

Intelligent Men and Women
by Tom Choquette and Friends

I really could use some perspectives on how to apply the following quote from our revelation in a paper I'm putting together.

195:9.6 Primitive man lived a life of superstitious bondage to religious fear. Modern, civilized men dread the thought of falling under the dominance of strong religious convictions. Thinking man has always feared to be *held* by a religion. When a strong and moving religion threatens to dominate him, he invariably tries to rationalize, traditionalize, and institutionalize it, thereby hoping to gain control of it. By such procedure, even a revealed religion becomes man-made and man-dominated. Modern men and women of intelligence evade the religion of Jesus because of their fears of what it will do *to* them—and *with* them. And all such fears are well founded. The religion of Jesus does, indeed, dominate and transform its believers, demanding that men dedicate their lives to seeking for a knowledge of the will of the Father in heaven and requiring that the energies of living be consecrated to the unselfish service of the brotherhood of man.

Josh responded:

Okay, brother Tom, I will take you up on that:

Receive each thought of that quote for what it actually and fundamentally is, disregarding entirely what it might have been, with arms and heart wide open.

It's a beautiful and clear passage.

Jesus has got ahold of me, of you—no fear of being held.

Rod mused that:

Tongue-in-cheek humor ("religion of Jesus does, indeed, dominate and transform ...") with guidance on using evolutionary fear response as motivation to discover the new and positive religion of Jesus. But this discovered religion should make a good effort to avoid the human tendency to "rationalize, traditionalize, and institutionalize" religious revelation. "Brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God", free of formality, should be a noticeable and alluring characteristic.

Chuck replied:

Hey, Tom. Very interesting paragraph. Part of what makes it interesting is that it raises a question that it doesn't answer, which is this: *Why* are these "modern men and women of intelligence" afraid of being "held" by strong religious convictions? I think the author is purposefully leaving it to us to figure that out, but the last sentence offers a big clue.

It suggests by implication that many people are afraid of being forced to give up a way of life that is made up mostly or almost entirely of self-serving thoughts and pursuits. The irony behind this fear, of course, is that the true religion of Jesus does not "force" us to do anything. It initiates a spiritual transformation that results in the loss of interest in purely self-centered uses of one's time and energy. The possibilities that are revealed in partnership with God are far more exciting and satisfying!

David also said:

I've found it helpful to view *spiritual* experience and *religious* experience as two different things. My *spiritual* experience is my relationship with God. It is existential. It exists prior to any linguistic formulation. It is characterized by a flow of loving worship. My spiritual experience *is* my relationship with God.

My *religious* experience starts when I try to express my spiritual experience with language, with concepts, with philosophy. My religious experience is created from concepts present in my culture (and my revelation), beginning with language and extending into the linguistic formulations of philosophy and theology. But, again, these are all elements drawn from culture. This is not a spiritual experience.

My experience of the presence of God and the behaviors which are motivated by that experience are my personal religion. It is something that can only be experienced in living. The moment that experience crosses the threshold of language it starts to crystalize: It begins to become rationalized, traditionalized, and institutionalized. Even the revelation becomes man-made and man-dominated as we turn it into stories which we use to construct our social identities and socialize our experience with the revelation.

So I take the meaning of your quote to be that we're encouraged to focus on and live our lives from the spiritual side of the language threshold—even though we need to construct our material, social, and religious lives on the religious side of that threshold. I think the paragraph just points out how so many people live their lives on the language side and mistake the intellectual abstractions of linguistically constructed religion to be spirituality.

The spiritual side of the threshold is where values live. It's part of eternity. The religious side of the threshold is where meanings live. It's ephemeral but useful scaffolding, serviceable only during mortal life. At least that's how I have it diagramed out for my own understanding.

There's a real conceptual bonus here: Once we separate out these two factors, the world's religions take on a different perspective. We realize that the spiritual side of the threshold is universal, an experience between individuals and their creator. It is a fundamental aspect of human existence. The world's religions represent a wide range of cultural interpretations of that experience. The interpretations are widely varied; the experience is universal. Again, the problem and the source of religious conflict is that so many people not only see the interpretations as the essence, they believe (and are taught) that having the correct interpretation is the key to attaining eternal life. The spiritual side of the threshold is where we can find spiritual unity. The cultural side likely will always be a domain of rich diversity.

I believe the real religion of Jesus originates on the preverbal (spiritual) side of the threshold while it seeks expression on the cultural side under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth.

Your mileage may vary.

Rod continued:

This entire paper alludes to a new way of living as children of God enlightened by epochal revelation, even suggesting that traditional Christianity is not that way. In fact, the way counseled may require effort to comprehend and practice. After all, overorganization and formality seem represented by a human genome in recent centuries.

"...subsequent to the discovery of the barrenness of formalized religion" (195:9.7)

"Christianity is threatened by slow death from formalism, overorganization, intellectualism, and other nonspiritual trends." (195:9.10)

"The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men." (195:10.1)

"The true church—the Jesus brotherhood—is invisible, spiritual, and characterized by unity, not necessarily by uniformity. Uniformity is the earmark of the physical world of mechanistic nature. Spiritual unity is the fruit of faith union with the living Jesus. The visible church should refuse longer to handicap the progress of the invisible and spiritual brotherhood of the kingdom of God. And this brotherhood is destined to become a living organism in contrast to an institutionalized social organization." (195:10.11)

Pamela chimed in:

Great question and answers...

Nalda, the woman at the well, comes to mind. When encountered by Jesus, she diverted from the personal to intellectualizing Jesus' words, theories *about* God and scripture rather than accepting the challenge of entering the very presence of God. (Religion of the mind over religion of the spirit.*) But lo! See the transformation in her when she got personal, 'real.'

"...evade the religion of Jesus because of fears of what it will do *to* them--and *with* them."

How dedicated and selfless can I be in seeking God's will? Am I willing to stand in front of a tank, or a crazed killer with an AK-47?

Rod continued:

After decades of study, the UB now seems to suggest that the religion of Jesus is not that studied in books (or proselytize or whatever). The UB's "Life and Teachings of Jesus" presents advice on how to live in such a way that the religion of Jesus can be discovered experientially, especially when we're more attuned to a certain indwelling presence, blessed with angelic guidance, and leavened by spiritual forces.

David replied:

Yes! Living the religion of Jesus opens the windows to personal revelation. Remember that the Spirit of Truth is only effective in the lives of mortals who embrace the Master's mission.

Rod inserted:

The supporting paragraph, with counsel for "increasing effectiveness."

"Though the Spirit of Truth is poured out upon all flesh, this spirit of the Son is almost wholly limited in function and power by man's personal reception of that which constitutes the sum and substance of the mission of the bestowal Son. The Holy Spirit is partly independent of human attitude and partially conditioned by the decisions and co-operation of the will of man.

Nevertheless, the ministry of the Holy Spirit becomes increasingly effective in the sanctification and spiritualization of the inner life of those mortals who the more fully obey the divine leadings." (34:5.5)

Lee contributed:

I hope we are not done with all the insightful perspectives being brought forward in response to your original question/struggle--as I'm getting nourished and am growing from this discussion!

My viewpoint (at this time from an evolutionary frame of reference): humankind has adapted, prospered (materially at least) through intelligence applied in controlling and conquering the vicissitudes of our planetary environments and all the other various challenges. So, yes, “thinking,” “modern” men and women are basically leaving superstitious and fear-based ideologies and religions in the rearview mirror. Don’t worry; “everything is under control!”

Well, not so fast: climate change may have one up on us! We are trying to wisely adapt while still “fueling” the fires that threaten to radically change us—as a species.

My hope and prayer is that—because of these modern day challenges—humankind will experience a renewed spiritual awakening both personally and en masse.

For me, this poem by the lauded British Jesuit poet/ writer Gerard Manley Hopkins (described as one of the most innovative poets of late 19th-century England) captures our current predicament:

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Pamela succinctly pointed to that experience of Nalda, the woman at the well:

143:5.6 (1613.4) Jesus perceived the attempt of the woman’s soul to avoid direct and searching contact with its Maker, but he also saw that there was present in her soul a desire to know the better way of life. After all, there was in Nalda’s heart a true thirst for the living water; therefore he dealt patiently with her, saying: “Woman, let me say to you

that the day is soon coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. But now you worship that which you know not, a mixture of the religion of many pagan gods and gentile philosophies. The Jews at least know whom they worship; they have removed all confusion by concentrating their worship upon one God, Yahweh. But you should believe me when I say that the hour will soon come—even now is—when all sincere worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for it is just such worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Your salvation comes not from knowing how others should worship or where but by receiving into your own heart this living water which I am offering you even now.”

143:5.7 (1614.1) But Nalda would make one more effort to avoid the discussion of the embarrassing question of her personal life on earth and the status of her soul before God. Once more she resorted to questions of general religion, saying: “Yes, I know, Sir, that John has preached about the coming of the Converter, he who will be called the Deliverer, and that, when he shall come, he will declare to us all things”—and Jesus, interrupting Nalda, said with startling assurance, “I who speak to you am he.”

We are all, individually and collectively are being challenged to “Let Go and Let God”
Jeremiah 29:11 (and adopted in practice for those in a 12-Step Program)

This from a quick Google search:

How to Let Go and Let God, One Day at a Time

- 1) Identify what you can control—and what you can't. ...
- 2) Address what you can control. ...
- 3) Surrender what you can't control. ...
- 4) Meditate on the promises of your faithful God. ...
- 5) Choose a “letting go” motto. ...
- 6) Resolve not to act on fear but on faith

In the recent movie, *Jesus Revolution* --which I just viewed with some members of our study group--the rather staid minister of a failing church is brought into immediate contact with an unorthodox Jesus-loving “hippie” via his truth-seeking, eyes-wide-open, young daughter who brings this strange but lovable guy home to meet Dad.

I’m not giving the rest away, but it involves and revolves around some progressive decisions to let go of control (and fear of being ostracized) to follow the spirit of God’s will.

As Jesus stated to Nalda "Your salvation comes not from knowing how others should worship or where but by receiving into your own heart this living water which I am offering you even now.”

Tom Choquette

Thank you for a different perspective from all of you love-saturated souls. I love the way we grow with each other.