

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

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS.¹

“But when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all the nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”—Marr. xxv. 31-33.

IN this great prophecy, with which St. Matthew closes our Lord's active ministry, our Lord's eye has first fallen upon the immediate future, the judgment that is to pass upon the Jewish race; Jerusalem is to be destroyed and the time is not uncertain; it may be anticipated as surely as we can know that summer is nigh by the budding and foliage of the fig tree. “This generation shall not pass till all *these* things (ταῦτα πάντα) be accomplished.” Then His eye has taken a wider range; He has looked forward to a more distant and a more comprehensive judgment; but the date of that is uncertain; of that day (περὶ ἡμέρας ἐκείνης) knoweth no man; it will be as little anticipated as the flood had been; and the parables of the faithful and wise servant, of the virgins, and of the talents, show the nature and standard of the judgment that is to pass upon Christians. Then, in the words of the text, a new scene in the drama is opened: “*but* when the Son of man shall come in His glory and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory.” It is not clear that a different time is intended, but it is clear that a new case is being ushered in for trial, that the Judge has once more taken His place upon the judgment-seat. Who then are they who now stand at the bar? “Before Him shall be gathered all the nations.” The words

¹ A sermon preached before the University of Oxford, on October 15th, 1899, the first Sunday of the Academical year.

are ambiguous, but I cannot help thinking that the more modern view of their interpretation is right. This view has been advocated by several commentators, and by none better than by that vigorous, human-hearted, thoughtful, interesting, and spiritual theologian, Dr. Bruce, of Glasgow,¹ who has done so much to help us to understand the parables of the New Testament, and whose loss we have lately mourned. It is that we have here Christ's judgment on the heathen world. The judgment on the Jewish nation is over; the judgment on the Christian Church is over; it is the heathen and the heathen alone who are being tried. The title given to the Judge supports this view: He is not only the Son of man, which expresses the widest contact with all human nature, but He is also *the King*—and the title is used here of Him for the first time—the title which expresses the thought of universal imperial rule. The surprise of both the good and the bad—"when saw we thee?"—is most natural in the mouths of those who have never heard of Christ in their lives; and, most strongly of all, the standard by which they are tried favours this interpretation; the standard is that of the simplest instincts of our common humanity: have they done, or have they failed to do, acts of kindness? It is the same standard by which Eliphaz the Temanite thought to condemn Job, the great type of Gentile character in the Old Testament. "Is not thy wickedness great? neither is there any end to thy iniquities. . . . Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry, . . . thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken: therefore snares are round about thee and sudden fear troubleth thee" (Job xxii. 5-9). It is akin to the sacred importance attached to the duty of hospitality in many heathen nations, and notably among the Semitic tribes. "From the earliest times of Semitic

¹ *Expositor's Bible, ad loc.*

life the lawlessness of the desert, in which every stranger is an enemy, has been tempered by the principle that the guest is inviolable. A man is safe in the midst of enemies as soon as he enters a tent or even touches the tent-rope. To harm a guest or refuse him hospitality is an offence against honour which covers the perpetrator with indelible shame.”¹ Crabbe, basing his poem on the tales of European travellers in Africa, has made the African negress soliloquize in exactly this spirit as she takes pity on the wayworn traveller:—

“What though so pale his haggard face,
 So sad and sunk his looks,” she cries,
 “And far unlike our nobler race
 With crisped locks and rolling eyes?
 Yet misery marks him of our kind;
 We see him lost, alone, afraid;
 And pangs of body, griefs of mind,
 Pronounce him man and ask our aid.”

When we consider, further, that the thought of the judgment on the heathen was a common one in Jewish prophecy and apocalypse, it would be surprising that our Lord should not have dealt with it anywhere. Indeed, the language of St. Matthew may be based upon that of the great scene of judgment in the prophecy of Joel: “Let the nations bestir themselves and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations (*πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*) round about” (iii. 12). But how striking is the contrast between the vengeance taken on the heathen nations in those apocalypses and the discrimination of this judgment, with its unequalled tenderness and severity! The recognition of the possibilities of heathen repentance and salvation, in the book of Jonah, approaches nearest to it in the Old Testament.

It is, then, the heathen who are being tried “without

¹ W. Robertson Smith: *The Religion of the Semites*, p. 76.

law" by their conformity to human instincts; and the parable illustrates the saying of our Lord in St. John's Gospel, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (x. 16). Thus far the parable seems clear, but one point remains doubtful, and that is the persons to whom the heathen have or have not shown kindness. When our Lord says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of *these my brethren*, even these least, ye did it unto Me," He may be thinking of *Christians*; and thus the judgment will be only upon the heathen for their treatment of *Christians* in trouble. We shall picture our Lord standing with the Christians at His side, and the heathen brought up in front for trial; and "*these my brethren*" will be a sharp antithesis to "*you.*" Or He may be thinking more widely of all men as His brethren, and the scope of the judgment will be wider. We shall picture Him with all the heathen "round about" (Joel iii. 12), He sitting in the centre to judge them for their conduct to each other.

There is much in the Old Testament analogies of the judgment on the heathen for their treatment of the Jews in captivity, as well as in the ordinary use in the New Testament of the term "brethren," which favours the former view. On the other hand, it is perfectly natural that our Lord at such a moment should have identified Himself with all humanity. In the former case we should think of such instances as Rahab welcoming the Jewish spies, the woman of Sarepta feeding the prophet Elisha, Ebedmelech the Ethiopian rescuing the prophet Jeremiah, or the barbarians of Melita showing the shipwrecked Paul no common kindness. In the latter case we may include all loyal worshippers of *Ζεύς ξένιος*, all doers of kindness the whole world over, all who in entertaining strangers have entertained angels, and more than angels, unaware.

When once the true interpretation is seized, several inferences follow of the greatest interest and import.

1. In the first place there is a negative inference. It is not fair to infer, as is sometimes done, from this parable that the ultimate test for Christians is supplied here.

It is said sometimes that the stress laid by Christians on faith is unjustified because in the ultimate resort our Lord condemns only for failing to do kind deeds. Not so. That is the ultimate standard only for the heathen; no doubt Christians must also reach it, but for them there lies also beyond it the deeper tests supplied by the previous parables which imply faith in Christ as the Bridegroom and the Master. That is the lowest pass standard, and they are candidates for honours.

2. More positively,—it is scarcely necessary to point out the claim which the Lord makes for Himself here. His presence is in every Christian, perhaps in every human being. To help forward the cause of humanity, to aid any single person in trouble is help to Him. He is present, He is conscious, He is grateful, He is mindful of every such deed. But it is more interesting to point out how we have in this scene a great picture of His attitude towards the other religions of the world, and therein a guidance for ourselves. It is often surely to many of us a perplexity in modern days to know quite what is our right relation to the good that lies outside our own circle. Whatever body we belong to, if we belong to the Church of England, if we belong to the far more comprehensive Church of Rome, if we form smaller sects of those drawn together by a close adherence to some one side of truth, there is always the contrast between the narrow circle which seems to contain the fullest embodiment of truth and the large mass of the world that lies outside it. No less striking a contrast must have presented itself to the minds of the Twelve as they sat on the slopes of Mount Olivet, and felt sure that their Teacher had the words

of truth more fully than all other teachers in the world ; and in this parable they would have heard His judgment on all the millions of mankind that lay outside their own " little flock."

Let us note it carefully.

(a) There is a thorough recognition of the good. All the nations will contribute to the saved ; they will have their sheep to stand on the King's right hand. So it was that St. Paul could speak of God as Saviour of all men, and not only of those who have conscious faith ; and could contemplate Gentiles doing by nature the things of the law, and acquitted in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men. So Justin Martyr met the objection that Christ could not benefit those who lived in pre-Christian times by that which he quotes as already the traditional teaching of the Church (*ἔδιδάχθημεν*)—that Christ existed before all creation, that He was the reason in which every race of mankind had share, and that those who lived in harmony with reason are Christians, even if called godless, whether among the Greeks, like Socrates and Heracleitus, or among the Jews like Abraham, Ananias, Azariah, Misael and Elijah (Apol. i. 46). So Clement of Alexandria treated philosophy as given to be a schoolmaster to lead the Greeks to Christ, as the law had been given to the Jews (Strom. i. 5). Our problem has been the problem of all the Christian ages, and it has been, nearly always, solved in the same way ; and ours is only more difficult that we have to recognise this good, this possibility of salvation, not only in those who have not heard of Christ, but in those who have heard of Him and rejected Him. We have to admit that the rejection of some presentations of Christianity may prove a schoolmaster to lead men and women to Christ.

In the last vacation there has passed away in Richard Congreve, at the time of his death an Honorary Fellow of Wadham College, one who, reared here in Christianity,

sacrificed all his earthly prospects by renouncing it in the interest of what seemed to him the highest truth, and devoted his whole life to the service of humanity. "The key to his life" (it was said over his grave) was faith in, fidelity to, the greatest of humanity's servants." What though he thought that the name of that servant was Auguste Comte? Surely, in spite of that mistake, the Father has a blessing for him too, and he will know that he has really been serving one greater than Comte.

(b) Further, in our recognition of the good, our clue is *love*. Do the actions, does the teaching, lead to brotherhood? Each act of kindness is an implicit recognition that self is no longer our centre, that others have claims upon us. The Greek philosophy, the life in harmony with reason, was a recognition of this on the intellectual side; the standard of right action was to be something beyond that of the individual's own judgment, it was the universal reason in which others had share. The Jewish law proclaimed the same on the moral side, the love of God and our neighbour taking the place of self. The Semitic bond of hospitality was a recognition of a duty to those who lay outside the narrow limits of family or of tribe: and so, in a lower stage, each simple act of kindness is an act of unselfishness, of submission to the claims of others; it is the germ of that absolute surrender to Christ, to that power outside ourselves, who has a right to claim our full allegiance—which is faith. It is ever expansive, for, in the words of Mr. Congreve, "the progress in love is, in fact, the only form of progress which may be kept up to the end. Our natural powers diminish and our intellect loses its force, but in love we may all advance to the end." "Faith itself," wrote Dr. Hort, in explaining the 13th Article (*Life and Letters*, ii. p. 337), not being an intellectual assent to propositions, but an attitude of heart and mind, is present in a more or less rudimentary state in

every upward effort and aspiration of men. Doubtless, the faith of non-Christians is not, in the strict sense, faith in Jesus Christ . . . but such faith, when ripened, grows into the faith of Jesus Christ; so it finds its rational justification in the revelation made through Him. The principle of the Article teaches us to regard all the good there is in the world as what one may call imperfect Christianity, not as something essentially different, requiring, so to speak, to be dealt with by God in a wholly different manner." Our Lord has taught us, then, to see in every doer of kindness—

Heaven's possible novitiates
 With self-subduing freedom free.

* * * *

Each of secret kingly blood,—
 Though not inheritors as yet
 Of all their own right royal things.

There is a kingdom already prepared for them, into which the King will, in due time, admit them.

But such recognition of good does not imply any light-hearted optimistic view that one religion is as good as another, and that each may be left to work out his own salvation. Soon after this parable was spoken, the Lord draws the Twelve apart to the upper chamber: there He makes them realize their separation from the world, and in that separation the closeness of their tie with them, the strength of the bond of true brotherhood, the certainty of a full knowledge of truth: He prays not for the world, but for them and for those who shall believe on Him through their preaching; and, before His Ascension, He sends them out to make disciples of all the nations. The very same races, the *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*, who, while left to their own religions and their own instincts, will contribute their quota to the kingdom, are yet to be evangelized and made disciples, made learners of new truths.

There can be little doubt that the great motive of missionary work has often been something very different from this: it has been assumed that the heathen as such were necessarily lost, and the motive has been a generous self-sacrificing desire to save them from this terrible fate. We cannot, in the light of the parable, make the appeal for mission work exactly in this form. Yet, surely, sufficient reason for continued and increased effort remains.

For, in the first place, the simple human instincts of kindness and generosity may degenerate. The Bishop of Melanesia has told us, not long ago, how within the memory of living man the natives of one of the Melanesian islands have learnt from their neighbours the habits of cannibalism: and Sir Alfred Lyall's *Asiatic Studies* have been reiterating for us afresh the certainty at the present moment of the decay of Hinduism under the solvent of European education, and the danger to moral progress implied in this decay.

Again, the purpose of missionary work is to complete and carry forward these germinal instincts into their full development. This is what the King is represented as doing in the parable: He leads the heathen forward to understand the unity of all human nature and its consummation in Himself; and so, if we turn to that beautiful description of Burmese Buddhism, which has lately been depicted in Mr. Fielding's *The Soul of a People*, we cannot rise from the book without feeling both the strength and beauty of the love, the brotherhood, fostered by it, and yet its need of extension and deepening. On the one hand, we have the teaching of the Buddha himself, "the teaching of love, charity, and compassion, eternal love, perfect charity, endless compassion," given by "the teacher of the Great Peace"; there is the persevering quest after truth on his part—"he sought on till he found, and what he found he gave as an heritage to men for ever, that the

way might be easier for them than it had been for him": there is, too, the great compassionate respect of the masses of the people for religion as manifested in the mendicant monks. And yet, how wanting this religion is, in some points, even with respect to brotherhood! It places woman on a lower religious level than man; it fails to satisfy her instincts of prayer for those whom she loves; it stands apart from daily life and does not consecrate the marriage tie; it has no message for the dying man; and, therefore, it has to be supplemented by practices drawn from more primitive beliefs.

What a sphere then here for missionary work! There the alphabet of the gospel of love has been learnt. Can we recognise it? can we train its learners to put the letters together till they spell out that name in which there is, in which there can be, neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, the name Christ Jesus? Certainly it can only be, if we are bringing them the religion of a fuller brotherhood and a completer love.

This parable may seem to have little bearing upon us to-day, who are starting on a new academical year. We shall indeed be tried by higher standards than this. The test of an University life will be found rather in the parables of the virgins and of the talents. Shall we show the ready wisdom of the wise virgins? shall we keep the lamps of hope and enthusiasm which we bring from school supplied with fresh oil? shall we have the ready alertness to welcome truth coming at unexpected moments and in unexpected ways? Shall we trade faithfully with the talents which our Master has entrusted to our care? Shall we keep up a high ideal of God's nature and the blessing of His service? or shall we allow our slothfulness to degrade our conception of God Himself till we think Him "a hard man"? These are the questions which we shall have to answer, and yet even the simple lesson of the sheep and the goats has its

reference to us. There are problems of the true methods of charity on which we should be making up our minds. There are in college life the lonely and the unpopular, to whom a word of sympathy may be everything; there is often among us "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos viii. 11); there are those who long to see their way through perplexity and difficulty, and in helping them we are helping Christ. St. Augustine finely paraphrases our Lord's words in this application, and he makes Him say, *Cum unus ex minimis meis discit, ego disco.*¹ That saying is a word of encouragement for us teachers. If our college sermons touch the heart and kindle it into the desire of service, if our philosophy fosters moral discipline and a real love of truth, if our political economy leaves us better instructed in brotherhood, if our theology makes us reverent towards God, then the Christ is learning in each pupil, His needs are being satisfied, His powers of service are being enlarged.

It is a word of encouragement and stimulus also for pupils. Look beyond your studies to those to whom you in after life will be called to minister. Make your studies sound, sure, real, that you may have bread and not a stone to give to those who ask you. See that you keep up your hope and faith in truth, that you may be able to speak "a word to the weary." Deepen your own character, that it may be a strength to others. Know yourselves as well as your books; for in the words of St. Bernard:²

"There are many who know many things, but know not their own characters. They criticise others, and neglect themselves; they seek God by external evidences, and they know not the internal evidence of their own heart, where God is enshrined deeper within.

¹ In Joh. Tr. XXI. cap. v.

² In Cantica, Serm. xxxvi.

“For there are some who wish for knowledge only for knowledge’s sake, and that is unworthy curiosity.

“And there are some who wish for knowledge that they may be known to possess it, and that is unworthy vanity.

“There are, too, those who wish for knowledge as a source of gain, and that is unworthy trafficking.

“But there are also those who wish for knowledge that they may edify others, and that is charity.

“There are, too, those who wish for knowledge that they may be edified, and that is wisdom.”

WALTER LOCK.

A CRITICISM OF THE NEW CHRONOLOGY OF PAUL.

(Concluded.)

OUR argument in the two preceding articles has issued in the following conclusions: 1. The positive argument of O. Holtzmann and his followers is valueless; 2. The Eusebian chronology advocated by Blass, if at all admissible, must be modified, not by the subtraction of a year to make it agree with the results of Holtzmann, as proposed by Harnack, but by the addition of a year. This will not only satisfy the three synchronisms which Ramsay has shown to be still valid, but will also meet the true requirements of the calendar argument, in regard to which he has been misled by a too exclusive dependence upon Lewin. Curiously, the two alternative dates for Paul’s arrest, 55 or 58, which our review of the calendar argument has left as the only possibilities, are just the two between which we should be forced to choose according as we adopted the (properly modified) Eusebian dating, or were influenced by the objections of the dominant school of Wieseler, Lewin, Schürer, Lightfoot, Ewald, Weizsäcker, Wendt and others