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F. W. ROBERTSON (1863-1863);

“A Thinker in the Pulpit

by E. D. MACKERNESS

ROBERTSON of Brighton” would probably be classed as an Evangelical in the more general sense, rather than as Reformed in the stricter sense. But many of our readers will certainly find interest in this study of him from a fresh viewpoint, in which his work is assessed in literary rather than theological terms. The following pages represent one of a series of studies of English preachers by Dr. E. D. Mackerness, Lecturer in English Literature in the University of Sheffield.

“Where’s your logic? Where’s your theology?

Is it, or is it not, neology?”

ROBERTSON’S sermons present the reader with a minor bibliographical problem. The five volumes in which they originally appeared were not given extensive editorial scrutiny when delivered to the press; and in the “Everyman” edition (in three volumes) the text was produced with practically no alteration. But even in their final form many of the sermons have the appearance of being elaborate notes rather than carefully constructed sequences of oratorical prose. Indeed, Robertson himself gives us to understand that the sermons as we have them were for the most part put together *after* delivery—under conditions which he found tiresome in the extreme. And Stopford Brooke confirms that after Robertson had settled in Brighton in 1847 his sermons “were written out for a friend from memory, the evening of the day on which they were delivered. Everyone knows”, he goes on, “how irksome it is to recall, in cold blood, what has been brought out by the presence of numbers . . .”¹

From this one would be inclined to assume that the wonderful effect which “Robertson of Brighton” is known to have exerted would be mainly dependent on the dynamic quality of his oral style, and would not be appreciated so readily through the agency of the written word.² This, however, does not seem to have been

¹ Stopford Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson* (one-volume edition, 1887), p. 125.

² “He was entirely without oratorical parade. He had hardly any gesture save a slow motion of his hand upwards, and when worn and ill in his last years . . . he stood almost motionless in the pulpit . . .” (John Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain During the Nineteenth Century* [1885], p. 309).

the case. Robertson's sermons were accepted as living literature throughout the later nineteenth century. "The extension of these sermons among *all* classes", says Stopford Brooke, "has been almost unexampled. Other sermons have had a larger circulation, but it has been confined within certain circles. These have been read and enjoyed by men of every sect and of every rank . . ."³ In the case of his sermon "The Israelite's Grave in a Foreign Land", preached on the first day of public mourning for the Queen Dowager (December, 1849), Robertson took occasion to disown certain pieces which had been published in his name but without his authority. A "pirate" had been at work, it appears (Robertson had already tried to discourage an enthusiast who had applied to him for permission to take down shorthand notes of what he said in the pulpit) under the impression that he could catch a good market. To his contemporaries, at any rate, the fascination of Robertson's public addresses seems to have been irresistible.

The fact that Robertson's sermons are neither direct transcriptions of his pulpit utterances nor examples of finished literary work gives them an interest which does not attach to the sermons of Liddon and Pusey. In 1866 Bishop Thirlwall wrote to a friend that "Robertson's 'Sermons' have the merit of being very thoughtful and suggestive, but appear to me, both as to form and substance, to have been given to the world too much in the state of raw material. Perhaps you see more of the process of thought, which is no doubt interesting, but you miss the finished results . . ."⁴ The Sermons are not, perhaps, notable for formal beauties of the kind Thirlwall might have been looking for. They subsist on a certain bluntness of style which follows the rhythm of speech in so far as it discards constructions which are not strictly necessary to immediate comprehension. Take, for example, this passage from a sermon on "Prayer":

There is many a case in life, where to act seems useless—many a truth which at times appears incredible. Then we throw ourselves on Him—He did it, He believed it, that is enough. He was wise, where I am foolish. He was holy, where I am evil. He must know. He must be right. I rely on Him. Bring what arguments you may; say that prayer cannot change God's will. I know it. Say that prayer ten thousand times comes back like a stone. Yes, but Christ prayed, therefore I may and I will pray. Not only so, but I *must* pray; the wish felt and not uttered before God, is a prayer. Speak, if your heart prompts, in articulate words, but there is an unsyllabed wish,

³ Stopford Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, p. 320.

⁴ Connop Thirlwall, *Letters to a Friend*, ed. A. P. Stanley (1882), p. 58.

which is also a prayer. You cannot help praying, if God's Spirit is in yours.⁵

That forms the third division of a paragraph headed, "The right of petition". It is, one might say, the residue of what must, in the pulpit, have been a stirring episode; it is slightly marred by the repeated injunctions: but in his eagerness to recapture his original fervour Robertson is reckless of grammatical convention. This does not mean, however, that this particular portion of the sermon is *ungrammatical*; but the sense and the feeling thrust their way out together after the manner of incipient poetry.

By way of contrast we may consider an extract from the next division of the same sermon:

From this we understand the spirit of that retirement for prayer, into lonely tops of mountains and deep shades of night, of which we read so often in His life. It was not so much to secure any definite event as from the need of holy communion with His Father—prayer without any definite wish; for we must distinguish two things which are often confounded. Prayer for specific blessings is a very different thing from communion with God. Prayer is one thing, petition is quite another. Indeed, hints are given us which make it seem that a time will come when spirituality shall be so complete, and acquiescence in the Will of God so entire, that petition shall be superseded. . . .⁶

This—as is often the case with the concluding passages of these sermons—reads much more like conventional literary prose evolved from brief verbal motifs than does the passage previously quoted: it is meant to serve as an illustration to some foregoing points, and the author's anxiety to spellbind the hearer is less insistent. By comparison with the work of Liddon or Keble, Robertson's sermons are patchy: short paragraphs are left entirely undeveloped, and occasionally a single enigmatic sentence will be used to serve as a bridge between lengthy and imposing periods. In his addresses and literary criticism Robertson has left us much very fine prose. But in his Sermons he spoke as the spirit moved; and his printed works contain many interesting attempts to retrace these unpredictable convolutions of the spirit.

Robertson's religious outlook is difficult to describe with exactness. As Tulloch observes, the term "Broad Church" has to be used with reserve when applied to him.⁷ Henry Crabb Robinson's words in a letter of November 3rd, 1848, are probably as near the mark as any, even if they do have reference to political inclinations: "While he gives great offence to High Churchmen and Con-

⁵ F. W. Robertson, *Sermons on Christian Doctrine* (Everyman edition), p. 190.

⁶ *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 195.

⁷ John Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought . . .*, p. 315.

servative politicians, he has lately delivered an address to the Working Men's Association, remarkable for the boldness with which he avoided all *courting of the people*, while he advocated their cause . . ."⁸ At Oxford, Robertson had been greatly impressed by the genius of Newman. But he could not conscientiously join the ranks of the Tractarians; their programme seemed likely, as he told his friend Moncrief (letter of May 26th, 1840) to provoke "nothing less than a direct, or, as Hooker would call it, an 'indirect denial of the foundation'."⁹ A friend who knew Robertson when he was in charge of an incumbency at Winchester soon after leaving Brazenose College, described him as "entirely 'evangelical'" but at the same time disturbed by the *puzzles* which were already suggesting themselves to his mind. Robertson's career was one of continual mental fight: but even in his student days he was conscious of a division of loyalty which seriously affected his general view of life. On the one hand he longed to be a man of action; his first ambition had been to become a soldier, particularly in wars against the "heathen". On the other he was an ardent Wordsworthian and so placed a particular value on the life of calm and absorbed contemplation. We shall see how he sublimated his desire to become a participant in chivalric pursuits. It is noticeable that military words and phrases, and "Onward-Christian-Soldiers" sentiments are very common throughout his sermons. But quotations from Wordsworth and adaptations of the Lake Poet's most notable phrases are also ubiquitous in his works. Unlike Matthew Arnold, Robertson did not believe that poetry could be an adequate substitute for religion; but, as he says in a letter relating to his own lectures on poetry, all or most poetry is a "half-way house" towards religion, inasmuch as the laws of both are the same, the opposite of both being science, and the organ of both *intuition*.¹⁰

Robertson's opinions were forcefully and unambiguously expressed. But it would be a mistake to imagine that he ever became entrenched behind his own conception of liberal theology. He was critical of broad church teaching when it erred on the side of intellectual lassitude. On December 24th, 1850, for instance, he stated that he would do anything to abolish "that detestable doctrine which is preached in some evangelical pulpits that self-

⁸ Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, selected and edited by Thomas Sadler (3rd edition, 1872), Volume II, p. 298.

⁹ Stopford Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, p. 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 255-256.

happification is the great duty, or, as they call it, saving one's soul. . . ."¹¹ In some Liberal Anglican circles an easy contentment with the *status quo* was giving rise to a type of effeteness which could only be counterbalanced by "dash" and "effervescening enthusiasm". Not, however, that Robertson felt inclined to ally himself with the "movement" sponsored by Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice. On the other hand he could not subscribe to High Church policy: though he praised the High Church party for the good work it had done in reasserting the doctrine of spiritual resurrection—which had been almost lost sight of among the Evangelicals. The mid-Victorian era was an extremely active time for the various Church parties which had arisen as representatives of divergent points of view. Robertson's own personal teaching, says Stopford Brooke, was "suggestive, not dogmatic. . . . Owing to this, he never became the leader of a sect or the follower of any religious school. He stood aside from all parties . . ."¹² and it is as well that he did, for the life of a religious campaigner is anti-pathetic to complete purity of interest.

One of the most characteristic marks of Robertson's personality is his complete distrust of "religious emotion" cultivated and indulged for its own sake. But amidst the distractions of the nineteenth-century world genuine religious experience would seem to be impossible of attainment. For one thing, it was fatally easy to conceal infirmity of belief by subscribing to a completely respectable orthodoxy. Opportunities for the performance of accredited "good works" were embarrassingly numerous; on one occasion, indeed, Robertson went so far as to say that we ought to "cease to admire philanthropy, and begin to love men . . .", to "cease to pant for heaven, and begin to love God: then the spirit of liberty begins".¹³ That form of devotedness to which the nineteenth century gave the name of "zeal" is ineffective if it overrides personal integrity and prevents maturity of judgment. This partly explains Robertson's preoccupation in his sermons with *character*. "Not without significance", he says in a sermon on July 6th, 1848, "is it represented that the superficial character is connected with the hard heart".¹⁴ In a later sermon on "The Early Development of Jesus" he makes a similar point when he observes that "our stimulating artificial culture destroys depth. Our competition, our nights

¹¹ Stopford Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, p. 198.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 276.

¹³ Notes on Psalm 51. *Sermons on Bible Subjects*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁴ "The Parable of the Sower", *Sermons on Bible Subjects*, p. 292.

turned into days by pleasure, leave no time for earnestness. We are superficial men. Character in the world wants root . . ."¹⁵ But, as Robertson goes on to say, "character" is not identical with the ability to entertain strong feeling: it is determined by our ability to recognize, control and utilize feeling: for, as he observes in the same sermon, "warmth of feeling is one thing—permanence is another". This, of course, implies the necessity of understanding the setting which gives rise to the various trains of feeling. And Robertson's sermons are notable for the agility with which he educes the psychological and sociological significance of Biblical episodes without forcing them to support particular points of dogma.

Canon Charles Smyth has described Robertson as "the first and greatest of the *psychological* preachers of the Church of England."¹⁶ In a sermon on "Solomon's Restoration", indeed, Robertson declared that there is one study "which never can lose its interest for so long as we are men: and that is the investigation of human character".¹⁷ And this approach is especially noticeable in his *Sermons on Bible Subjects*. In discussing the united treachery of Jacob and Rebekah in "Isaac Blessing his Sons", he lays down the principle that although we judge men by their acts, it would be truer to say that we can only judge the act by the man.¹⁸ For "by our intentions, and not by the results, are our actions judged",¹⁹ the "intention" being usually referable to "character". A fine discrimination is therefore called for in order to understand even the simplest deeds. A "very delicate analysis of character" is needed to comprehend such behaviour as that of Jacob and Rebekah "and rightly to apportion their turpitude and their palliations".²⁰ But although Robertson uses a number of recognized "psychological" terms (such as "reaction", "volition", "perversion", and so on) he does not follow any particular theory of mental organization. From experience he found that "of that constitution, which in our ignorance we call union of soul and body, we know little respecting what is cause and what is effect. We would fain believe that the mind has power over the body, but it is just as true that the body rules the mind . . ."²¹ Robertson's empirical observations in the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

¹⁶ Charles Smyth, *The Art of Preaching* (1940), p. 229.

¹⁷ *Sermons on Bible Subjects*, p. 103.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁹ "Joseph's Forgiveness", *Sermons on Bible Subjects*, p. 37.

²⁰ *Sermons on Bible Subjects*, p. 26.

²¹ "Elijah", *ibid.*, p. 117.

field of psychology admittedly did not take him very far, but as presented to us in his sermons they have their own peculiar value. It is typical of his mentality that after telling us that "doubt often comes from inactivity" he should go on to observe: "We cannot give the philosophy of it, but this is the fact . . ." ²² Robertson's own personality, according to Stopford Brooke's account, had some of the marks of the manic depressive type: and his prolonged and often agonized introspection found relief in tracing out the general development of the mind when subject to "religious" promptings.

In a sermon on "The Dispensation of the Spirit", Robertson concluded his remarks by observing that "There is a sacredness in individuality of character; each one born into this world is a fresh soul intended by his Maker to develop himself in a new fresh way; we are what we are; we cannot be truly other than ourselves . . ." ²³ The business of religion is with men's feelings; not merely with their intellectual convictions. "He believes truth who feels it." ²⁴ Hence Robertson's interest in the service which the creative imagination could render to religious belief:

It is a grand thing, when in the stillness of the soul, thought bursts into flame, and the intuitive vision comes like an inspiration; when breathing thoughts clothe themselves in burning words, winged as it were with lightning—or when a great law of the universe reveals itself to the mind of genius, and where all was darkness, his single word bids Light be, and all is order where chaos and confusion were. Or when the truths of human nature shape themselves forth in the creative fancies of one like the myriad-minded Poet, and you recognize the rare power of *heart* which sympathises with, and can reproduce all that is found in man." ²⁵

But the specifically "religious" emotion which is self-stimulating and leads no further than itself is unhelpful to the true believer. In his *Lectures and Addresses* (1858), Robertson discusses the contemporary taste for fiction; and goes on to say: "Every man has experienced how feelings which end in themselves, and do not express themselves in action, leave the heart debilitated. We get feeble and sick in character when we feel keenly and cannot do the things we feel . . ." ²⁶ He makes this point several times in relation to literature; and in "The Kingdom of the Truth" he applies it to religion in support of the contention that "Christianity

²² "John's rebuke of Herod", *ibid.*, p. 160.

²³ *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 140.

²⁴ "God's Revelation of Heaven", *ibid.*, p. 203.

²⁵ "God's Revelation of Heaven", *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 203.

²⁶ *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 26 (an address delivered on the opening of the Working Men's Institute on Monday, October 23rd, 1848).

joins two things inseparably together ; acting truly, and perceiving truly". For "It is a perilous thing to separate feeling from acting: to have learnt to feel rightly without acting rightly. It is a danger to which, in a refined and polished age, we are peculiarly exposed . . ." ²⁷ If the feeling is allowed to develop without giving rise to appropriate action ("duty") the human character becomes *untrue*. For "excited feeling that stops short of deeds is the precursor of callousness and hardness of heart" ²⁸: and this has its obvious effect on "character".

If anything, Robertson's taste in literature was more eclectic than Liddon's or Newman's. But it is worth recalling that he held no special brief for the sermon as a vehicle of self-improvement. In fact on one occasion he classed it, along with poetry and romances, as capable of inducing spurious feeling within the mind of the auditor. In the Rev. A. B. Evans' essay on "Preachers and Preaching: the Pulpit and the Press" there is a reference to F. W. Robertson's "wail" to the effect that "Sermons are crutches—I believe often the worst things for spiritual health that ever were invented" ²⁹. But in Robertson's own hands the sermon serves as a means of bringing Scriptural experience to bear on the problem of how truth of character is to be cultivated in an age of doubt and spiritual profligacy.

In fulfilling his *mission* from the pulpit Robertson was able to reconcile the chivalrous and the Wordsworthian properties of his character. For he was unquestionably a missionary, as Henry Crabb Robinson confirms in a letter of February 17th, 1851. Robertson at this time had only two years to live ; but he informed Crabb Robinson that he now felt himself "comfortable" in the Church of England, and knew that he had an undoubted vocation: "That mission is, to impress on minds of a certain class of intellect, that there is a mass of substantial truth in the Church of England, which will remain when the vulgar orthodox Church perishes, as probably it soon will" . . . ³⁰ But Robertson's pursuits outside the sphere of church affairs are of great importance in appreciating his whole attitude to life. He never wished to become a popular preacher and, as we have seen, had continual misgivings about the efficacy of routine sermonizing.

In spite of accusations made against him on the score of his

²⁷ *Sermons on Religion and Life*, p. 124, "The Kingdom of Truth".

²⁸ "The Orphanage of Moses" in *Sermons on Bible Subjects*, p. 59.

²⁹ Rev. Orby Shipley (ed.), *The Church and the World* . . . (1868), p. 49.

³⁰ Crabb Robinson, *op. cit.*, Volume II, p. 322.

"democratical" leanings, Robertson was never a political preacher; and he was not "popular" in the sense that, say, C. H. Spurgeon was. But he did address himself to a class of men and women whose allegiance seemed particularly to be worth securing. At Brighton he made special efforts to reach those sections of the community which he thought would be least likely to resent suggestions for self-help and mutual improvement. In places like Cheltenham and Winchester, where Robertson had previously officiated, it was not so easy to attract this kind of person; but Brighton afforded more promising opportunities. And the business of a minister, Robertson believed, was to stand "as a link of union between the two extremes of society . . ." ³¹, since his duties gave him access to many different classes. Not—as this quotation would suggest—that there were merely *two* nations.

Robertson's simplification of the matter here is indicative of the uneasiness he felt when confronted with the fact that social cleavages were widespread and acute. His many references in the pulpit to this malaise and the difficulties which it gave rise to led many people to believe that Robertson was a daring revolutionary. But his detractors failed to appreciate the direction which his social thinking was apt to take. He certainly believed in "socialism" to the extent that he preached a doctrine of work and calumniated busy inactivity, however virtuous. For this reason he was regarded as something of an iconoclast among the "Belgravians" (as he called them)—a section of society which had been successfully wooed by Tractarian preachers in the Metropolis. ³² But he warned his congregation that a thorough-going political revolution, such as many hot-heads seemed to be advocating in the years between 1848 and 1853, might produce an effect quite the opposite of the one it was intended to have: it might introduce a more vicious tyranny than the prevailing one. Robertson worked, therefore, to arouse people to a sense of the power they already had within them. For it was premature to provide the underprivileged with the means for self-improvement if they had not arrived at a fair conception—in the Christian sense—of the *ends* of living.

In this connection it may be useful to follow up Robertson's thoughts on the sabbatarian question and to compare them with those of Dickens. Robertson, as it happens, was a great admirer of Dickens' work, and on one occasion scandalized his friends by

³¹ *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 2.

³² See Stopford Brooke, Letter 131, p. 257.

professing to find spiritual sustenance in his novels. The pamphlet "Sunday Under Three Heads", which Dickens wrote in protest against parliamentary proceedings instigated by Sir Andrew Agnew, appeared in 1836 when Robertson was a young man of twenty. After pointing out the extreme injustice and hypocrisy which would prevail if the Bill in question were to become law, Dickens goes on to envisage a state of affairs under which the Sabbath might well be made a more pleasant occasion than it had been hitherto:

I should like to see the time arrive, when a man's attendance to his religious duties might be left to that religious feeling which most men possess in greater or less degree, but which was never forced into the breast of any man by menace or restraint. I should like to see the time when Sunday might be looked forward to, as a recognized day of relaxation and enjoyment, and when every man might feel, what few men do now, that religion is not incompatible with rational pleasure and needful recreation.³³

Under such a dispensation as Dickens envisages, the Sabbath day would pass away "in a series of enjoyments which would awaken no painful reflections when night arrived; for they would be calculated to bring with them only health and contentment. The young would lose that dread of religion, which the sour austerity of its professors too often inculcates in youthful bosoms: and the old would find less difficulty in persuading them to respect its observances . . ." A sensible government, he argues, would undertake to provide the public with parks, museums, art galleries and other amenities whereby health of mind could be cultivated together with bodily recreation. To Robertson, however, such recommendations as these were the outcome of facile thinking, however great might be the desirability of the amenities suggested. In his sermon on "The Religious Non-Observance of the Sabbath" (November 14th, 1852) he takes up the very point which Dickens had canvassed so persistently. The assumption that public places for recreation which (as it is claimed) humanize the populace will necessarily "Christianize" them seems to Robertson quite unwarrantable. "Only in a limited degree", he says,

is there truth in this at all. Christianity will humanize: we are not so sure that humanizing will Christianize. . . . Esthetics are not Religion. It is one thing to civilize and polish: it is another thing to Christianize. The Worship of the Beautiful is not the Worship of

³³ Dickens: *Reprinted Pieces* (Everyman Library edition), p. 300.

Holiness ; nay, I know not whether the one may not have a tendency to disincline from the other.³⁴

A change in the nation's "heart" is not, according to Robertson, going to be brought about simply by an infusion of some vague kind of taste for artistic graces: other foundations need to be laid down, namely:

Simpler manners, purer lives ; more self-denial ; more earnest sympathy with the classes that lie below us ; nothing short of that can lay the foundations of the Christianity which is to be hereafter, deep and broad.³⁵

On the other hand, it must be recorded that Robertson refused to sign a petition in favour of closing the Crystal Palace on Sunday because he believed, among other things, that "it is a return to Judaism to enforce, by human enactment, that which St. Paul declares repealed".³⁶ Nevertheless, he detected underneath the vigorous agitation for the secularization of Sunday signs of a deplorable kind of backsliding: "we prefer Pleasure to Duty, and Traffic to Honour ; . . . we love our party more than our Church, and our Church more than our Christianity ; and our Christianity more than Truth, and ourselves more than all. . . ."³⁷ That, no doubt, was a bold way of dismissing the subject: but it is fully in keeping with Robertson's view of what ought and what ought not to be said in the pulpit.

There were times when Robertson was very sceptical about the effectiveness of his own ministrations. "I wish I did not hate preaching", he wrote to a friend in July, 1851, "but the degradation of being a Brighton preacher is almost intolerable. . . ." He went on to say that in his view the pulpit had lost the place it once held in public life. "It does only part of that whole which used to be done by it alone. Once it was newspaper, schoolmaster, theological treatise, a stimulant to good works, historical lecture, metaphysics, etc., all in one. Now these are partitioned out to different offices, and the pulpit is no more the pulpit of three centuries back, than the authority of a master of a household is that of Abraham, who was soldier, sacrificer, shepherd, and emir in one person. Nor am I speaking of the ministerial office ; but only the 'stump orator' portion of it—and that I cannot but hold to be thoroughly despicable".³⁸ A liberal theologian himself, Robertson was antagonistic towards the illiberality displayed by those of his

³⁴ *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 240.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

³⁶ Stopford Brooke, p. 249 (Letter to Mr. Wright, November 27th, 1852).

³⁷ *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 244.

³⁸ Stopford Brooke, *op. cit.*, p. 220 (Letter 113).

colleagues who put "party" interests before ministerial responsibilities. With factions Robertson would have nothing to do. "The pulpit", he declared, "is not to be degraded into the engine of a faction. Far, far above such questions, it ought to preserve the calm dignity of a voice which speaks for eternity, and not for time. If possible, not one word should drop by which a minister's own political leanings can be discovered".³⁹ That last stipulation is a very difficult one to live up to; and it is questionable whether Robertson was always careful about its observance. But the sermons preached at Brighton are the work of an enlightened near-anarchist who would not allow the purity of his essential interests to become defiled.

On one occasion Robertson complained that, among his contemporaries in the pulpit, religion was treated too much as theology and too little as an affair of daily life. His own presentment of the "psychology of religion", in which the point of the average believer is always respected, was unimpaired by sentimentality and was free from strange saws or unaccredited modern instances. There have, of course, been many other "thinkers" in the pulpit besides Robertson. But the distinctive quality of his performance is perhaps best expressed in the words of John Tulloch: "He felt a truth before he expressed it; but when once he felt it, and by patient study had made it his own, he wrought it with the most admirable logic—a logic closely linked, yet living in every link—into the minds of his hearers. This live, glowing concatenated sequence of thought is seen in all his greater sermons".⁴⁰ One measure of the "greatness" of Robertson's sermons is the fact that men as widely different in temperament as William Wordsworth⁴¹ and Frederic Harrison⁴² acclaimed them. Another, and more important point is that they bespeak a genuine and non-dogmatic type of Anglican catholicity in thought and feeling.

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³⁹ *Sermons on Religion and Life*, p. 306.

⁴⁰ John Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought*, p. 309.

⁴¹ Henry Crabb Robinson quotes Wordsworth as remarking that Robertson's sermons were "the most satisfactory religious teaching which has been offered to this generation". Letter of October 15th, 1864, in Crabb Robinson's *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence*, Vol. II, p. 385.

⁴² In H. Hensley Henson's *Robertson of Brighton, 1816-1853* (1916), a letter from Frederic Harrison is quoted in which Robertson is described as "a truly spiritual Divine, who could not be classed with any of the contesting 'parties', and against whom the most subtle casuist could bring no indictment of 'heretical opinion' . . .".