

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 HISTORICAL CHRIST OF ST. PAUL.

I. THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS (*Concluded*).

ROMANS xiii. 7, 10, 14.—Let us repeat the principle which we have laid down in the previous Section. We must always regard the moral teaching of St. Paul as in his own view a distinctively *Christian* morality. He never gives it to the world as something elaborated out of his own natural consciousness, but always as something imparted to him through a mysterious spiritual contact with the mind of Christ. In the Chapter before us there are presented to our view three very striking moral principles which, from a consideration of the Pauline method, we must hold that the Apostle believed to be points of Christian morality. When we turn to our present Gospels we find that each of these has been identically reproduced. The matter may appear trifling, but the elements of every life portraiture are trifles in their isolation.

Verse 7 runs thus: "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." The idea is one to which we have been familiarized by eighteen Christian centuries, but one to which we are convinced no Christian Apostle would have ventured to give utterance on his own responsibility. It means that a subject of that Kingdom which is to swallow up all other kingdoms may yet, in secular departments, acknowledge the sovereignty of earthly rulers. In the Gospel we attribute to St. Matthew, the Founder of Christianity is represented as sanctioning tribute, by the words: "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's;" and if St. Paul had not that command before him, he must have had one analogous to it.

Verse 10 contains these words: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." We have already seen, in a previous Section,

that the historical Christ had, according to St. Paul, fulfilled the law by spiritualizing it. The Apostle now declares that it is spiritualized through love. The idea is not so much that love is an impulse, as that love is a germ; it is the germ-cell out of which are evolved all the requirements of duty, and all the commandments of law; and which contains already within itself the embryo of a pure life. In St. Matthew xxii. 37-40 we have an exact reproduction of this morality. The Founder of Christianity is represented as having been asked which was the great commandment of the law; and is said to have returned the answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Verse 14 runs thus: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." "Provision" literally means a seeing in advance. Alike in Greek and in English, the form of expression is a warning against an anxious forethought for things not worthy of such anxiety. It is an admonition not to allow the material cares of to-morrow to intrude themselves upon the work of to-day. It is pointed out that material things should not be objects of anxiety for the mere selfish pleasures they can bring: "To fulfil *the lusts* thereof." It is suggested that, in order to avoid such desires, the mind must be preoccupied by a higher aim: "*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" One hears in these utterances the ring of that precept which has become familiar to the ear of Christendom: "Take no thought for the morrow; take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed: seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." In this passage of our recognized Gospel the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of the Messiah, is said to consist in the antithesis to

that frame of mind which makes eating and drinking and clothing the end of human life. Is this the same Messianic kingdom which Paul claimed for *his* Christ? Is it a subjective growth of the second century, or is it an actual picture of the Christian Founder's teaching as it has been handed down from the Apostolic age? The answer to that question will be found in the next Section.

Romans xiv. 17.—“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” These words, to modern ears, sound like a truism; to the age of St. Paul they were very original and somewhat paradoxical. The general tendency alike of Jew and Gentile was to look for a kingdom of God whose essence should be its eating and drinking; in other words, its possession of what are called the good things of life. The kingdom which Paul here foreshadows is a kingdom which would not naturally have been suggested to his mind either by his Jewish education or by his Gentile surroundings. It is a kingdom whose distinguishing characteristic is its inwardness as opposed to prevailing outwardness; it cometh not with observation. The historical reign of the Messiah (for that is the true significance of the phrase “kingdom of God,”) is here represented as a reign which does not directly influence the animal and the physical, but influences them only through its empire over the spiritual life, through “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Here, in this Gospel of Paul, we have the direct statement of a connection between the historical reign of the Messiah and the outpouring of that mysterious influence known as the Holy Spirit; he views it as a gift from the Christian Founder. When we look through this Gospel of Paul we are struck with the powers he attributes to this Spirit; and when we turn to our later, and, by supposition, our mythical Gospels, we are still more struck by the

similarity which the powers these attribute to the Spirit bear to those assigned by Paul. We think it will be found that St. Paul attributes to the Holy Ghost five distinct influences. Its first and foremost power is, with him, that of revelation—the gift of prophesying. The “natural man,” he says, “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. ii. 14, 10). Is this a different or the same power with that which the fourth Gospel marks in these words: “Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; he shall guide you into all truth, he shall teach you all things?” Flowing out of this power comes a second, the power of verbal expression, or gift of tongues: “The things which we speak, we speak not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. ii. 13). Is this a different or the same power with that which is indicated in the words of St. Luke xii. 11, 12: “And when they bring you unto the synagogues and unto magistrates and unto powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say?” Next, is the power of pleading or advocacy: “The Spirit helpeth our infirmity; the Spirit maketh intercession for us with unutterable sighings” (Rom. viii. 26); does not the writer of the fourth Gospel expressly call the Spirit the Advocate? There follows the power to impart comfort: in the passage before us peace and joy are associated with the Spirit; is this the same kind of peace and joy which the fourth Gospel promises as the fruit of the Comforter’s mission? Lastly, as the result of the whole, there is ascribed to the Spirit a power to influence the moral life: “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. v. 16):

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Rom. viii. 4): is this another power from that which in the language of our Johannine Gospel was to “convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment?”

Romans xv. 3, 5, 18, 19. There are four distinct points brought before us in these Verses: the self-denial of the historical Christ; the tendency of his spirit and teaching to promote unanimity; the command which He gave to evangelize the world; and the relation of his person to the great subject of miracles. The main interest, from an apologetic point of view, lies in the last of these; and therefore the first three may be briefly stated.

(1) “For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” St. Paul here states, as an historical fact, that the life of the Christian Founder was one of self-denial. It may be said, if he is referring to real history, why does he appeal to prophecy? why does he quote Psalm lxix. if he had the actual monuments of the life before him? He does so just *because* he had the actual monuments of the life before him, and because these monuments seemed, on a first view, to contradict prophecy: they revealed a suffering, instead of a conquering, Messiah. St. Paul could not resist the evidence of the monuments; but he wanted to shew that their evidence was not altogether foreign to the old Jewish conception, that some such Christ had actually been prefigured in the Jewish Scriptures, and that, side by side with the conquering element, there had all along been attributed to the Messianic Deliverer an element of pain and weakness. The Gentile proclivities of Paul would not naturally have led him to read Christianity into Judaism; it was his sense of the new principle in Christianity which made him desire as much as possible to find such a bridge between the two re-

ligions as would prevent a total rupture between the Jewish and the Gentile converts.

(2) "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus." The phrase *according to Christ Jesus* marks, as we think, a clear reference to the Christ of history. If it had been simply "according to Christ," it would not necessarily have implied such a reference; Christ was simply the official name which was to be given to the Jewish Deliverer, whenever He should come, and whoever He might be. To recommend unity of spirit "according to Christ" might mean no more than to recommend unity of spirit as a fitting preparation for that reign of peace which the Messiah was to usher in. But when the historical name of *Jesus* is coupled with the official designation *Christ*, it is clearly implied that the exhortation to unanimity is based upon the spirit and teaching of the actual Christ of history; and from this it immediately follows that the historical Christ whom Paul worshipped was one who could have uttered the familiar words: "Agree with your adversary quickly; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (St. Matt. v. 24, 25.)

(3) Passing now to the last clause of Verse 19, we find these words: "So that from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, I have fulfilled the gospel of Christ." The word "fulfilled," which is the literal translation of what we render "fully preached," is highly suggestive. It implies that, in making his missionary circuit, the Apostle believed himself to be fulfilling a command of the Christian Founder to propagate his religion; or, as St. Paul himself puts it, "To make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed." We involuntarily compare the concluding passage of St. Matthew: "Go and disciple all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." In executing the command St. Paul declares that he had been successful;

but the point for us to observe is the reason he assigns for his success. It is a point which ushers us at once into the last apologetic question suggested by this Epistle, and in one sense the most important question with which the Christian apologist can be anywhere engaged. We shall try to treat it with calmness and impartiality.

(4) Verse 18, and the first clause of Verse 19, runs thus : " For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through the might of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." St. Paul virtually says this : " If I liked, it would be quite legitimate for me, and quite possible for me, to quote many testimonies to the supernatural power of the Gospel ; but, for the sake of direct evidence, I am constrained to confine myself to those supernatural occurrences in the production of which I have myself been the direct agent." This is very bold language, and would seem to bring the apologetic question very near to a crisis. Yet it will be found that there are really two questions at issue, which we shall have to consider separately. The first is, does St. Paul, in the passage before us, claim the power of working what we now call miracles ? the second is, if we shall find that he does claim such a power, what bearing has this upon the supernatural character of the Christ of history ?

We shall put the first question in this form : Does St. Paul profess to work miracles in that sense in which the word is understood in our present Gospels ? The author of " Supernatural Religion " says, No ; he says that the miracles of Paul are mental changes, new thoughts, inward ecstatic experiences. We agree so far with the author of " Supernatural Religion," that all the miracles of St. Paul are conceived by the Apostle as having their root and their origin in mental changes ; but we would call attention to the fact that this is the very point in which the miracles of

our Gospels are distinguished from the miracles of all other religions. The Gospels make no distinction, in point of supernatural power, between a counteraction of natural law and a counteraction of moral law: "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk"? but they make a great distinction between them in point of chronological sequence. They assert, not once, nor twice, but persistently and unvariedly, that the counteraction of the moral law must precede the power to counteract the natural one: "Why could not we cast him out?" ask the disciples concerning the possessing spirit; "Because of unbelief" is the immediate answer. In order to be healed a man is required to have faith: "If thou believest, all things are possible to him that believeth": and on one occasion the Evangelist is not afraid to say of the Son of Man: "He could not do many mighty works among them, because of their unbelief." St. Paul's Epistles simply prove that this view of our Gospels is not mythical, that it belongs also to the primitive Christian age. We see there that, in the view of the Apostle, all wonders are conceived as having their beginning in the innermost parts of the soul, as taking their rise from changes in the subjective consciousness, as emanating from powers implanted by a new and a vivifying life. The Gospel is said to be "the power of God to every one that believeth"; and, in the passage immediately before us, the "mighty signs and wonders" are referred directly to a spiritual source—"the power of the Spirit of God."

The miracles of the Son of Man, as they appear in our Gospels, are the eruptions of a hidden supernatural Life: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus, and *manifested forth his glory*;" "as he *prayed* the fashion of his countenance was altered." When the miracle is a work wrought upon another human soul, its initiating process is the production in that soul of the same hidden life which was the germ of the work in the spirit of the Master. The wonders of

our Gospel, therefore, are, in the first instance, inward wonders. But observe, as long as they are inward wonders, they are not and cannot be signs. A sign is a manifestation. In every New Testament passage in which the word is used, it signifies an external symbol intended to prove the existence of a power more inward than itself. The essence of a sign is its outwardness; it may be miraculous or not according as that which it is designed to prove is conceived to be a natural or a supernatural occurrence;¹ but its characteristic is that, whether natural or supernatural, it must be more outward than that which it is designed to prove. The sign is not intended for him who works the miracle, nor yet for him on whom the miracle is wrought; these are already supposed to be in possession of that hidden life which is its own evidence. The sign is meant for the outside world. It is to be, to men beyond the Christian pale, the indirect evidence of that which they cannot know directly; and, as such, it must be a distinctively outward manifestation addressed to the organs of sense, sufficiently outward to meet the unspiritual, sufficiently wonderful to authorize the belief in the unknown something called spirituality: St. Paul himself declares its purpose to have been "*To make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed.*"

Let us now ask if the Pauline miracles are such as we should have expected on the supposition that our Gospels are true. Are they such as would find their germ in our authorized historical narrative? Paul gives us a catalogue of them in 1 Corinthians xii. 8-10. One of them is translated, "Working of miracles"—a very unhappy rendering, because it ignores the fact that, in the view of St. Paul, all were equally supernatural; it seems to us that the simplest rendering would be "operation of powers," understanding by the word "powers" dynamical forces within the man,

¹ In St. Matthew xvi. 3 the sign and thing signified are matters of natural observation.

impelling him, and enabling him, to do great things; when, we turn to Galatians iii. 5 we find that there "powers" are directly referred to the influence of faith; we recall the fact that in our present Gospel there is ascribed to faith a dynamical efficacy which is symbolized in the power to arrest the growth of the fig tree or to command the mountain to be removed into the midst of the sea. Another class of the Pauline miracles is described as "gifts of healing"; and the connection of this with our Gospels requires no comment. A third order of men are said to be endowed with the power to "discern spirits"; on the supposition that our Gospels are true, this would seem to us to have its basis in the ability to distinguish the subjects of demoniacal possession, and the power to separate between the man's own consciousness and the foreign consciousness which had been thrust upon him. The "divers kinds of tongues" would find their beginning and their germ, or, at all events, their parable and prophecy, in those works by which the Master had restored speech to the dumb. The "gift of prophecy" would have its warrant in the promise of a Spirit which should reveal the things to come—not simply the foretelling of what *should* be, but the revelation of what in the nature of things *must* be. The "word of wisdom" and the "word of knowledge" would derive their claim to a supernatural origin from those declarations of the Christian Founder in which He maintained that flesh and blood could not reveal, but only the Spirit of the Father. All this might be clearly and legitimately deduced on the assumption that our Gospels are true; in the absence of that assumption we may not go so far: but we are entitled with absolute confidence to say that the method of the Pauline miracles is that identical method with which we have been made familiar by our Gospel narratives.

We now come to the second question involved in this subject. If we shall find, and we must find it, that St. Paul

claims the power of working miracles, how does that affect the Christ of history? The common answer is, it proves the Christ of history to have Himself possessed that power; because it would be a contradiction in terms to suppose that the power of the disciple was inferior to that of the Master. Logical as the inference is, it greatly underrates the strength of the case. According to St. Paul, it was the Christ *alone* who possessed the power of working miracles. He says, in the very passage under consideration, "I will not dare to speak of any of those things which *Christ* hath not wrought by me." He does not say that he has wrought them through Christ; he is only a member of the Divine body; he lives because Christ lives in him. His claim to work miracles is, with him, no more than a claim to be in union with the person of the Christian Founder; and he values the working of the miracle chiefly as a proof and symbol of his being united to the life of that Founder. It may be said, it has been said, Why does not Paul appeal as evidences of Christianity to the personal earthly works of the historical Christ? The answer seems to us not to be far away. It never occurred to Paul for a moment to suppose that he was separated from the Christ of history by any spatial or temporal barrier. It never occurred to him that he was enjoying an inferior privilege to those whom we now call contemporaries of the Son of Man; he held himself to be a contemporary. The continuity of his consciousness of the Master had never been broken; the resurrection of Christ was to him a fact as historical as the death. To the eye of our nineteenth century, Christianity presents the aspect of a temporary interruption to the world's order which speedily faded away into the old routine. To the eye of St. Paul, Christianity presented the aspect of a new revelation of this world's order, which was to constitute the permanent light through which man was to gaze on nature. The earthly ministry of the Son of

Man was to him an eternal ministry; it had never been closed by death, for death itself had been superseded by resurrection. To the mind of the Apostle, the history of the past had no need yet to be written; for the past was to him still the present. The things of yesterday had, for him, no distinctive or peculiar interest; for the Being whom he recognized as the Founder of Christianity was one whom he could have described, in the language of one of his own school, as "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

G. MATHESON.

ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN INSCRIPTIONS IN
THEIR BEARING ON THE OLD TESTAMENT
SCRIPTURES.

V. NIMROD AND THE GENEALOGY OF GENESIS X.

It is at first a somewhat surprising result of the studies of Assyriologists, that as yet no certain trace has been discovered of one whose name has been, from a very early period, prominent in many of the legends and traditions that gather round the history of Assyria. No interpreter has yet identified any combination of cuneiform characters with the name of Nimrod.¹ Whatever explanation may be given of the fact, it at all events bears testimony to the caution and accuracy of the interpreters as a body. Few temptations would have been greater to an imaginative scholar than that of discovering, if it were possible, even at some sacrifice of the precision which is an element of a

¹ Mr. George Smith, however (*R. P.*, iii. 6), finds the name NIN-RIDU on a brick in the British Museum, as that of the guardian deity of Eridu, one of the earliest Babylonian cities. The fact that the name appears in the Egyptian inscriptions of Pianichi-Meramon, translated by Canon Cook (*R. P.*, ii. 85), is worth noting, though as yet, no inferences have been, or perhaps, can be, drawn from it.