

"THE HEAVENLY SCHOLAR" vs. THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES

Jn 7:20-52

I. VARIOUS VERDICTS ON JESUS in JOHN 7 (Wm. Barclay)

- A. A **Good Man** (v. 12); cf. rich young ruler: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do?" and Jesus' response: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (Mt. 19:16).
 - 1. How do you define "good"? What makes a peach "good"? What makes a man good?
 - 2. What made Jesus good, yet more than good? (cf. Napoleon)
- B. A **Prophet** (v. 40)
 - 1. What makes one a prophet? Name the prophets you admire, listen to, believe sent from God. Why did Jesus say John the Baptist was the greatest of the prophets?
 - 2. What made Jesus a prophet? What made him more than prophet?
- C. A **Deluded Madman** [i.e. demon-possessed] (v. 20)
 - 1. What makes one a madman? Inasmuch as the "insane" [i.e. not-sane, not-healthy] are detached from reality, how many current politicians/professors/pundits/ seem insane?
 - 2. What made Jesus utterly unlike madmen? What about Him seem mentally healthy, exuding common sense, rightly deemed the *Logos*?
- D. A **Seducer** harming Judaism [i.e. one who leads astray by persuasion or false promises]
 - 1. What makes one a seducer? Name noted seducers in history.
 - 2. What made Jesus unlike a seducer? Or was he, from a Jewish position, such?
- E. A **Courageous Man** (v. 26)
 - 1. What makes one courageous? Why is it so strongly praised as a "cardinal virtue"? Who do you think fully illustrates (in history or today) courage?
 - 2. What made Jesus courageous? What made him more than humanly courageous?
- F. A **Dynamic Personality** (v. 46)
 - 1. What makes for a dynamic personality? Describe any you have known or read about?
 - 2. What about Jesus illustrates his dynamic personality?
- G. **The Christ, the Anointed One of God** (v. 41)
 - 1. What characterized the promised Jewish Messiah?
 - 2. What about Jesus identified Him as the anticipated Messiah? Yet why was he something more than the Jews expected?

II. THE "HEAVENLY SCHOLAR" (vv. 10-31)

- A. Humanly, Jesus appeared (to Jewish leaders) unprepared, unqualified to teach
 - 1. "Jews marveled, saying, 'How does this Man know letters, having never studied'" (v. 15)—meaning he had not followed a rabbinic course of study, not that he was illiterate; still more: "no prophet has arisen out of Galilee" (v. 52), nor would Messiah be Galilean (v. 41), so traditional biblical interpretation barred him from consideration (Bethlehem birth unknown)
 - 2. Yet, in truth: "The officers answered, 'No man ever spoke like this Man!'" (v. 46)
 - 3. Nicodemus urges judicial procedure (v. 50-51) to actually settle the question
- B. Heavenly preparation demonstrable in Jesus' words and life
 - 1. Eternally known: "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me;" "He sent Me" (vv. 16, 29).
 - 2. Temporally revealed: "I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me" (v. 33). Of all "special revelation" Christ is THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD
 - 3. His truthfulness demonstrable to all who will to do His Father's will (i.e. the godly will confirm Jesus as true manifestation of God)
 - 4. Teaching/Revelation to be sustained and clarified by the Holy Spirit (vv. 37-30)
- C. Enduring questions regarding "scholarly" ministry, laity
 - 1. Early concern for training deacons & priests—schools integral to churches
 - 2. Medieval universities embedded within Church
 - 3. Reformation leaders (Luther & Calvin) primarily scholars
 - 4. Recurrent movements (generally sectarian and short-lived) rejected "learned" clergy
 - a. Lay-led movements (e.g. Waldensians; Lollards)
 - b. Revivalistic movements on American frontier—farmer/preachers
 - c. Charismatic movements stressing Spirit-filled rather than scholarly ministers
 - d. Independent congregations selecting & ordaining without regard for credentials

Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator* [ca. 200 A.D.]

“O you who are children! An indestructible corner stone of knowledge, a holy temple of the great God, has been hewn out especially for us as a foundation for the truth. This corner stone is noble persuasion, or the desire for eternal life aroused by an intelligent response to it, laid in the ground of our minds.” (I,1; p. 3).

“. . . the self-same Word who forcibly draws men from their natural, worldly way of life and educates them to the only true salvation: faith in God. That is to say, the heavenly Guide, the Word, once He begins to call men to salvation, takes to Himself the name of persuasion . . .” (I,1; p. 4).

“Let us call Him then, by one title: Educator of little ones, an Educator who does not simply follow behind, but who leads the way, for His aim is to improve the soul, not just to instruct it; to guide to a life of virtue, not merely one of knowledge. Yet that same Word does teach” (I,1; p. 4).

“Therefore, the all-loving Word, anxious to perfect us in a way that leads progressively to salvation, makes effective use of an order well adapted to our development; at first, He persuades, then He educates, and after all this He teaches” (I,1; p. 5).

“The education that God gives is the imparting of the truth that will guide us correctly to the contemplation of God, and a description of holy deeds that endure forever. Just as the general directs a line of battle with the safety of his soldiers in mind, and as the helmsman pilots his ship conscious of his responsibility for the lives of his passengers, so the Educator, in his concern for us, leads His children along a way of life that ensures salvation. In brief, all that we could reasonably ask God to do for us is within the reach of those who trust in the Educator of the little ones” (I,7; p. 50).

Arthur Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth* [c. 1977]

“The early church claimed that all truth is God's truth wherever it be found. The *focus* here is on truth. But the ultimate *locus* of truth is God. If he is the eternal and all-wise creator of all things, as Christians affirm, then his creative wisdom is the source and norm of all truth about everything. And if God and his wisdom are unchangingly the same, then truth is likewise unchanging and thus universal” (p. 8).

“It remains the case that ‘we know in part’ and ‘see through a glass darkly.’

“But at the same time, this credo about truth extends hope to man that truth is knowable and life ultimately makes sense. It means that men created as intelligent beings in God's image can hope to understand in measure a world intelligently made by the most intelligent being of all” (p. 9).

“The prologue to the Fourth Gospel speaks of Jesus Christ as the *Logos*, the Word. Once again the term evokes comparisons with other philosophical ideas, for it was used by a variety of ancient writers: yet by his selection of this term, John plainly wishes to speak of what they sought to understand. Heraclitus of Ephesus (d. 475 B.C.), used *Logos* of a rational element in nature, so that what would otherwise be confusing and chaotic flux becomes an intelligible and ordered process. The *Logos*, moreover, is associated with human intelligence and its power to think soundly and give to life the guidance of reason. Anaxagoras (d. circa 428 B.C.) employed the synonym *Nous*, or Mind, in related ways. It is a rational principle at work in nature, holding things together which otherwise would fall apart, and making them intelligible to man. The term *Logos* appears similarly in the Stoics for an active and rational force that controls the material elements and gives to nature its ordered unity. The *Logos* is a life-giving principle diffused throughout nature, and a seminal deposit of it comprises each man's soul” (p. 12).

“He [Justin Martyr] sees the divine *Logos* as somehow the source of whatever truth Plato or Socrates or Heraclitus of the Stoics may have apprehended. ‘For each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the spermatic word, seeing what was related to it. . . . Whatever things are rightly said among all men are the property of us Christians. For next to God, we worship and love the Word’” (p. 14).