

Authority in Religious Life.

(8)

Scripture Luke 10²⁵⁻³⁷ Matthew 7¹⁻¹² 7²⁴⁻²⁹

Sext. Mat. 7²⁹

The effect upon the multitude of this sermon of Jesus, the sermon on the Mount, at once arouses our interest. If there is one thing that men desire in any thought, in any deed, it is authority. Some love that beautiful hymn of Cardinal Newman, "Lead kindly light" touches a responsive cord in every heart. As we sit here to-day, looking into the unknown future, conscious that tomorrow with all its uncertainties is before us, conscious that it may bring into our life some great sorrow, some great temptation, some great defeat, something which may overcome us, and cast aside worn out and useless, we instinctively pray for some kindly light to lead us. We feel that deep down in our hearts there is a craving, a longing to cast the burden of responsibility upon the shoulders of another, and for one moment to feel certain absolutely certain, that we are supported by and are under the immediate protection of a great power whose love and care for us ever assures us that he is watching over us. With what resolution, and courage would you and I go

about our daily tasks, if we were certain that we ²
were supported by an inflexible authority. Sometimes
when I am called upon to make a personal decision
which is of some importance to me, I feel, and
I know that under similar conditions, you must
feel, very much as the good old Cardinal Newman
did, when, after years of unhappy search for an
authority in his religious life, he turned to the
protecting arms of the Catholic Church, singing out
of the uncertainty of his soul, -

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou we on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home, -
Lead thou we on!

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene, - one step enough for me.

At times we feel this some uncertainty in our religious
life. We are not always quite certain about the great
religious truths, which mean so much to us, truths
which make life as we know worth while. Could
we but know absolutely that God is a loving
Father, to whom we might go in prayer in our
moments of great joy, or great sorrow, before whose guiding
care we could always depend, how authoritatively
would we express our religious belief, and with
what faith would we live our religious life.

But these things we do not know, and it
is because of this deep uncertainty in our hearts

that we are so interested in this fact that Jesus taught his religious truths with such authority that the multitude was astonished. The thought occurs us that perhaps we, too, may come to see the truth Jesus had seen, and be assured of the great religious insight which had enlightened his soul, and enabled him to feel the authority of a loving Father back of him, to show his authority to the multitude.

There is one thing that becomes quite apparent as one studies the life of Jesus as we know it. The authority with which he spoke was not some external authority derived from an oracle, or an inspired book, or an ecclesiastical functionary, but it was the authority of an internal conviction, which filled his soul and dominated his mind. In fact that is just what the text tells us most plainly. He did not teach as the scribes. The authority of the scribes was based upon just these external things. They depended upon the traditions of Jewish religious history, upon the ritual and forms of ceremony, habits and customs which had been ingrained into the very fibre of the Jewish soul. all these external authorities came in to support the scribes in their teaching. What were such they ask you? If there is any lasting authority in these external forms, traditions, and institutions as such certainly there never was a more of a true

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strive to use them, than in three years in the history
of the Jewish people. But even with these author-
ities, the scribes could not reach the multitude
as did the simple carpenter Jesus of Nazareth.
Well known to the world, heralded only by the
fanatic preacher John the Baptist, this devoted con-
secrated soul comes ~~for~~ before the multitude
preaching a new gospel, and he preaches it with
such authority that the multitude is astonished.
Why? Because his authority is not dependent upon
some special revelation, or a divine institution,
but it is the authority of an inner conviction.
Could you and I feel the authority of a similar
conviction at this moment, the world would become
a new place for us, our doubts would be dis-
solved, and our uncertainties would vanish
and a deep peaceful faith would take possession
of our mind and heart.

How much it would mean to us if we
could go back of that day when Jesus first
came before the world to be baptized of John
the Baptist in the Jordan, we can never know. If
we but knew the story of his life as he grew
from childhood into youth, and from youth
into manhood, it might reveal to us ~~inestimable~~

truths of inestimable value in solving our perplexing questions. But all is a blank, save one little incident in the temple. At times in our imagination we try to picture him standing by the carpenter bench, doing his daily duties in his simple noble way. Even then we wish rather to know the thoughts that occupied his mind, and the struggles that went on with in his soul day by day as he grew up into manhood. But all these imaginings are in vain. We know him only as the teacher of the simple religious life among the people of Palestine. He comes to us first as a man among men, destined to teach and renew the religious life of the world. If we find the source of his authority, we must seek it among the secrets of his life and teachings.

A study of these sources reveals three facts, which I wish to suggest by noticing certain typical instances,

The first one is that Jesus was a very close observer of nature, and from ^{this} observation he derived many of his religious truths. "Seek ye first the ^{his} Kingdom of Heaven and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you," says Jesus, and we wonder where and by what

means that great truth had shined upon his mind. 6.
Had it come to him by a strange, supernatural revela-
tion of God? or did Jesus observe the truth in some
more natural way? The answer is found in the
very passage which contains these wonderful
words. Jesus says, "Behold the birds of the
heaven that they sow not, neither do they reap
nor gather into barns: and your heavenly father
feedeth them, are not ye of much more value
than they? And why are ye anxious concern-
ing raiment? Consider the lilies of the field
how they grow, they toil not, neither do they
spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon
in all his glory was not arrayed like one
of these. But if God so clothe the grass of
of the field, which to day is, and to-morrow
is cast into the oven, shall he not much more
clothe you." Then follows that beautiful
teaching "Seek ye first His Kingdom and his
righteousness, and food and raiment will take
care of him self. Jesus had observed the
life and habits of the birds of the heaven, had
seen their care free enjoyment of the day that
is, and compared it with the over anxious

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strivings of man for the indulgence of his
mere physical wants. God cares for the birds
of the air, will he not also care for man? Again
he had observed the beauty and the simplicity
of the lily of the field, and he had compared it
with man's vain attempts to adorn his person
with costly raiment, and the comparison
was to the credit of the natural beauty of
the wild flower. Again he thought, "If God
clothes the grass of the field with such beauty
will he not care for man. Seek ye first
the Kingdom of Heaven & his right answers, and
these things will be added unto you. These two
allusions to life in nature are but typical
of many, which bring home to us very forcibly
the truth that Jesus was a keen observer of natural
life, seeing there evidences of God's care for us
of God's eternal power, of God's love for truth
goodness & beauty. "The Kingdom of Heaven is
like unto the man who sowed good seed in his
field" "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a
grain of mustard seed": "By their fruits ye shall
know them" Do men gather grapes of thorns

or figs of thistles!" All these and many more. 5
tell us that Jesus gleaned many of his beautiful
and noble thoughts by his close observation of nature.
It is simply wonderful to see the extent to which
Jesus sayings indicate that many of his great
truths are ~~the~~ but the fruit of the simple every
day habit of keen observation. Here a fact is
noted, there a fact is noted. by and by all these
simple facts crystallize out into a beautiful
truth, of value to man for all time, a source
of inspiration and comfort to the human soul,
and above all, true to all times and conditions,
because based upon the actual love of God
as they ~~revel~~ were revealed to Jesus ~~in the~~
among the hills and valleys of Palestine.

If we turn to another aspect of Jesus life and
teaching, we discover another source of his truth
~~It is~~ It is all crystallized in one little passage showing
us as clearly and as plainly as if Jesus had told
us with his own words, that we studied the
lives of this fellow men. Let us read the passage.
"As he sat down over against the treasury, and
beheld some the multitude cast money into
the treasury, and many that were rich cast
in much. And there came a poor widow

and she cast in two mites, which make two a⁹
farthings; And he called unto him his disciples, and
said unto them "Verily I say unto you. This poor
widow cast in more than all ^{they} that are casting
into the treasury; for they all did cast in of their super-
fluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she
had even all her living." What a picture? If we
could but see in our imagination just what took
place there, and understood the significance of
it as a principle of Jesus' life, it would give us the
key which would unlock the mystery of Jesus
foster as a Teacher. Can we not see him sitting
near the treasury, quietly taking in all that was happen-
ing about him, watching the throng coming up to the
treasury and depositing their money, just as you
and I might watch the fascinating panorama of a city
street. Suddenly he sees this poor widow among
the other drop her two mites into the treasury. From
that moment he is all alert. In the midst of the rest =
less multitude he finds the fine noble soul, who
was willing to sacrifice even all her living for the
religion of her people. When he calls the attention of
the disciples to this incident, and says to them, "This
poor widow cast in more than all they who are
casting into the treasury," it seems as if he had
seen the innermost secrets of her soul, and had
revel there the purity, the nobility the grandeur
of a true child of God. Do you wonder that Jesus
spoke with authority?

do not refrain from referring to one more incident¹¹⁰
which indicates the simple method of Jesus. Perhaps
you have already recalled the incident of Jesus
and the lawyer which was a part of the scripture
lesson. ~~It shows not only~~. That incident always in-
fuses us anew with the mental acuteness of Jesus
and the power that he had of reaching the motives
and inner feelings of the men with whom he came
in contact. This lawyer, doubtless thinking that he could
force Jesus into an embarrassing position by his question
asked him what he should do to inherit eternal life.
When Jesus had answered by saying that he should
love God and his neighbor, the lawyer asks "who
is thy neighbor?" Then Jesus tells him his story
of the man who fell among thieves. He ~~reminds~~ the
the priest and the Levite, whose duty it was to love
their neighbor, had passed the sufferer by, he says. Then
comes the Samaritan, of whom we would have expected
but and he ministers unto him. Having related this
story Jesus turns on the lawyer with the pointed question
"Which of these three thickest thoughts passed neighbor
unto him that fell among the thieves?" The lawyer
had to answer his own question. Here again in
the poor outcast Samaritan Jesus had found the presence
of the living God, and he had taken ^{into his own life} of the lesson
that the Samaritan had taught him.

The gospels are full of these incidents which tell
us so plainly, that he who would may read

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That Jesus knew the life and the habits of the men
of his own time, of the men, with whom he came in con-
tact closely. In them he saw the spirit of God
manifesting itself, and from their lives he picked
up the bits of truth which he wove together into his
gospel of love and hope, "Blessed are the merciful;
for they shall obtain mercy," he said, and he knew
that it was true, because he had seen the truth of
it established, in the lives of the plain people of
Palestine. He found a bit of fine noble life in one
man, and a bit in another, and still more in
the third, and putting them all together, he saw in
this composite ideal of men, his own ideal. It is
like the process of weaving. He takes a thread
of goodness here, and another there, and a third
from some other soul, and so on, until finally
he has gleaned from the lives of his fellow men
threads enough to weave the fabric of the
world ideal. By this world ideal he lives, and
the truth of this world ideal he teaches, and his
teaching is the teaching of authority, because every
thing that he says is the outgrowth of his acute
insight into human nature. Every truth that he
utters has been tested and tried in the daily life
of the people whom he knew. Can you wonder that
the multitude were astonished at the authority

of his teaching, when he had drawn from the very ¹²
depths of their souls, the truths that he was uttering,
when he knew that he was but returning to them
the divine truths that they had given to him,

But over and above ^{manifestation} the appreciation of the revelation
of God in nature, and the revelation of God in the souls
of his fellow men, there is the simple but definite
consciousness that God was in his own soul. In
the realization of this truth Jesus rises to the height
of his spiritual genius. Feeling within the depths of
his own soul the deep emotions which were struggling
to express themselves in love and service, realizing
that within him were great forces of love and hope
demanding of him that he devote his life to ^{the} expression
of those forces, he had felt the sympathetic touch
of the spirit of the loving Father in his heart, he had
heard the voice of our all former God commanding
him to go forth to minister unto his fellow men.
to teach and to live the gospel of love and hope
unto eternal life.

This consciousness of the spirit of God within
him permeates his whole life, Indeed he lives
as if he believed that he were the Temple of

of the living God. "I and my Father are one," "Who¹³
both seen me, both seen the Father," these indicate
the extent to which the truth of God in his life
had taken possession of him, and his life tells
us how he had given himself up to its commands.
Can you wonder that he spoke ^{with} ~~from~~ authority,
when he had the scepter of God's power within
his soul, and the truth of God's love revealed
in the human heart, within his mind.

All these powers and truths are ours if we
but ask for them. We, also, may come to love this
deep untroubled conviction of the eternal reality of God's
care and love for us. We do not need the
authority of an infallible ~~book~~ church, or an in-
spired book, or a divine prophet. So we are given
the opportunity of seeing God and knowing God
even as it was to Jesus. We live in the midst
of a beautiful ~~nature~~ world of nature, where the
same divine mind dwells, the same divine spirit
is manifesting itself to us even as it did
to Jesus 2000 years ago. Yes! are not the
evidences of God's all powerful love forced

before us to day with a greater clearness, and with a
 deeper meaning, than could have been the case in
 Jesus time. Our scientific studies have enlarged
 the world into a universe, and divided the
 common materials into the minutest particles. Forces
 were wonderful those the tales of mythology
 have been discovered. Things are done every day
 before our very eyes, which in the time of Jesus
 would have been recorded as miracles. If ever
 in the history of man it were possible to see
 the guiding hand of an all powerful intelligent
 God behind these laws of nature, that time is
 to day. The more we discover, the more
 wonderful it becomes. The great fault is, not
 that God may not manifest himself to us
 in nature, but that we becoming so accustomed
 to his wonderfulness, may overlook them.
 We ought always to hear the voice of God
 saying to us. "Put off thy shoes from off thy
 feet, for the place whereon thou standest is
 holy ground."

We are living too in the midst of

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saintly souls, whose daily life is a manifestation of God's bountiful love and kindness. We may see the poor widow creep her two mites into the treasury, if we but look. We may see the good Samaritan ministering unto those who have fallen by the way side, if we but have a care for beautiful souls. We may see the ^{some} few noble minded souls to-day, that Jesus saw in ~~his~~ ^{his} Palestine. We do not have to go back to the ages that are no more for the sainted ones whose lives may give us the threads for the fabric of a world ideal. We do not have to turn back the pages of history to find lives in which we may see courage, purity and chivalry. Here again our peril is that we may overlook the lives of beauty and purity, and forget the ever present spirit of love, and devotion and care. The world that you and I live in is filled with the beautiful souls, we come in contact with them every day. I believe that never before were there so many noble lives, who are the living revelation of an eternal loving God as at this moment. It is for us to search out these threads of gold.

and take them up into our hives, thereby becoming¹⁶
the richer and nobler for having come in contact
with them.

Finally the spirit of God is within each human
soul. You and I are the living, revelations of God.
What a profound inspiring thought it is to think
that the spirit of the same God is within us, as
was in Jesus. Yes, what a sacred being you and I
ought to consider ourselves. Do we not feel deep
within the inward recesses of our soul, the commands
of the Divine Spirit? In those quiet hours, alone by our-
selves, or in moments when we are struck by a noble
personality, there arise in our minds resolutions to do
noble heroic things, to lead fine worthy lives, that
is the voice of God speaking to us, even as it spoke
to Jesus. There are the greatest moments of our lives
and what is most beautiful about it all is that they
come to the life of every human being. The voice of
God speaking to us within our own hearts. It is a
grand truth, and one which ought to fill us with
awe and reverence, and inspire us to lives of
nobility and purity, and activity.

Let us, then, amaze with our doubts, let us
not ask for any other authority in our religious
life, than the authority in which we live and

above and true one being. Oh, that we could ¹²
see the real revelation of God in our own sky and
generation, as Jesus saw it in his! Could we but
read God's word as it is written in the marvellous
book of nature, and in the divinely inspired books
of the human soul, our doubts would vanish, and
our lives would be transformed into the joyful
triumphant certainty which forced Jesus to say
"I and my father are one." Whittier feels this truth
which is born of a deep conviction, and fervent by human
life, as he writes

"Yet, in the mouldering voice of things
And tossed by storm and flood.
In one one fixed stake my fivefold claims
I know that God is good."

Shall not you and I, open our hearts and our minds
to this simple divine authority of our life, let its
truth guide us in our daily living, and its
commanding spirit lead ^{us} ~~into~~ without doubt
and without fear into the uncertain tomorrow.
Knowing that.

Worcester, N. H.

Nov. 2.

... the case ... of God in our own ...
generation, as found ... it in his ...
... it is written in the ...
... and in the ...
of the human ... our backs ...
our lives ... the ...
... from the ...
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... in the ...
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