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 Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

In the letter which Professor Sanday addressed to the Bishop of Oxford, a letter which went such a long way towards meeting the difficulties of present-day thought on miracle, there was one sentence that must have been peculiarly disappointing to the unbeliever in miracle. It was the sentence in which he expressed his heartfelt belief in the deity of our Lord.

How is it that Dr. Sanday retains that belief, and retains it so assuredly? It is not with him a matter of custom or environment; it is not due to sentiment. No scholar of our day takes himself to task more sternly to see that his faith has reality to rest upon. As with all his beliefs, this also is due to his appreciation of the evidence. There is in the New Testament so much in favour of the deity of Christ, and that much is so powerfully strengthened by the record of Christian experience, that, when many things which once he believed have gone, this thing, the greatest of all, has remained to him and is more surely believed now than ever.

In a sermon preached in the Temple Church and reported in the new volume of *The Christian World Pulpit* (James Clarke & Co.; 4s. 6d.) Dr. Sanday lifts a corner of the evidence which is offered by the New Testament. It is the evidence contained in the Synoptic Gospels. He chooses the Synoptic Gospels because just on this very subject there is a difference between them and the Fourth Gospel. The Fourth Gospel has much to say about the deity of Christ, and says it directly. In the Synoptic Gospels the evidence is indirect, and, with one exception, it is found in small sayings or incidental allusions. For the Fourth Gospel was written with the express purpose of bringing out the deity of our Lord. The evangelist himself says so. He says, 'These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' The Synoptic Gospels are not entirely without this motive. But it is not prominent in them. It does not take the first place. It does not influence to the same degree the composition and form of their narratives. There is 'a great naturalness and simplicity' about them. And it is just this naturalness and simplicity that give value to the picture they present of the person of our Lord. It makes the light that they throw on His person more penetrating than that of the Fourth Gospel. It reveals Him more completely and more convincingly.

We are so familiar with the Christ of the Gospels that we do not see how unexpectedly natural He is. If *we* had written a Gospel we should have emphasized the things that appealed most powerfully to our minds. If we had tried to describe a Divine life upon earth we should have

taken good care that it should be seen at once to be Divine. We should have singled out the strongest expressions and put them in the strongest relief. The beauty of the Gospels is that they reflect the light as it really was; they do not force their own interests upon it. They leave it to tell its own tale.

The first example that Professor SANDAY takes is from the Gospel according to St. Mark. It is the familiar story of the healing of the palsied man who was let down through the roof of the crowded chamber by four of his friends. The Lord observed their faith, and gave the sick man the benefit of it. He said to him: 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.' But then He noticed that there were certain scribes sitting by, and that they were complaining, in an undertone, to each other: 'Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God?' The narrative goes on to tell how Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves said unto them: 'Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.'

Now this story makes one of the highest claims that ever were made by Jesus or for Him. It claims that He has power to forgive sins. But how is the claim made? It is made in a parenthesis. That which is the centre of the narrative, that which lifts Jesus high above all that is human, arises out of the story as a subordinate detail; a parenthesis is enough for it.

Quite as parenthetic, yet quite as amazing, is the claim that is made when the Pharisees accuse Him of casting out demons through Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. He refutes that idea. And then He draws a lesson from the discussion. 'When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.' The strong man armed is Satan, but our Lord leaves His audience to guess who is the stronger than he. And He says: 'If I by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.' But He does not stay to press home the application to His own person; He contents Himself with saying that the victory over Satan is proof that the Kingdom is coming. He does not even point the obvious moral that He is the Prince and Ruler of that Kingdom. He leaves His hearers to draw the inference, but He does not draw it for them.

There is a still finer example in the immediate context. 'The men of Nineveh,' says Jesus, 'shall stand up in the judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgement with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.' Notice the indirect way in which Christ speaks of Himself. He does not use the first person, but the third. He does not say, 'I do this or that'; He says, 'The Son of Man does this or that.' The very title He uses seems to lay more emphasis upon His humanity than upon His divinity. And yet He had no doubt whatever in His own mind, and He does not leave His hearers in any doubt, as to the extent of His own implied claim of authority. He is well aware that His own coming marks an epoch in the history of the world such as had never been before: 'Verily I say unto you, 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 (in that new order of things which He came to found) is greater than he.'

Dr. SANDAY said that to the reticence and reserve of the Synoptic Gospels on the Divinity there is one exception. It is the single verse: 'All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.' The verse is introduced most abruptly. We should expect so direct and lofty an announcement to be introduced by some preface, setting forth the uniqueness of this relation at some length, but there is none. It is possible, Dr. SANDAY thinks, and even probable, that the original saying was longer and fuller than we have it now. But the very abruptness of it is characteristic. It is a sentence full of a high theology, yet the Synoptists offer it just as they find it. The less suspicion attaches to it that it is unique. Its uniqueness is in keeping with the unstudied simplicity of these Gospels throughout.

But the uniqueness of this saying throws into contrast the general reserve of the first three Gospels. Professor SANDAY believes that we do not appreciate the delicacy of that reserve. It is a true reflexion of the reserve of Christ Himself. 'He came to manifest His glory, but it was a glory veiled, and not revealed, at least not revealed in the full blaze of His day. His sojourn upon earth was but the prelude to a great outpouring of the Spirit which has continued all down the ages, and is in full force even now.'

Of the things that are likely to emerge from the present upheaval one great thing is as likely as any other. It is that the East and the West will be drawn closer together. It is not merely that India and Great Britain will be drawn closer, or Great Britain and Japan. It is that all over the East and all over the West there is likely to be a new and serious looking into those things which make them to differ, not in order to weaken them, but in order to appreciate and as far as possible appropriate them, to the great expansion and enrichment both of the West and of the East.

It is the more likely because the movement has been in progress for some time. In a notable article contributed to the issue for July of *The Calcutta Review* (Kegan Paul), G. F. BARBOUR, D.Phil., Esquire of Bonskeid, names one or two notable distinctions between typically Eastern and Western ways of thought, and points out certain lines of convergence which have already come into view. Two books lay before him as he wrote his article, one by an Eastern writer and one by a Western. The one book was *Sadhana: The Realization of Life*, being the Yale Lectures of Rabindranath Tagore. The other was a small volume containing three addresses by Emile Boutroux, called in French *L'Au-dela Intérieure*, in English *The Beyond that is Within*. These books draw the East and the West nearer. But, as we have said, Dr. BARBOUR tells us first of all wherein the East and the West most characteristically differ.

The simplest difference is also the most familiar. It is that Eastern thought is predominantly contemplative, while Western is predominantly practical. Dr. BARBOUR draws attention to the adverb 'predominantly,' for there are large and notable exceptions. On the side of the East he points to the practical genius of China and Japan; and how can we forget 'that little nation at the opposite extremity of the Asian continent, to which Europe owes its religion, and of which Matthew ARNOLD was thinking when he said that conduct was three parts of life'? And on the side of the West, while in the ancient, and still more in the modern, world the practical bent has been very strong, the contemplative ideal has never been wholly lost sight of and has had its periods of ascendancy, especially in the Middle Ages. Still the distinction holds good, and within its limits it is both useful and enlightening.

But there is a less familiar antithesis than that. It is the difference in the attitude of the East and the West towards the Infinite. The difference depends on the familiar difference of the contemplative and the practical already noticed. The practical mind looks with suspicion on any attempt to extend the flight of thought beyond the limits of clear definition and immediately verifiable knowledge. For the contemplative mind these limits exist only to be transcended.

To the practical mind of the Greek the 'Infinite' was an object almost of horror. It signified the unbounded, that which was without measure, and so the formless or chaotic. To the early mathematical philosophers of Greece the Infinite was the evil, the measured and symmetrical the good. The Greeks anticipated the saying of Goethe that 'he who would do great things must limit himself.' It was theirs to show that the highest beauty depends on a perfect command of the material medium and on a certain restraint in artistic expression. And in this interest they recognized the need of the work begun by Socrates, the work of criticizing the ideas which pass current in ordinary thinking. To the practical mind of the Greeks the infinite Beyond was only a distraction and a danger.

But even the Greek mind was not always practical. Greek philosophy and religion did not wholly lose the sense that concentration and 'measure' were not everything. Plato aspired after some single form of insight or knowledge in which all other knowledge is comprehended. And many a great thinker held that immediate inspiration might carry man into higher regions than the patient work of reason. Still, this is the mind of the East rather than of the West. In the words of Tagore, the ultimate truth about the external world '"lies in our apprehension of the eternal will which works in time. . . . This is not mere knowledge, as science is, but it is a perception of the soul by the soul. This does not lead us to power, as knowledge does, but it gives us joy, which is the product of the union of kindred things." But "to attain our world-consciousness, we have to unite our feeling with this all-pervasive infinite feeling." Here the Infinite is no longer an object of fear or aversion, but contact with it, nay more, the realization of the oneness of the human and the cosmic *atman* (surely one of the most daring conceptions ever reached), becomes the secret of all true understanding and of an abiding joy.'

How then are these two types of mind, so different in outlook, to be reconciled? Dr. Barbour does not claim that they can be reconciled. He claims only that the one may be brought to appreciate the other. He does not seem even to desire their reconciliation, in any sense that would mean coalescence. He believes that they have each a lasting value. His desire is that the East may obtain by understanding the benefit of that which is good in the practical scientific mind of the West; and perhaps still more earnestly, that the West may reap some of the riches which unquestionably attach to the more intuitive and imaginative mind of the East.

And to this end he commends the study, first of all, of M. Boutroux's little book. Not that M. Boutroux makes a deliberate and conscious attempt to understand the East. But his claim is the Eastern claim. He believes that the striving after a Beyond is an inextinguishable characteristic of the human spirit, and that it can find satisfaction only in a 'Beyond that is Within,' in the discovery of new depths in the inward and inalienable experiences of the heart of man.

Where do these experiences make themselves known? They make themselves known, says M. Boutroux, in Religion, in Morality, in Art, and even in Science. Dr. Barbour takes these four 'forms of life' separately, and considers how they point to and express the Beyond.

He takes Science first. The first great victories of modern science were gained by the strict appli-

cation of the mind to the things which can be measured, tested, and verified, and by the mental restraint which refused to look at those vague half-lights which come from the super-conscious world. But the time came when science could no longer be so restrained. Natural knowledge was found incapable of separation into measurable and conveniently limited departments. To do it justice a larger view had to be gained and subtler, bolder methods had to be used. Even in physics more and more reliance had to be placed upon mathematical theories which cannot be tested by direct observation, and in which concepts of the Infinite come to play an ever greater part. And when psychology made its researches into the phenomena of the sub-conscious—which some hold to be nearly allied to the super-conscious—a new meaning was read into the old motto: 'Yet more is to be found in me.' Thus science tends to become less positivist in tone and to rely more on hypotheses which can be verified only by the finest processes of the abstract intellect. It also reaches a fuller recognition of the infinite variety and complexity of the universe, and is thus less ready to dogmatize on the impassable limits of knowledge, more prepared to admit the impact of immeasurable influences on the mind of man.

Art, like Science, requires the discipline of concentration. 'The path of beauty lies through a certain restraint and "economy," through that perfect adaptation of form to idea, and banishment of all needless ornament which marked classical art at its best. But when this ideal has been approached, another and more sublime ideal is seen to lie beyond. The perfect expression of finite beauty no longer satisfies, and the artist strives to convey some hint or adumbration of an infinite beauty. Here, in the effort to express this transcendent idea, completeness and symmetry are no longer the one object of endeavour: it is found in the effort to express something of the "immortal longings" of the spirit of man.'

The same progress, and in the same direction, is found in the history of Morality. First there is the stage of Law and legal observance. Duties may be numerous and exacting, but they are there, clearly set forth in custom or enactment, and there is no inherent reason why the good man should not say, 'All these have I kept from my youth up.' But gradually, as reflexion and self-knowledge grow deeper, a doubt arises whether goodness is exhausted by the performance of any outward law; and, as moral experience advances, this doubt becomes an assurance that the moral end cannot be thus attained, but that there is an element of the Infinite in the moral Ideal. This is the truth expressed by the Psalmist in the words, 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad'; it underlies the discovery of Paul that 'the law is spiritual'; and it has been writ large in modern ethical theory by Kant, who teaches that the ideal is so high and so exacting that it cannot be attained in this life, but implies a faith in immortality.

Finally, and in the words of M. Boutroux, as Dr. Barbour translates and quotes them, '"Religion constitutes the endeavour to amplify, to enlarge, to transfigure the very foundations of our being, through that power which enables us to participate in an existence other than our own, and which strives to embrace even the infinite, *viz.*, love. And religion does really confer on nature the power of realizing what, from the naturalistic standpoint, was unrealizable. Religion pledges, in the innermost depths of the soul, the fundamental unity of the Given and of the Beyond, and she promises the gathering inflow of the latter into the former." Nor is this true only in the region of effort and action; the great religious spirits have also expressed the same bold paradox of the relation of the finite spirit to the Infinite in terms of aspiration and desire. Such a religious paradox we find in the lines of Mary E. Coleridge:—

"Is this wide world not large enough to fill thee
Nor Nature, nor that deep man's Nature, Art?
Are they too thin, too weak and poor to still thee,
Thou little heart?

Dust art thou, and to dust again returnest,
A spark of fire within a beating clod.
Should that be infinite for which thou burnest?
Must it be God?"'

What is the most distinctive thing about Christianity? What is it that gives Christianity its preeminence? What is it that distinguishes it utterly and for ever from all the religions of the world? It is that the followers of its Founder love Him.

It is not that He loves them. He does love them. 'Greater love hath no man than this.' But you might claim for Buddha, you might possibly claim for Muhammad, that they loved their followers. You cannot claim, however, that their followers love them. They did not love them even when they were with them on the earth. The wonder of Christianity is that Christians love the Lord Jesus Christ after He has gone to glory, that they love Him now as passionately as they loved Him at the beginning, that they are ready to lay down their lives for Him. That is what makes Christianity unique among the religions of the earth. That is what makes it *the* religion.

The idea is expressed and elaborated at length in a sermon by the Rev. W. E. ORCHARD, D.D., to be found in the volume already referred to of *The Christian World Pulpit.* The love of the soul for Jesus, says Dr. ORCHARD (who is one of our 'broad' theologians, remember), is unique in human experience. And he hints to the psychologist, so eagerly on the outlook for new material, that he should turn his attention to it. For, as we have said, it is a passionate love. It is that or it is nothing. Dr. ORCHARD dares even to refer it to the love that is between the sexes. The reference does not ignoble love to Jesus, which is purged from every base and even natural motive, but it ennobles sexual love, for it seems to show, he says, that sexuality and religious devotion have some obscure connexion.

It is a passion. It is not the love of abstract things like truth, sincerity, or justice. It is not even a hyperbole for spiritual adoration. It is a passion. It breaks into the poetry of passion in Bernard's 'Jesu, dulcis memoria,' and in Wesley's 'Jesu, Lover of my soul.' 'It takes up the Old Testament Song of Songs and reads into what is undoubtedly a romantic poem of pure though earthly love the sweet allegory of the sacred love between the soul and its Saviour. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." It seizes on David's elegy over Jonathan as expressing its own feelings. "His love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman." It is a love which lays hold of strong, masterful men like Bernard, or Loyola, or Gordon, and makes them like little children. It sometimes provokes a scornful smile from those who cannot understand; but then so does the ridiculous behaviour of a young couple on a bus in the breast of the boisterous and unfeeling schoolboy, who nevertheless may soon be doing precisely the same thing.'

Love to Christ is that 'expulsive power of a new affection' which Chalmers declared to be the only thing which could break the tyranny of sin. 'It drew Augustine from the soft entanglements of sensuality, when all the religions and philosophies of the ancient world had failed to set him free, to mourn for ever the years in which he had not known Christ: "O beauty of ancient days, yet ever new, too late have I loved Thee." It drew Francis from the romance of chivalry, the delights of luxury, the frolics of youthful escapades, to become the knight of the Prince of Peace, the bridegroom of lady poverty, the troubadour of the lowly Jesus. It has just drawn Albert Schweitzer, the brilliant young German doctor, eminent musician, terrible theological critic, frequenter of Berlin salons, to the barbarism, the loneliness, the dangers of the fever-stricken Congo, to tell the natives the story of Jesus. Sodden drunkards, depraved criminals, worn-out *roués*, leering harlots, have become sober, honest, pure, clean, for love of Jesus.'

Thus does Dr. ORCHARD preach his sermon. We wonder sometimes if it is a sermon or a song. But as soon as we come to the 'heads'—the inevitable three—we do not doubt that the song is a true sermon. What are the three heads of it?

The first is that love to Jesus must be love to a real historical person. It is the Christ of our own experience that we love? Yes, but the Christ of our own experience is the Christ of Calvary. Can you bring a case where it is not? And when it goes back to Calvary, it finds a Christ who demanded love, love before everything else, love and nothing else.

The second head is that our love to Jesus goes back to Jesus' love for us. The question 'Lovest thou me?' (Jn 21[17]), which is Dr. ORCHARD's text, presupposes 'as I have loved thee.' It is meaningless without that. It is impertinent. 'We love because he first loved us.' Here again Dr. ORCHARD thinks there is material for the psychologist. And for the theologian. For 'He loved me and gave himself for me'—that the follower of Jesus can say that, never having seen Jesus in the flesh, and find a response to that in the passion of his own heart's love for Jesus, is surely both psychology and theology the most profound.

The third head is that it takes us back to God. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son'—it takes us back to that. For without that we cannot explain the love of Jesus. And without the love of Jesus to us, we cannot explain our love to Jesus, as we have already seen. It takes us back to the love of God, where the psychologist is at fault, and even the theologian is in deep perplexity. But of the fact there is no doubt whatever. It is a chain. We know that God loves us because we love Jesus. His disciples might have loved Him because they found Him as a man well worthy of their love. But we who have not seen Him in the flesh could not love Him so. We could not love Him if He were not the Son of God. We could not love Him if it were not true that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

The Theology of Paul and the Teaching of Jesus Christ.

BY REV. J. G. JAMES, M.A., D.LITT., NEW BARNET.

WE are frequently being told that the theology of St. Paul as propounded in his Epistles is a hindrance rather than a help to those who would take the gospel of Jesus our Lord in all its directness and simplicity to their hearts. In one form or another this objection has been urged since the cry, 'The Return to Christ' was raised, and long before the Tübingen School came into being. The later developments in theology have brought it once more to the front, and we are continually hearing echoes of the same cry, that Paul corrupted the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. Renan has thus stated the charge. 'The writings of Paul have been a stumbling-block and a peril; they have caused the chief defects in Christian theology. Paul is the father of the subtle Augustine, the arid Aquinas, the sombre Calvinist, the sour Jansenist, and the ferocious theology which predestinates to damnation. Jesus is the father of those who seek repose for their souls in the dreams of the ideal world.'

It is really worth our while to look at this contention fairly and to consider what degree of truth there is in it. In so doing we may be enabled to bring out the distinctive value of Paul's testimony and the contribution he has made to religious truth. English writers do not as a rule seem to have taken a prominent place in this vital discussion, which has been going on now for some years, but it is a subject upon which every careful