We are told expressly in several places in the biography, and indeed it would be evident to the reader without telling, that the textual researches with which his name is most generally associated were only secondary with him and undertaken as a step towards the discussion of larger questions. What he had to say upon these is chiefly embodied in the Hulsean Lectures entitled *The Way, the Truth, the Life*. We have seen under what difficulties these were brought even to their present imperfect condition. A large part remains in the form of aphoristic notes which were never worked up into the texture of the book. There is also an obvious disadvantage in making the presentation of a far-reaching philosophy of religion dependent upon the exegesis of two verses. And it must needs strike the reader as surprising that, while the discourses on which the discussion is based belong to a portion of Scripture which is a direct object of critical assault, there should hardly be a word of criticism proper in the book. It is impossible that this should not suffer from the fact that the form was given to it quite a quarter of a century ago.

These drawbacks are serious, and they are increased by the

<sup>4</sup>The slightest of all his productions (doubtless not intended for publication) is the *Six (Popular) Lectures on the Antenicene Fathers*, which, however, contains a few specially valuable sentences on Tertullian.

nature of the contents, which by their combination of profundity and boldness excite interest and curiosity to the utmost, while rarely giving it complete satisfaction. We have said that some very welcome help is afforded by the publication of the letters; and there can be no doubt that the admirers of Hort will go back to the study of the earlier work with the assistance of the later. In any case it is most deserving of study. Thus much is evident, that if the leading ideas of this volume should hold good we should have in our hands an *apologia* for Christianity more powerful and more comprehensive than anything in English since Butler's *Analogy*. But it may be doubted whether there is anyone as yet who understands its drift sufficiently to form a judicial estimate of it.

However that may be, the book is full of wise and penetrating sayings. The question is how far they are capable of being combined into a coherent and satisfactory whole. One section at least of such a whole seems to stand out. The writer of this does not know anywhere a philosophy of the formation of opinion and belief which commends itself to him as at once so lofty and so true. Though even here we long to be able to consult the oracle afresh, and to ask for a little farther explanation or concrete illustration. We have before us a torso—in any case a striking, perhaps a magnificent torso; but some years must elapse before the world will know the real value of the legacy bequeathed to it.

(5) Hort was one of those writers whom an Englishman need not be ashamed to put in competition with the great theologians of the continent. He was not only eminent in himself, but his influence is, and is likely to be, great on his younger countrymen. This makes it natural to institute something of a comparison, and to ask how one of our best typical English theologians would differ from his peers in continental Europe, and more particularly in Germany. We might take, *e. g.*, such representative names as Harnack and H. J. Holtzmann. The latter writer has criticised English theology more than once with a certain condescension. Nor can we quarrel with him for this. Our standard is not the German standard. And the number of

our writers for whom, as for Hort, no standard is too high, is not large. Dr. Holtzmann, however, does not so much take up the ground of superior knowledge as of a different kind of superiority—that which is thought to come from an uncompromising acceptance of “modern criticism.” In England a similar position is taken up by Mrs. Humphry Ward and her allies, not so much perhaps as a direct result of conscious experience as from reflecting in different degrees the attitude of their continental authorities.

The main points in which Hort’s position would differ from such an one as Holtzmann’s would be these:

1. He would start with a much greater respect for the past, and would use a greater effort to keep up the continuity of Christian thought. The view which Hort took of the great conciliar decisions of the church is interesting. He certainly did not regard them as above criticism. This would appear in particular from a letter addressed to Dr. Stanton (ii, 434 f.). At the same time it is evident that not only they but the movements of which they formed the culmination had been to him the object of much close and sympathetic study. This may be seen conspicuously in the second of the *Two Dissertations*. There can be no doubt that the effect of these historical discussions sank deep into Hort’s mind, and it would have been impossible for him to throw them over so lightly as some of the critics we have mentioned would be prepared to do. In the last resort every conclusion which he formed was based upon reason; but it was reason into which historical data largely entered. The important letters which deal with a section of the Articles of the Church of England (ii, 324–338) are a good specimen of his method.

2. The skepticism with which a German of Holtzmann’s stamp would approach any historical formularies Hort would have turned rather upon the purely modern substitutes for them. There was nothing to which he would not give a fair hearing, and nothing that he would not accept if it really carried conviction. But it is not to be denied that there was a conservative leaning in his mind, and that he was slow to admit results some-

times put forward with no little confidence. This temper comes out in the *Introduction to the Ephesians* and in the treatment of the pastoral epistles in *Judaistic Christianity*. How bold Hort was capable of being may be seen in the notes and illustrations, representing material not worked up, which are collected at the end of the *Hulsean Lectures*. But in the working out of critical theory he proceeded *pedetentim*, with much caution and circumspection. Nor would it be wrong to say that this is the prevailing attitude of English students of the New Testament and church history.

3. It cannot be at all surprising if writers like Holtzmann should be somewhat impatient of this and should find it difficult to understand. There is a difference between the position of English students and their own which they are hardly likely to appreciate. It is expected of every German, especially of every German professor, that he should "have a theory," and not only a theory but a "rounded" or "complete theory"—*eine geschlossene Anschauung* is the phrase used in a pamphlet which shows the state of opinion on such matters.<sup>5</sup> The possession of such a theory Hort, we may feel sure, would have disclaimed. One who was prepared as far as he was *stare super antiquas vias* would not need it. He has a standing ground under his feet from which he can strain forward as far as sight may carry into the unknown. This is what Hort was always doing. He was constantly winning new conclusions, new generalizations, constantly reclaiming bits here and there from the waste. But there was much even in the central region which he was aware that he did not know, and was content not to know. The state of the data very often does not allow of positive conclusions, and in such a case Hort could be trusted as few besides could be trusted not to go beyond the evidence.

The German critic is less able to acquiesce in such a position. He has (at least in the more extreme cases) left himself so little to fall back upon that he is compelled to construct theories of his own covering all the most vital questions. But where this

<sup>5</sup>WEIFFENBACH: *Herrn Dr. Stade's Wahrheit und Dichtung*, p. 8, Braunschweig, 1894.

has to be done the temptation is very great to give to the evidence a fictitious completeness, to make it prove more than it does, to treat as proved propositions of which the real proof is very imperfect. Dr. Holtzmann is a very learned and a very able man—but do not his writings present examples of this? He possesses the art of balanced statement, and he frequently sums up the case on the two sides with much impartiality. But, unless we are much mistaken, when it comes to the general view he does not strike the balance so equitably. He treats the surplus of argument on his own side as far greater than it really is. He obtains his main position by a *tour de force*, and the facts must be accommodated to it as best they may.

It seems to us that such a position is like Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. The army is still fairly compact, and it seems as though it still had strength to overthrow obstacles in its front; but it does not know what swarms of Cossacks (in the shape of unanswered difficulties) are gathering in its rear, and its safe return behind the frontier line is rather a forlorn hope than a matter of assured confidence.

For our own part we believe that the methods and temper of Hort and his Cambridge colleagues are not only sounder in themselves, but more in accord with the genius of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. And we conclude with the hope that students of theology on both sides of the Atlantic may not desert them.