

The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

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To err is human. To blunder might almost be said to be the peculiar property of, if **Errors and Blunders.** not the wise man, yet the man of learning—more or less. There is such a thing as pure error: a blunder is, on the other hand, essentially confusion, and he who blunders is, in the very nature of the case, "mixed." He is not like the lost horse wandering in the steppes: he is like the sleepy horse stumbling in the path. The very core of a blunder is, therefore, incongruity: and it is on this account that it ordinarily strikes us as amusing; for incongruity is the soul of humor. The incongruity may indeed pass beyond the limits of the amusing to the absurd, and may be such as to call out rather indignation than a smile; but in any case, it is the presence of mismatched elements in the phenomenon which raises it from the plane of a mere error into the dignity of a blunder. The late Mr. EDWARD A. FREEMAN, in his inimitable way, genially defines a blunder accordingly thus:—"A blunder is a work of art. An utterly stupid man, an utterly ignorant man, may

make dull mistakes and dull confusions; he cannot make a good blunder. To make a good blunder needs cleverness, and it needs knowledge—imperfect knowledge certainly, but still some knowledge, not utter ignorance." Indeed, it does not always imply ignorance at all,—sleepiness rather. The best blunders are but the nods of Homers; and a Homer is as necessary for their production as the nod.

We see the blunder in its most genial form when no ignorance is argued at all. In **Various Kinds Of Blunders.** these cases, it creates nothing in the hearer but a diverted smile, in which the perpetrator joins without embarrassment. Instances may be found in Dr. HERRICK JOHNSON'S declaration that Peter "cowered before a barmaid" (Lectures on the New Testament, Etc.: The American Tract Society, 1881, p. 7), and Dr. CHARLES WADSWORTH'S explanation, in one of his printed sermons, that the Epistle to the Colossians "had been penned by two private secretaries, Tychicus and a young colored man, Onesimus." Neither writer so

of his individual experience. In his application of the passage, Jesus reveals a principle which, in general, underlies his interpretation of the Psalms. It is a Messianic extension of one of the essential elements of poetry. Poetic representation is essentially an idealization—whether of scenery, of events or of feeling. The Psalmists, like other true poets, had ideal conceptions of their experiences. Under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, in conceiving and expressing their experiences, whether objective or subjective, they portrayed the experiences of Israel, and especially of the coming king of Israel, the Messiah. No one can fully appreciate the Psalms, or the Prophets in many of their poetic utterances, if he loses his hold on this guiding principle for which we are indebted to the Master himself.

We may now sum up this inquiry in a few words. Jesus must have been a painstaking student of the Scriptures. He became exceedingly well acquainted with the whole body of the text as it stood both in the original Hebrew and in the current Aramaic version. He was a sane and sober interpreter of the Scriptures, understanding the general scope of the whole, of particular books, and parts of books, as well as the grammatical meaning of the sentences. The principle which guided him in applying the Scriptures and in seeing the fulfilment of prophecy were such as must commend themselves to reverent scholars. He never does violence to the primary meaning when correctly understood, though he often sees beneath the surface, and brings to light a hidden meaning, which, when seen, commends itself to devout students and reveals sound principles of interpretation.

JESUS' DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

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When Jesus declared that the "Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark ii: 28), he unquestionably referred to himself. This was his favorite and most frequent term of self-designation. This title occurs not less than eighty times in the four Gospels, and, whatever its implications, it has great significance from the fact that he so repeatedly applies it to himself. The Sabbath was made for man; and he who is the Son of Man, the

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Second Adam, the Head of the New Race, is Lord also of the Sabbath.

This teaching goes deep and far. The Sabbath is an ancient and venerable institution. It ante-dates the decalogue. It is an inheritance from Eden. It is a child of the creative week. It was ordained for the benefit of mankind. Essentially, it is a religious provision. It was set apart in recognition of man's religious nature and need. Like all religious boons, it carries with it blessings not distinctively religious, blessings social, economical and industrial. It is a matter of proof that man and beast can do more work and better, working six days in the week than seven. The rush of modern life, with its multiplying and accumulating demands, confirms the wisdom of the sabbatic law.

Of the ten commandments, the fourth is often singled out as the "positive" or arbitrary one. It is said that it is intrinsically wrong to steal and kill and bear false witness, but to desecrate the Sabbath is wrong because God has commanded us to consecrate it. Of the rest of the law, it is said God enjoined it because it is right; but of this, at the best, it is right because God has enjoined it.

Regarded, however, only from the view-point of man's highest welfare, it is easy to see that the Sabbath is no arbitrary thing. Physically, men need it; mentally, also, and especially this driven and nervous generation. The Sabbath goes wherever Christianity goes, and if men need the Christian religion, they need this, its unfailling mark and fruit. Not even as to the particular portion of time set apart in the commandment, is it without support, from experience and reason. It has been proved that one day's rest in five is more than men need and that one in ten is less. During the French Revolution, the insane Parisians, ignoring God and renouncing Christianity, under the sanction of the "Goddess of Reason," decreed that one day in ten should be observed as a day of rest; but the ungodly experiment lasted only long enough to prove that men need more time than that for rest.

All Christians are at one in regarding the fourth commandment as of perpetual obligation. It was not simply a provision for a preparatory or passing era. The benefits which it confers are such as men will need always and everywhere. The principle on which and for which it stands is permanent and change-

less. The Word of God and the Christian conscience are in harmony with the evidence gleaned from human experience, that the Sabbath day, with its call to rest and worship, is to be kept holy till the end of time.

All this being so, we begin to see what it means that Jesus should declare himself "Lord of the Sabbath." The Sabbath is of God. It is a divine establishment; it stands upon a truth that is eternal; the duty to keep it is enduring. Even as a positive ordinance, God is its author and God only can disannul it. God is the only law-giver to man, and therefore He only is sovereign over his laws. Or, there is a better view: God is the ineffably, infinitely righteous One, and any law which He ordains is, in its way, a free expression of that infinite wisdom and eternal righteousness which are the very attributes of Himself. In this sense, then, God is not only the law-giver, He is the Law. And yet here is this Galilean teacher, proclaiming himself "Lord" of that law. The temple is the house of the Most High God; and yet, Jesus, pointing to himself, declared that one "greater than the temple" was there. The law of God is truth enjoined as duty; and Jesus presumed to call himself not only the Way and the Life but the "Truth" also. The Divine Sovereignty of Jesus, then, stands out upon the very face of this incident. Sovereignty is always supreme, for a dependent sovereign is no sovereign. It is always alone, for a divided sovereignty is a contradiction of terms. It may be limited in its scope; but not so this sovereignty of Jesus. He is Lord of the Sabbath, but the Sabbath is for all lands and ages. He is not only over things and men; he is over duty and truth and righteousness. Such a sovereignty, supreme, universal and spiritual, is nothing if it is not divine.

No one rightly reads the records who does not find this sovereignty on every page. He assumes it; he asserted it; he exercised it. It was from nothing artificial or adventitious. It was supported by no standing armies or conquering fleets. It was a stranger to Cæsar's pomp, and it spurned the splendors of worldly show; and yet it was real, active and self-revealing.

This sovereignty revealed itself in the spheres of (1) natural law; (2) intellectual thought; (3) ethical activity; and (4) spiritual life.

1. It is not necessary to discuss the *rationale* of our Lord's

miracles, in order to be persuaded of his sovereignty in the realm of nature. Miracles lose much of their mystery when we see the world at the proper angle of relation with its Lord. The mystery is in the miracle-worker, not in the miracle; and it is the unyielding mystery of the Divine. If God is the Creator and the world his creature, why should it be thought a strange thing that the Creator should do as he will with his creature? Few philosophers of first rank to-day deny the *a priori* possibility of miracles. The man of science knows no such words as possibility and impossibility; they are not in his dictionary—he busies himself in seeing what is. If Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh, the miracle falls as a corollary from his almighty hand. Grant theism, and the miracle is possible. Not that miracles are to be regarded as the cheap coin which Jesus tossed right and left at random on every side; not that there is not a serious presumption against miracles until a worthy motive for them appears and a necessary place for them is found in the development of a great organic world-regenerating process. We are not to cheapen nature by multiplying anomalies in her spheres; we need the law if we are to have the miracle; we must postulate the uniformity of nature or the miracle is gone. But if we accord to Jesus the sovereignty he claimed, the difficulty with his miracles vanishes. If he was Lord of the spiritual Sabbath, how much more was he Master of matter and supreme over cosmical laws? The battle over the Gospels will always be hottest about this divine prerogative of the Christ. If he was divine, his works were, like himself, divine also. The supernatural to us was natural to him. The deeds of Napoleon were but the natural product of a Napoleonic genius. The writings of a Plato are the spontaneous utterances of a Platonic mind. The words, the acts, the life of Jesus were the free, unstinted and unstudied shining forth of his personality; and if that Jesus was divine, then his prerogative of sovereignty in the world about him was but the legitimate manifestation of himself. If God is a slave to the world, then so was he; but if God made the world, and is supreme over the world he has made, then so is he.

Getting right on the question of the divinely sovereign Christ must mean, in a large measure, the settlement of all doubts as to the miracles of the Gospels. We cannot subscribe to the theology

of "A Death in the Desert," as a whole, yet there is a great truth, happily put, in the words so familiar to readers of Browning:

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ,
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise."

2. He was sovereign in intellectual spheres. He taught not as the scribes but as "one having authority." The intellectual majesty and easy sublimity of his teachings are the wonder of mankind. The very words that name the highest attainments of other men are seen to be inadequate and incongruous when applied to him. Plato was a prince among dialecticians, and his Socrates was not always able to resist the charms that fascinate the sophist, but the sayings of Jesus are simple, almost *naïve*, in form though sublime in their significance. We call a Leibnitz or a Kant a great philosopher, and yet we all see the figure of speech when Jesus is referred to as the wisest of the sages. We may call a Humboldt or a Newton a great scholar, but we never would ascribe "scholarship" to Jesus. We talk of the genius of a Shakspeare or a Goethe, but the world would not quite approve of our classifying the Galilean among the geniuses of history. He may be regarded in many different characters, and that man who could match his powers in any one of them would be accorded the laurels of the world's fame. We may not have stenographic reports of his discourses, but what we have proves that, as the preacher of a gospel, he was easy master of the substance and of the *technique* of the greatest of all preachers. His sayings have the freshness that proves them both spontaneous and extemporaneous. His discourses were not "lectures" nor delicately trimmed and scented "essays;" they did not smell of either musk or oil. If eloquence is thinking grand thoughts out loud, then he was eloquent. The brow of a hill, the bow of a rude boat, only with the people about him, was pulpit enough for him. He never quotes except from the scriptures, which he revered and regarded as the very Word of God.

All this evidences his sovereignty here. He ignored the pretentious forms of academic scholasticism. Saul sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but Saul's Lord was untaught of the masters and of the schools. He who perfectly knows the laws of thought need not

study the grammar of human speech; and he who knew truth itself, at first hand and absolutely, was easy master of the forms of thought and of the laws of the human mind.

Do men say that he knew not scientifically, critically, or as the scholars know to-day? The slow course of intellectual conquest is still very far from the profoundly penetrating, intuitive insight of the Nazarene. He is easy master of the world's masters. Human wisdom is wisest when sitting teachably at his feet. Science is proud of its forms, but this is what a recent scientific scholar has written of Jesus in his relation to science:

"One of the strongest pieces of objective evidence in favor of Christianity is not sufficiently enforced by apologists. Indeed, I am not aware that I have ever seen it mentioned. It is the absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge—whether in natural science, ethics, political economy or elsewhere, has had to discount." (The late Prof. Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion*; p. 167.)

3. It is less likely to be questioned that Jesus was divinely sovereign in ethical spheres. He alone is "Lord of the conscience." This high prerogative belongs neither to king nor pope; it belongs only to the Divine. The moral consciousness of Jesus was unique and yet it was typically human. Dr. Forrest well says: "His freedom from stain and shortcoming is not the destruction of his humanity, but its completion." (*The Christ of History and of Experience*; p. 40.) If the saint is to be king, and not the philosopher, as Plato in his *Republic* would have it, then there is none to dispute the throne with the Son of Man. His moral majesty crowns his intellectual, and reveals the correspondingly deeper resources and greater glories of his moral being. Few are they who have ventured to point out what they have alleged to be blurs or blemishes upon the truly unsullied record of his life. But they who tell us that the life of Jesus was a perfect pattern for our imitation and that his death was a stupendous object-lesson of self-sacrifice, are right in what they say but wrong in not saying more; for such a spectacle has lost its *motif* and meaning if it be only for the sake of itself.

Men may well see in Jesus the culmination and the climax of human development. They are right if they would measure

human greatness, at the top, in terms of the ethical rather than of the intellectual or the merely rational. There are no heights beyond the supernal altitudes in which the Son of Man breathed and dwelt. A recent French writer has said, "Should the light of history reveal to us some Personality animated with more Reason and Will than appeared in Jesus, the theological thesis with all its consequences would be compelled to transfer itself to such a One." (*Essay on the Bases of the Mystic Knowledge*, by E. RÉCÉJAC; p. 118, Eng. trans.) Over against these words, we may place those of another gifted but skeptical Frenchman, M. RENAN, in his *Life of Jesus*, "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed."

The world will wait in vain for the coming of a greater than this royal prince in the realm of moral character. Plato drew his picture of the ideal state, but admitted that it was impossible of realization. The ages may draw their picture of the ideal man and it is realized in the Gospel history; more than realized, for the world's ideal is imperfect. It is worth something to hear the testimony of honest but reluctant witnesses, and if we would know what thoughtful doubters think of the historical Christ, as an ethical factor in history, we may turn to these words of John Stuart Mill: "Not even now could it be easy even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than the endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life." (*Three Essays on Theism*; p. 255.)

4. In the sacred spheres of religious life, Jesus is supreme. He claimed and accepted the homage due to a God. He forgave sin not as pope or confessor but as very God himself. All sin is against God. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned." Only he whose law is broken can forgive the offense. "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that I have power on earth to forgive sins (he said) Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house. And he arose and departed to his house."

This one incident establishes completely the spiritual sovereignty of Jesus of Nazareth. He who puts himself in the place of God is either the divine Christ or the Anti-Christ; and the consciousness of the Church of God may be depended upon to detect the difference.

But we must guard against divorcing the spiritual from the ethical. This false bill of divorcement has blighted many a time and place in the history of the past. Jesus was both spiritually and ethically sovereign; he could not have been either one without the other. He cannot be to-day. Eulogies upon the ethical virtues of Jesus are empty if they lack the reverent homage of the soul. *Christus, si non deus, non bonus.* No man can accept the New Testament narrative as historically true and stop this side of the convinced Thomas' exclamation, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus' self-witness, once accepted, is final. He "claimed" nothing in an offensive or arrogant sense. But he spoke clearly and freely about himself. And truly no man ever spoke as he spoke. Prophets and apostles said, "Thus saith the Lord;" he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," and the Greek brings out emphatically the *Ego*. Who else has stood up and invited the whole world to come unto him for rest? "Come unto *me* and *I* will give you rest."

An ethical Christianity, without a sovereignly reigning personal Christ, is a vain thing after all. Humility was his chief human grace; "for I am meek and lowly in heart." But he himself was the inspiration and source of every force that contributes its part to the accomplishment of his work. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christianity is not a system of truth only; it is not an ethical impulse only; it is not a spiritual life only; it is first of all a *Personality*, pervasive, powerful, divinely sovereign; it is the personality of the ever-living, ever-reigning, ever-blessed Christ.

THE SEA OF GALILEE.

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The usual approach to the Sea of Galilee is by the old roadway—deeply worn by the tread of many generations—which leads down from Nazareth, by way of Cana, to Tiberias. From a notable outlook on one of the lower levels in this descent, the traveler gets his first view of the lake and its environs. As seen under a cloudless sky, and in the fresh spring time, from this standpoint—