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A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

## What Jesus made of Men.<sup>1</sup>

BY THE REVEREND EDWARD SHILLITO, M.A., B.A., BUCKHURST HILL, ESSEX.

THE reader who seeks to discover in the Gospels what Jesus thought of men, and how He dealt with them, will find an answer both consistent and arresting. Jesus, as He was remembered in the Early Church, had a way of His own in dealing with individual men and women. In a study of this way it is not necessary to enter upon critical problems; the evidence is too widely spread and too convincing to admit of any doubt that such was the mind of Jesus, as His people remembered Him. He left them in no doubt of what He made of man.

It is clear that when some individual man came into personal dealings with Him, He looked first of all with an unprejudiced eye upon him; He was not prepared to classify him finally with a larger company; He does not appear to have made much use of the labels, which were in use in His day, but He was not in the least blind to the plain realities to which these labels bore witness. It *was* a matter of importance whether a man was a Jew or a Gentile, but only on a certain level of life. There was a deeper level with which He was concerned. On that level there is neither Jew nor Greek even as there is neither male nor female.

### I.

In St. Matthew there is, to take the first illustration, the story of the Roman centurion, who besought Jesus to heal his boy. The man, as he approached Jesus, could be described according to his race, class, profession, wealth, and even religion. But in his dealing with Jesus he revealed what he was upon another and deeper level. He showed what our Lord was always seeking, and finding in strange places.

'The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.'<sup>2</sup>

There was in him that singleness of mind which leads a man to be ready to venture all upon a call,

<sup>1</sup> Mt 8<sup>8-13</sup> 16<sup>15-18</sup>, Lk 19<sup>9-10</sup> 23<sup>42, 43</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Mt 8<sup>8</sup>.

that comes to him with authority. He was among the pure in heart who shall see God.

That mattered supremely; on the other levels of his life he might be justly and usefully described as a Roman, a pagan, a soldier, a master of a household; but when Jesus descended to that deeper level in which faith is revealed, He did not let the other classifications modify His verdict:

'When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.'

Then, as always, beginning from the one life before Him, Jesus let His imagination go forward into the future. He saw in this man the forerunner of a great multitude of men, like-minded with him, who would come into the Kingdom of Heaven from the East and West. It was not only of the tragedy of Israel as He saw it, when the children of the Kingdom should be cast out into outer darkness, that He was thinking; but of the members of the new Israel who should march with the light of faith in their eyes into the blessed Kingdom. Only one man, and that man an alien from the Israel as men knew it! Jesus saw in that one man the promise of the new Israel of which such men as that would be the first-born.

### II.

There is that same method revealed in the story of the confession of Simon at Cæsarea Philippi.

'And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'<sup>3</sup>

The Simon who comes into this scene could be

<sup>3</sup> Mt 16<sup>18-19</sup>.

described in perfectly correct terms as a Galilean and a fisherman; he has been somewhat extravagantly called by Mr. Chesterton, 'a shuffler, a snob, and a coward'; at least it must be admitted that in the story he is known as a man of impulsive moods, taking his colour from his company. The rock, so far, was a hidden rock. But once more Jesus had penetrated to that level upon which faith is revealed. That made all the difference in His eyes. There was only one man before him, and that man only on the threshold of the new life, but Jesus saw a Church. Whatever these difficult words may mean, they must imply that in the Early Church it was not thought impossible or even strange that Jesus in His earthly life should look upon a man who had shown faith and see—a Church rising, because of that man's confession and the faith which blazed up in that moment.

When Robert Louis Stevenson wrote to his mother about his friend, James Chalmers, the missionary whom he called, as the Papuans did, Tamate, he said: 'He has plenty faults like the rest of us, but he is big as a Church.' There was something of the same imaginative insight in these words, as that which can be discovered in the words of our Lord. Whatever else there is in these words, there is this at least; Jesus was not prepared to read the personality of Simon by what we should call the card-indexes in common use. Simon, yielding to the Voice which had spoken to him, was a new fact in the life of the world, and new hopes and promises were to be released in him: in his blood 'the great age slept sepulchred.' Now Jesus saw the stone rolled away.

### III.

The story of Zacchæus reveals the same fearless method and the same vision. It is a story perfect in the economy of language. The picture has very few lines. Yet no one can mistake the truth that is set forth in it. Zacchæus was well known, and put in his right place in Jericho. He was a publican, to be numbered among the sinners and outcasts, more to be despised than even a dog of a Gentile. He was treated as an enemy of society:

'And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

And he ran before, and climbed up into a

sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.'<sup>1</sup>

The story would certainly not have been preserved unless there had been in it an illustration of something characteristic of Jesus, as He was remembered. It is not the story of a miracle of healing, but of what might have been rightly called a miracle of spiritual healing. It must have seemed one out of many examples of such acts of healing. But the story would be without meaning if there was not in the publican the beginnings of a capacity for the new life. There was a hidden Zacchæus, whom no one in Jericho suspected to be there. It is simply said that he sought to see Jesus; such seeking might be little more than curiosity, but all the human quest for knowledge began with curiosity; and such curiosity as Zacchæus showed had within it the seed of faith.

When Jesus passed that way He saw a face in the sycomore tree; but it was not the face of a publican and a sinner, but the face of the hidden and unknown Zacchæus. The card-index of Jericho was correct as far as it went. But it did not describe that other level upon which Jesus looked. He came to seek one who was lost.

The familiar story ends with the words:

'And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'<sup>2</sup>

Upon the significance of this saying of Jesus much might be said by the critical student; but as it is used in this story, it must mean that Jesus had found in Zacchæus a son of Abraham waiting to be released. That hidden Zacchæus had been lost in the heart of a human society in the city of Jericho. Jesus had come to seek and to save such lost souls. Nothing more was needed than the dawning of faith. Jesus saw a new vision of that city to which Zacchæus belonged. It was made the richer by the entrance into it of a son of Abraham. Salvation came to the house of that publican. But salvation could not be understood without the vision of what it would involve for other lives. The presence in Jericho of a new Zacchæus would be a new fact in the life of the city. One penitent publican! But Jesus saw more than that one man. He looked into the future, and saw the way that lay before that man, and what his new life would bring. All that future He had seen in promise

<sup>1</sup> Lk 19<sup>2-4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Lk 19<sup>9, 10</sup>.

when He looked at the face looking down upon Him from the sycamore tree. Given the rudiments of faith, the rest followed.

It is the same Jesus dealing in the same way with Zacchæus as He had done with the Roman centurion and with Simon.

To the last He followed the same quest and showed the same freedom and daring.

What if there were no future for the soul upon this earth? What, then, could He see as He looked into the future? The story of the Dying Thief has been told countless times for the comfort of those whose time is short. It has been read as though it taught the lesson:

Between the saddle and the ground,  
He mercy sought and mercy found.

Yet as the story was told to the first hearers, it must have meant more than that. It tells how Jesus carried forward the life of the Thief into the unseen.

'And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'<sup>1</sup>

This is rightly called a story of faith, and it was the faith, which to Jesus was the one thing needful. 'To see, in the white, worn, bleeding flesh of a crucified convict, the Lord of Life and of Death, was no exercise of ordinary, or scientific, reason in the mind of the penitent thief. But it was true insight, as true, not the less but the more, for that.' 'The difference was a moral and spiritual difference between the many who saw in Jesus crucified, a detected and defeated impostor, and the one who there bowed his soul in homage, and in prayer, to the Lord and King of the Life which is beyond death.'<sup>2</sup> It was, once more, on this level that the penitent thief and the Lord met. Jesus did not see in the dying man by His side a desperate brigand, perhaps a nationalist outlaw, paying for his wild and lawless deeds by his death. The one thing that mattered in that hour was the man's faith. On the level which was revealed this man showed insight, the insight which came from faith. That was enough.

'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'

<sup>1</sup> Lk 23<sup>42, 43</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*.

To others Jesus had said, 'Go to your home, and tell what great things God hath done for you.' He could not say such words to this man. Any future for him must be found beyond the bounds of time and place. Yet on the Cross the Saviour, knowing the faith of the dying man, looked into the future before him. This also was remembered by the Early Church in the records of Calvary; Jesus in dying had traced out for this companion of His a future scene, in which his faith would be unfolded. He who had looked so often into the new life for others on this earth into which their faith would lead them, now at the end still looked forward, only now upon that other shore.

'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'

In one of the noblest religious poems of this age, J. S. Phillimore<sup>3</sup> wrote to the honour of the good thief, who by St. Cyprian was reckoned among the martyrs who are baptized in their own blood. This poem is true to the spirit of the Gospels, and not the less true because of its very daring.

Did ever paladin adventuring out

To face the great uncharted enterprise,  
Choose for companion in the crucial bout

A sorrier squire with whom to agonize?

Yet in that earthquake-darkened afternoon  
Of dereliction, when the seventh sword

So pierced the Dolorous Mother's heart that she  
Was fallen dumb in swoon,

Thou midst the railers didst salute thy Lord,  
Thou hadst the heart to cry, *Remember me*.

'Thou shalt be with me in Paradise.' It was a fitting close to that Divine Life that our Lord should go forth into the unseen with this man for whom the world had no use. It was like Him, as He is pictured to us, to see in that man by His side a companion to be with Him when the long agony was over. He could see beyond the horizon of this earthly life. For Him there was no call to despair even though to such penitence as He knew the Thief could give no expression in this life. It was too late for that now. But the imagination of Jesus was not bounded by death. It is still true that there can be no belief in the sacredness of the individual human life which does not rest upon a belief in the eternal world and in the God who is not the God of the dead but of the living.

Wherever we pause to reflect upon the memorabilia of Jesus, we find Him always the same in His

<sup>3</sup> *Things New and Old*.

dealings with men. He is always a realist, not one of the 'vision-weaving tribe.' He is always in quest of that other and deeper level of which the judgments in common use take little account. He is always free from bondage to the merely outward and conventional judgments. He is a merchantman seeking for one treasure which far outvalues all others. When He finds that treasure, Faith, He can see it in its unfoldings in this life and beyond. He can read the future of a multitude in one man; He can see a Church rising when one man confesses Him: He can see a Son of Abraham when one publican looks curiously upon Him, and in a dying brigand He can see a companion with whom to cross the threshold of the unseen world.

That is the picture of the Lord whom men re-

membered. It is little wonder that they have said of Him:

For oh, the Master is so fair,  
His smile so sweet to banished men,  
That they who meet Him unaware,  
Can never rest on earth again.

And they who see Him ris'n afar  
At God's right hand to welcome them,  
Forgetful stand of home and land,  
Remembering Jerusalem.

There is also judgment in His clear eyes, but it is never a judgment divorced from faith and hope and love. Men when they bowed beneath His judgment never doubted His eager quest of them, nor the vision that He had of them.

## Literature.

### DOCTRINES OF THE CREED.

CANON OLIVER C. QUICK, M.A., D.D., has just produced a book of remarkable interest and value—*Doctrines of the Creed: Their Basis in Scripture and their Meaning To-day* (Nisbet; 10s. 6d. net). Canon Quick is Professor of Divinity in the University of Durham, and this volume is no doubt part of the fruit of his prelections in that seat of learning. He describes the book as an essay in systematic theology, and makes a careful discrimination between systematic theology and dogmatic theology. The latter concerns itself mainly with the genesis and original significance of traditional dogma, and, in so far as it turns its attention from the past to the present, it seeks only to answer the question: What does the Church teach as *de fide*? On the other hand systematic theology asks the question: How can we best understand and interpret as a coherent whole the doctrinal tradition of our church in relation to that particular world in which we are now called upon to uphold the Christian faith?

If that somewhat unusual distinction be real, it is obvious that it must be very difficult to maintain it in actual practice. And indeed Dr. Quick hardly succeeds in doing so. It is impracticable to commend a doctrine to our intelligence without a reference to its original significance and to its genesis.

And indeed it is difficult to present a doctrine persuasively without offering a defence of it. And we are not surprised, or disappointed, to find both dogmatic theology and apologetics in this able and suggestive essay. But in the main Dr. Quick may quite justly claim that the purpose inherent in systematic theology has been the main purpose of his lectures.

The book has four parts, expounding the four great doctrines of the Creed: The Christian Faith in God, The Incarnation, The Christian Doctrine of Salvation, and The Holy Spirit and the Church. Under these headings all the main issues raised for belief are faced and explored with a grasp and insight that furnish a sustained intellectual satisfaction. As a proof of the thoroughness of the treatment of these themes it may be mentioned that in the second section of the book we have discussions of the Jewish background of Christology, a particularly able refutation of the supposed Hellenic influence on St. Paul, a chapter on 'The Incarnation and Historical Criticism,' an intelligent but unsatisfactory chapter on the Virgin Birth, as well as brief consideration of such points as our Lord's knowledge in His earthly life. The one marked omission is any direct reference to the doctrine of Scripture. It is true that the whole book is an exposition of Scripture teaching, but it would naturally be expected that the belief in the