

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

structure—we do not read of the owner's consent having been asked or obtained—would be a work of no small labour, the tiles being bituminously cemented together. And what of the assembled people in the room below as the work of destruction went on—the noise of the proceedings overhead interrupting our Lord's discourse, and as the roof was gradually broken through, pieces of broken tiling, mortar, and wood descending upon their heads?

A striking example of 'faith'—and 'works'—this means of obtaining access to the Saviour—yes, assuredly. But, if we take another, and simpler interpretation of the passages, faith, none the less, one may opine, is shown.

The τὸ μέσον in Luke's account of the incident (5¹⁰) may rightly be taken as corresponding to the *was't eddâr*, 'the middle (part) of the house,' or open square, around which the living apartments of an Eastern house are situated; cf. תְּבִיבָה תְּבִיבָה, the middle part of the house, the interior court (2 S 4⁶). For reasons of coolness and shade an awning is commonly stretched, as was the case in Roman theatres (*Lucr.* 6. 109), by a system of ropes and pulleys, above this sun-exposed space. It was here, in such place, we may assume, that our Lord was, the thronging people round Him. And into this 'middle part of the house' the four bearers lowered the 'bed' (blanket or mat of sheepskin, perhaps) upon which the paralytic lay, after they

had 'uncovered the covered place' (ἀπεστέγασαν τὴν στέγην) by tearing (or, violently pulling) up the covering (ἐξορύξαντες, Mk 2⁴). The small rooms of Eastern houses, it may be remarked, are scarcely capable of accommodating a crowd of people (ὄχλος, Mk 2⁴, Lk 5¹⁰).

Luke's account of the incident (5¹⁹, R.V.), '... they went up to the housetop and let him down through the tiles with his couch,' would seem to favour the commonly received interpretation of the passage. But, with a slight change of punctuation—removing the comma after δῶμα and placing it after κεράμων—the words would run, '... having ascended to the housetop by way of the tiled roof, they let down . . .' (ἀναβάντες ἐπὶ τὸ δῶμα διὰ τῶν κεράμων, καθήκαν . . .). The tiled roof of Eastern houses is commonly ascended by a staircase in the house.

It may be remarked that the reading διὰ is somewhat uncertain. Perhaps we should read ἀπό, omitted on account of its resemblance to the preceding ἐπί '... they went up to the housetop, and from the tiled roof let him down. . . .' κέραμος is not found in Attic Greek with the meaning of '(individual) tiles,' the singular being used collectively. The unusual word (κράββατος) found in Mark's version of the paralytic seems to be of Macedonian origin, and to mean 'a poor man's couch' (Lat. *grabatus*). The etymology is uncertain.

W. D. MORRIS.

Kelso.

Entre Nous.

A TEXT.

Luke xxii. 38.

"HE that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. And they said: Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough." They are strange words from His lips. They sound like the words of one who is preparing to meet Brute Force with Brute Force. He would seem to be arming His little band of followers for a last, hopeless, but brave resistance against overwhelming odds. Everything is to be sacrificed, money and the ordinary comforts of life (symbolised

by the cloak), in order to offer armed resistance to the foe. . . .

'It looked as though it was the only thing to be done. So it was. Not for Jesus, but for His disciples. They had not His vision into the heart of things. They could not as yet know anything of a Power stronger than Brute Force. . . .

'In order to meet Brute Force on its own ground, the only requisite, beyond good luck and the avoidance of blunders, is an overwhelming Force to set against it. The ship with 15-in. guns is better than one with 13-in. guns; and, quite apart from the righteousness of the cause, is much more likely to

call down the blessing of heaven. "God is with the big battalions." He cannot possibly be with the fools who venture to go to war with small battalions and small guns.

'Now the only question that concerned Christ, and which He would have His disciples discover, was whether the victory of Brute Force was any victory at all, and not an impostor, a hollow mockery, and a lie. And so their Captain shewed them the way, through what looked like overwhelming defeat on the Cross, to a Victory that was not won with two swords, nor with twenty, nor even with "twelve legions of angels. . . ."

'Dare we believe that there are other things than mere material possessions and prosperity and power, that make a nation great? Dare we believe that the most dangerous foes of a nation are not "flesh and blood," but spiritual foes: pride and selfishness, false ideals, unscrupulous policies, lying and deceit (under whatever honourable names they may pass muster), vice and intemperance, materialism and a lack of the vision of spiritual standards and values?

'If we believe that these are the things which destroy the soul of a nation, we shall, if we are humble, look at home more often than abroad for our foes; we shall lift war into another region and make it more worthy of the dignity of human nature. We shall know that wars arise within the thoughts and hearts of men, and there we shall find our battlefield. . . .

'We shall begin to see the utter folly of cracking skulls, in order to get right ideas into them. We shall begin to believe that Spirit is stronger than Matter, that the strongest foes are the foes of the Spirit, and the only adequate weapons are spiritual weapons. We shall begin to believe that Love is stronger than Fear.

'We shall then demand that the folly of armaments shall have an end, because they are inadequate for their purpose, and so an utter waste of public money and an insult to the intelligence of our fellow-men.

'We shall stand in the Garden with Christ and listen to those words of terrible scorn for all who take the sword: "Are ye come out, as against a robber, with swords and staves?" We shall understand something of the exquisite irony of Him who answered to those who said: "Lord, here are two swords," and said: "It is enough." Aye, more than enough!'

This interpretation of the passage from St. Luke is taken from a volume of addresses which the Rev. D. L. S. Pocock, British Chaplain at Berlin, has published this month through Messrs. Skeffingtons. The title of the volume is *The Shepherd of the Nations* (3s. 6d. net). The addresses were delivered, for the most part, to audiences composed of civilian and military prisoners of war. Mr. Pocock met their special need by dealing with their problems in the light of Christ's teaching. The publication of the volume is timely, and we hope it will be widely read, for it applies Christ's teaching to national and international life.

SOME TOPICS.

Memory.

Dr. Alfred Rowland, who has been a tower of strength of Congregationalism for many years, and who has lately retired from active work, has just published his *Autobiography*. As he has reached the ripe old age of eighty-three he has many interesting reminiscences of the great men of last generation—of Thomas Binney, of Newman Hall, of Guinness Rogers, of Spurgeon, and of Parker. He has given the biography the title of *An Independent Parson* (Congregational Union of England and Wales; 5s. net). It is a very modest account of a man who has made considerable history in his Church. It is written in the freest and freshest way. Here are two of the stories which Dr. Rowland tells against himself.

'On two occasions my memory has failed me in preaching. Once I had begun to quote the verse of a hymn, when I forgot the third line of it, so I said "I need not quote the whole verse; it is so familiar that even that boy playing in the gallery could no doubt finish it, if he paid attention." In the vestry afterwards, one of the deacons said: "That was a capital rebuke of yours, sir. I never knew the children to be so quiet as they were after you spoke." He little suspected the cause, and I confess I did not enlighten him. It is sometimes amusing to deceive the very elect.'

'The other incident occurred in Pembroke Tabernacle. I had just become engaged, and my dear fiancée was sitting immediately below me. I had begun the sentence, "And the woman of Samaria said," thus committing myself to a quotation, so that I could not extemporize. At that moment our eyes met, with the result that there was a pause, followed

by startled attention on the part of the people, as I exclaimed: "Upon my word, I forget what the woman of Samaria *did* say."

An Attractive Service.

'The other day I went into the porch of Chelsea Old Church, and there was a nice notice in the porch, just asking you not to make a noise, as service was going on: so we felt welcome and went in, and stood at the back: a sensible, pleasant-voiced parson was saying the week-day Evensong with a quiet little congregation, and there was nothing to spoil the beautiful Anglican service—no bad music or silly ceremonial, and no sermon at all. It was all so beautiful and impressive, in this, one of the few churches that have escaped restoration; the atmosphere was so free from contention and so full of prayer. And I thought then how small a thing can bring men in, and what small things keep them out—only there has been such an accumulation of small things—and I thought that if the churches ceased to give offence, men might come together again.'¹

The Reformation.

'I am far from apologising for the Reformation, still further from regarding it, in the fashion of some moderns, as a lamentable mistake. But it becomes increasingly obvious that the reformers did not go far enough; that in refusing the despotism of the empire only to further the growth of a stubborn nationalism, in throwing off the chains of the Papacy only to become enthralled by an illiberal view of the Bible, above all, in accepting from emperor and pope alike the view that material force is the criterion of right and wrong, they fell below the plain teaching of Jesus and left to our modern world a legacy of intolerance which has made it only too easy for hatred to masquerade as religious zeal, and for the followers of Jesus to devote to furious wrangling among themselves the passion that should have been turned to the missionary task of winning the world for Him. Nothing is more melancholy to the reflective Protestant mind than the plain fact that from the time of the Reformation till the beginning of the nineteenth century the supreme task of the Church passed almost out of sight.'²

¹ P. Dearmer, *The Church at Prayer*, 181.

² J. W. Coutts, *The Gospel and International Relations*, 95.

Environment.

'Beautiful country, how ill these narrow-minded superstitious folk fit in with the vast freedom your open gates seem to let in! And yet is it not true that all the wide lonely spaces of the earth have been inhabited by bigots, slaves fettered by narrow custom?

'You, nomads of the wilderness, who have night by night watched the great constellations circle overhead, have turned your thoughts to the stars and invented systems of astronomy older than Chaldea! You have watched the loud rivers roll down their dreadful floods in summer from their mysterious origins in the white mountains and called them sacred, and have made pilgrimages to the holy places. You have marked the seasons, and watched your flocks dying because the rains were held back, and rejoiced when, with the bursting of the storm, the dun-coloured hills have shone green again. Your world, a world of big things, was full of mysteries which baulked you at every turn; and in your search for truth you probed not deep. Presently iron custom shackled you; a necessity of existence founded on obedience to the Law. And error grew up alongside the truth, like tares, and hardened, and choked the truth, reigning as superstition in its stead.

'Is not this what happened to Inca and Arab, Mongol and Tibetan, overwhelmed by the spaciousness of earth and sky—a desert, lit by five thousand suns—heaven-kissing mountains? So the domination of the few could impose that cruellest of all burdens, custom, and petrify for ever the springs of originality!

'But to the children of a happier northern clime, where the mountains are low and the seas beckon men, and the stars are not always visible—to us, who were uncouth and ignorant when you had invented writing and could count the months of the year across the starry belt of heaven, was left the carrying on of the torch you had lit.'³

³ F. K. Ward, *The Mystery Rivers of Tibet*, 149 f.