

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

with the usage of the Prophets of the Old Testament this objection could not stand.

(3) We proceeded to a minute examination of the Epistle which we found to exhibit certain phenomena which were most simply explained by the assumption that the writer was dealing with communities.

(4) The associations of the term "elect" were discussed, and it was seen that these were those of the Old Testament—a fact which seemed to justify the inference drawn from the similarities between 2 John and the Old Testament Prophets.

Finally (5) the meaning of the ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή of 1 Peter v. 13 was subjected to an independent investigation with the result that we were led to the position that St. Peter is here personifying a community. It was accordingly submitted that we have a valuable corroboration of the figurative interpretation of the ἐκλεκτή of 2 John 1.

Conclusion.

From these considerations we arrive at the conclusion that on the whole the evidence is in favour of our regarding the Second Epistle of St. John as addressed not to an individual Christian matron, but to a Christian Church, personified—after the prophetic manner—as a Mother with her Children.

H. J. GIBBINS.

STUDIES IN THE "INNER LIFE OF JESUS."

XIII. THE CAUSES OF OFFENCE.

(1) THE saying of the Fourth Evangelist, "He came unto His own home, and His own people received Him not" (John i. 11) expresses the tragedy and the mystery of the Advent of the Son of God among the chosen people of God. Although "God sent forth His Son when the fulness of

the time came" (Gal. iv. 4), yet in the thought and life of His age the Son of Man was a stranger and an out-cast. Mentally, morally, spiritually, as well as physically, in His own age, among His own people, He had nowhere to lay His head (Matthew viii. 20). The time and the place of the Incarnation were appointed by the divine wisdom and counsel, and yet at first how unadapted both seem. We need to remind ourselves that God in every age fulfils His purpose by "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5), "the holy seed which is the stock" of God's people (Isa. vi. 13). There were those among the Jewish people who were "looking for the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25); and there were some who received the Word, by believing on His name (John i. 12).

(2) The relation of Jesus to His own age and people presents the same problem as that of every man who is wiser and better than his contemporaries, only in a degree so much higher as Jesus' wisdom and goodness transcend all human talent and excellence. The penalty of greatness, especially of moral and religious genius, is loneliness, misunderstanding, distrust, hate, antagonism, persecution. He who recognizes that it is his vocation to transform the world is often compelled by his conscience not to conform to its moral standards and religious ordinances. This involves an inward struggle prior to the outward battle. A man must master his own affection for, and attachment to, the accepted principles and practices of his age and people before he can attempt to overcome the traditions and conventions of others. A genuine reformer is not a rash innovator, who is devoted to the new because he has no reverence for the old; but his surrender of ancient loyalties is to him an inward crucifixion.

(3) In the experience of Jesus this pain must have been more intense, and this struggle more severe, because the precepts He corrected, and the customs He disregarded,

came to Him with the most sacred sanctions, for He not only set aside the traditions of the scribes, and the conventions of the Pharisees, but He laid down principles that came in conflict with the provisions of the law which He recognized as of God. If, in regard to the Sabbath, He opposed Himself directly only to the Sabbatarianism of contemporary Judaism, yet in the principle to which he appealed, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; so that the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark ii. 27-28), He assuredly gave to the observance of the day a sanction, not legal in character, and quite independent of the law. The conflict between His own teaching and the requirements of the law in regard to divorce, Jesus was fully aware of, and frankly acknowledged, offering a justification which could be applied to other provisions of the law besides that in dispute. If "Moses wrote this commandment for the hardness of the heart" of the people (Mark x. 5), an adaptation to human imperfection is admitted in the law, which weakens its permanent authority, and lessens its universal validity. The disciples discerned that in regard to ceremonial pollution the teaching of their Master abrogated distinctive requirements of the law, if we may take the comment in Mark, "This He said, making all meats clean" (vii. 19) as reporting what the disciples at the time understood to be His meaning. In setting aside altogether the rule of retaliation, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Matt. v. 38 cited from Exodus xxi. 24, Leviticus xxiv. 10), and the limitation of love to a neighbour (Matt. v. 43, the first part of which is cited from Leviticus xix. 18, in which "neighbour" is defined by the phrase "the children of thy people," while the second part, although not a literal citation, is warranted by the command regarding the Ammonite or the Moabite in Deuteronomy xxiii. 6, "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all

thy days for ever"), Jesus was changing not an insignificant precept, but a prominent, if not dominant, principle of the law. Those who endeavour to show that Jesus criticized and condemned only the obscuration and the perversion of the law by His contemporaries are enlisted in a forlorn hope. The evidence is too abundant and conclusive, that Jesus by His own ideal of morality and religion was compelled to deny the permanent authority and universal validity of important provisions of the law. It is certain that Paul in his struggle for the liberty of the Gentiles had the mind of Christ. In what outer conflicts this attitude of Jesus to the law involved Him in His ministry we shall afterwards consider, but meanwhile emphasis may be laid on the inward strain that this opposition of the new ideal to the old law must have involved for Jesus Himself.

(4) We are warranted in affirming that Jesus was anxious that his attitude to the law should not be misunderstood. In the *Sermon on the Mount* He seeks to show that He has come not to destroy, but to fulfil, as He recognizes the claim of the law for reverence and obedience until so fulfilled. He warns the disciples against the innovation, which is destruction, and not fulfilment. He requires in His disciples a righteousness, in this fulfilment of the law, exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, who believed themselves to be pre-eminently the exponents, theoretically and practically, of the law (Matt. v. 17-20). When we look at the instances He gives of His fulfilment of the law, we at once discover that it is not outward observance of the provisions of the law He requires, but inward appreciation of the principles of the law. Some of the provisions, as we have seen, He sets aside altogether; for legal prescriptions He substitutes ethical and spiritual principles. His fulfilment is as little perpetuation as it is destruction of the law. In His desire to conciliate and not to offend, Jesus, as far

as His conscience allowed, conformed to current usages and recognized institutions. A request to interfere in a quarrel about property was met by not only a refusal, but a warning against covetousness (Luke xii. 13-15). The duty of paying taxes to Cæsar was recognized on the ground that, as the Roman Empire conferred benefits, so it could impose obligations, on its subjects (Matt. xxii. 15-22). Although He cleansed the leper, He would not supplant the priest in his office to declare him clean (Luke v. 14). When He told Peter to pay the temple tax, He was careful to explain that what He did was done to avoid offence (Matt. xvii. 27). More surprising still, He acknowledged that the scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, and bade the disciples obey their precepts, but not follow their practices (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3). These instances of conformity deserve attention, as they throw into bolder relief the cases in which, in spite of the offence He gave, He refused to conform.

(5) The Jewish people was not only the people of the Mosaic law, but also of the Messianic hope. Jesus found Himself out of agreement not only with the popular expectations, but even with the prophetic predictions regarding the Messiah. When, as is often done, the personal ideal of Jesus is opposed to the popular expectations, it is often forgotten that the latter could appeal against the former to the prophetic predictions. Jesus fulfilled the prophets in the same sense as He fulfilled the law, not by any literal coincidence, but by a moral and religious development. He accepted in prophecy what was in accord with His own conscience of His vocation; He rejected whatever fell short of His ideal. The Servant of Jehovah, who suffers that He may save, is an anticipation of the *Son of Man* Jesus willed to be; as the *Son of David*, delivering Israel from a foreign yoke, and ruling in righteousness in Jerusalem, is not. He did not Himself use the title *Son of David*, and seems not to have desired its use by others. When two blind men

appealed to Him as Son of David, He gave no heed, and granted their request only when they had followed Him into a house, enjoining absolute secrecy upon them (Matt. ix. 27). The Syrophenician mother's appeal in the same terms was met with silence (Matt. xv. 22, 23). His argument with the Pharisees regarding the Sonship of the Messiah (Matt. xxii. 41-45) was evidently intended to assert the inadequacy of this view of the Messiahship. That He accepted the title without any challenge from blind Bartimaeus (Mark x. 47-48) and from the multitude at the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Matt. xxi. 9) is explicable by the circumstances. For Him the issue of His ministry was already decided, and the reserve that He had exercised in order that false hopes might not be aroused was no longer necessary. In dealing with the Temptation in the *Fifth* of these Studies it was pointed out that "the prophets had depicted the Messianic age as one of material prosperity, political emancipation, and imperial dominion for God's chosen people. The land is to become a garden; the people are to cast off every yoke; the other nations are to seek incorporation in Israel as the condition of Jehovah's favour." The popular expectations rested on a literal interpretation of the prophetic predictions, although these were often vulgarized, and exaggerated in the common imagination. If there is literal fulfilment of prophecy the people were right, and Jesus was wrong; but, if prophecy is as regards its form necessarily conditioned by the time and place of its utterance, but as regards its moral and spiritual substance essentially realized in that which apparently contradicts, because it really transcends its form, Jesus by His ideal fulfilled, the people in their expectations obscured and distorted, the predictions of the prophets. Nevertheless, it cannot have been without inward struggle that Jesus penetrated from the form to the substance. His moral insight and His spiritual discernment were not exercised without effort.

(6) So transcendent was the ideal of Jesus that John the Baptist, His forerunner, was offended by Him. John's question, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" (Matt. xi. 3), has caused perplexity to many commentators, who assume that the words ascribed to John in the Fourth Gospel, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John i. 29) represent His permanent conception of the Messiah's work. As was indicated in the *Fourth* of these Studies, we can accept these words as genuine only on the assumption, that in conversation with Jesus John had learned His ideal, for a time was by Jesus' influence induced to adopt it, but when that influence was withdrawn, relapsed to that view of the Messiah's work which the Synoptists ascribe to him. According to these records John anticipated that the Messiah would come in judgment, for which the nation seemed to him ripe (Matt. iii. 11-12; Luke iii. 16-17). He called to instant repentance, as an escape from imminent doom (Matt. iii. 10; Luke iii. 9). Jesus Himself indicates a great distance between John's prophecy of judgment, and His own ministry of grace. Although "among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist, yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew xi. 11). The popular excitement, which John's method of terror aroused appeared to Jesus a method of violence (verse 12), which did not bring gain, but loss to His cause. He had John and his disciples, as well as the multitudes whom John's ministry had influenced in view, when He said, "Blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion for stumbling in me" (verse 6). To any man with a zeal for righteousness, a belief in justice, a hatred of wrong and sin, who had not discovered the "more excellent way" of love, Jesus' ministry of grace must have appeared a disappointment, and not a fulfilment, of the Messianic hope.

(7) While John laid hold of the moral, judicial aspect of Messianic prophecy, the people laid stress on the secular and the political. Although Jesus exercised a reserve in speech, and a restraint in action, so that there might be no premature disclosure of His Messiahship, before He had transformed, purifying and elevating, the hopes which he claimed to fulfil; yet on several occasions what the people desired of Him, and what He was willing to be and do for them, came in sharp conflict. He distrusted the popular desire for His works of healing, and rebuked the faith that needed signs and wonders (John iv. 48). When His compassion constrained Him to heal, He sought in various ways to escape publicity. This economy in working miracles was an offence to the multitude, but He steadfastly declined to meet the demand of His enemies that He should work a sign from heaven, however gratifying He knew that such a display would be to the people. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matt. xii. 39, xvi. 4). The demand was made by His adversaries not to remove their doubts, but, as refusal was anticipated, to lessen His popularity with the multitudes. That even lower expectations had to be disappointed, His rebuke of the people that had been fed shows: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled" (John vi. 26). The failure of the attempt "to take Him by force, to make Him King" (verse 15) probably produced a reaction of popular feeling against Him. He would not work wonders to gratify their curiosity or to satisfy their necessity at their pleasure; He would not fulfil their worldly, earthly desires; He would not effect the national emancipation that piety and patriotism combined to require of the Messiah—these were the counts of the indictment of the Jewish populace against Jesus. He lost His popularity because He would not lower His ideal.

(8) The disciples undoubtedly shared the popular Messianic expectations. The surname of Simon the *Zealot* (Luke vi. 15; Acts i. 13) suggests that the most fanatical party in the Jewish nation was represented in the small company; and it is not probable that Simon on becoming a disciple of Jesus entirely changed his character, abandoned his beliefs and hopes, and that he exercised no influence on the other disciples, to most, if not all, of whom this intense Messianic hope would be quite congenial. The downward career of Judas is not adequately explained by avarice (the vice ascribed to him in John xii. 6). It is much more probable that a baffled aim and a blighted hope were the soil in which the seeds of hate took root, and grew until they bore the fruit of treachery. It is suggestive that the Fourth Gospel connects the first announcement of the betrayal with the time when the popularity of Jesus began to decline after His disappointment of the popular expectations (John vi. 64, 70). If Jesus' quick moral insight detected in Judas the first germs of disloyalty, to the burdens He bore must have been added as no light weight the sense that He was proving an offence to at least one, if not more, of His closest companions. If John vi. 66-70 may be regarded, as is not improbable, as a reminiscence expressed in the distinctively Johannine phraseology of the scene at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. xvi. 13-20), a new significance is given to the Synoptic narrative. The disciples do not by the mouth of Peter confess for the first time their faith in Jesus' Messiahship, but reaffirm their faith, in spite of the disappointment of the expectations with which they had come to Him, and which had been their reason for attaching themselves to Him, because they have accepted the view of the Messiahship which His words and works, with the illumination of the Spirit of God (ver. 17), had presented to their minds. This explanation of the incident does not involve the assumption that Jesus had

given any formal instruction to His disciples regarding His Messiahship or that He had made any explicit disclosures of His position and function; but that He delayed to make any inquiry regarding, or to seek any confession of their faith, until by His companionship they had been taught and trained to recognize Him as Messiah in the sense He Himself desired. But how imperfect their recognition of His ideal was is shown by the brief interval of time that elapsed between Peter's confession and remonstrance, Jesus' commendation and censure. The Confessor, as soon as Jesus began to announce His approaching passion, became the Tempter; Peter the Rock became Satan the Adversary. The vehemence of Jesus' rebuke shows the acuteness of the temptation for Him to turn aside from the path of suffering. After this crisis in His relation to His disciples Jesus had to suffer an estrangement of feeling, an antagonism of purpose on their part. The Cross to the very end never ceased to be an offence to them. It is not necessary here to repeat what has been written in the *Eleventh* of these Studies on the efforts Jesus made so to teach and train His disciples that they would be constrained to accept His will to suffer. Their ambition and rivalry (Matt. xviii. 1-3), their exclusiveness (Mark ix. 38-40), their intolerance (Luke ix. 54-56), their mercenariness (Matt. xix. 27-30) show how different their spirit was from His. Perhaps no incident presents this contrast so vividly as the attempt of the sons of Zebedee on the one hand to gain an unfair advantage over the other disciples, and the anger among the company which this effort provoked; and, on the other hand, the confession by Jesus of His own ideal. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). If we are endeavouring to realize in any measure what the "inner life" of Jesus was during this closing period of His ministry, we must try to imagine how lonely

He was, because to His disciples His purpose of self-sacrifice was an offence.

(9) When Jesus began His ministry in Jerusalem, He soon discovered the hostility of the religious rulers and teachers. As has been fully shown in the *Eighth* of these Studies, He condemned the party of the Sadducees, the priestly aristocracy in Jerusalem, as by their worldly policy the destroyers of the religion of which they claimed to be the custodians (John ii. 19). The motives of the part they played in the final tragedy of the Cross will be subsequently discussed. The party of the Pharisees, to which the scribes for the most part belonged, Jesus censured in their representative Nicodemus as spiritually incapable, without a thorough change, of understanding or sharing in the great movement that He had just begun; they without a birth from above could neither see nor enter into the Kingdom of God (iii. 3, 5). While it was only at the end of His ministry that Jesus was again brought into close relations with the Sadducees, throughout the whole course of His ministry His steps were dogged by the Pharisees, who, zealous for their own ascendancy among the people, and jealous of His influence over the multitudes drawn by His preaching and healing, were ever on the watch for any breach of their moral conventions and religious traditions, in order that they might discredit His character, depreciate His reputation, and destroy His authority. The causes of offence that they found in Him may very briefly be noticed. Having refused to ally Himself with their party, He turned to the common people whom as ignorant of the law they held accursed (John vii. 49); He chose as one of His close, constant companions Matthew, who had been engaged in the unpatriotic and impious calling of a tax-gatherer, a tool of the tyranny of Rome so intolerable to every Jew who cared for His God and his country (Mark ii. 14); and He made use of this

connection to come into personal contact with others who were in the same employment and with many men who on account of their laxity in the observance of the law were regarded as sinners (verse 15). By this policy Jesus in the eyes of the Pharisees not only incurred ceremonial pollution Himself, but disregarded and defied what was regarded as one of the most essential provisions of the law, the strict observance of which was regarded as a distinctive evidence of piety. Two instances of Jesus' offence claim special notice; His acceptance of the tribute of gratitude from the sinful woman, which led His host to question His prophetic character (Luke vii. 39); and His choice of Zacchaeus the chief publican as His host in Jericho, which called forth the censure of the crowd (Luke xix. 7). Jesus with absolute confidence justified His policy. It was His unique function "to seek and to save that which was lost" (verse 10); as the Healer sent by God His rightful place was among the sick; He was properly offering His salvation to those who were in common repute held to need it most, not to those who in their own judgment had no need of it (Mark ii. 17); as every sinner was a loss to God, and his recovery brought joy to God, He in saving sinners was pleasing God (Luke xv. 3-10); His attitude of compassion, and not the Pharisees' attitude of contempt for sinners expressed God's heart as Father (verses 11-32); the gracious pardon He offered could in the most sinful evoke so intense an affection as gave a certain assurance of a changed life (vii. 41-50). In these answers Jesus laid down two principles that were in absolute opposition to Pharisaic precept and practice; firstly, God desires the recovery of the most sinful, and they are capable of such recovery; secondly, goodness is not self-protective only, but self-communicative, and such goodness alone resembles God's-Jesus' claim to be Saviour, which in these answers He assumes, was formally challenged by His enemies, when

He assured the paralytic, brought to Him by four friends, of his forgiveness (Mark ii. 1-7). He did not deny that Pharisaic assumption that God alone can forgive; He did not assert that any man can offer this assurance in God's name; but by an outward sign of healing He proved His authority as Messiah so to represent God on earth. This claim was offensive to the Pharisees, not only because He, who on other grounds was so hateful to them, claimed so lofty a right; but also because for their legalistic piety such a ministry of pardon towards sinners, in disregard of the paramount claims of the law, would appear in the highest degree morally dangerous as an encouragement to laxity. He was offering the people another way of approach to God than the way of the law that the scribes had been so careful to hedge. The Pharisees believed that they had a convincing proof of this laxity in the neglect of Jesus' disciples to keep the ordinary fasts (Mark ii. 18-20). His answer by ignoring denied their assumption of the moral obligation and the religious merit of fasting; as a compulsory observance He will not recognize it; as a spontaneous expression of natural emotion He admits its legitimacy. As the emotion natural to His companions is gladness, fasting would for them now be quite out of place. He suggests that a time of separation will come, when fasting may express their feelings. Does not this answer give us a bright glimpse of the spirit of Jesus' ministry, especially of His companionship with the Twelve? More than any other offences did Jesus' disregard of the Sabbath law outrage the conscience of the Pharisees. Against the charge of Sabbath-breaking, He defended His disciples when they had plucked ears of corn as they passed through a field, and Himself repeatedly, when He had wrought a cure. His answers are varied in character. David's example when he eat the shewbread reserved for the priests is appealed to (Mark ii. 25-26) as

showing that ceremonial law may be set aside in order that physical need may be met. The practice of circumcision (John vii. 22), and the observance of sacrifice on the Sabbath in the Temple (Matt. xii. 5), show that there are provisions of the law more sacred, and that consequently the Sabbath law has no absolute authority. That it is intended for man's good, and that it must therefore be subordinated to man's good is explicitly affirmed: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark ii. 27). All acts of beneficence are declared legitimate on the Sabbath, as it is to be devoted to doing good and not evil; especially is care of life incumbent (Matt. xii. 10, 12; Mark iii. 4). The kindness shown to animals in providing for their needs, or saving them from danger (Luke xiii. 15, xiv. 5; Matt. xii. 11-12), should much more be shown to men, as theirs is a far greater value. "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep!" The humanity so characteristic of all His words and works, which Jesus here exalts above all legality, was the very antithesis of the Pharisaic attitude. Let men consistently order their lives by such principles, and the doom of legalism is pronounced. Jesus' claim as Son of Man to be Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. xii. 8) must have appeared to those who regarded themselves as the authoritative interpreters of the Law as intolerable presumption; still more His plea that He was working even as His Father worked (John v. 17), although He meant it as a proof of His dependence on, submission to, and communion with God, appeared to them nothing less than the blasphemy of making Himself equal with God.

(10) As Jesus' abrogation of the law of ceremonial defilement in defending His disciples against the charge that they had eaten with unwashed hands (Mark vii. 11-23) has already been referred to, it need not detain us further;

but we may pass on to notice in closing this study that the offence for which Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin was not really any one of these offences which we have discussed; although the ostensible charge was blasphemy in claiming to be the Christ the Son of God (Matthew xxvi. 63-66), the real reason for His condemnation is given in the cynical confession of Caiaphas, as reported in the Fourth Gospel (xi. 50): "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." On the one hand Jesus had challenged the authority of the worldly priesthood even in the Temple (John ii. 13-19); on the other His movement was likely to attract the attention of the Roman Government, and to lead to further measures of repression (John xi. 48). To save their position and power thus threatened, this worldly priesthood exploited Pharisaic bigotry, popular fanaticism, and the weakness of the Roman Governor to sacrifice Jesus as an offence to their secular ambition.

ALFRED E. GARVIE.

THE CHRISTIAN INSCRIPTIONS OF LYCAONIA.

IN studying the Christian inscriptions of Lycaonia, one is met by the difficulty of specifying the period to which they belong. Whereas the Phrygian Christian inscriptions are frequently dated exactly by year, month and day, and the dated texts form a fixed and certain series alongside of which the undated can be arranged with an approximation to certainty, not a single Lycaonian inscription has been found dated according to an era, such as was used in Phrygia; the custom of dating by an era was rarely, or not at all, practised in Lycaonia. Except where an Emperor or other known person is mentioned, no Lycaonian inscription can be fixed by external and indubitable evidence;