

Translator's Introduction

This is the fourth of Helmut Thielicke's books which I have had the privilege of translating—with two more already completed and on their way to publication. When the first, the sermons on the parables of Jesus, was sent on its way in English, I had no idea that the pressure of demand would lead me, not only to continued labors on succeeding volumes, but to a warm and stimulating friendship with the author of these books. Both the work of translating and the friendship have entered into my life and strengthened my apprehension of the gospel for which we stand.

These sermons on the first eleven chapters of Genesis are great preaching on texts that often daunt the preacher today. The editor of the *Expository Times* wrote of one of Thielicke's volumes of sermons: "A valuable tool is placed in the hands of preachers and teachers when a book is published by a scholar who is also a successful preacher. Such a gift is Professor Helmut Thielicke's sermons." As a teacher of preachers I can say to preachers what I say to my students: If you want to know how to preach to the man of today on the Old Testament and particularly these first chapters of the Bible, read these sermons!

In the first sermon and the "Postscript for Theological Readers" the author has stated the purpose of these lecture-sermons and the problems connected with their preparation but an excerpt from a personal communication to the translator is worth passing on to the reader. He states that his first aim was to hew out the *message* of the text as in any proper sermon. His second purpose was to enter into the current discussion of the relationship between the Old and the New Testament by this means of

preaching as a Christian on Old Testament texts. The third intention was to help people to grapple with the intellectual difficulties they face in this world today in which the antitheses of faith and thought, kerygma and cosmogony, religion and science create barriers for doubters and misgivings for believers.

“Every sermon,” the author says, “must run the gamut of this *whole* complex of questions. This made the labor I expended on these sermons the most difficult and trying task I have ever tackled. There were shoals of problems, both of theory and method, that needed to be dealt with in connection with each sermon.

“The recompense for all this was the unusual intensity with which the hearers listened and also their quantity. The services had to be repeated in each case because of the tremendous overflow attendance. Theological courses of study for laymen, which were conducted by my co-workers, endeavored to deepen the impact of the sermons. And these in turn had to be scheduled in duplicate in order to accommodate the numbers who came. As in the case of previous series, the audiences were made up of all kinds of people—university professors and students, dock workers and executives, Christians and pagans.”

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