

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS
ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And many Explanatory Notes.

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JOHN I. 35-42

35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and

abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

THESE verses ought always to be interesting to every true Christian. They describe the first beginnings of the Christian Church. Vast as that Church is now, there was a time when it consisted of only two weak members. The calling of those two members is described in the passage which is now before our eyes.

We see, for one thing, in these verses, *what good is done by continually testifying of Christ.*

The first time that John the Baptist cried, "Behold the Lamb of God," no result appears to have followed. We are not told of any who heard, inquired, and believed. But when he repeated the same words the next day, we read that two of his disciples "heard him speak and followed Jesus." They were received most graciously by Him whom they followed. "They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day." Truly it was a day in their lives most eventful, and most blessed! From that day they became fast and firm disciples of the new-found Messiah. They took up the cross. They continued with Him in His temptations. They followed Him wherever He went. One of them at least, if not both, became a chosen apostle, and a master builder in the Christian temple. And all was owing to John the Baptist's testimony, "Behold the Lamb of God." That testimony was a little seed. But it bore mighty fruits.

This simple story is a pattern of the way in which good has been done to souls in every age of the Christian Church. By such testimony as that before us, and by none else, men and women are converted and saved. It is by exalting Christ, not the Church—Christ, not the sacraments—Christ, not the ministry—it is by this means that hearts are moved, and sinners are turned to God. To the world such testimony may seem weakness and foolishness. Yet, like the ram's horns, before whose blast the walls of Jericho fell down, this testimony is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. The story of the crucified Lamb of God has proved in every age, the power of God unto salvation. Those who have done most for Christ's cause in every part of the world, have been men

like John the Baptist. They have not cried, Behold me, or Behold the Church, or Behold the ordinances, but “Behold the Lamb.” If souls are to be saved, men must be pointed directly to Christ.

One thing, however, must never be forgotten. There must be patient continuance in preaching and teaching the truth, if we want good to be done. Christ must be set forth again and again, as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” The story of grace must be told repeatedly—line upon line, and precept upon precept. It is the constant dropping which wears away the stone. The promise shall never be broken, that “God’s word shall not return unto him void.” (Isaiah. lv. 11.) But it is nowhere said that it shall do good the very first time that it is preached. It was not the first proclamation of John the Baptist, but the second, which made Andrew and his companion follow Jesus.

We see, for another thing, *what good a believer may do to others, by speaking to them about Christ.*

No sooner does Andrew become a disciple, than he tells his brother Simon what a discovery he has made. Like one who has unexpectedly heard good tidings, he hastens to impart it to the one nearest and dearest to him. He says to his brother, “We have found the Messiah,” and he “brings him to Jesus.” Who can tell what might have happened if Andrew had been of a silent, reserved, and uncommunicative spirit, like many a Christian in the present day? Who can tell but his brother might have lived and died a fisherman on the Galilean lake? But happily for Simon, Andrew was not a man of this sort. He was one whose heart was so full that he must speak.

And to Andrew’s out-spoken testimony, under God, the great apostle Peter owed the first beginning of light in his soul.

The fact before us is most striking and instructive. Out of the three first members of the Christian Church, one at least was brought to Jesus, by the private, quiet word of a relative. He seems to have heard no public preaching. He saw no mighty miracle wrought. He was not convinced by any powerful reasoning. He only heard his brother telling him that he had found a Saviour himself, and at once the work began in his soul. The simple testimony of a warm-hearted brother was the first link in the chain by which Peter was drawn out of the world, and joined to Christ. The first blow in that mighty work by which Peter was made a pillar of the Church, was struck by Andrew’s words, “We have found the Christ.”

Well would it be for the Church of Christ, if all believers were more like Andrew! Well would it be for souls if all men and women who have been converted themselves, would speak to their friends and relatives on spiritual subjects, and tell them what they have found! How much good might be done! How many might be led to Jesus, who now live and die in unbelief! The work of testifying the Gospel of the grace of God ought not to be left to ministers alone. All who have received mercy ought to find a tongue, and to declare

what God has done for their souls. All who have been delivered from the power of the devil, ought to “go home and tell their friends what great things God has done for them.” (Mark v. 19.) Thousands, humanly speaking, would listen to a word from a friend, who will not listen to a sermon. Every believer ought to be a home-missionary, a missionary to his family, children, servants, neighbours, and friends. Surely, if we can find nothing to say to others about Jesus, we may well doubt whether we are savingly acquainted with Him ourselves.

Let us take heed that we are among those who really follow Christ, and abide with Him. It is not enough to hear Him preached from the pulpit, and to read of Him as described in books. We must actually follow Him, pour out our hearts before Him, and hold personal communion with Him. Then, and not until then, we shall feel constrained to speak of Him to others. The man who only knows Christ by the hearing of the ear, will never do much for the spread of Christ’s cause in the earth.

Notes. JOHN I. 35-42.

35.—[*The next day.*] Let St. John’s particularity in noting days at this period of our Lord’s history, be observed again in this verse. If, as many suppose, St. John was one of the two who this day followed Jesus and became His disciples, we can well understand that it was a memorable day to him.

[*John stood.*] This expression seems to imply that there was some particular spot near Bethabara where John the Baptist was in the habit of standing, to preach, and to receive those who came to be baptized. While he “stood” here, the event which follows took place.

36 —[*Looking...Jesus, as He walked.*] This probably means that he saw Jesus walking among the crowd of persons who were attracted to Bethabara, alone, without followers, and as yet not recognised by any one as the Messiah.

Stier remarks, “John saw Jesus walking in silent meditation, waiting for His hour and His Father’s commands; in full preparation for the world and its sin: equipped, for the testimony to the truth, with that armour which has been tested and approved in His first great spiritual conflict, and for the utterance of the new words of God which the Father has given Him.”

[*He saith, Behold, etc.*] This seems to have been a second public proclamation of our Lord’s office and character, a partial repetition of what had been said the day before; and yet, as the event shows, a more effective proclamation. The same truth may do good the second time that it is preached, which does nothing the first time.

37.—[*Heard... speak... followed.*] The three steps described in this verse are very noteworthy. John the Baptist “speaks:” the disciples “hear.” After hearing they “follow Jesus.” This is a succinct summary of God’s way of saving myriads of souls.

Rollock, on this verse, remarks, “We learn by this example, how powerful is the preaching of Christ,—yea, one or two words about Christ and the cross, how powerful are they in changing the hearts of men! Preach, if you like, about the great deeds of kings and generals, and their courage and glory;—these things will please men for a little time, but they will not convert them. But preach concerning Him that was crucified, a subject

apparently ignominious and foolish,—and then the story of the cross, which is foolishness to them that perish, will be the power and wisdom of God to them that believe.”

38.—[*What seek ye?*] We cannot doubt that our Lord knew perfectly well the hearts and motives of these two disciples. In asking this question therefore, He spoke partly for their encouragement, and partly to stir them up to self-inquiry. “What seek ye? Is there anything that I can do for you, any truth that I can teach you, any burden that I can take away? If so, speak, and be not afraid.”—“What seek ye? Are you sure that you are following Me with right motives? Are you sure that you are not regarding Me as a temporal ruler? Are you sure that you are not, like other Jews, seeking riches, honour, greatness, in this world? Prove your own selves, and be sure that you are seeking the right object.”

[*Which is to say, being interpreted.*] This is one of a class of expressions which shows that John wrote for Gentile readers rather than Jews. A Jew would not have needed this parenthetical comment. This same remark applies to verse 41.

[*Where dwellest Thou?*] This question seems to imply a desire for conversation and private communion. “We would fain know more of Thee. We are drawn to Thee by John the Baptist’s proclamation. We would like to go aside with Thee from the crowd, and inquire of Thee more privately and quietly, at Thy dwelling, about the things which are upon our hearts.”

To apply the text, as many do, to our Lord’s spiritual dwelling in “contrite hearts,” etc. (Isaiah lviii. 15), may produce good doctrinal and practical theology. But it is not the point of the text.

39.—[*Come and see.*] The great affability, and condescension of these first words of our Lord’s after His public appearance as Messiah, ought not to be overlooked. The very first thing that we hear Him saying, after He has been publicly proclaimed as the “Lamb of God,” is, “Come and see.” It is a pleasant type of what He has been ever saying to the sons of men from that day down to this. “Come and see who I am, and what I am. Come and be acquainted with Me.”

Schottgen and Lightfoot both remark that the expression, “Come and see,” is a very common one in Rabbinical writings, and would be very familiar to the Jews.

[*Where He dwelt.*] We can only suppose that the place where our Lord was dwelling at this time, was some temporary residence in or near Bethabara. At the best, it was probably some humble lodging. It is not impossible that it was nothing more than a cave. He often “had not where to lay His head.” If the two disciples had the least relic of Jewish expectation that Messiah would appear in royal dignity and glory, our Lord’s dwelling would go far to disabuse their minds of the idea..

[*Abode with Him that day...tenth hour.*] The Jewish day began at six o’clock in the evening. The tenth hour therefore means, four o’clock in the afternoon. At this late hour of the day His disciples found it impossible to conclude their conversation with Jesus, and therefore remained in the same lodging with Him all night.

Many commentators, from Augustine downwards, make the natural remark that this evening must have been a blessed evening for these two disciples; and that it would have been pleasant if the conversation had been given to us! Yet if it had been good for us to know the conversation, it would doubtless have been recorded. There are no deficiencies in Scripture.

40.—[*One of the two...was Andrew.*] The priority of Andrew to Peter ought not to be overlooked. Peter, to whom the Church of Rome boastfully attributes a primacy among the Apostles, was neither converted nor made acquainted with Christ so soon as his brother.

Who the other of these two disciples was, we are not told. It is highly probable, as Chrysostom and Theophylact conjecture, that it was St. John himself. On seven other occasions in this Gospel he humbly withholds his name. (John xiii. 23; xix. 26, 35; xx. 2; xxi. 7, 20, 24.) It is therefore very likely that he withheld it here.—The supposition of Musculus, and others, that the other disciple was a person of less zeal and sincerity than Andrew, and is therefore not named, appears to me improbable.

41.—[*He first.*] This expression must either mean that Andrew was the first of the two disciples who brought a brother to Jesus,—or that he was the first disciple, speaking generally, who spoke to others of the Messiah, when he had found Him,—or that he was the first to tell his brother Peter, and Peter was not the first to tell him about Christ.

[*We have found.*] This expression implies an unexpected and joyful discovery. The evening's conversation which Andrew had held with Jesus had convinced him that He was indeed the Christ.

[*The Messiah ... interpreted... Christ.*] It is almost needless to remark that these names mean the “anointed one.” The first is Hebrew, and the second is Greek. Kings, prophets, and priests, in the Old Testament, were anointed; and our Lord as the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church, was called the Anointed One, not because He was really anointed with oil, but because He was “anointed with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts x. 38.)

The extent of Andrew's religious knowledge ought not to be overlooked. Poor and humble in station as he was, he seems, like all the Jews, to have known what the Old Testament prophets had foretold about Messiah, and to have been prepared to hear of a person appearing in the character of Messiah. It is one of many expressions in the Gospels which show that the lower orders among the Jews were far better acquainted with the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures, than the poor in our own day generally are with the letter of the New Testament, or indeed of any part of the Bible.

Calvin remarks on Andrew's conduct, “Woe to our indolence, if we do not, after having been fully enlightened, endeavour to make others partakers of the same grace.”

42.—[*When Jesus beheld...said...Thou art Simon.*] Our Lord here displayed His perfect knowledge of all persons, names, and things. He needed not that any should tell Him who and what a person was. This knowledge was supposed by the Jews to be a peculiar attribute of Messiah, whenever He came. He was to be one of “quick understanding.” (Isaiah xi. 3.) Enough for us to know that it is a peculiar attribute of God. He alone knows the hearts of men. Our Lord's perfect knowledge of all hearts, was one among many proofs of His divinity. The same knowledge appears again in His address to Nathanael, in this chapter, ver. 47, and in His conversation with the Samaritan woman. (John iv. 18, etc.)—The effect produced in both cases, is very worthy of notice.

[*Cephas.*] This is a Syriac word, and is equivalent to the Greek word Petros, which we render Peter. Both mean a stone, a portion of a rock. “Petra” means a rock, “Petros” a piece of a rock. Peter was the latter, but not the former.

[*A stone.*] The marginal reading here, as Lightfoot remarks, would have been much better than that which the translators have put in our version. If the words were “Cephas, which is by interpretation Peter.” it would have conveyed our Lord's meaning far more clearly.

The custom of having two names appears to have been common in New Testament times. The apostle Peter seems to have been only known as “Cephas” in the Corinthian Church. Out of the five other places in the New Testament where the name Cephas is found, four are in the Epistle to the Corinthians, while the name Peter is not used in that Epistle at all.

Nifanius gives the names of three Popes who have so grossly mistaken the origin of the

word Cephas as to suppose that it is derived from the Greek word which signifies “a head,” and that it indicated Peter’s headship in the Church! Such a palpable blunder is one of a thousand proofs that Popes are no more infallible than other men. Calovius makes the same charge against no less a person than Cardinal Bellarmine.

If it be asked why our Lord gave Simon this new name, the best answer appears to be that it was given with a special reference to the change which grace was to work in Simon’s heart. Naturally impulsive, unstable, and unsteady, he was finally to become a firm, solid stone in the Church of Christ, and to testify his unshaken adherence to Christ by suffering martyrdom.

Chrysostom thinks that our Lord altered Simon’s name “to show that it was He who gave the old covenant, that it was He who called Abram Abraham, and Sarai Sarah, and Jacob Israel.”

Lightfoot, on these verses, after noticing the error which Roman Catholic writers attempt to found upon it, about Peter being the rock on which the Church is built, makes the following curious observation : “If they will so pertinaciously adhere to it, let us apprehend our Lord speaking *prophetically*, and foretelling the grand error that would spring up in the Church, namely, that Peter is a rock than which the Christian Church has known nothing more sad and destructive.”

Let it be noted, in leaving this passage, that the selection of such humble unlearned men as those here described, to be the first apostles and preachers of the Gospel, is a strong evidence of the truth of Christianity. A religion which was propagated by such weak instruments, in the face of persecution and opposition from the great and learned, must be a religion from God. Such results from such instrumentality cannot possibly be accounted for on natural principles.