

The Compelling Power of Christian Realism

by Charles William Butler

Charles William Butler preaches about the importance of Christian realism, emphasizing the need to adhere to truth that corresponds to reality, especially in the realm of theology. He highlights how Christian truth and experience, though not demonstrable in a chemical laboratory, can be realized and demonstrated in the laboratory of higher values of life, leading to fundamental changes in human personality. Butler explores the concept of Christian realism through the example of Peter and John's unwavering faith in the face of opposition, showcasing how the realism of Christian faith creates a compelling force and enthusiasm in believers. He underscores the mission of the true Christian church to produce witnesses through genuine evangelism, anchoring individuals intellectually, morally, and spiritually in the reality of salvation.

Description

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Transcript

the-compelling-power-of-christian-realism.pdf" txtUrl: "/pdf-text/text/c/charles-william-butler---the-compelling-power-of-christian-realism.txt" thumbnailUrl: "" hasTranscript: true oneLinerSummary: "Christian realism is the principle of depicting Christian truth as it exists, without idealization, and demonstrating its power in human experience." sermonType: "teaching" topics: - name: "Christian Realism" slug: "christian-realism" - name: "Evangelism" slug: "evangelism" bibleRefs: outline: - heading: "The Definition of Realism" - heading: "The Principle of Realism in Christian Faith" - heading: "The Power of Christian Realism" - heading: "The Mission of the Christian Church" - heading: "To produce witnesses in the realm of Christian realism" - heading: "To fulfill the command to preach the gospel to every creature" faq: - q: "What is Christian realism?" a: "Christian realism is the principle of depicting Christian truth as it exists, without idealization, and demonstrating its power in human experience." - q: "How can we test the promises and precepts of the Bible?" a: "We can test them

in a way that will make us witnesses of their truth, based on our own experience and the truth of Scripture." - q: "What is the key to demonstrating Christian truth?" a: "The key is to have a settled consciousness within ourselves that we know Christ and know that the great promises of the gospel are true." - q: "How can we be certain of the truth of the Bible?" a: "We can be certain by testing its promises and precepts in our own experience and by the truth of Scripture." - q: "What is the mission of the Christian church?" a: "The mission of the Christian church is to produce witnesses in the realm of Christian realism and to fulfill the command to preach the gospel to every creature." quotes: - "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." - "He that willeth to do the will of my Father, shall know of the doctrine." - "Blessed are they which have not seen and yet believe." applicationPoints: - "We can test the promises and precepts of the Bible in our own experience and by the truth of Scripture." - "The key to demonstrating Christian truth is to have a settled consciousness within ourselves that we know Christ and know that the great promises of the gospel are true." - "The mission of the Christian church is to produce witnesses in the realm of Christian realism and to fulfill the command to preach the gospel to every creature." keywords: - "Christian realism" - "realism in literature and art" - "realism in philosophy" - "Christian truth" - "human experience" - "compelling power" - "Christian church" - "mission of the church" - "preaching the gospel" ---

The dictionary definition of realism states that "in literature and art, it is the principle of depicting persons and scenes as they exist, without any attempt at idealization." In philosophy, involving cosmology, "the doctrine that in external perception man can and does perceive real external objects: opposed to idealism and skepticism. The theory that logical genera and species are real things, existing independently and apart from our conceptions of them and names for them." Truth has been defined as that which corresponds to reality.

Realism in modern culture has become a system of thinking and of theories not in harmony with truth as it exists in the higher realm of theology. The principle, however, of adhering to that which actually exists on any level of thought is a sound principle. Applied to the Christian message, truth is present which answers to reality in human consciousness, involving power that makes fundamental changes in the realm of human personality on the level of the moral and spiritual. While Christian realism cannot be demonstrated in a chemical laboratory, it is capable of demonstration in the laboratory of the higher values of life. Christian truth is capable of realization and of practical demonstration in its accomplishment of that for which it stands when conditions are met on the part of free moral subjects. Just as surely as demonstrations may be made in the laboratories of scientific investigation, the truth as it is in Jesus may be put to a practical laboratory test in the realism of human experience until certainties are established in the realm of the spiritual and the moral, of which the believer is as certain on this higher level as the scientist may be certain of the testing of a formula in the chemistry laboratory. The reality of Christian truth and experience is of a nature which creates a new force or compelling power in the experience of them that believe, so that the Christian who has been cleansed from sin and filled with the Holy Spirit, possesses a compelling enthusiasm which joins with the experience of the Apostle Peter as expressed in the Acts of the Apostles at chapter 4, verse 20.

The text referred to is the statement of Peter, when on trial for his faith before officials of the law. The opposition to the Christian movement in its very early days was such that but for the realism involved in the content of Christian faith, the whole movement would doubtless have faded away near the hour of its birth. However, it did not fade; the exact opposite is true. When Peter and John were threatened by officers of the law and commanded that they speak henceforth to no man in the name of Jesus, their reply

was, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." There is a Christian realism that does not permit silence on the part of its possessor. There is a force which creates enthusiasm which will not be silent. This is based on the initial experience in Christianity. When the first disciples discovered Christ, and the fact of his Messiahship registered in their consciousness, we have the record of their becoming evangelists who, in their activity, cried as they met others, "We have found Him, we have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." In later years, when Peter wrote a letter to the church universal, he witnessed, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables ... but were eye witnesses of his majesty." Peter brings both the eye and the ear into the line of testimony regarding the reality of the content of the Christian faith and experience. He brings a line down to the present experience of the same reality as he declares, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed; as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart." All this is in harmony with the challenging test put on the individual by the great Founder of the Christian faith.

When the ministry of our glorious Founder was questioned by the people who heard him until they expressed their surprise at his wisdom and marveled, saying "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Jesus answered them, and said, "my doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The Christian faith has met this great test across the path of all the Christian centuries. This is the basis of a realism in the realm of the knowledge of Christ and the power of God in the gospel which establishes certainties in the lives of all them that truly believe. It matters not where it is or who it is that receives him. The same result is achieved -- enthusiasm which will not be hushed, a power within that becomes a compelling force in our loyalty to him, based upon facts of consciousness in the individual life. "We can but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

The producing of this type of result is the very central fact of genuine evangelism. It is the mission of the true Christian church. It is the objective and test of every true ministry. This fact is recognized by the great apostle who, in writing to his son in the gospel, exhorts him "Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry." The very credential of the Christian minister and of the true church is the producing of witnesses in the realm of Christian realism. Let every believer awake and put on the whole armor of God and push the battle to fulfill the command, the scope of which is the whole world and the unit of which is the individual. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

The reality of salvation in genuine Christian experience anchors a man intellectually, morally, and spiritually. It determines his direction and fixes his goal. An illustration of this truth is found in the following incident in the life of our Lord.

Jesus, with his disciples, was en route north from Judea and the record for some unknown reason declares he must needs go through Samaria. Wearied with his journey and while his disciples went into a village to buy food, Jesus sat on the curb of Jacob's well, not only weary but hungry and thirsty. A woman of Samaria came to the well to draw water. Jesus asked her for a drink, whereupon she, being a Samaritan woman, exclaimed in surprise, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritan?" Jesus' reply to the woman was, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

The conversation which followed between Jesus and this Samaritan woman discovered to the woman her sinful life and condition, and the Messiahship of the man with whom she was speaking. The outgrowth of the conversation was such conviction concerning Christ that the woman became a witness, left her water pot, went her way into the city and declared to the people that she had found the Messiah, basing her testimony upon the fact of His self-revelation to her and the discovery of her own condition of need.

A revival was thus started in Samaria. Many of the Samaritans believed on Christ through the testimony of the woman. She said of him, "He told me all that ever I did." Many others came out unto Christ and besought Him that He would tarry with them and he abode there two days. The revival swept on, making many witnesses into Christ's true Messiahship. The testimony of the people after seeing and hearing Christ was, "We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

The key to this message is the statement "We have heard Him ourselves and know ..." Christian truth is capable of demonstration in the consciousness of the individual. Christ put all his teaching and claims to this test: "He that willeth to do the will of my Father, shall know of the doctrine." We note in this instance that there were those who believed upon the testimony of the woman. Thus we see faith may be based upon testimony. Very much of the knowledge we possess in practically all fields of our thinking is to a greater or less extent based upon testimony. Bishop Butler in his famous book, "The Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion," states that the content of Christian faith is of such importance that if its truth could be established, by even a probability in its favor, it ought to command the most serious attention of all right-thinking men.

The experience of the disciple Thomas with Christ in his post-resurrection appearances illustrates the two principles we are emphasizing. First, he refused to accept testimony as evidence of the resurrection of his Lord. Upon the occasion of his meeting the Lord and coming into the possession of faith based upon actual experience, and sight, we have the special approval of the Master upon those who do not demand such materialistic evidence as Thomas demanded. Jesus said to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they which have not seen and yet believe." The wonderful truth we are seeking to establish in this meditation is that while there are grounds for faith other than that of actual experience, yet in the realm of Christian truth we are permitted to test the promises and precepts of the book in a way that will make witnesses of us on the basis of experience. We can test the essential facts of Scripture so that we, with the Samaritans, shall bear testimony: "We have heard Him ourselves and know ..." Testimony based upon experience, when that experience is backed by the truth of Scripture, becomes very valuable evidence for the truth. It is great to have a settled consciousness within ourselves that we know him and know that the great promises of the gospel are true, which, in their fulfillment, save from sin and build us in holy character.

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