

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

they distrust him, they are disciples of Jesus, though very imperfectly understanding His teaching. He loves the honest-minded among his opponents because they are fighting for what they consider to be the truth in Jesus. He loves the whole world because he believes all mankind have a place in Christ's Saviour-sympathies. It is not meant by these statements to insinuate that St. Paul exercised charity by calculation, and after deliberate reflection on motives. His Christianity was too vigorous and healthy for that. I mean that Christ had so possessed his soul as to become the inspiration of his whole life, the latent source of all his impulses, the supreme end of all his actions.

A. B. BRUCE.

*DEVOTION TO A PERSON THE DYNAMIC OF
RELIGION.*

NOTHING is easier than to create a religion ; one only needs self-confidence and foolscap paper. An able Frenchman sat down in his study and produced Positivism, which some one pleasantly described as Catholicism minus Christianity. It stimulated conversation in superior circles for years, and only yesterday Mr. Frederic Harrison was explaining to Professor Huxley that this ingenious invention of M. Comte ought to be taken seriously. An extremely clever woman disappeared into Asia and returned with another religion which has distinctly added to the innocent gaiety of the English nation. One never knows when a new religion may not be advertised. The Fabian Society is understood to be working at something, and each novelty receives a good-natured welcome. No person with any sense of humour resents one of these efforts to stimulate the jaded palate of society unless it be paraded a season too long and

threatens to become a bore. Criticism would be absurd: you might as well analyze *Alice in Wonderland*. Comparison with Christianity is impossible: it were an insult to Jesus.

The great religions of the East compel another treatment; one bows before them with wonder and respect. They are not the ephemera of fashion; they are hoar with antiquity. They are not the pastime of a coterie, they have shaped the destinies of innumerable millions. The most profound instinct of the soul breathes in their creeds and clothes itself in their forms, and notwithstanding their limitations and corruptions these ancient faiths have each made some contribution to the Race. One has anticipated the self-renunciation of Jesus, another has asserted the mystery of the eternal, a third has vindicated the unity of God, and a fourth has saturated with filial piety the future rivals of the West. It were unbelief in Divine Providence to deny those faiths a share in the development of humanity: it were inexcusable ignorance to regard them as systems of organized iniquity. They bear traces of noble ancestry, they preserve in their history a record of splendid service. Stricken by time, their ruins affect our imagination like the columns of Karnak. Dying at the heart, these worn-out religions still make more converts than Christianity. No reverent Christian will allow himself to despise the religions of the past; no intelligent Christian doubts that his will be the religion of the future. A child of the East, the religion of Jesus has conquered the West; conceived by a Galilean peasant, it has no limitations of thought or custom; with only a minority of the Race it embraces the dominant nations of the world. The mind of Jesus seems nothing more in the world as yet than a grey dawn; but wise men can see it is the rising sun.

The final test of any religion is its inherent spiritual dynamic: the force of Christianity is the pledge of its

success. It is not a school of morals, nor a system of speculation, it is an enthusiasm. This religion is Spring in the spiritual world, with the irresistible charm of the quickening wind and the bursting bud. It is a birth, as Jesus would say, a breath of God that makes all things new. Humanity does not need morals, it needs motives: it is sick of speculation, it longs for action. Men see their duty in every land and age with exasperating clearness. We know not how to do it.

“ Whom do you count the worst man upon earth,
Be sure he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before.”

No one condemns the good, he leaves it undone. No one approves the evil, he simply does it. Our moral machinery is complete but motionless. The religion which inspires men with a genuine passion for holiness and a constraining motive of service will last. It has solved the problem of spiritual motion.

Jesus did not create goodness—her fair form had been already carved in white marble by austere hands; His office was to place a soul within the ribs of death till the cold stone changed into a living body. Before Jesus, goodness was sterile, since Jesus, goodness has blossomed; He fertilised it with His spirit. It was a theory, it became a force. He took the corn which had been long stored in the granaries of philosophy and sowed it in the soft spring earth; He minted the gold and made it current coin. Christianity is in Religion what steam is in mechanics, the power which drives. Jesus wrote nothing, He said little, but He did what He said and made others do as He commanded. His religion began at once to exist; from the beginning it was a life. It is the distinction of Christianity that it goes. This is why some of us, in spite of every intellectual difficulty, must believe Jesus to be the Son of

God—He has done what no other ever did, and what only God could do. He is God, because He discharges a “God-function.”

“Tis one thing to know and another to practise,
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction,
For practising what we know already.”

Religion with Jesus has a dynamic, and it is Jesus Himself, for Jesus and His religion are as soul and body. He did not evolve it as an intellectual conception, He exhibited it as a state of life. It was never a paper scheme like Plato's *Republic* or More's *Utopia*. Jesus' religion was in man before it appeared in the Gospels; it had been fulfilled in Himself before it was preached to the world. The Gospels are not only a programme, they are already a history. Christianity has been apt to sink into a creed or a ceremony—it is the decadence of Pharisaism—in Jesus' hand it was a life. Jesus never proposed that men should discuss His Gospel, He invited men to live it. “Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings and doeth them . . . is like a man which built an house . . . on a rock” (St. Luke vi. 47, 48). He did not suggest lines of action, He commanded His disciples to do as He did. “Jesus . . . saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, Follow Me” (St. Matt. ix. 9). He did not dismiss His followers as pupils to a task, He declared that they would have a common life with Him. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep . . . by Me, if any man enter in, He shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture” (St. John x. 7, 9). Jesus combines every side of religion in Himself, and is the sum of His Gospel. “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (St. John xiv. 6).

Jesus made a claim that separates Him from every other teacher—a claim of solitary and absolute infallibility. The

attitude of every other master has been modest and qualified. "This, I think, is true, but you must not believe it as my word; this, I think, is right, but you must not do it after my example. Examine and decide for yourselves. I am, like yourselves, a seeker and a sinner." Their disciples accepted this situation, and so Simmias said to Socrates, "We must learn, or we must discover for ourselves, the truth of these matters; or if that be impossible, we must take the best and most impregnable of human doctrines, and, embarking on that as on a raft, risk the voyage of life, unless a stronger vessel, some divine word, could be found on which we might take our journey more safely and more securely. . . . Cebes and I have been considering your argument, and we think that it is barely sufficient."

"I daresay you are right, my friend," said Socrates in the *Phaedo*.

Jesus did not affect such humility, nor make such admissions. He did not obliterate nor minimize Himself; He emphasized and asserted Himself. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time," opens one paragraph after another of Jesus' great sermon, and then it follows, "But I say unto you." Jesus brushes aside the ancients as if they had never been. His disciples were not to own any authority beside Him; He was to be absolute, with Apostles and Prophets only His witnesses and interpreters, never His equals. "Be not ye called Rabbi, for One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" (St. Matt. xxiii. 8). His words are ushered in with the solemn formula, "Verily, verily"; they fall on the inner ear like the stroke of a bell; they are independent of argument. It is ever "I," and one's soul answers with reverence. For this "I" that sounds from every sentence of the teaching of Jesus is not egotism; it is Deity.

Jesus makes the most unqualified demand on the loyalty of His disciples, and believes that the attraction of His

Person will sustain their obedience. The beginning of the religious life was no reception of dogma or dream of mysticism; it was to break up a man's former environment, and to follow the lead of Christ. "Believe in Me," and "Come unto Me," He was ever saying, as if it were natural to trust Him, impossible to resist Him. The hardness of religion had its compensations: it carried association with Jesus. "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (St. Mark viii. 34). The immense sacrifices of religion would be an office of love. "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake" . . . (St. Mark x. 29). Religious cowardice was a synonym for treachery to Christ; it was a breach of friendship that could not be healed. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the Holy angels" (St. Luke ix. 26). The slightest kindness was exalted into an act of merit, because it was inspired by devotion to Christ. "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (St. Mark ix. 41). When Jesus came from the Father, the religious instincts were withering in the dust, and vainly feeling for something on which they could climb to God; Jesus presented Himself, and gathered the tendrils of the soul round His Person. He found religion a rite; He left it a passion.

Perhaps the most brilliant inspiration of Jesus was to fling Himself on the earliest, latest, strongest passion of our nature, and utilize it as the driving force of His religion. All our life from infancy to age we are in the school of love, and never does human nature so completely shed the slough of selfishness, or wear so generous a guise, or offer such

ungrudging service as under this sway. Here is stored to hand the latent dynamic for a spiritual enterprise; it only remains to make the connection. Do you wish a cause to endure hardness, to rejoice in sacrifice, to accomplish mighty works, to retain for ever the dew of its youth? Give it the best chance, the sanction of Love. Do not state it in books; do not defend it with argument. These are aids of the second order; if they succeed, it is a barren victory—the reason only has been won; if they fail, it is a hopeless defeat—the reason has now been exasperated. Identify your cause with a person. Even a bad cause will succeed for a space, associated with an attractive man. The later Stewarts were hard kings both to England and Scotland, and yet women sent their husbands and sons to die for “Bonnie Prince Charlie,” and the ashes of that romantic devotion are not yet cold. When a good cause finds a befitting leader, it will be victorious before set of sun. David had about him such a grace of beauty and chivalry that his officers risked their lives to bring him a cup of water, and his people carried him to the throne of Israel on the love of their hearts. Human nature has two dominant instincts—the spring of all action as well as the subject of all literature—Faith and Love. The religion which unites them will be omnipotent.

It was Jesus who summoned Love to meet the severe demands of Faith, and wedded for the first time the ideas of Passion and Righteousness. Hitherto Righteousness had been spotless and admirable, but cold as ice; Passion had been sweet and strong, but unchastened and wanton. Jesus suddenly identifies Righteousness with Himself, and has brought it to pass that no man can love Him without loving Righteousness. Jesus clothes Himself with the commandments, and each is transfigured into a grace. He illustrates His Decalogue in the washing of feet, and compels His disciples to follow His example. “If I then, your Lord and

Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet" (St. John xiii. 14). By one felicitous stroke He makes Love and Law synonymous, and Duty, which had always been respectable, now becomes lovely. It is a person, not a dogma, which invites my faith; a person, not a code, which asks for obedience. Jesus stands in the way of every selfishness; He leads in the path of every sacrifice; He is crucified in every act of sin; He is glorified in every act of holiness. St. Stephen, as he suffered for the Gospel, saw the heavens open and Jesus standing to receive him. St. Peter, fleeing in a second panic from Rome, meets Jesus returning to be crucified in his place. Conscience and heart are settled on Jesus, and one feels within his soul the tides of His virtue. It is not the doctrines nor the ethics of Christianity that are its irresistible attraction. Its doctrines have often been a stumbling block, and its ethics excel only in degree. The life blood of Christianity is Christ. As Louis said "I am the State," so may Jesus say "I am My Religion." What Napoleon was to his soldiers on the battle-field, Jesus has been to millions separated from Him by the chasm of centuries. No emotion in human experience has been so masterful, none so fruitful, as the passion for Jesus. It has inspired the Church, it has half saved the world.

Before Jesus could utilize this love He had to create it, and this was not accomplished either by His example or His teaching. The effect of His awful purity was terror: "Depart from me," said St. Peter, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (St. Luke v. 8). The result of three years' teaching was perplexity: an average apostle asked for a theophany: "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (St. John xiv. 8). Holiness compels awe, wisdom compels respect; they do not allure. Nothing can create Life but Life; nothing can beget Love but Love. He that is not loved hates; he that is loved, loves, is a law of experience.

As the earth gives out the heat which it has received from the sun, so the devotion of Jesus' disciples to Him in all ages has been the return of His immense devotion to them. He lavished on His first disciples a wealth of love in His friendship; He sealed it with His sacrifice of Himself upon the cross. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (St. John xv. 13); "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (St. John x. 11). Twelve men came into His intimacy; in eleven He kindled a fire that made them saints and heroes, and the traitor broke his heart through remorse, so he also must have loved. But Jesus expected that His love would have a wider range than the fellowship of Galilee, and that the world would yield to its spell. It was not for St. John, His friend, Jesus laid down His life; it was for the Race into which He had been born and which He carried in His heart. No one has ever made such a sacrifice for Humanity. No one has dared to ask such a recompense. The eternal Son of God gave Himself without reserve, and anticipated that to all time men would give themselves for Him. He proposed to inspire His Race with a personal devotion, and that profound devotion was to be their salvation. "Give Me a cross whereon to die," said Jesus, "and I will make thereof a throne from which to rule the world." The idea was once at least caught most perfectly in an early Christian gem, where, on a blood-red stone the living Christ is carved against His cross; a Christ with the insignia of His imperial majesty. Twice was Jesus' imagination powerfully affected—once by the horrors of the cross, when He prayed, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (St. Matt. xxvi. 39); that was the travail of His soul—once by the magnetic attraction of the cross, when He cried, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (St. John xii. 32); this is the endless reward of His travail.

The passion for Jesus has no analogy in comparative religion ; it has no parallel in human experience. It is a flame of unique purity and intensity. Thomas does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, or that, more than any other man, He can escape the hatred of fanaticism ; but he must share the fate of Jesus. "Let us also go," said this morbid sceptic, "that we may die with Him" (St. John xi. 16). At the sight of His face seven devils went out of Mary Magdalene ; for the blessing of His visit, a chief publican gave half his goods to the poor. When a man of the highest order met Jesus he was lifted into the heavenly places and became a Christed man, whose eyes saw with the vision of Christ, whose pulse beat with the heart of Christ. Browning has nothing finer than "A Death in the Desert," wherein he imagines the love of St. John to Jesus. No power is able to rouse the apostle from his last sleep, neither words nor cordials. When one has a sudden inspiration : he brings the Gospel and reads into the unconscious ear,

"I am the resurrection and the life,"

with the effect of an instantaneous charm.

"Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,
And sat up of himself and looked at us."

This man had leant so long on Jesus' bosom—some seventy years—that at the very sound of His words the soul of Jesus' friend came up from the shadow of death. It is the response of the flower of the Race to Jesus.

This Passion is placed beyond comparison, because it is independent of sight. St. Paul denies the faith that was once dear to him, and flung away the world that was once his ambition, to welcome innumerable labours and exhaust the resources of martyrdom, for the sake of one whom he had never seen, save in mystical vision, and formerly hated to the shedding of blood. Men were lit as torches in Nero's garden, and women flung to the wild beasts of the amphi-

theatre; and for what? For a system, for a cause, for a Church? They had not enough knowledge of theory to pass a Sunday School examination; they had no doctrine of the Holy Trinity, nor of the Person of Jesus, nor of His Sacrifice, nor of Grace. They died in their simplicity for Him "Whom having not seen ye love," and the name of the Crucified was the last word that trembled on their dying lips. With an amazing candour Jesus had warned His disciples: "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake. . . . And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake" (St. Matt. x. 18-22). With a magnificent confidence Jesus encouraged His disciples, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved. . . . Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven" (St. Matt. x.). The warning and the promise were both fulfilled in the history of the disciples' passion. "Christianus sum," confesses the martyr, and then the hoarse refrain, "Christianus ad leonem." But Perpetua sees a "great ladder of gold reaching from earth to heaven," and on its highest round stands the Good Shepherd; while Saturus is brought to the throne of the Lord Jesus and "gathered to His embrace." "Men," says Leckie, "seemed indeed to be in love with death. Believing they were the wheat of God, they panted for the day when they should be ground by the teeth of wild beasts into the pure bread of Christ." Love of life and love of kin, fear of pain and fear of death, were powerless before this talisman "For My sake."

This sublime passion did not die with the sacrifice of the martyrs, a mere hysteric of Religion, for it has continued unto this day the hidden spring of all sacrifice and beauty in the Christian life. The immense superstitions of the Middle Ages were redeemed by the love of Jesus, radiant in the life of St. Francis, reflected from the labours of the "Friends of God." There was a glory over all the bitter

controversies of the sixteenth century, because on the one side piety desired a spiritual access to Jesus' Person; and on the other, piety longed for the comfort of His Real Presence. Both the excessive ceremonialism and the vulgar sensationalism, which are the two poles of modern religion, may be pardoned, because the High Churchman at his altar and the evangelist at the street corner are one in their utter devotion to Jesus. Not only has the best theology been fed by this spirit, so that Bonaventura, questioned regarding his learning, pointed to the crucifix, and the living hymnology been its incarnation, so that to remove the name of Jesus were to leave no fragrance, but all the vast and varied philanthropy of public Christianity and the sweet and winsome graces of private life have been the fruit of this unworldly emotion. "For My sake," has opened a new spring of conduct from which has flowed the heroism and saintliness of nineteen centuries. When Jesus founded His religion on personal attachment it seemed a fond imagination: the perennial vitality of Christianity has been His vindication.

This perpetual Passion in the hearts of His disciples implies the mystical presence of Jesus, who promised "A little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father" (St. John xvi. 16), and "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). The presence of the living Christ, the object of adoration and service, has been wonderfully realized by the mystics, and distinctly held forth in the sacraments, but it is apt to be obscured in the consciousness of the Church by two different influences. One is a mechanical theology which builds every act of Christ into the structure of a system till no virtue comes from the flowing garments of His life, because they are nothing but the grave clothes of a dead Lord. The other is an idealizing criticism which evaporates the Person of

Christ in His teaching and while it may leave us a master, certainly denies us a Lord. This were to cast Religion back on its former condition when it was either an invention of the scribes or the philosophers, and to barter the indescribable charm of Christianity to secure a creed or to disarm unbelief. It is to reduce the religion of Jesus to the impotence of Judaism or Confucianism: it is to sell Jesus again without the thirty pieces of silver.

Jesus' idea lifts Christianity above the plane of arid discussion and places it in the region of poetry, where the emotions have full play and Faith is vision. Theology becomes the explanation of the fellowship between the soul and Jesus. Regeneration is the entrance into His life, Justification the partaking of His Cross, Sanctification the transformation into His character, Death the coming of the Lord, Heaven His unveiled Face. Doctrines will be but moods of the Christ-consciousness; parables of the Christ-life. Suffering will be the baptism of Jesus and the drinking of His cup, and if every saint have not the stigmata on his hands and feet, he will at least, like Simon the the Cyrenian, have the mark of the cross upon his shoulder. And service will be the personal tribute to Jesus, whom we shall recognise under any disguise, as his nurse detected Ulysses by his wounds, and whose Body, in the poor and miserable, will ever be with us for our discernment. Jesus is the leper whom the saint kissed, and the child the monk carried over the stream, and the sick man the widow nursed into health, after the legends of the ages of faith. And Jesus will say at the close of the day, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto Me" (St. Matt. xxv. 40.)

We ought to discern the real strength of Christianity and revive the ancient Passion for Jesus. It is the distinction of our religion: it is the guarantee of its triumph. Faith may languish; creeds may be changed; churches may be

dissolved; society may be shattered. But one cannot imagine the time when Jesus will not be the fair image of perfection or the circumstances wherein He will not be loved. He can never be superseded; He can never be exceeded. Religions will come and go, the passing shapes of an eternal instinct, but Jesus will remain the standard of the conscience and the satisfaction of the heart, Whom all men seek, in Whom all men will yet meet.

JOHN WATSON.

“POWER ON THE HEAD.”

1 Cor. xi. 10.

THIS passage has been the despair of interpreters. Much violence has been brought to bear upon it, both as respects text and translation. The puzzling word is *ἐξουσίαν*, which is translated “power” in the Authorised, and “authority” in the Revised Version. In the one translation the verse stands thus: “For this cause ought the woman to have power on (her) head because of the angels”; in the other it runs as follows: “For this cause ought the woman to have (a sign of) authority on her head, because of the angels.” Both are accompanied by a marginal annotation. The Authorised Version explains the expression “power” in these terms,—“That is, *a covering, in sign that she is under the power of her husband*”; while the Revised, dropping this explanation, suggests for “have a sign of authority on,” “have authority over”—words which certainly do not elucidate, but rather add to the enigma suggested by the verse.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that many efforts have been made to get rid of the term *ἐξουσίαν* altogether, or to give it quite a different turn by the insertion of the word *οὐκ* before *ὀφείλει*. Heinrici mentions that Valkenaer proposed thus to alter the text, so as to bring out