

George Stephen Goodspeed

The editorial staff of the *Biblical World* has suffered a severe loss in the death of Professor George Stephen Goodspeed, whose frequent contributions to the magazine have made his name familiar to our readers. His deep personal interest in the publication was always manifest, and his rare editorial gifts will be greatly missed by his colleagues on the staff.

George Stephen Goodspeed was born January 14, 1860, at Janesville, Wis., where his father, a man of unusual force and attractiveness in the pulpit, and widely known and honored in his denomination, was pastor of the Baptist Church. In 1880 he was graduated from Brown University. After a short stay at the Rochester Theological Seminary, he entered in 1881 the Baptist Union Theological Seminary at Morgan Park, the institution known since 1892 as the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. This removal from Rochester to Morgan Park was the determining point of his career. At Morgan Park Mr. Goodspeed became a pupil of the young and enthusiastic Professor of Hebrew, William Rainey Harper, who was just launching his novel enterprise, a correspondence school in Hebrew, and popularizing a study hitherto regarded as the least attractive in the theological curriculum. The common desire to promote among ministers and laymen alike a more intelligent and thorough study of the Bible drew them together at once. The relation between the two men from the beginning was far closer than that of teacher and pupil. The elder soon found in the younger the scholarly student whose assistance he needed, and upon whose friendship he could depend.

Mr. Goodspeed received his B.D. degree from the Seminary in 1883, but this congenial companionship in biblical studies continued until his marriage in 1884 and his removal to California, to accept the call of the Baptist Church of Sonora. A first pastorate of two years in Sonora was followed by a second as short in Springfield, Mass., relinquished in 1888, that he might return to his studies in the



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Graduate School of Yale University, where Dr. Harper was now Professor of Semitic Languages. During two years spent at Yale in preparation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, conferred upon him in 1891, Mr. Goodspeed was again associated with Professor Harper as Assistant in the Semitic Department, and more intimately still in the work of the American Institute of Sacred Literature, as a teacher in its correspondence courses in New Testament Greek. One of the earliest of its series of "Inductive Studies," appearing in 1888-89, that entitled *The Gospel of John: Jesus Manifested as the Son of God*, bears upon its title-page the names of William R. Harper and George S. Goodspeed. In the editorial management of the *Old Testament Student*, later known as the *Old and New Testament Student*, and now as the *Biblical World*, he had an important part.

In the year in which he completed his graduate studies at Yale University, the trustees of the University of Chicago were calling together its first corps of instructors. Mr. Goodspeed accepted an invitation to join this adventurous company, with the opportunity of a year of study first in the University of Freiburg (in Baden). When the new University opened its doors to students in October, 1892, the name of "Associate Professor Goodspeed" appeared in its *Announcements* as offering three courses, one in "Ancient History," a second in "Biblical History," and a third entitled "Studies in Egyptian Historical Documents."

To the University his life henceforth was given. His attainments in scholarship and skill as a teacher won for him promotion. In 1898 he was made Professor of Ancient History and Comparative Religion, and later a member of the University Senate. For six years, 1895-1901, he held the office of University Recorder, and in the discharge of its duties entered most intelligently and efficiently into the administrative work of the entire University. The close of this notable service was signaled by the completion of a task to which months of labor had been given, namely, the codification of the regulations of the University. From the routine of the classroom, the study, and the Recorder's office he found respite in 1897-98 in a second year of residence abroad, spent chiefly at Geneva and Lausanne.

Professor Goodspeed's physical constitution, never robust, was

ill-suited to encounter the rigors of a Chicago winter, and for several years he was out of residence during the months of January, February, and March; but he had seldom appeared to be in better working condition than at the opening of the Winter Quarter of 1905, when he confidently undertook the conduct of a class. This familiar task, carried for six weeks easily and cheerfully, was suddenly interrupted by an attack of pneumonia, and a ten days' struggle ended in his death on Friday, February 17.

These twelve short years of University life resulted in a considerable and important intellectual product. A large amount of work, difficult of course to measure accurately, was done in the editorial management, at different periods, of the *Biblical World* and the *American Journal of Theology*, and in very many thorough and conscientious book reviews in these journals. In 1898 Professor Goodspeed printed a syllabus, *Outlines of Lectures on the History of the Hebrews*; in 1900 he published *Israel's Messianic Hope*; in 1902, *A History of the Babylonians and Assyrians*; in 1904, *The History of the Ancient World*. Critics who are themselves specialists in these fields praise the scientific accuracy and the breadth of scholarship displayed in these books. Not less admirable are the author's intellectual candor and his easy grasp of his subject. For the "mere rhetorician" Professor Goodspeed had no tolerance; his taste nevertheless was unerring, and his style singularly lucid and attractive.

His work in ancient and biblical history is of a high order and likely to possess lasting value. But more and more eagerly in the last years of his life his thoughts turned to the great subject of comparative religion. To studies in this field, in which he had already made large attainments, he longed to give himself entirely; and it is the unappeasable regret of his associates that his life should have been cut short with these hopes unfulfilled. They do Professor Goodspeed an injustice, however, who think of him as a specialist only. So closely and with so sympathetic an understanding had he followed the course of theological speculation during the years since he turned aside from the distinctive work of the preacher that he might easily and quickly have found himself at home in a chair of theology. No new work of importance in history or philosophy or general literature escaped his notice; admirable book reviews from

his pen appeared frequently in the columns of Chicago newspapers; and he was never too much engrossed with his own specialty to enter into discussion of a companion's particular problem.

In leaving the pastorate, Mr. Goodspeed did not withdraw entirely from the pulpit, though he preached less frequently in later years. It was not that he could not always find an opportunity to preach, or that he was not heard with appreciation; least of all, that he was out of sympathy with the minister's calling; but that an occasional return only, to duties which properly claim all that a man can give, became to his sensitive conscience increasingly difficult. And while he was always very reticent regarding his inner religious experience, to know him well was to be assured that his hold upon the fundamental Christian truths was unshaken by any result of criticism or research.

How heavy a bereavement has the University sustained in the death of this accomplished scholar, this eager and untiring student! No one has been more intimately conversant with its affairs from the beginning than he; no one has served it more ungrudgingly and loyally; in the achievement of no other life, cut off though it was in the day of its promise, has it been more highly honored. With every year his contribution to its varied activities was more important. His name appears today in the Faculty of the Department of History, in the membership of the University Senate, of the Board of Physical Culture and Athletics, of the Board of the Senior Colleges.

Mr. Goodspeed's associates are persuaded that, could his life have been spared, his reputation as a scholar, in the province particularly of comparative religion, would have been established beyond question; and it is not easy to be reconciled to his loss. There are not many who are likely to accomplish the tasks he had set for himself. But it must always be very much to his colleagues that they were permitted to know in the freedom of daily intercourse a man so sensitive in honor, so modest, so sincere, so kindly, so true. However time may deal with what he wrought, it cannot alter their estimate of what he was, or efface his memory from their hearts. And though the fame he might have won in a longer career is denied him, eternally his record is on high and his reward is sure.
