

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

by the courage of hope, and delight himself in a security in which no possibility of danger can be discerned. So far from sitting solitary and forsaken, many shall come and pay court to him; he shall have all that should accompany a tranquil old age, with

The bounty and the benison of Heaven
To boot.

All these succours and blessings, however, depend on his instant and hearty penitence. If he remain impenitent, his will still incorrect to Heaven, he will meet the doom of the impenitent; his eyes will pine away with unsatisfied desire; every refuge of lies in which he has taken shelter will crumble into ruin; and his last hope will be fleeting, unsubstantial, irrevocable as the last breath of a dying man.

S. COX.

THE GOSPEL IN THE EPISTLES.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord.

As we have adopted the Apostles' Creed for a thread on which we may conveniently range our inquiry into this subject, we are met at the very outset of our examination by a remarkable feature in Christ's teaching, which is noticed alike by Evangelist and Apostle, and noticed, too, in that undesigned manner which renders their joint testimony of such rare value. Those who listened to Christ were listening to no ordinary teacher, and when men came to Him as suppliants for aid, or as followers and companions, they were called upon to prove their fitness in a way new in the history of the world's teaching. They could not come, as men came to the lectures of the Stoic

and Epicurean among the heathen, and after listening with more or less delight to the words of the Master, depart with no other gain than the gratification which they had experienced in the hearing of subtle arguments, and with no thought of following out in life the precepts which had been set before them. Nor could men approach the Lord as the Jews came to their authoritative teachers, to hear a rule expounded of some ceremonial observances which they must keep, and then, if zealous, go away and add one degree more of scrupulousness to their round of external ritual, and do no more. No, Christ demanded a new thing. He asked for a surrender of much more than the ears to his lessons, or the body to his regulations. His claim touched the soul, and the New Testament Scriptures are full of this new idea which was expressed by the word *faith*. Men were to believe in Jesus. We have called this demand *new*, for the Jew had no conception of such a frame of soul as it implied. His thought was always to *know* and to *do*, and of that distinction between themselves and Christians, the Jews of our own time still make their constant boast.¹ And the heathen world were so far strangers to the disposi-

¹ For a confirmation of this statement see "*Harmony and Disharmony between Judaism and Christianity*," two sermons (in which the points at issue are very fairly stated) by Dr. S. M. Schiller-Szinessy. As these sermons cannot easily be procured, it may be well to quote a sentence or two in illustration. "While on the Jewish side every page of the book of our instructions and our hopes teems with recommendations, exhortations, and commandments to search, to inquire, and to *know*, . . . Christianity has fixed its standard on *faith* as it is inculcated by Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, who may emphatically be called the Apostle of Faith." And again he speaks of "the boast which has for its cause the possession of *knowledge*, as distinguished from and superior to that of *faith*."

tion which Jesus asked of all who became his disciples, that Christianity was compelled, as we shall see, to adopt a new phraseology, to find new words wherewith to explain this new condition of discipleship. For the belief which Christ demanded was to be no mere acknowledgment of Him as a powerful teacher; no mere credence given to statements which men heard Him make; nor were his disciples to rest content with a desire for fellowship with Him. Their belief was to be of such a kind as would pervade the whole of their lives, whether He were present with or away from them, and was to become the moving principle of every action from that time forward: it was to be a sure unswerving confidence that in Jesus Christ God had revealed to man the way of salvation.

One instance will explain what we mean by what we have ventured to call a new phraseology. In St. John's Gospel (Chap. viii. 30, *seq.*) Jesus is related to have been discoursing on the close union between the Father and Himself, and among other things He says, "He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone." We are told that the effect of his discourse was a great increase in the number of his followers; and the character of their acceptance of his teaching is indicated by a phrase which is peculiarly employed by the writers of the New Testament to designate that adherence to Christ which alone constituted true discipleship. "As he spake these words many believed on him" (*πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν*). This is not the Greek of classical authors. It is a novel mode of expression, invented to describe the sort of allegiance which Christians owed to their Lord and Saviour. Nor has it, since the

times of the writers of the New Testament, been found to be such an expression as could be applied in any way differently from that in which the authors of the Gospels and Epistles used it. They had to speak of a new thing, and they have framed their Greek expression in a very unusual way, and made the phrase peculiarly their own; and from them it has become the language of the Churches, and stands in the forefront of our creeds.

For when in the New Testament the word πιστεύειν is used as the classical authors use it, it may many times be seen what a different sense the writers attach to it. In the very next verse after that which has just been quoted we come upon an illustration. There were many among the Jews who listened to the words of Jesus without any inclination to become his followers. Their great boast was that they were Abraham's seed; and teachers who told them, as Christ's forerunner had done, that God was able of the very stones to raise up children unto Abraham, were not likely to meet with ready acceptance among such men. Yet these very men are styled in the verse on which we are dwelling, "Those Jews who believed on Jesus." But here we have the phrase which is most common in classical Greek. Unhappily in our language we have no means of conveying the subtle distinction which exists in the original, τοὺς πεπιστευκότας αὐτῷ Ἰουδαίους. The Greek means no more than that these Jews acknowledged the power of Jesus as a teacher; and this we can see from the dialogue which follows. Our Lord tells them, in a manner which implies at the outset that they were no true followers of Him, "If ye

continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They answered Him, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." The Lord's reply is, "Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin. . . . I know that ye are Abraham's seed, but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you." We see, then, what sort of belief these men had. It was the belief of the devils, who believe and tremble, but not the true faith which Christ sought from his disciples.

Of course such a recognition of Christ's teaching as theirs was must precede true belief; and therefore this expression (*πιστεύειν αὐτῷ*) may likewise be found used of those who had begun to give heed to Jesus, and who afterwards yielded themselves to Him as their Saviour: to whom, in consequence, the more specially Christian phrase (*πιστεύειν εἰς αὐτόν*) could in the end be applied, for the greater includes the less. But what it is desired here to point out is the peculiar selection by the Evangelists and Apostles of words neither classical nor usual, whereby the surrender of the life to Christ should be emphatically described. Now throughout the writings of St. Paul we find both constant indications that faith was needed for those who would join the new communion, and also that this expression for faith in Him which we have styled specially Christian is of perpetual occurrence. We need scarcely illustrate what we have said of Christ's demand for faith from his followers and from those who sought his aid, by quotations from the Gospels. Christ's words (Mark ix. 23) to the father of the demoniac child, "*If thou canst believe, all*

things are possible to him that believeth ;” and to Jairus (Luke viii. 50), sorrowing for his dead daughter, “ *Believe only*, and she shall be made whole,” are instances of what happened in every case when suppliants came to Christ. And in St. Matthew (Chap. xviii. 6), speaking of those who above all others might be called his own, Jesus employs the very phraseology on which we are commenting. “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones *which believe in me*” (τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ).

But it is, as we might expect, when we come to the Fourth Gospel, that we find the phrase most abundant. St. John has recorded more of the discourses of our Lord than the Synoptists ; and those which he has presented to us are precisely those in which the doctrines of Christ are more specially developed. He deals with the words of Jesus much more than with the works. Demands for faith are abundant here too, as when (Chap. xi. 26) Christ says to Martha, “Whosoever liveth and *believeth in me* shall never die,” and waits for the expression of her faith before He raises her brother to life ; and in the interview with Thomas (Chap. xx. 29), “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed ;” a passage which is followed immediately (*Verse 31*) by the statement of the Evangelist that the miracles of Jesus were recorded that men might “believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *believing* they might have life by his name.” And for the phrase πιστεύειν εἰς αὐτὸν we might quote almost every Chapter of the Gospel. In Chap. ii. 11 it is found after the account of the miracle at Cana in

Galilee, "His disciples *believed on him.*" In Chap. iii. 15 we are taught concerning true believers "that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have eternal life." In Chap. vi. 35 Jesus testifies, "He that *believeth in me* shall never thirst;" and in Chap. xii. 44 the phrase is three times repeated, "He that *believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him* that sent me." Yet long before any of these Gospels were written St. Paul exhibits the same peculiarities of phraseology in his Epistles. Everywhere there is made from those who would become followers of Christ the like demand which the Lord made for Himself when He was on earth. The salvation which is set forth in the Gospel according to St. Paul, as well as according to those who are specially named Evangelists, is effectual only through faith. So (Romans i. 16) we find the Apostle declaring, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation *to every one that believeth.*" And in the same epistle (Chap. x. 4) he declares, "Christ is the end (*i.e.*, the final aim and purpose) of the law unto righteousness *to every one that believeth.*" And to the Corinthians (1 Cor. i. 21) he writes in like manner: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save *them that believe;*" and to the Galatians (Chap. iii. 22) he says, "The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given *to them that believe.*" And instances of the same kind abound, shewing that the condition on which men were to be admitted into the privileges of the Christian covenant was that same *faith* on which the Founder had always insisted. And the Apostle

uses the formula (*πιστεύειν εἰς αὐτόν*) at this early date exactly as we have seen it in St. John's Gospel, which was written nearly at the close of the century. In Romans (Chap. ix. 33) we have an instructive example, shewing how St. Paul has modified a quotation from the Septuagint, and fashioned it, in its application to Christ, on this special Christian model. "Behold," he quotes, "I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence, and whosoever *believeth on him* shall not be ashamed." The latter part of the quotation is from Isaiah (Chap. xviii. 16), but there the words are simply, "He that believeth shall not make haste," *i.e.*, flee away hastily, as men do when ashamed. The passage, as first written, applies to the Messiah, but the specially Christian portion of the phrase was left for St. Paul to introduce after Christ had appeared and taught men what the nature of true faith was. And the Apostle uses the same text with the same modification in the very next Chapter (x. 11). Perhaps one of the most interesting passages of this nature is in the Epistle to the Galatians (Chap. ii. 16). St. Paul is speaking of St. Peter separating himself from the Gentile converts. Such a separation was not according to the truth of the gospel, and in his declaration of what is gospel truth, St. Paul says, "A man is not justified by works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; so we have *believed in Jesus Christ*, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law."

We have dwelt thus long on this usage of the Christian Scriptures, because such a similarity of language, in an expression which must have been

of hourly occurrence in the intercommunion of the early Christians, shews that from the very first the teaching which was given to the converts was, in this marked particular, exactly what the Gospels represent it to have been; and such a resemblance is so thoroughly without design, so completely a natural result of the circumstances out of which it sprang, that it seems to be of the highest importance to put it prominently forward. Christ's demand for faith, and the language descriptive of that state of mind which He sought for in his followers, have left their imprint on all the literature of the Christian society; and this feature is to be found alike in the letters of St. Paul to his own converts in Corinth and Galatia, and to those Christian brethren at Rome whose first teaching had come from other lips than his. They all use, and all understand the same expressions—and these no common ones—on this solemn question of faith in Christ.

Nor do we deem it of slight importance that our inquiry shews that there exists a somewhat fuller resemblance between St. Paul's language and that of the Fourth Gospel than between the Epistles and the writings of the other Evangelists. St. John has left us much more of what may be termed doctrinal teaching than of history in his Gospel. His subject-matter is, therefore, much more akin to that of St. Paul than are the more purely narrative records of the Synoptists. The result which we have arrived at from an inspection of the language of the two writers is exactly what we should expect. The Apostle (himself divinely taught by Christ) employs special language for describing the

fellowship of Christians with their leader ; and when the beloved disciple has to record the words of the Lord Himself, we find a complete unity between the two modes of speech. With the preacher, as with the Evangelist, true Christianity is (*πιστεύειν εἰς Χριστόν*) to believe in Jesus Christ.

When we turn to the first article of the Apostles' Creed, we find allusion made therein both to the Divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. As human, he is Jesus, so named from his birth ; as Divine, he is Christ, the anointed of God before the world began. Towards God his relation is that of the only Son ; towards men He is set forth as their Lord.

Let us look first at what our Epistles tell us of the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ. By the title of *Son of God* He is called in many places. To the Galatians (Chap. i. 16) St. Paul says, "When it pleased God . . . to reveal *his Son* in me," in allusion to the Divine revelation which had been vouchsafed to him on his road to Damascus ; and once more, referring to that knowledge of the early history of Christ which he must himself have at first been taught, as he was now to be the teacher of others, he says (Gal. iv. 4), "When the fulness of time was come, *God sent forth his Son*, made of a woman ;" and immediately afterwards, speaking of those whom he calls heirs of God through Christ, he writes, "God hath sent forth the spirit of *his Son* into your hearts." And in the other Epistles the like teaching is repeated in every form. To the Corinthians (2 Cor. i. 19) he styles the Saviour "the *Son of God*,

Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us ;” while over and over again God is called “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. xv. 6; 2 Cor. i. 3; xi. 31). In the opening words of the Epistle to the Romans (Chap. i. 1-3), speaking of the gospel of God, to the preaching of which he himself had been separated, he says that the message thereof is “concerning *his Son Jesus Christ* ;” and in the next verse he teaches that Jesus was declared to be the *Son of God* with power. And in a following chapter (Rom. viii. 16, 17), in stronger language than that of the Epistle to the Galatians, believers are called the children of God ; and immediately there follows, “And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,” who is therefore in a special sense the Son of God. Conformity to the likeness of Christ is called (Rom. viii. 29) “being conformed to the image of *his Son*,” while (2 Cor. iv. 4) Christ Himself is said to be *the image of God*. But not only so, the Apostle declares as emphatically as any of the Evangelists that Christ is God Himself. In the Epistle to the Romans (Chap. ix. 5) we read, “*Christ* who is over all, *God blessed for ever*.” And that He was with the Father in heaven before He came to earth, we are told when St. Paul states (1 Cor. xv. 47) that the second man, Jesus Christ, who brought life into the world, as the first Adam had brought death, was in truth “*the Lord from heaven*.” And we may gather testimony to the same effect from a passage where the Apostle expounds a Scripture of the older covenant. The words are from Deuteronomy (Chap. xxx. 12), and were, of course, addressed to Israel long before the coming of the

Saviour in the flesh. "Who shall go up for us into heaven?" are the words in the Law, and this the Apostle explains by inserting, "to bring down Christ from above." In looking at all these passages, we should try to realize how much must have been heard of the gospel story before those to whom such hints (for they are no more) as are herein contained could be intelligible. They are truly *φωνάντα συνετόσω*, and nothing else; words which the instructed can understand, but which would come with their full weight to nobody besides. The Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans must have heard how Jesus Christ had claimed, while on earth, to be the Son of God. They must have heard how He had said, "I and the Father are one." They must have been told how this "Son of God with power" had wrought, during his earthly life, many marvellous works, and had appealed to those who saw Him, "If ye believe not me, believe the works." They must have been taught that He through whom they were to become heirs of God had said to his disciples, "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have believed that I came forth from God." They must have heard also of the witness borne at Christ's birth by the angelic choir, "This day is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." It would be no startling thing for such people to read, when it came to be written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." And when that sublime teaching is accepted in its full meaning, there is nothing in the Gospels regarding the divinity of Christ which remains to be learnt.

Let us now turn to what these Epistles tell us of the *human* nature of the Lord. In the Epistle to the Romans (Chap. v. 15) St. Paul expressly speaks of our Lord as "*one man* Jesus Christ;" and that there may be no question about the notion of true humanity which the Apostle meant to predicate concerning Jesus, He is put (as in 1 Cor. xv. 47), by the comparison in this text, on a level with the first Adam. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses. . . . But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by *one man*, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." But we have still stronger and more definite expressions concerning the humanity of our blessed Lord. For in speaking of the Israelitish nation (Rom. ix. 5) the Apostle tells his hearers that from that race Christ came (*τὸ κατὰ σάρκα*) as far as flesh was concerned. Therefore the Jesus of whom the Romans had heard was a human Jesus, born a Jew. But to understand the hint so briefly given, they must have heard much more. They must have been taught that the human in Christ Jesus was not all, that therewith was also combined a Divine nature. If Christ had been born into the world with no different characteristics than other men possess, or if the Romans had never been told this, what need for that expression *according to the flesh*? If He were a Jew, born like other Jews, He was of course an Israelite in this respect, and Scripture would have recorded for the instruction of these converts something which is superfluous, a practice not lightly to be charged on the sacred writers. We may be quite sure that the

whole history of the Divine, as well as of the human side of Christ's life, had been fully set forth to the converts, and that this short sentence conveyed to their minds all that the Gospels tell us of Jesus as the miraculously conceived Son of a human mother, but at the same time the Son of God, born to save his people from their sins.

But we have a more definite statement still. In writing to the Galatians, St. Paul (Chap. iv. 4) says, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Leaving out of our consideration for the present all in this passage except what relates to Jesus as man, can we for a moment suppose that these Galatian Christians would have appreciated such a sentence as this, occurring in a brief Epistle, unless they had been fully instructed in what we call gospel history? That God's Son should have been born of a woman was an idea inconceivable except they had been thoroughly instructed concerning the conception of Christ by the Holy Ghost. They must have heard how He was born of the blessed Virgin; they must have been taught how in his infancy He and his parents conformed to all the ceremonial observances of the law of Moses; that He whom they were called upon to worship had been in outward appearance a Jew, living among Jews, and observing the law just as other men did. But they must have heard more than this. They must have been told how He not only observed, but said that He came to fulfil the law, that his mission was not to destroy, but to enlarge the scope of that Divine revelation. The

sentence of St. Paul implies too that Christ continued to observe the law when He was more advanced in age, and that during his life He confined his ministrations mainly to the house of Israel. Those who read this Letter had heard, we cannot doubt, how at the first Christ said of Himself that He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and that to his disciples his first commission had been that they should preach to Israel only, and that He had expressly said, "Into any city of the Gentiles enter ye not."

But they to whom the Apostle wrote were themselves Gentiles. They must therefore have likewise been taught that there had been given a wider commission, put forth by Christ at the end of his life; they must have been told, nay, themselves were a living evidence on the subject, that now it was not only those who were under the law whom Christ had come to redeem, but that his ministers were sent forth "into all the world, to preach the gospel to every creature; to teach men all things which he had commanded, and to baptize them in his name." We thus see that the men who, being Gentiles, could appreciate the full meaning of this sentence of the Apostle, must have had imparted to them at least an outline of the Gospel history from the birth of Jesus Christ till his ascension. *We* can understand all these brief allusions, because we have the Gospels as our key. The early converts could not have understood them without teaching of a similar kind. With our Gospels before us the allusions in the Epistles are plain, and those for whom they were written must have been prepared by oral teaching

to appreciate their words as well as we can. That is, so far as these two points of Christ's Godhead and manhood are concerned, the Roman, Corinthian, and Galatian Christians had heard orally within some twenty or thirty years of the death of Jesus what we now read and call the Gospels.

J. RAWSON LUMBY.

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES.

HEBREWS xii. 1.

THE authorized English translation of the Bible has taken so strong a hold upon the memories and associations of Englishmen, that we find it difficult to adapt ourselves to an improved rendering, or even to correct in our minds an ambiguity of which, when reminded of it, we find that we were quite aware.

In Hebrews xii. 1, the idea of witnesses as persons looking on at a spectacle has so taken possession of our minds, that few of us pause to ask ourselves whether this is really the conception which the writer intended to convey. But if we go into the question etymologically, we shall see that it is at least very doubtful whether this meaning will hold.

What is the meaning of the Greek word *μάρτυς* (witness)? There can be no question that it means one who bears testimony. Neither in classical Greek nor in the New Testament is any instance to be found where any other meaning attaches to it. For example, it is used of the witnesses who gave testimony against Stephen (Acts vii. 58); and in 1 Timothy v. 19, where we read, *Κατὰ πρεσβυτέρου κατηγορίαν μὴ παραδέχου, ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ δύο ἢ τριῶν μαρτύρων* (against