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Authority in Religious Life

Earl Clement Davis

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Scrifture Luke 1025-37 motthew 77-12 724-29 (8) Jext. mat. 729 The affect when the multitude of this server of Jerns, the server on the Mount, at once arouses one interest. If there is one Thing that men desire in any thought, in any deed, it is cuthority. Some how that heartiful hyran of Condinal hermonic, Level Kindly light" tinches a responsive corch in every beaut. as me sit here today, looking with The un know future, conscious that to more with all its un certaintrés in before us, conscions that it way being into our life some great source some great temptation, some great defeat, some: Thing which my overcome us, and cost ascale worn out and males, me instincturely fray for some kindly light too level us. We fiel that deep down in one hearts there is a crawing, a longing to soit the bundles of responsibility of a the shoe: dear of another, and for one moment to feel certain absolutely restars, That me are sufforted by and are uncle the immediate fortection of a great forman mene en and some for me even arriver is that he is notching over us, Mith what resolution, and konage would you and I go

About our claig Tosks, if me more cutain that me 2 mere sup forted by an in follible anthority, Sometimes when I am collect upon to make a ferrowch decision which is of some importance to me, I freel, and I kum that under similar conditions, you must feel, very much as the grend old Carchiel Themmes dick, when, after years of untoffy search for an anthrity in his religions lofe, he turned to the fortesting sums of the Catholic Church, singing art of the uncertainty of his send, -Leach Rively Light, amich the mainling gloom, fear thou we on; The night is clark, and dam for from home,-Level The we on! Keef thou my fert ; I do not ask to see The distut scene, - one step enough for me. Bit times me fiel this some meetainty in our religions life, we are not almongo quite certain about the great religious truths, which mean so much to us, truths which make life as me know worth while. Coned me but know absolutely that god is a lowing Fother, to whom we might giv in frager in more ment of great joy or great source, where guiding vone me aved always defend, tom andher itabily would me exfran on religions belief, and with what fouth would me line our religions life. But There things me do not know, and it is became of this deef uncertainty in on hearts

that me are so intented in this fait that ferres tright his religiour truths with such anthonity that the multitude mass astroiched. The thought accur us us that fer for me too way come to see the truth ferrer book seen, and be assured of the great seligions insight which book en lightened his sore, and enabled him to feel the authrity of a loring Fother book of him, to show his authrity to the multitude.

There is one Thing that becomes quite offerent as one studies the life of Jerns as me know it. She authrity not with which he spoke wer wat some exterval anthrity derived from an aracle, or an inspired book, or an ecclesiastical from etimany, but it was the authority of an internal conniction, which filled his sure and clominated his mind: de fort that is just what the text tell us wat flouisly. He clice wat teach as the seriles. The cuttorily of the scribes nor based up just there extended things. They defended wfor the trachting femich vergins history, upon the retiral and forme of Receiving, Hubits and customs which tool been ingrammed into the very fibe of the family roce, all the esternal anthritis some in to suffort The scribes in This Terching. Whit were swech They ask for : If there is any losting authority in There external former, trachiting, and institutions as such restandy there were wor a work offorme

time to me them, then in the years in the listing of the famish feagle. But even with there author :ities, the seriber could not reach the unlitude as chiel the simple conferter Jesus of they with. Mu Room to the world, heralded only by the Janotic fearcher John The Boffit, this devoted an= secrated sone comes for before the multitude pearling a new Jorfel, and he prevenes at with such anotherity that the multitude is asteristed. Why, Became his authority is not defendant upon some special revelation, ar a climine institution, but it is the authrity of an inner conniction. Circle you and I feel the authority of a similar conviction at this moment, the world would become a ven flore for us, our cloubto would be chis: felled, and on uncertainties much vouish and a deef feacebre faith unbold take formen in of our mind and heart.

How much it would mean to us if me ever go boch of that day when Jerne first comes before the world to be beftied of John the Buftit in the forder, me are never know, of me but know the story of his life on he grew prove childlood into youth, and from youth is to workood, it might revere to us incertance

truthe of inertimable value in solving on fer: flexing questions. But all is a blank, some one little incident in the taufle, at times in our in againation me try to ficture him stonding by the carfenters beach doing his daily clubes in his simple mobile way. Enon then we mish rather to Room the thoughts that accufied his mind, and the struggles that ment on with in his some day by day as he grew of into manboud. But all There inaginings are in rain. We know him only as the teacher of the simple religious life away the feafer of Paleatine. He amen to us first as a won awong men, destried to learl and reworld the religions life of the world, It we find the source of his authority, we must seek it awing the records of It his life and teachings, a study of these sources reveals three forts. which I mish to suggest by voticing centarin typicol instances, the first one is that forms over a very close observer of nature, and from observation he derined mony of his religions Truths, Seek ye first the Ringdom of Hearing and his rightonsmas and all those things sheel he added into you." sogs Jesur, and me wonder where und by whit

means that great that bod channed up his mind, b. Hod it some to him by a stange, sufernotural renda: twin of god ? or click ferrer observe the truth is some war natural way? the ansmen is found in the very forroge which contains there would fol words. Jesus soys, Behald the hirds of the heaven that they some wat, wither do They reaf vor gother into bans; and your heavenly fother feedeth there, are wat ye of much more value than they ! And why me ye anxious concern: ing varment. Consider the libes of the frelch for They give, they toil not, wither do they sfin, and yet I say unto you that ena bolowon in all his glory wor wit anoyed like one of there. But if god so clothe the gran of of the field, which to doy is, and to worm is cost into the onen, stall be not much war clothe you." Then Jollows that beautiful toching Seek yE first His Kungdun and his rightournan, and food and raiment will toke core of bin seef. Jem bod observed the life and tobits of the hirds of the beaven, bol seen their care pree enjoyment of the day that is, and comfored it with the over anxion

strinings of more for the includgente of his mere flypical month, Goch cares for the burchs of the ain, will be not also care for wors ? again he bod observed the beauty and the simplicity of the lily of the field, and he had comfared it Mith man's main attempts to aclow his ferson with costly rainent, and the confaring work to the credit of the water beauty of the milel plomer. Again he thought. If goel clothes the gives of the field with such beauty mill he not care for war, Lekye first thiskingdom of heaven I his right menes. and these things wied he aclosed with you. There have allisions to life in notice are but typeal of wany which bring tome to we very for the the buth that ferrer war a keen abserver of wateral ble, seeing there enidences of goels care for us of goels steward former, of goels love for built goochare & hearty. The Kingdon of Herren is like when the war who someal good seed in his field "The Kingelow of bearin is like when grain of mustand sead ! By their Junits ye shall Room Theme" On men greber großes of lowes

a figs of thirtter !" all there and many ware 8 tell us that Jesur gleaned worry of his beautiful and notle thoughts by his close observation of watere It is simply wonderfore to see the extent to which Jesus soyings indicate That wany of his great truths are the but the forchast of the simple every dry bobit of keen observation. Here a fact is noted, There a fort is voted. by and by all there simply forts anytolize out into a beautiful truth, of volue to man for all time, a source of inspiration and comfort to the human sone, and store all true to all times and couch tris became bored upon the actual love of god as they reveal more revealed to Jesus in The among the liels and valleys of Polestine. If me turn to another aspect of Jesus life and teaching, we discover another source of his truth Flir It is all anystolized in one little farsage showing us as showly and as flindy as if ferre bod told us with his own words that we stuckied the hier of this fellow wer. Lit we read the formage. An he sat down one ergainst the treasury, and beheld home the multitude cust money into the treasury, and many that were wich cost in much. and there some a four michow

and she wit in this mites, which make two a 9 for things, and he colled write him his disciple, and said into them "Nerily I say unto you. This for miclow cast in more than all that one casting into the heasing ; for they all did cart in of their sufer : fluity; but she of her wont did cast in all that she had even all her living." What a ficture? If me could but see in om inagination just what took flare these, and understand the significance of it as a frinciple of ferns life, it wored give us the key which would unlock the mystery of fears forver as a teacher, Con we not see him sitting near the treasury, quetly taking in all that was fuffer: ing about him, matching the throng coming of to the treasury and deforiting their money, just as you and I might wotch the facinating for arrange of a city street. Suddenly he sees this four michon among the other drof her two mites with the treasury. Fim That woment he is all alert. In the micht of the rest = lere multitude he finds the fine walle sine, mbo wor mieling to samplice even one her living for the religion of her feagle. When he calle the attention of the disciples to this incident, and says to them, this four miclon cost in war then all they who are costing into the treasury," it seems as if he bod seen the innerront secrets of her sore, and bod reach there the fairity, the wolikity the geomeder So you would that Josus of a time child of god. stoke with authority :

& cound reficin from referring to one work incident 10 which inclicates the simple method of ferres. Perhaps you bor already recalled the incident of Jesus and the Longa which wer afart of the scriptime leason, it shows wet only. Shat incident always in 2 parses we arear with the mental acutemen of ferre and the former that he tool of reaching the wating and inner fredings of the men with whom he came is contract. This courger doubtless thinking that he and force Jesus into an embaraning furition by his question asked him what he showed do to inherit sterve life. Maken firms had answered by soying that he should love god and his neighter, the lowger asks "mbo is they neighbor? The Jasur tell him his story of the new who fill among theires. He recounts the The frist and the first, where cluty it was to love their neighbor, bod formad the sufferier by, ba sup. Then comes the Som aniton, of whom we groved mor exfected but and he ministers with line, Horing relative this story form turns on The langer with the forinted question Nobich of these three thicker T throught froved neighbor unto him that feel among the theires ?! " the longer bod to answe his own question. Here again in the four outcost Somariton denne had found the fresence that the Somanitan boel longht him. the gosfels are full of There incidents which Tell us so flainly, that he note show my read

That ferre Ruene the life and the bobits of the man of his own time of the men, with a fun the some in con a tort donly. In them he som the spirit of god manifesting itself, and from their lines he ficked of the lists of truth mulich he were together with his gougel of love and hope, Blessed are The marciful; for they about obtain mercy," he said, and he knew that it was the became he had seen the truth of it established, in the lines of the flain feafle of Palestine. He formal a bit of fine make life in one ferre, and a bit in another, and still work in the third, and fulting them are together, he seek in This compriste icleal of men, his own iclear. It is like the frocen of meaning. He takes a thread of gradness here, and another there, and a Third from some other sine, and so and, until fridely he bor gleaved from the lines of the his feelow men threads even gh to mean the fabric of the worde iclear. By This word ideal he lines, and the truth of this would ideal be teacher, and his teaching is the teaching of anthority, because every thing that he sorge is the outgrowth of his acute in right into huma watere, Eeneny truth that he retters for her tested and Tried in The daily life of the featle when he know. Can you would that the meltitude mere articished at the outbrily

of his teaching, when he bod down from the very " defthrof, their sover, the truths that he was uttering, when he have that he was but returning to Them the divine truth that they bod given to him manifestature But over and above the affection of the combetan of good in votice, and the revelation of good in the sover of his feelow wan, there is the simple but definite consciousness that god won in his own some, on the realization of this truth genue mes to the beight of his spiritual gavins, Beding mothin the defths of his own some the deep emotions which were stonggling to exfress than salves in love and service, realizing that mithin him more great former of love and boje demonding of him the he denote his life to expension of those former, he bock feelt the sympothetic tooch of the spirit of the loving fother in his heart, he tol "heard the voice of an all former for god commanding him to go forth to minister unto his fellow war. to teach and too line the gosfel of love and hope miter eterral life. This concions of the spirt of good within prin fermeates his whole life, Indeed he lines as if he believed that he were the temple of

of the living god. I and my Farther are one, Who " both seen me, both seen the Fother," there indicule the extent to which this truth of goel in his life bod token forsenion of him, and his life lells us bow he bod given himself of to its commends. Con you wonder that he spoke firm anthority, when he had the chyvornic of God's former within his soul, and the touth of god's low renealed in the human beaut, mithin his mind.

All there forwars and truths are owns if me but ask for them. We also, way come to boos this deef authaitative consister of the stand reality of God's cone and love for us, the do not need the authority of an infollible took shouch, or an in a Afined book, or a dimine fughet. For us is given The offer timety of seeing ford and Running god even as it was to feens , We live in the midst of a heartiful watere would of nature, where the some chinine misclon, the some clinine spirit is manifesting it self to ve energe it shil to forus 2000 years ago, yes! are not the enidences of God's all former for bound forced

byfor us to doy with a greater dearnere, and mich a defer meaning, then smell for heen the core in Jesus time. Une scientific stuckes box enloyed the world into a universe, and chinided the common moterials into the minutest forticles, former work mendaport those the toles of mysthology for been discovered. Shings me done energedry before our very eyes, which in the time of form would have been recorded as minarles. If ever in the history of won it were forsible to see the quicking bouch of an all former for intelligent god behind there love of votice, that time is to day. The ware me discover, the ware wonde ful it pecomes. Un great feril is, wat that god way wat wanifest himself to us is notice, but that we becoming so accustomed to his wonifestatus, way or alook Them. Now ought abourge to head the voice of God sorging to us Put off they above from off they feet, for the flore where on those stondert is toly ground. We are living too in the micht of

saintly sorts, where claily life is a wini pertotions of god's bound for love and kindness. We way see the four midow chof her two with the the hearing, if we but look, we way see the good for anitory miniating into The who for follow by the way side, if we boil torre a rave for beautiful sores. We way see the five would min decl souls to choy, that ferres som in this the Polestine. Me for not for to go book to the ages that are we ware for the samiled over whore line way give us the the och for the fobric of a word ideal. We do not have to time bock the foges of history to find lines in which me may see comage, finity and climity. Here again our feril is that me very oneslash the lines of beauty avel furity, and forget the even ferent spirit of love, and devotion and care. The world that you and I line in in filled with the hear hipol sorts, we come in contout mith them every day. I believe that were before were there so many voble lines, who are the lining renelation of an steward loving god as at this woment, It is for ve to search out there Theods of gold.

and toke them of into our hirs, thereby becoming " the richer and nobles for borning come in contout mith them. Finally the spirit of god is within each human sone, you and I are the living revelotions of good. what a forformal inafining thought it is too think that the spirit of the Some God is mithe in rec. as was in Jerur. yes. what a socied being you and I

mght to consider ourschies Do me wat feel deef

mithin the invert receives of one soul the commonde

of the Divine Spirt? In three quiet hour, alone by our

selver, or in woments where we are strived by a woble

ferror stily, these wise in our minule resolutions to all

woble beroix things, to level fore worky lines, that

is the voice of God speaking to us, even as it spoke

to Jesus. There are the greatest woments of on this

and what is wort beautiful about it all is that They

come to the life of every human being, the voice of

God speaking to us michin on our bearts. It is a

groud Truth and one which angles to fall us mith

wave and seven me, and inspire us to live of wality and finity and articity

bit us there, any with on clouble, that us not ask for any other outbouty in our religions . It life, then the authority in mulich me his and

wome and tome one hering. Ih, that me could 12 see the real revelotion of God in our own they and generotin, as Jesus some it in his? Conect we but read goods word as it is mitten in The manuellong book of votice, and in the clining in speel book of the human sone, our doubts would would, and our lines would be transformed water the bufe for triunflost sectainty which porced ferme to soy I and my Jother are one." Whittie feels this truth which is born of a deep consistens, could ferred by human life, as he mitis yet, in the modeling way of things and tomed by storm and flood. to one one fixed stoke my fingue clings I know that ford is ford ," Shall not you und I ofen our hearts and one minde to this simple dinine authority of our life, Let ite That quide us in our daily lining, and its commonding of with lead with mithant doubt and mithout fear into the mixertain to morrow. Howing that .

Wouchate .m. It. generation, or forme anne it in his I Consel me to period goods would be it is switten in the war relland book of waters, and in the diminely in your took of the human nook, our doubts would nough, and our times under the training owners water the boys for I kin fort cartainty which pound form to any I and my fother are one on ." Whittie full this touth astick is prove of a first summittees, and from by bringing hippen ander maitin Myst, in the modelening may of things and tomed by atoms and pleased. for one one figure atoke my for for a langs I know that you is first. " I have not you and offer our hearts and our series to this simple dimine anthouts of our life, but also hut guide we in our dail fining, and its arminorching of with lead fint mittait deret and mithout from into the ministanie to anon

Authority in Religious Life

Earl Clement Davis

Manchester, New Hampshire

No $Date^1$

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 7:7-12; 7:24-29.

Text: Matthew 7:29, "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.²"

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. Somehow that beautiful hymn of Cardinal Newman's, "Lead Kindly Light" touches a responsive chord in every heart. As we sit here today, 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 [us] 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 that he is watching over us. With what resoluteness, and courage would you and I go about our daily tasks, if we were certain that we were supported by an infallible authority. Sometimes when I am called upon to make a personal decision which is of some importance to me, I

¹ While this manuscript has no date, there is the notation, "(8)" at the top, similar to other notations from dated sermons from his Earl Davis' time as a student at Harvard. On the back of the last page is the location, Manchester, N. H., and "Hum. 2," which I believe refers to a class Earl Davis was taking at Harvard.

 $^{^2}$ The text from Matthew 7:29 is not written out in the manuscript, only its source, "Matthew 7:29"

feel, and I know that under similar conditions, you must feel, very much as the grand 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 me on; The night is dark, and I am far from home, Lead Thou me on; Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene;

One step enough for me.³

At times we feel this same 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 [it] worthwhile. Could we but know absolutely that God is a loving Father, to whom we might go in prayer in moments of great joy, or great sorrow, upon 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 to 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

³ Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) wrote this poem in 1834. Originally an evangelical academic at the University of Oxford, and a priest in the Church of England, he became dissatisfied with the Church of England and in 1845 left the Church of England and was received into the Catholic Church. Pope Leo XIII made him a Cardinal in 1879. He was Beatified by Pope Benedict XVI on September 19, 2010.

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 tradition of Jewish religious history, upon the ritual and forms of ceremony, habits and customs which had been ingrained into the very fiber of the Jewish race. All these external authorities came in to support the scribes in their teaching. What more could they ask for? If there is any lasting authority in these external forms, traditions, and institutions as such certainly there never was a more opportune time to use them, than in those years in the history of the Jewish people. But even with these authorities, the scribes could not reach the multitude as did the simple carpenter Jesus of Nazareth. Not known to the world, heralded only by the fanatic preacher, John the Baptist, this devoted consecrated soul comes 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, as 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 dispelled, and our uncertainties would vanish and a deep peaceful faith would take possession upon mind and heart.

How much it would mean to us if we could go back of that day when Jesus first comes 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 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's bench, doing his daily duties in his simple noble way. Even then we wish rather to know the thoughts that accompanied his mind, and the struggles that went on within 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 lead and remold the religious life of the world. If we find the source of his authority, we must seek it among the records 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 his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you"⁴ says Jesus. And we wonder where any by what means that great truth had dawned upon his mind. Had it come to him by a strange supernatural revelation of God? Or did Jesus observe the truth in some more natural way? Our 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 you heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? ... And why are ye anxious concerning 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 the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you."⁵

Then follows that beautiful teaching: "Seek ye first his Kingdom and his righteousness and food and raiment will take care of himself."⁶ Jesus had observed the life and

⁴ Matthew 6:33.

⁵ Matthew 6:26-30.

⁶ It is interesting how Earl Davis' Biblical quotations both differ slightly from the language of the King James Bible, and, in this instance, differ with each other. Here we have three versions of Matthew 6:33: (1) ECD#1: "Seek ye first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you;" (2) ECD #2: "Seek ye first his Kingdom and his righteousness and food and raiment will take care of himself;"

habits of the birds of the heaven, had seen their carefree enjoyment of the day that is, and compared it with the over anxious stirrings 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 this Kingdom and his righteousness, and these things will be added unto you." These two allusions to life in nature are but typical of many {???} bring home to us very forcibly the truth that Jesus was a keen observed 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."7 "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed."8 "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?"⁹ All these and many more 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 but products of the simple everyday habit of keen observation. Here a fact is noted, there a fact is noted. By and by these simple facts crystalize out into a beautiful truth, of value to men 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 were revealed to Jesus 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 all crystalized in one little passage showing us as clearly and as plainly as if Jesus had told us with his own words that

(3) King James: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
⁷ Matthew 13:24.
⁸ Matthew 13:31.

⁹ Matthew 7:16.

he studies the lives of his fellow men. Let me read the passage.

And he sat down over against the Treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the Treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And then came a poor widow and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and said until 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 superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had even all her living.¹⁰

What a picture? If we could but see in our imagination just what took place there, and understand the significance of it as a principle of Jesus' life, it would give us the key which would unlock the mystery of Jesus' power as a teacher. Can we not see him sitting near the Treasury, quietly taking in all that was happening 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 others drop her two mites into the Treasury. From that moment he is all alert. In the midst of the restless multitude he finds the pure 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 read the there the purity, the nobility, the grandeur of a true child of God. Do you wonder that Jesus spoke with authority?

I cannot refrain from referring to one more incident 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. That incident always impresses me anew with the mental acumen of Jesus and the power that he had of reading the motives and inner feelings of the men with whom he came in contact. This lawyer, doubtless thinking that he could force Jesus into

¹⁰ Mark 12:41-44.

an embarrassing position by his questions asked for 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. 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 no good was expected and he ministers unto him. Having related this story, Jesus turns on the lawyer with the pointed question, "Which of these three thinkest thou proved neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?"11 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 the lesson that the Samaritan had taught him.

The gospels are full of these incidents which tell us so plainly that he who may read, that Jesus knew the life and the habits of the men of his own time, of the men, with whom he came in contact daily. 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."12 he said and he knew 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 person, and a bit in another, and still more in the third, and putting them all together, he sees in this composite ideal of men, his own ideal. It is like the process of meaning. 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 moral ideals. By this moral ideal he lives, and the truths of this moral ideal he teaches, and his teaching is the teaching of authority, because everything 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

¹¹ Luke 10: 25-37.

¹² Matthew 5:7.

drawn from the very 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 the appreciation of this manifestation 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 powers of love and hope demanding of him that he devote his life to the expression of those powers, he had felt the sympathetic touch of the spirit of the loving father in his heart, he had heard the voice of an allpowerful 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 was the temple of the living God. "I and my Father are one."¹³ "Who hath seen me, hath seen the Father."¹⁴ These indicate the extent to which this 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 authority, when he had the dynamic of God's power within his soul, and the truth of God's laws 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 have this deep authoritative conviction of the eternal reality of God's care and love for us. We do not need the authority of an infallible church, or an inspired book, or a divine prophet. To us is given the opportunity of seeing God and knowing God even as it was to Jesus. We live in the midst of a beautiful world of nature, where the same divine wisdom, the same divine spirit is manifesting itself to us even as it did to Jesus 2,000 years ago. Yes! Are not the evidences of God's all-

¹³ John 10:30.

¹⁴ John 14:9.

powerful hand forced upon us today 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. Laws more wonderful than the tales of mythology have been discovered. Things are done everyday 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 today. The more we discover, the more wonderful it becomes. Our great peril is, not that God may not manifest himself to us in nature, but that we becoming so accustomed to his manifestations, 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."15

We are living too in the midst of saintly souls, whose daily life is a manifestation of God's bountiful love and kindness. We may see the poor widow drop her two mites into the Treasury, if we but look. We may see the good Samaritan ministering unto those who have fallen by the wayside, if we but have a care for beautiful souls. We may see the same pure noble-minded souls today that Jesus saw in 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 moral ideal. We do not have to turn back the pages of history to find lives in which we may see courage, purity and divinity. 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 lives, thereby becoming 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

¹⁵ Exodus 3:5.

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 inmost recesses of our soul the commands of the Divine Spirit? In those quiet hours, alone by ourselves, or in moments where we are stirred by a noble personality, there arise in our minds resolutions to do noble heroic things, to lead pure manly lives. That is the voice of God speaking to us, even as it spoke to Jesus. Those 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, away with our doubts. Let us not ask for any other authority in our religious life than the authority in which we live and move and have our being. Oh, that we could see the real revelation of God in our own day and generation, as Jesus saw it in his? Could we but read God's word as it is written in the marvelous book of nature, and in the divinely inspired book of the human soul, our doubts would vanish, and our lives would be transformed into the hopeful 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 proved by huma life, as he writes,

> Yet, in the maddening maze of things And tossed by the storm and flood. To one fixed trust my spirit clings I know that God is Good!¹⁶

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 without doubt and without fear into the uncertain tomorrow.

¹⁶ A passage from John Greenleaf Whittier's (1807-1892) poem, "The Eternal Goodness," first published in 1867 in Whittier's The Tent on the Beach and Other Poems.