

IBRI

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NOTES ON THE LIFE AND INFLUENCE OF J.B. PHILLIPS

I. Some Introductory Thoughts

- A. On the place of people in the IBRI association
- B. On the study of biography..with a sidenote to Longfellow
- C. A quick character appraisal of our subject...

Phillips is a man marked with what I would call the standard "British arrogance" combined with a Pickwickian sense of humor and impertinence. He is marked with a broad view of the church but an absolutely committed attitude to the essentiality of the Christian experience. He shows a strong interest in the underdog and a fondness for the non-cultic nonconventional. Possessed of a sharpshooter's eye for detail, he demonstrates a curious blend of a simple, naive faith with incisive critical spirit.

TVT, of course, never met him and has only read the books and articles so any character appraisal on my part is pretty superficial. Nevertheless I think this is the sort of person we are discussing and there is a bit of him in all of us and, I suppose in converse, a bit of us in all of him.

When my essential study was ended I had that giant emotion and wistfulness that I would have given a lot to have known him and would have felt supremely complimented to have met him in the course of this life. Neither has happened but my study has given me great respect and appreciation for his work although one will note that there are still great gaps in theology. I cannot elaborate on all of these in this discussion.

D. Our Primary Source Materials:

On his Life: The Price of Success, 1984 (autobiography)

On his work as a translator, The New Testament in Modern English, 1958
(and the introductory notes to the series that produced the final form)

On his pastoral work: Your God is Too Small (1952)
Making Men Whole (1952)
New Testament Christianity (1956)

On his apologetic work: The Ring of Truth, (1967)

In addition to his translation work, Phillips produced a number of volumes expressing Christian life concerns (more than a dozen) and four major anthologies as well as a commentary and numerous shorter articles. The above are cited as normative and the more important for our study