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The culture of the spiritual
life

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THE CULTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE



THE CULTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

SOME STUDIES IN THE TEACHING
OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

BY THE REV.

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER AND MOTHER

P R E F A C E

THE Apostle Paul has been studied so much as a Christian theologian that there is danger of his being somewhat neglected as a Christian moralist. His Epistles, however, are a thesaurus of applied Christian Ethics, which no preacher or student of Scripture can afford to ignore. It is because so little has been written on the Apostle's teaching regarding the culture of the spiritual life that this book is offered as an attempt to meet, in some measure, what is believed to be a want felt by many.

The spiritual life is not to be viewed in any narrow or conventional sense. Sometimes, indeed, it is spoken of as if it were a type of life which could only be lived apart from the common life of men—a divine fire that needed no earthly fuel. In reality it has everything to do with our everyday life. It is our common life inspired and sublimated by the Spirit of Christ, and concerns all that concerns man. It knows no exclusiveness, and is good for the market as for the Church, for social intercourse as for Christian service, for our pleasures as for our sorrows. It is our old life with its multifarious interests and engage-

ments made new by being lifted up to a higher plane and lived out in a new spirit.

The culture of the spiritual life begins with our adoption of the Christian point of view in regard to our nature and our destiny. In order, however, to arrive at, and appreciate, this point of view, it was felt to be necessary briefly to compare and contrast the Pauline with the Pagan conception of the problem of the moral life. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ was the revelation of new heights and depths in the nature of man. With the coming of Jesus the whole ethical outlook was changed, and the problem became at once larger and more hopeful.

But the student of Paul's teaching finds also that he cannot proceed far without discovering that the Apostle's ethics are so based upon, and intertwined with, his theology that the one cannot be understood without the other. Man is regarded in his eternal relations to God, to himself, and to the world. In other words, Paul's conception of man's nature and destiny is determined by his conception of God's nature and God's purpose in redemption. It seemed imperative, therefore, to the right understanding of the subject to deal with Paul's view of sin and of man's deliverance from sin by the redemptive work of Christ, who becomes the standard and the power of the spiritual life.

The general scheme of the book is simple. The Christian point of view in regard to the problem being reached, the culture of the spiritual life is

considered in a series of chapters in its three general aspects—Personal, Social, and Domestic. The concluding chapters of the volume treat of the aberrations against which Paul had to define and defend the spiritual life—aberrations, the study of which enables us to appreciate more fully the wholesomeness and breadth of the Apostle's conception of Christian Spirituality. These aberrations, which are not without their modern counterparts, are Over-spirituality, a False Intellectualism, an Ascetic denial of the sanctity of the natural life, and a tendency to revert to Legalism. The spiritual life of the Christian, as depicted by Paul, is enhanced by his delineation of these excesses and errors, just as the brilliancy of a landscape is heightened by the shadows that fall upon the scene.

We have endeavoured, as far as possible, to indicate our indebtedness to others; but, as every one knows, thoughts, like seeds, are carried in strange ways—by birds and winds of heaven—and grow when we are, as it were, asleep and unconscious of their arrival and germination. The realm of thought is a great communism in which we all are at once debtors and creditors.

The writer does not profess to have treated the subject with that thoroughness which it deserved and he desired. In extenuation he can only plead the scanty leisure at his disposal as minister of a large city congregation, which has ever been generous and forbearing.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge very cordially our

obligation to three friends—the Rev. Thomas S. Dickson, M.A., Edinburgh; the Rev. David Mackie, M.A., Partick; and the Rev. John Addie, M.A., Perth, for services willingly rendered in offering valuable suggestions and in revising the proofs.

May these pages lead many to a deeper appreciation of the teaching of the Apostle, who was himself, by precept and example, among the first and greatest exponents of the Culture of the Spiritual Life, and through his teaching may many be brought to a profounder adoration of, and devotion to, his Master and ours, as The Light and Life of men.

WILLIAM DICKIE.

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ON SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF PAULINE ETHICS

“Too often has the advocacy of Christian ethics been left to those who accept Christ’s teaching and example without fully recognising that it is by His sacrifice we are saved and by His Spirit sanctified. But Christian ethics includes much more than the words of Jesus about duty, or even the works of Jesus done in love and righteousness; it includes the moral value and efficacy of His agony and passion.”—GARVIE’S *The Gospel for To-day*.

“The true conception of humanity demands that man shall not desire to have morality as his *own*, but as founded on God and on man’s relation to God.”—MARTENSEN’S *Christian Ethics*.

“His [Paul’s] thought is everywhere penetrated with an intense heat, leavened with lightning, that fuses the mass containing it, and runs off alive for other media to hold it. The revelation to him of Christ in heaven set in action all the resources of his nature, and gave them a preternatural tension.”—MARTINEAU’S *Studies of Christianity*.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

ON SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF PAULINE ETHICS

IN entering upon a study of the teaching of Paul regarding the culture of the spiritual life, it is important to note the relation of his ethics to his theology. Being the ethics of the Christian life, they are based upon great theological postulates regarding the being and nature of God. If God be the God of holiness, love, and grace, He cannot be complacent in view of His creature's misery and sin. He may be expected to intervene in the history of humanity with the supreme object of man's salvation. God's revelation of Himself must have in view the transformation of human life into the ideal life of God as manifested in Jesus Christ, and this ideal must become the chief end of man's aspiration and endeavour. For that reason Christian ethics are related to Christian theology as the stream to the fountain, as the flower to the seed.

But there is another reason for this characteristic of Pauline ethics. It is personal, and is to be found in his peculiar experience in connection with the origin and maintenance of his own life as a Christian. The cataclysm of his individual history, to which he dated back his moral regeneration, was due to the great flood of light which bore down upon him from heaven.

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This was to him not merely a mental illumination: it was a moral resurrection. The fountal source of it was the vision of the Crucified. Before the vision he fell as a dead man—dead to the old life of futile effort and legal obedience. He saw his righteousnesses shrivel up like the leaves of a blasted tree. But the lightning-flash of revealed grace that slew him also revived him. The end was also a beginning. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."¹ This identification of Paul with Christ, of human life with divine life, of moral effort with religious obligation, naturally affects the whole of Paul's teaching regarding the spiritual life. It gives it a constant theological reference and support.

And, indeed, Paul's ethical teaching marks an epoch in the history of ethics. He begins with the idea of a holy God, and works down from this conception to test and elevate the moral nature of man. Greek ethics began with man, and endeavoured to build up an ethical ideal from the elements which it found in him. Paul found the ideal in the incarnate Son of God, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."² His ideal was that of a Person, and was actually realised in a life; whilst that of the Greeks was an elaborated abstraction, which none, not even the best, ever realised in its totality.

Again, Paul perceived the ends of the ethical life as making for holiness—the holiness of God. The Greek moralists oscillated between different ends: to some it was virtue; to others knowledge; to others pleasure—all in man. They sought the perfect man,

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² Col. ii. 9.

that might be, in the imperfect men that are: he discovered the Perfect Man, that was and is, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And still another point of contrast and divergence may be noted. In the ethical teaching of Paul, man is constantly reviewed and challenged in the relation of his life to the divine order and purpose as revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Greek ethics man is regarded simply in relation to the order of nature, of which he forms an integral part. The main problem to the Greek is how to adjust life to the world around him, to the conditions of the state or of the city, to the environment in which he actually finds himself, to the natural forces which thwart his will and mar his peace of mind and comfort of body. For this reason the ethics of the Academy are, for the most part, political or civic, and those of the Porch naturalistic and utilitarian. To Paul, on the other hand, the ethical inquiry went deeper and was more searching, because the standard was higher and the obligation more exacting. The ethical problem became essentially subjective, introspective, and religious; for the secrets of heart and conscience were laid bare before God, who demanded a life of holiness and guaranteed its attainment.

As the problem of ethics is not merely the problem of the moral life, but of the best moral life, the value of the solution is to be judged by the quality of life which it begets, fosters, and propagates. For ethics are not merely a branch of the natural history of the human animal, in which his virtues and vices are defined, classified, and correlated. Ethics deal with possibilities as well as actualities: their domain stretches

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beyond the explored into the illimitable ideal ; for the life of a moral being has reference to the universe and to God. The value of an ethical theory is not exhausted by its correctness in ascertaining and generalising what may be called the moral phenomena of man. It has an educational and missionary end—the furtherance of the moral nature, the betterment of man, the discovery of a larger and fuller life. For that reason the value of ethical teaching is to be reckoned by its moral results.

What, then, is the problem which we have to face? We find ourselves in a world which baulks our desires and frustrates our plans. Nature in many of her moods is remorseless as fate, and silent as the Sphinx. Our very existence is hazardous. We have to run the gauntlet of sickness, misfortune, adversity, and death—the incalculable contingencies which condition all our lives. The threads of our being, also, are so inextricably interwoven with the lives of others that conduct is a continual experiment in accommodation and adjustment. Nor is this all. We are conscious of relations to a life which is above us, and to a life which is beyond, such as compel us to transcend the visible and to view our life *sub specie æternitatis*. Our success or failure in the midst of all these indifferent, opposing, or benign forces must depend upon the view of life which we adopt, the end for which we strive, the hope or despair which inspires or depresses us in the struggle, the contraction or expansion of our outlook. What help can our ethical theories contribute to us in this life-long contention with our environment? Their justification is to be sought in the quality of life which ensues.

When we inquire as to the outcome of philosophical ethics in Greek life we are filled with disappointment. One cannot fail to be impressed by the refinement of their teaching. Many of their utterances are like premonitions or echoes of Christianity. Indeed, the similarities and coincidences of language are almost misleading.¹ For, though the Pagan talks Christian, it is with a difference. His conception of life and of man's position in the universe is not that of Christian thought. God, redemption, and immortality, as presented by and in Jesus Christ, create a new atmosphere and set man in a new world, with a higher uplook and a wider outlook. We regard with admiration the beautiful and intricate machinery of Pagan ethical systems, but we discover that there is one thing wanting—there is no steam to set and keep the machinery going: they have no dynamic energy. And it is this point which we desire specially to emphasise; for an ethical teaching which is devoid of religious sanction has little effect upon the moral life of man. It is precisely because Paul constantly correlates man with God and Christ and immortality that an ethical revival springs from his ethical teaching.

The meagreness of the results of ancient philosophical ethics as seen in the moral life of Greece and Rome has often been remarked upon.² The masses remained unimpressed. The ideal man needed an ideal society, which the theories were inadequate to create. Plato's philosopher-king was "the creation of a state which

¹ Lightfoot's *Philippians*. Essay on Paul and Seneca, *passim*.

² Strong's *Christian Ethics*, pp. 3-12; Lightfoot's *Philippians*, p. 309.

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no existing conditions were adequate to produce"; whilst, in the case of the Stoics, the life of protest and resignation invited only the philosopher, who could afford to retire from, or rise above, the turmoil of a full and active life. And this is not to be wondered at when we consider the nature of the appeal. The higher the ideal was held up the more difficult it was to attain: and the more the rules for its attainment were refined, either in conformity with, or in protest against, the actual conditions of life, the less easy were they to understand and to follow. The ideal, in fact, had no power to translate itself into life: the rules did not engage and energise the will. Ethical theories failed for lack of the religious dynamic. Man, not having discovered his larger and divine affinities, was left very much where he was, groping through the maze of conduct without inspiration, without vision, without hope: he had never sounded the depths of his own nature in its actualities of sin and its possibilities of holiness, nor had he apprehended the beneficence and grace of the nature of God.

When we pass into the region of Pauline ethical thought we breathe a fresher and more invigorating atmosphere. Not that Paul thought of himself as an ethical philosopher; all we can say is, that he was an ethical missionary, because he was a missionary of the Gospel of Christ. Indeed, his ethical teaching was merely incidental. He never defined a system. His ethics were the legitimate outcome of his personal experience of moral regeneration, and had as their basis the larger and deeper conception of God revealed to him in Jesus Christ. But it was an experience which he felt constrained to share with all men, and for that reason

he laboured to bring them to Christ as the origin and source of it. His ethics were the natural product of his theology, just because the Christian life is the product of the Christian faith.

Turning now to the theological basis of Paul's ethical teaching, we may sum it up in a few outstanding postulates. These postulates give life and movement to his whole conception of Christian conduct.

God is the God of holiness. He is the absolute Good, who made all things good. But over against this stands the sinfulness of man, which God's holiness at once reveals and condemns.

God is love. Love is self-revealing. He manifests Himself in nature, in providence, in conscience, to all men; to the Jews especially, in their national history, with its encouragements and rebukes; to Jew and Gentile in Jesus Christ. The Incarnation is the full and free expression of God's love—of God's love to Christ, and through Christ to man. The Incarnation, however, is not only a revelation of God: it is also a revelation of man. It reveals the holiness of God as the standard and goal of human life. Though man has fallen, it is from this holiness he fell—the holiness made manifest in Jesus; to this holiness he may also be restored.

God is the God of grace. The movements of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—all make for the salvation of man. The barrier of sin which separates man from God is broken down by God Himself, who gave Christ to die for sin. The death of Christ is thus the charter of deliverance. Man, liberated from the thralldom of sin, is free to be holy. The Spirit calls him with a holy calling. The life of holiness becomes a vocation,

to which man is constrained by love. His moral ideal is now not merely a theory, it is a life—a life which realises itself afresh in all who, by faith, identify themselves with Christ, the Life of men. And Christ breaks down not only the barrier of sin which separates man from God, but the barrier of death which separates him from immortality. The resurrection of Jesus Christ gave man the vision and assurance of a larger life—a life beyond the grave. He is “the first-born from the dead,” the first-fruits, the earnest of the harvest.

These theological conceptions are rich in ethical content. Man is set in a new position in the universe. His life is construed in terms of the life of God. The deeper depths of sinfulness are revealed in him, but there are also revealed sublimer heights of moral possibility. He sees a higher ideal before him, but it is no longer a passive ideal, an abstraction. It is an ideal which has the power of reproduction; a life once realised, and ever realising itself in others: not merely an ideal towards which we strive, but an ideal which is ever striving with and in us. Indeed, the Christian life is a new type of life, a new creation; Christ dwelling in us by faith. It is a life of which Christ is the standard and the power. The facts of His life are the guarantees and assurances upon which it rests. His Incarnation announces the affinities of man with God. God in man in Christ Jesus is prophetic of God in us by faith in Christ Jesus. So also the forgiveness of our sins is not a hope or a speculation. It is guaranteed by the fact of the death of Christ. And in the same way, our immortality is no longer the dream of the poet or the vision of the

philosopher ; it is assured by the fact of the resurrection of our Lord. It is thus the ethics of Paul, by bringing man into a living relation to God through faith in Jesus Christ, make the moral life dependent not merely upon human endeavour, but upon divine inspiration.

DE PROFUNDIS

“Nothing in the various inconsistency of human nature is more grotesque than its willingness to be taxed with any quantity of sins in the gross, and its resentment at the insinuation of having committed the smallest parcel of them in detail.”—RUSKIN'S *Letters on the Lord's Prayer*.

“She being stained herself, why did she strive
To make Him clean, who could not be defiled?
Why kept she not her tears for her own faults,
And not His feet? Though we could dive
In tears like seas, our sinnes are pil'd
Deeper than they, in words, and works, and thoughts.

“Deare soul, she knew who did vouchsafe and deigne
To bear her filth; and that her sinnes did dash
Ev'n God Himself: wherefore she was not loth,
As she had brought wherewith to stain,
So to bring in wherewith to wash:
And yet in washing one, she washèd both.”

HERBERT'S *Marie Magdalene*.

“We may go so far as to declare that no one can enter deeply into the study of sin without sitting at St. Paul's feet to learn both the metaphysics and the ethics and still more the theology of the question as he here enunciates and develops each.”—VAUGHAN'S *Lessons of the Cross and Passion*.

CHAPTER II

DE PROFUNDIS

PLUTARCH tells us that Alexander the Great, when on one of his expeditions with his victorious Macedonians, summoned the Indian sages called the Gymnosophists, and catechised them. To one of them he put the question, "Which is the craftiest of all animals?" and the reply was given, "That with which man is not yet acquainted." The answer of the Gymnosophist was significant. It summed up the results of Pagan thought on the greatest questions of human inquiry. Man was not yet acquainted with himself.

The enigma of human life is as old as thought itself. But human life cannot be interpreted in its deeper significance until man has defined and, to some extent, explored the mysterious and profound relations in which he finds himself as a denizen of the universe. He cannot know himself till he goes beyond himself. These relations give the reply to the first and last interrogations with which he confronts himself—Whence? Wherefore? Whither? Until he can give an intelligent response to these questions he is not acquainted with himself.

What are these relations? As soon as man begins to reflect upon life he discovers that he is related to

two worlds—the world around and the world above—nature and God. He instinctively claims affinities with both. He is part of the natural order of things, subject to the laws of nature, involved in the struggle, growth, decay, and death of all animate existence. But though his feet are on the earth, his head is in the skies. He is conscious, more or less dimly, of relations with the supernatural. He knows that he is not inextricably involved in nature, as a mere pin or wheel in the vast mechanism of the material universe. He looks above and dreams of a beyond. To him alone of all created existences God and eternity are problems.

Though these two relations have always been more or less present to man's thoughts, the relation of man to nature was the distinctive problem to the Pagan mind, whilst to the Jewish, and especially to the Christian mind, the distinctive problem was man's relation to the supernatural. But as man could not define and explore his relations to God and eternity until these relations were revealed by God revealing Himself, it follows that man could not understand the deeper significance of his being so long as the main problem was his relation to the natural order. It is this which accounts for the outstanding defects of Pagan ethics, and of all ethics which are purely naturalistic. Man cannot know himself until God makes Himself known.

In nothing is this difference of the estimate of man's nature more clearly seen than in the conception and estimate of sin. To the Christian mind sin is something deplorable, something which should not be, which may not be; something foreign to man's true nature as in the intention of the Creator; something which involves

guilt. It is rebellion, disobedience, self-pleasing, self-assertion. Why? Simply because to the Christian mind a higher conception of God has been revealed, and man judges himself in the light of that revelation. The idea of God interprets the nature of man. God's holiness reveals and condemns man's sin.

By the Pagan mind, on the contrary, though sin is often spoken of in language which has a Christian ring, it is regarded more as a defect of nature. It is not related to God as disobedience to His holy will. It is sickness, deformity, disease; but its moral obliquity in the eyes of God is not conceived.¹ To Plato sin was not a religious conception, as to the Christian. It was essentially æsthetic—a breach of good taste, of proper form. "That is, and ever will be, the best of sayings, that the useful is the noble, and the hurtful is the base."² "The lie in the soul is the true lie, a corruption of the highest truth."³ Sin is hurtful, a disease of man's soul, but it brings no agony, no remorse. It is a defect of nature.

In the same way, but from a different standpoint, the Stoic moralist regards sin. The evil of the world, he says, is part of the order of nature. It is necessary, and we must make the best of it. "Does your cucumber taste bitter?" said Marcus Aurelius; "Let it alone. Are there brambles in your way? Avoid them."⁴ It is the Stoic's counsel of despair in face of the inevitable. For, to his mind, evil is inherent in man and in nature. It is, and must be. "*An enemy hath done*

¹ Cf. Hatch's *Hibbert Lectures*, 1888, p. 159: "To the Stoics it [sin] was shortcoming, failure, and loss: the chief sufferer was the man himself: amendment was possible for the future, but there was no forgiveness for the past."

² *Republic*.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Meditations*.

this,"¹ says Jesus Christ; and a great ray of hope falls upon man as soon as he can think God has not willed sin and is not involved in it. Take yourself out of its way, says the Stoic. Put it out of your way, says Christ; and the God of holiness is on the side of every man who seeks to make the attempt.

When we turn to the Scriptural conception of man, we are arrested by the fact that little cognisance is taken of man's relation to nature—to the material world or even to the political and civil environment. That is the standpoint of the Pagan mind. The Jewish and Christian mind views life almost solely in relation to God and eternity. Nor can we fail to observe the severer and more condemnatory view which is taken of man. Man is a rebel, a culprit, over whom hangs a divine sentence. He is on all sides brought into vital contact with God; and whilst this enlarges his view of life, it also deepens his consciousness of sin. Man's sin, as an act of disobedience and revolt, puts him into a hopeless position of guilt—hopeless, except God intervenes in mercy and grace. The Scriptures with pathetic eloquence tell the worst of man, and sound the depth of his guilt.

But between the Old Testament and the New there is a difference which may mislead us. Where in all literature do we find such sighings of shame, such groanings of guilt, such passionate importunities of penitence, such heart-rending cries of remorse, as in the writings of the psalmists and prophets? No Pagan writer ever struck that peculiar note of human woe and misery. And why? Because no Pagan mind ever heard the appeal of a personal God for love and

¹ Matt. xiii. 28.

obedience. But when we pass into the New Testament the temperature seems to change. There seems to be a cooler sense of the sinfulness of sin. The writers seem not to feel so keenly the sting of remorse. They do not rend the heavens with their passionate cries *de profundis*. What is the explanation of this? Is it not to be found in the fact that in the Old Testament the curse was more keenly felt because the remedy was less keenly perceived? The holiness of God accentuated the guilt of sin, for which grace had not yet revealed the perfect atonement. Whereas in the New the accent of self-despair is lost, and man thinks of the sin that abounds in the light of the grace which doth much more abound. Not that sin is less sinful—it is more sinful—to the Christian, but it is regarded as a smitten enemy, over whom Christ is seen bending as a conqueror. The New Testament puts the accent on the Saviour; and the agonising note of remorse and penitence is almost lost in the joyous note of triumph.

To this prevailing temper of the New Testament writers towards sin there is an outstanding exception—the Apostle Paul. We catch in him again the passionate hate of sin which possessed the psalmists and the prophets. We may say of him as Dante said of Virgil:

“O noble conscience, upright and refined,
How slight a fault inflicts a bitter sting!”¹

And this is due, no doubt, to the fact that, unlike the Twelve, who tarried with Jesus and were gradually won to Him by His gentle ministrations of grace, he passed in a moment out of darkness into light, and the memory of his darkness remained with him as the great regret of his life. The sudden cleavage of

¹ *Purgatorio*, iii.

his conversion made him speak of sin with the old accent of hate. The brighter the light of Christ shone around him, the deeper grew the shadow of sin upon his path. It was because of his unique experience that he is the only apostle who is heard to utter such a cry as "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"¹

When we ask the question—How does Paul conceive of sin? we are met by the difficulty that his teaching on this subject is only incidental. But though it is only incidental, it is all-pervasive. The thought of man's sin is the constant undertone in all his marvellous exposition of the love of God and of the grace of Jesus Christ. Yet the essential nature of sin, as conceived by the Apostle in its theological bearings, might be summed up in three words—Alienation, Disobedience, Bondage. For sin is not merely an act, or a series of acts, or an aggregation of acts, but a state of mind and will which breaks out in act, and which is aggravated and intensified by every act in which it expresses itself against the will of God.

Alienation. In Eph. iv. 18, 19, the Apostle incidentally presents to us a living picture of sin. It portrays the life-walk of the sinner as seen in that of the Gentiles: "Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."² In this graphic representation of sin there are several movements describing the sinner as he descends the inclined plane of sin. We see him

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

² R.V.

emerging into our view with a heart hardened as steel against all that is good and true. His back is evidently turned towards God. The hardening of the moral nature leads to the darkening of the intellect. The loss of purity of heart is the forfeiture of the vision of God. But as he travels farther in this state of vanity of mind,¹ he becomes an utter alien from the life which is of God, losing sympathy with, and interest in, holy things; and, begetting a distaste to God, he becomes as a foreigner. Then the corruption of the whole moral nature sets in, for the life of God no longer pulsates in the veins. He is "past feeling"; has ceased to feel the pain of sin, is dead to the appeals of conscience and the stings of remorse; and at last he "gives himself over," like a bondsman, to work uncleanness, as the business of his life,² with covetousness. We have not here a cool philosophical analysis of sin; it is the moralist's vision of sin, in which the deadly life-walk of the sinner is presented in its movements from spiritual apathy to moral disintegration.

Disobedience. Sin is not only alienation from the life of God; it is also disobedience to the law of God. God's will when expressed to man in nature, conscience, or statute, becomes the law of life to man. The law and the life are both derived from the same source, and when the latter does not conform to the former there is sin. "Where no law is, there is no transgression."³ "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."⁴ But what was the essence

¹ Eph. v. 17.

² Cf. R.V. margin: "to make a trade of" uncleanness.

³ Rom. iv. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.* v. 12.

of that sin of one, which was the starting-point of the sin of all? It was disobedience: "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners."¹ And, just as condemnation followed the moral act of disobedience, so the moral act of obedience is followed by justification: "So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."² But Paul conceived of this disobedience as a strange and hostile spirit which possessed men, and made them, although dead men—dead in trespasses and sins—walk with all the appearance of life. "And you hath he quickened, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye *walked* . . . according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."³ Nor is this all. This disobedience has, to Paul's mind, become a universal disposition of the race, and constitutes the depravity of man which evokes the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. "God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all."⁴

Bondage. This is another expressive figure by which Paul represents sin: it is bondage to a strange master. The "servants of sin"⁵ permit sin to reign in their mortal body like a hard taskmaster, and obey it in its lusts,⁶ yielding their members as its instruments,⁷ and at last drawing its wages—death.⁸

Thus Paul depicts the course of sin as beginning with alienation from the life of God, an attitude of aversion to God; and then passing into positive disobedience, and ending in the sinner's giving himself

¹ Rom. v. 19.

² *Ibid.* 19.

³ Eph. ii. 1, 2.

⁴ Rom. xi. 32, R.V.

⁵ *Ibid.* vi. 20.

⁶ *Ibid.* 12.

⁷ *Ibid.* 13.

⁸ *Ibid.* 23.

over in allegiance to a power foreign to his nature and opposed to God. It is interesting to note that in this diagnosis of sin Paul follows the pathological teaching of Jesus in the parable of the Prodigal Son.¹ The same three movements appear in the history of the sin of the younger son.

First: the restraint of the father's presence becomes irksome; the holy peace of the home depresses; the youth is out of sympathy with an environment which does not satisfy his newly awakened desires. He claims freedom and money and sets out into the far country. What is it but alienation from the life of God?

Next: he wastes his substance in riotous living. He throws off the laws of the life of the old home, and becomes a law to himself. What is it but disobedience to the law of God?

Lastly: he joins himself to a citizen of that country. He passes himself over to a power foreign to his parentage, to feed swine and to feed with the swine. What is this but bondage to sin—the self-surrender of a child of God to become a child of disobedience, a servant of sin?

But perhaps the most striking conception of sin in the writings of Paul is that in which he mentally detaches it from man, and views it as a great universal power which broods over man and holds him in cruel thralldom. He seems to gather up his thoughts of sin into one grand and awful personification, which challenges man's holiness and salvation, and lifts itself proudly up as the arch-enemy of God's grace and Christ's atonement—as something apart from and

¹ Luke xv. 11-17.

above man, striving against the divine will and purpose. He sees the gate of paradise flung open by one man's disobedience, and this strange power steps into the world accompanied by its dread shadow: "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin."¹ He scans the pages of Jewish and Gentile history, and finds none free unto God: "they are all under sin."² All are "in bondage to sin."³ Sin reigns like a tyrant in our "mortal body,"⁴ and reigns "unto death."⁵ The tyrant has his own "law of sin," which contests our allegiance to the "law of God."⁶ Sin deceives us and slays us.⁷ Sometimes sin, when unopposed in its rule, is so quiescent that it seems to be dead, and we alive; but, when confronted by the law of God, sin revives and we die.⁸ We are "sold under sin,"⁹ like slaves in a market. Sin, indeed, seems to dispute our very personality, and to become our *alter ego*: "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."¹⁰

¹ Rom. v. 12.

² *Ibid.* iii. 9.

³ *Ibid.* vi. 6, R.V.

⁴ *Ibid.* 12.

⁵ *Ibid.* v. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.* vii. 25.

⁷ *Ibid.* 11.

⁸ *Ibid.* 9.

⁹ *Ibid.* 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 17. Vide Weizsäcker's *Apostolic Age*, i. 148.

THE WAY OUT AND THE WAY IN

“We will trust God. The blank interstices
Men take for ruins, He will build.”

E. B. BROWNING.

“What a terrible hell science would have made of the world, if she had abolished the ‘spirit of faith’ even in human relations.”—ROMANES, *Thoughts on Religion*.

“God enters by a private door into every individual.”—EMERSON.

“The smallest seed of faith is more worth than the largest fruit of happiness.”

THOREAU'S *Essays*.

CHAPTER III

THE WAY OUT AND THE WAY IN

PAUL is not blind to the fact that the desire for God and the instinct for holiness still linger with fallen man and are clamant for satisfaction. But, according to Paul, the experience of the world is that by wisdom it cannot know God,¹ and that the instinct for holiness is frustrated by an intractable element in our nature which defies our will. "The good that I would, I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do."² The efforts of reason and the experiments of moral endeavour fail. Man realises the necessity of salvation, feels the need and the desire, but is paralysed by spiritual and moral inability. Unless God reveals Himself, He cannot be known ; unless He meets us with an offer of grace, we cannot attain the holiness to which we aspire. This is the *cul de sac* into which man is driven by all that remains of the best of his nature. He must find a way out of sin before he can find a way into holiness.

The remedy comes from God, and comes in the Gospel. We cannot imagine that a good God would maintain such a world of sin had He not a plan wherewith to remedy its evils. Granted a good God, there

¹ 1 Cor. i. 21.

² Rom. vii. 19.

must be provision for a better world. This is Paul's "purpose of the ages."¹ The Gospel is a new force introduced into the life of humanity. It is the "power of God unto salvation."² And what is this Gospel? No single definition can exhaust its contents. It is a mine which we can never bring into our mint. The Apostle seizes the salient features of it in the words, "Therein [*i.e.* in the Gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."³ The "righteousness of God" which is revealed in the Gospel must not, however, be mistaken for that righteousness which is the quality and attribute of God. The Gospel does not consist in the revelation of God as a righteous God. That revelation was made long before the Gospel. It means "a righteousness"⁴ which has its source in, and proceeds from, the righteous God; a righteousness which, so far as man is concerned, is appropriated by faith.

The significance of this Gospel of grace as a message of hope to the man who has been baffled in his search after a righteousness in which he may stand before God is seen when we gather together the scattered references to it. Here is the very marrow of the Gospel. From one point of view—that of the recipients—the means by which this grace comes to them is "through faith in Jesus Christ," the embodiment of all grace. And even this faith, which is in a sense the condition on which we are counted righteous by God, is not meritorious as a condition which we ourselves create. It is a capacity for righteousness which

¹ Eph. iii. 11, R.V. margin: cf. Rom. ix. 11.

² Rom. i. 16.

³ *Ibid.* 17.

⁴ *Ibid.* R.V.

is created within us by the wondrous grace of God which is manifested in Christ. Faith itself is a divine creation. It is our yielding to the overtures of pardon and deliverance and acceptance. We will to be saved, because God wills to save. It is a new attitude of the soul towards God occasioned by a new attitude of God toward the soul.¹

But from another point of view—that of the bestower—the means by which this grace is secured for man is “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”² For the verdict of acquittal and acceptance is not a mere sentence which God pronounces; it is not an arbitrary act of God behind which man cannot see. It is founded on the great and manifest deed of deliverance effected on the cross by Jesus Christ, “whom God set forth to be a propitiation” for all, rendered effective for each “through faith, by His blood.”³ The Gospel, therefore, proclaims our deliverance from guilt and our acceptance by God because Christ has offered Himself as a propitiation for our sins; and the apprehension of that divine sacrifice produces in us that faith which appropriates the benefits which accrue from it.

What, then, is the ground upon which the sinner rests his hope? It is the verdict which God passes upon him, in which God, of His free grace, accounts him as righteous and receives him into His favour, not on account of any personal righteousness, but on account of the sinner's faith and the Saviour's sacrifice.

It is evident that Paul regards it as impossible to be righteous before God by accumulation of deeds or by

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14: “For the love of Christ constraineth us.”

² Rom. iii. 24.

³ *Ibid.* 25, R.V.

moral self-assertion. It is not what we do or endeavour which counts before God : it is what we are. We have no power in ourselves to cleanse the heart. The root and seed of sin are there, decorate our lives as we may with blossoms of endeavour and fruits of goodly deeds. It has been the experience of the most saintly men that all attempts at self-righteousness deepen the sense of sin and despair. Neither knowledge nor moral endeavour can find or forge the key that opens the door into the presence of a reconciled and righteous God. This has been done by Christ for us, by the propitiation He offered for our sin and by His homage of obedience. He presents the key to us. Faith alone can take it ; and even our faith only awakens with the gracious offer. So that salvation by grace through faith is the one hope of sinners ; and the glory of it from first to last is to be attributed to God alone, who has manifested His wondrous grace in Jesus Christ, and has imputed to us a righteousness not our own, in virtue of our faith in Him.

There are many questions, however, which gather around this doctrine, which is the very kernel of the Gospel. It may be said that the faith which justifies requires itself to be justified. What is this faith ? Is it a substitute for knowledge ? Is it merely another superstition ? What is the relation of this faith to reason ? Is it spiritually effective ? To these questions we may attempt to give some answer.

What is faith ? It is our surrender to God's grace : the outgoing of our intuitions and instincts to grasp and appropriate the offer and appeal which God makes to us in Jesus Christ. Something is presented to us in the Gospel which meets the deepest needs and

highest aspirations of our nature, and our nature goes out to meet it as a prearranged satisfaction. This response of our being is faith, and the evidence of its trustworthiness is to be found in the experience of satisfaction which is the result. As light satisfies the eye, as food hunger, as water thirst, so grace satisfies our faith, bringing with it its own verification. Paul regards it as a matter of the inmost being, the heart—the affections, the instincts, the intuitions of the whole man—the answer of our nature to its author: “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness”;¹ “whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered.”²

Is faith a substitute for knowledge? Is knowledge set aside as an unnecessary attainment in the Christian life? The answer to this question is that knowledge is one of the ends to be attained and enjoyed by faith. Faith is God shining in our hearts and verifying Himself to our nature, as light verifies itself to the eye. “God,” says Paul, “shined in our hearts, to give the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”³ Just as in science some of the greatest discoveries have been made by ventures of faith, forecastings of the intuitions, vaticinations of genius that have led afterwards to a knowledge of natural phenomena which has satisfied the demands of reason; so in religion faith is a means of knowledge; and, instead of dispensing with knowledge, it creates the conditions under which revelation can be apprehended, and stimulates the passion for knowing what it signifies. “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge

¹ Rom. x. 10. ² *Ibid.* vi. 17, R.V. ³ 2 Cor. iv. 6, R.V. margin.

of Christ Jesus my Lord," says the Apostle ; and he "suffered the loss of all things" that he might have that righteousness "which is of God by faith." And why? As a means to an end: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings."¹

What, however, is the relation of Christian faith to reason? It is absurd to expect that faith should justify itself at the bar of reason by producing the evidence upon which it is based. If we could prove the necessity of believing in Christ by evidence that would satisfy the intellect, the need for faith would not exist. Faith in a person is very different from belief in a theorem of Euclid or a law of astronomy. The latter presupposes and evokes no moral qualities, no spiritual consequences. Faith in Christ is the answer of soul to soul. We may have reasons for our faith—moral and spiritual reasons, which evade all scientific analysis or statement, and so we may not be able to produce our reasons as sufficient evidence. Ask a husband to produce his evidence for having faith in his wife; or let him even ask himself. He might write down a dozen reasons and then he would laugh at the absurd demand, and at the more absurd attempt to meet it. He feels that his reasons are no reasons. The reasons upon which his faith is founded have been acquired by the accumulation of innumerable impressions received, often unconsciously, from deeds and gestures and looks which have convinced not merely his mind, but his moral nature. So with our faith in Jesus Christ. We may have much reason for our faith, and yet not be able to produce our reasons to satisfy reason. And it is this

¹ Phil. iii. 8-10.

fact which makes the Gospel a message of hope and life to the simple and unlettered and un leisured man, not the perquisite of the philosopher and the scientist. God commands all men to believe, but He does not demand that all men should be able to satisfy their own reason, or the reason of others, with correct proofs of their faith.¹

Is Christian faith spiritually effective? In regard to this, Paul speaks with the accent of certainty, a certainty based upon his own conversion experience. At that critical moment he passed from death unto life, from an old world into a new. His struggle for self-righteousness was given up, and he found righteousness by faith. The life that was begotten in him by faith through grace was "a new creation."² It was not a change in form of obedience or devotion, not a new ritual, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision."³ These were matters of indifference now, for the end they had in view was attained in another way. The old regimen was superseded by a new ethic, springing naturally out of a new life. He gloried in this new life, which issued like a fountain from the cross, by which the world was crucified unto him and he unto the world.⁴

But though he finds the old world dead to him and himself dead to the old world, he knows that salvation is not a mere negation of himself and the world. He is risen with Christ. He is so identified with Christ in spiritual union that his lost identity is found again in a richer and fuller and freer life in

¹ On the influence of reason on faith, *vide* Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, pp. 137, 138 (Longmans, Green & Co. 1904).

² Gal. vi. 15, R.V. margin.

³ *Ibid.* 15.

⁴ *Ibid.* 14.

Christ : " Nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."¹ The spiritual efficiency of faith is verified by his personal experience : " the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me."² And the crucified world has also undergone a resurrection. The new life finds a new environment. " Old things are passed away"—the old sorrows and sins, ambitions and aims and strivings and ideals are things of the past ; " behold, all things are become new."³ The cross has vanquished the old man within and the old world around, and the new life is sustained by a new motive : " He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."⁴

The experience of Paul is not unique. The miracle of his resurrection into the new life of faith and righteousness is the daily miracle by which Christ keeps alive His Church in the world. It is the testimony of the saints that by faith in Jesus Christ they are born into a new world ; are accepted by and reconciled to God, who has proved His love upon the cross ; are delivered from the tyranny of sin ; and enter upon a life of holiness, happiness, and hope, which, apart from faith in Christ, they could not even have discovered. And this perennial testimony of Christian experience is accepted even by those who have long withstood the claims of faith in their devotion to the claims of reason. The words of George John Romanes are very significant : " I take it, then, as unquestionably true that this whole negative side of the subject [that

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² *Ibid.* ii. 20, R.V.

³ 2 Cor. v. 17,

⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

of agnosticism] proves a vacuum in the soul of man which nothing can fill save faith in God. Now take the positive side. Consider the happiness of religious—and chiefly of the highest religious, *i.e.* Christian—belief. It is a matter of fact that, besides being most intense, it is most enduring, growing, and never staled by custom. In short, according to the universal testimony of those who have it, it differs from all other happiness not only in degree, but in kind. Those who have it can usually testify to what they used to be without it. It has no relation to intellectual status. It is a thing by itself and supreme.”¹

It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that the faith which plays so important a part in our justification is a mere formality devoid of any ethical value. If it were only demanded that we give our intellectual assent to some truth, or our passive acquiescence in the acceptance of a righteousness imputed to us by grace, the moral unwholesomeness of faith would be apparent, and it might with justice be called a “cardinal sin.” No one, however, who has seriously studied the Pauline Epistles can think of Christian faith as a mere make-believe of credulity. The faith that Paul advocates stirs the very depths of our nature, makes a great moral demand, and effects a complete moral revolution. It is the supreme act of the soul in yielding to the authority of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. But the free decision thus made is itself a moral choice which does not exhaust itself in the act. It implies the capacity and will to be righteous as well as acquiescence in being counted righteous.

The Christian life begins by the apprehension and

¹ *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 152.

acceptance of God's gracious declaration of goodwill toward the sinner because of the atoning death of Jesus Christ, with whom the sinner has been identified by faith. The sinner falls back upon this act of grace. It brings with it as an accompaniment "peace with God,"¹ because it assures him of God's forgiveness. He stands now in a new relation to God. He is no longer under wrath and condemnation, which are inseparable from a state of unforgiven sin. The door of grace is open to him, and he crosses the threshold at the moment his faith accepts the divine declaration. He is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, "by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."²

But the Christian in his new standing sees the end from the beginning, and moves towards it by the gracious propulsion of hope, sustained by the joy which always attends hope. We "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."³ Nor is this all. This justification is a seed which cannot remain as a dead thing in the soul. It has life, potency, growth: it forestalls and anticipates. It enables us to interpret life in a new way, and to handle its events in a different spirit, assured that our acceptance by God through faith in Jesus Christ will stand valid all through life and even beyond. "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."⁴ In the whole of this passage Paul asserts the validity of our justification, not only as a momentary act, but as enduring

¹ Rom. v. 1.² *Ibid.* 2.³ *Ibid.*⁴ *Ibid.* 3-5.

through time to eternity: "Whom He justified, them He also glorified."¹ But he does more: he relates it to our sanctification, as a means to an end, for glory is only attained by our perfecting in holiness.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Paul does not regard the work of salvation as completed by our justification. We are only put thereby into position for the moral and spiritual renewal which is expected to follow. Being "reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."² The work of our salvation is begun by the death of Christ, but it is continued by His resurrection life, which we share in virtue of our union with Him. And this contention is borne out in another striking manner. God judges man during his lifetime by the faith which he cherishes, but at the last God judges by his works as the fruit of his faith—by the personal righteousness which has issued from the righteousness imputed to him at the first. At the great assize He "will render to every man according to his deeds,"³ "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."⁴ The basis of the final judgment is our sanctification.

Sanctification is a process, but it is not a process which we are left to work out for ourselves. In this there is co-operation between God and man. Paul, indeed, realises that in the Christian life every effort of man, even his faith, has its origin and power in God, who, by the manifestations of his abundant grace, wins

¹ Rom. viii, 30. ² *Ibid.* v, 10. ³ *Ibid.* ii, 6. ⁴ 2 Cor. v, 10.

the free consent of man's will and constrains his moral energy by His overwhelming love. No flesh can glory in His presence. Still, in the attainment of holiness there is co-operation: "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."¹ God's Spirit directing us, our faith yielding to be directed—these two carry forward the gracious work by which we are perfected.

What is this life of sanctification? It may be called the spiritual life or the Christian life, but it is a mistake to think of it as a life by itself. It is not a special cult, a new regimen, a ritual. What is new in it is the spirit, not the circumstance; the man, not the environment. It is not something apart from life, but life; not leaven, but leaven in the lump; not fire, but fire with fuel. To Paul the Christian life of sanctification is a life which does not take us out of common life, but reinstates us in it: a life which does not consist in the bestowal of extraordinary powers, but in the sublimation of our ordinary powers. The true characteristics of the Christian are not that he speaks with tongues, or heals the sick, or sees visions, but that in the ordinary relations of everyday life he exhibits Christian temper and feeling and kindness. "The fruit of the Spirit is" for everyday use, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."²

To the Apostle Paul there is no divorce between the spiritual and the common life. His religious teaching, even in its highest flights, has an ethical tendency. His

¹ Gal. v. 5, 6.

² *Ibid.* 22, 23.

thoughts may soar into heavenly places, but he never forgets that the sacred fire of holiness is kept alive by the fuel which we gather from our ordinary life in the world. There were around him many who in different ways would dissociate the Christian life from the everyday affairs of men and make the Church a mere order of prescribed rituals, devotions, and fastings, but the sanity of Paul preserved the breadth and comprehensiveness of sanctification as a vocation suitable for all men. The inherent tendency of human nature to adopt distinctive rules more readily than to submit to the all-round domination of a new spirit manifests itself in many ways. Sometimes we see it in great devotion to ritual and punctiliousness in prayer, conjoined with a life lived out on a very low moral plane. Sometimes we see it manifesting itself in the use of mere technical religious language and conventional shibboleths of orthodoxy, without any corresponding sanctity of thought or action. Sometimes it takes the form of extreme devotion to the business of the house of God, with such an amazing laxity in the business of the world as breeds contempt. The glory of Paul's teaching is that it regards the spiritual life as a life that can be lived by all men and under all conditions. We may bake bread, mend shoes, build ships, or preach sermons—it is not the thing we do, but the spirit in which it is done which makes it spiritual or secular. Our religion must be good for everything or it is good for nothing.

The nature of this life of sanctification may be seen by the contrast between the old life and the new, which Paul presents to us in a striking passage in

the Epistle to the Ephesians.¹ Although it has its source far up in the great altitudes where the spirit inhales its power and faith drinks deep of the fountain of grace and becomes energised by the love of God, yet it flows down like a serviceable river into the plain where the common workaday traffic is being carried on, and becomes the driving force of all the machinery of life by which man's moral worth is at once educated and tested. The association of truth and righteousness, of religion and morals, is characteristic of Paul's teaching. He finds the highest sanctions for our commonest duties, and makes our daily conduct a daily devotion to God. We see this characteristic in the contrast of the old life and the new in the passage referred to. The Christian is to be renewed in the spirit of his mind—to get the new spirit which finds for itself new rules of life. He is to put on the "new man." This, however, implies a changed life. Instead of falsehood, we speak every man truth with his neighbour. Why? "Because we are members one of another." Theft gives place to honest labour. Why? That we may be generous and "give to him that needeth." "Corrupt speech" gives place to that which edifieth. Why? "That it may minister grace unto the hearers." Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, malice, are displaced by kindness, tender-heartedness, forgiveness. Why? Because "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." So in our common conduct we are to be "followers of God." Why? Because we are His "dear children." We are to walk in love. Why? Because "Christ also hath loved us and given Himself for us." Our common duties have

¹ Eph. iv. 23—v. 2.

thus the highest sanctions, and the new life as an everyday life is linked through the Spirit to the divine life which is both its fountain head and its destination.

But, seeing that our sanctification is a process, the Christian is not to be unduly discouraged by his imperfections. He should remember that imperfections are incidents in the perfecting of the saints. For the perfection that is expected of men is not the perfection of angels: it is that of fallen men who have been set up again and are learning to walk in the Spirit; stumbling and sometimes falling again, but ever striving after the perfect walk with God. Absolute perfection may be demanded of angels, but what God expects of man is the will to be righteous, the constant direction of the mind to the highest and best life. Sometimes the Christian, through the infirmities of his nature, may find himself wrestling with the experience depicted in the seventh chapter of Romans. He passes through many difficulties, and occasionally labours hard in the Slough of Despond; but that is part of his discipline. He is perfected not by one blessed experience, but by sufferings. He is not a plaster cast turned out complete in a moment, but a sculptured marble long under the chisel. What he has to watch is that the process be not arrested; for a man is not lost because of the imperfections which he discovers in his life, but because of those which he has made no effort to remedy or remove. At the best he may only be able to say: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after. . . . Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which

are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”¹ Our sorrow for our imperfection is the prophecy of our perfection. The spiritual life is a progress through the imperfect to the perfect. Our sanctification is not annulled because we are not perfect, but only when we are not becoming perfect.

¹ Phil. iii. 12-14.

*CHRIST THE STANDARD AND THE POWER OF THE
NEW LIFE*

“Men are guided by type, not by argument.”—WALTER BAGEHOT.

“God stooping shows sufficient of His light
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.”—BROWNING.

“Oh! let me then in Thee
Be bound, in Thee be free!
A law of death in me
I find, a law in Thee
Of life, that grows to fullest liberty!

“Bind Thou this bondman strong,
That rules, encroaching long
Where he should serve, and through Thy death and pain
Set Thou the spirit free
That, born to liberty,
Still pines! a King that wears a captive's chain!”

DORA GREENWELL'S *Colloquia Crucis*.

CHAPTER IV

CHRIST THE STANDARD AND THE POWER OF THE NEW LIFE

WE must not think that Paul's mind moved in a region of abstractions. The truth is that in the very centre of all his thoughts there stood the divine personality of the living Christ. All doctrines, all virtues, all hopes, all enthusiasms played like planets around this sun. It is this which gives the peculiar charm to his writings and constitutes them the religious text-book, not of an age, but of all ages ; it is this which makes them palpitate with light and warmth and life, and renders them so human in their interests and sympathies.

The source of this characteristic is not far to seek. The theology of Paul is not a system evolved by abstract thought. It is his experience theorised : his own religious life reflected upon and translated. Just as the Incarnate Lord was the sum and spring of all religious thought and moral endeavour to the original disciples, so also to Paul the Risen Lord was at once the supreme standard and the efficient power of the new life upon which he entered at his conversion. The incident on the road to Damascus readjusted his whole being, and thinking, and doing. It was his spiritual illumination, the afterglow of which remained with him to the end.

In that crisis Christ Himself was everything. In

the light that smote him to the earth Paul swiftly read the significance of his past. His service of God he discovered to be the persecution of Christ. His punishment of the disciples came back upon him, and in wounding others he was only wounding himself by kicking against the pricks. When he heard the voice saying "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest,"¹ he knew it to be the voice of his Master and gave it an instant response. The torrent of his mad passion was held up and frozen, and the tenderness of Jesus arrested him with its gentle violence and led him into new and undreamt of paths. Then Jesus became everything to him in his personal life. "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."² From Christ he received his commission as a minister and witness of Christ, and the subject-matter of his ministry and witness-bearing was the manifestation of Christ in the Christian experience of his life.

To Paul, then, Christ is the inspiration of all thought and life. He is the goal towards which the believer is moving, and the force by which he is moved—an attractive force, which wins from the human heart the love and faith and high endeavour which it creates. Jesus thus becomes at once the standard and the power of the new life.

The value of a standard can scarcely be overestimated. Jesus Himself appreciated its worth. He did not merely say to those around Him: "Be virtuous, be true, be pure." He knew that such exhortation was but a counsel of perfection when virtue, truth, and purity were not realised and enshrined in a person. Hence He

¹ Acts xxvi. 15.

² *Ibid.* 16.

presented Himself to the world as the Way, the Truth, the Life. "Follow Me," He said, offering Himself as the standard of the new life which He inaugurated. The imitative faculty in man was appealed to as being a stronger force in the formation and attainment of moral ideals than the intellectual faculty: for men draw inspiration and hope from men rather than from abstractions, from things they see accomplished by others rather than from things they are exhorted to accomplish for themselves.

Paul apprehended this great truth, and for that reason his teaching is alive with personal interest. "The mind of Christ"¹ is what he desires for himself and others as the norm of truth; for richness of wisdom is given to those who have the "word of Christ" dwelling in them.² The Christian life itself is but the re-living of Christ—Christ expressing Himself in the Christian heart: "For to me to live is Christ."³ Imperfect meanwhile may be the expression, but our "life is hid with Christ in God,"⁴ as the seed is hid and growing in the soil, and will bear the ripe fruit in its season: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."⁵ To the Apostle, Christ is the archetype, "the firstborn of every creature"⁶—the ideal and end of our being; and hence to live the Christian life is to learn Christ,⁷ to follow Christ,⁸ to press towards Christ⁹ as the standard of all moral endeavour.

To Paul's mind this standard is not gained by any sudden leap. At first we are but "babes in Christ,"¹⁰

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 16: cf. Phil. ii. 5.

² Col. iii. 16.

³ Phil. i. 21.

⁴ Col. iii. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.* 4.

⁶ *Ibid.* i. 15.

⁷ Eph. iv. 20.

⁸ 1 Thess. i. 6.

⁹ Phil. iii. 14.

¹⁰ 1 Cor iii 1.

learning to spell out His words and to walk in His footsteps ; speaking as a child, feeling as a child, thinking as a child. But the babe is in Christ, and is nurtured and grows in the knowledge and grace of Christ, and becomes a man.¹ Then he passes out of an imperfect faith and over-confident knowledge into "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."²

It is this thought of slow development towards maturity which reconciles us to many of the imperfections which dishearten us. It teaches us the needed lesson of patience with ourselves and others, and checks the conceit of immediate perfection which blights the early blossom of many a promising convert. We must not look for "the full corn in the ear" in the first days of the Christian life. The "green blade" has first to appear ; and we must bear with the raw judgments and harmless pretensions, and the harsh though honest censoriousness, which are incidental to that stage of the Christian's growth. The mellow time of the ripe corn comes in its season ; and our thoughts are then tinged with the more sober colours of autumn, and our judgments are touched with a kindness and a charity which steal over us with slow surprise.

Yet the childhood of the Christian has a beauty and sincerity and joy of its own, which in its innocent exuberance we must not crush or judge by the standard of maturity. The babe in Christ will grow into the perfect man. The last glory of the Christian is not the same as the first. We "are changed into the same image from glory to glory,"³ as we look into the

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 11, R.V.

² Eph. iv. 13.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

mirror in which the glory of the Lord, our standard is beheld and reflected. Some one once remarked to Edward Irving that it seemed wonderful that a helpless babe could grow into a man. "Wonderful, rather," said Irving, "that such a feeble, heartless thing as manhood should be the fruit of the rich, glorious bud of being in childhood." So, too, it may be said of many a Christian life which begins with the peace of God and the joy of salvation and the enthusiasm for holiness. It is wonderful that our poor, half-finished temple of manhood should have been built upon such a glorious foundation; ¹ that the beginning of our faith, with all its promise, should end in such mediocre attainments.

Paul, however, is far from regarding Christ as merely the standard of the Christian life. Jesus is not a passive ideal, like a statue on a pedestal. He is an ideal who realises Himself in the life of the believer, at whose disposal He puts all the riches of His grace. He is thus the Power as well as the Standard of the new life.

To Paul Christ is good for everything that is good. He is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness." ² The Apostle speaks out of his experience when he says "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." ³ He needs to look to no other than Christ for the inspiration of his ministry: "I determined," he says, trusting to the all-sufficiency of Christ, "not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." ⁴

And this power Paul sees everywhere at work, for everywhere he sees Christ building up the Church which is His body. "The power of God unto salvation" works through those who serve Him. He works in

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 11. ² Rom. 1. 4. ³ Phil. iv. 13. ⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 2, R.V.

pastors and teachers with the object of "the perfecting of the saints" and "the edifying of the body of Christ."¹ He enriches men "in all utterance and in all knowledge."² His is a power that emanates from love, and works by love, and creates the works of love: "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men."³ And the great end for which the power is exercised is holiness,⁴ the assimilation of our nature to the nature of Him in whom this power is enshrined, that He who is the Author may also be the Finisher of our faith. He confirms us to the end that we "may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ,"⁵ "being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."⁶

Sometimes, indeed, the Apostle feels as if he were being dominated and hurried along by this power. It seems to compel his will and absorb his personality. To him religion and life are one, and both seem to be summed up in the one word, Christ. It is with a thrill of joy that he abandons himself to the gracious tyranny of his Master. He is content to realise his freedom by being led like a slave at the chariot of Him who conquered him: "Thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place."⁷ At times he becomes "a fool in glorying"⁸ in his Lord. For him, as for his Master, the thorn enters the flesh, and in his own Gethsemane he "besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart"

¹ Eph. iv. 12.² 1 Cor. i. 5.³ 1 Thess. iii. 12.⁴ *Ibid.* 13.⁵ 1 Cor. i. 8.⁶ Phil. i. 11.⁷ 2 Cor. ii. 14, R.V. ⁸ *Ibid.* xii. 11.

from him ;¹ but he shared his Master's experience in being called to the service of suffering as a token of divine favour. He learned the mystery of affliction as an ordinance of God for those who are called to high service. He heard the divine assurance: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My power is made perfect in weakness." At that moment he was willing to hazard everything for Christ, to be anything so long as Christ reigned supreme: "Most gladly therefore," he cries, his heart leaping up to meet the thorn, "will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me."² All through his Epistles the Apostle's self-effacement in the presence and under the power of Christ is evident. The divine personality of Jesus Christ, as the outgoing grace of God and the incoming grace of man, gives warmth and graciousness and intense humanness to every page.

But how are we to assume Christ as the power of the new life? Does this power lay down new rules for us and prescribe a certain ritual to be observed? Paul is jealous of returning to the beggarly elements of feasts and fasts and observances, lest Christ should be obscured from our vision and His power hindered in shaping our lives. When we "cast off the works of darkness," we are to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Ere we come out to meet the dawn, the cast-off garments of the old man—"rioting and drunkenness," "chambering and wantonness," "strife and envying"—are to be exchanged for Christ, who is the Christian's "armour of light."³

The phrase, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," is very striking. Christ is to be the *habit* of the Christian,

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 8.

² *Ibid.* 9, R.V.

³ Rom. xiii. 12, 13.

his dress for daily wear. Habit is the garment of the soul. Not that life is to be regulated by a new formulation of rules; it is to be inspired by a new assumption of dispositions. We are so to appropriate Christ as to share His sentiments and aims and ideals and spirit. The sum of our habits forms our character, but the Christian's habits are not rules of conduct, but dispositions of heart, which are superinduced by union and communion with Christ.

Paul laid emphasis upon this point, being afraid of a new legalism springing up in the Church and stifling the spirit by the letter. The only rule which he would lay down was the rule of the "new creature."¹ The Christian is not a mere reformation: he is a regeneration. He is not an old man rejuvenesced, but a new man. Ritual is nothing to him: "Neither circumcision avail-eth anything, nor uncircumcision."² What avails is the "new creature," who has put on as a fresh garment the Christlike dispositions, which find rule and ritual for themselves for their own proper expression. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."³

It is noteworthy also that Paul believes that these dispositions of the new man may be exercised in our common relations with others. Christ works the power of His salvation into us whilst we work it out in our ordinary surroundings. When the Apostle teaches the duty of humility, he does not hesitate to attach it to, and derive it from, the sublime example of the humiliation of Jesus Christ, who, though "being in the form of God," "made Himself of no reputation,

¹ Gal. vi. 15.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* v. 1.

and took upon Him the form of a servant," and "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death."¹ The very exercise of humility is thus sanctified by the power it derives from the example of Christ. So also, the duty of forgiveness receives divine sanction from the same example. The forgiving disposition is an expression of the indwelling Christ: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."² Even our common domestic obligations and duties are sweetened by being brought into relation with Jesus Christ, who touches us at every point of our life. The submission of wives to their husbands is commended "as unto the Lord."³ Husbands are to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the Church."⁴ Children are exhorted to filial obedience, because it is "well pleasing unto the Lord,"⁵ who is interested in the discharge of the humblest duties. So also, servants are to obey their masters "not with eyeservice, as menpleasers," but because in serving others well they "serve the Lord Christ."⁶ Masters, too, are to be just and equitable, remembering that they also are servants, for they have a "Master in heaven."⁷ Thus Christ is brought into personal touch and sympathy with us in our common life, and becomes the greatest formative power in the making of our character and the shaping of our destiny—"the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."⁸

¹ Phil. ii. 6-8.

⁴ *Ibid.* 25.

⁷ *Ibid.* iv. 1.

² Col. iii. 13.

⁵ Col. iii. 20.

⁸ Rom. i. 16.

³ Eph. v. 22.

⁶ *Ibid.* 24.

THE OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK OF THE NEW LIFE

“The sovereign source of melancholy is reflection. Need and struggle are what inspire us: our hour of triumph is what brings the void.”—**RICHARD HOLT HUTTON.**

“We make for ourselves, in truth, our own spiritual world, our own monsters, chimeras, angels—we make objective what ferments in us. All is marvellous for the poet; all is divine for the saint; all is great for the hero; all wretched, miserable, ugly, and bad for the base and sordid soul.”—**AMIEL'S *Journal*.**

“She [Faith] sees the Best that glimmers through the Worst,
She feels the Sun is hid but for the night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wailed 'Mirage'!”

TENNYSON.

“But this Pessimism, which reverts to the thought of an original energy without will, that produces the good and the bad alike without design, is not a profound view, but is just that cheap and superficial kind of view, by which all enigmas are conveniently disposed of—by simply sacrificing all that is most essential and supreme to the unprejudiced mind.”—**LOTZE'S *Philosophy of Religion*.**

CHAPTER V

THE OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK OF THE NEW LIFE

PAUL was not blind to the sin and sorrow and misery of the world. He looked at them steadily with open eyes, saw and said the worst, and yet maintained his sanity and hope. There was much around him to breed a sour pessimism—the long-standing vices of the heathen world, its squalor, its slavery, its tyranny, its suicide, its hopelessness, its ennui, its godlessness; yet the Apostle saw more than the seen: he saw the Risen Christ, glorified, empowered, enthroned; he felt the stirrings of a new life; believed it would spread from soul to soul; anticipated the victories of the future; read the prophecies of a new and better era, and thought, spake, and lived an optimist till the end.

One can scarcely fail to be impressed by the wholesomeness of the Apostle's mind. He never sits down to pule and whine over the pollutions and miseries of his times. He declines to float with the brackish tide, or to sit on the shore wringing his hands in the futility of despair. He breasts the wave, faces the storm, and, gathering strength from the opposing elements, "glories in afflictions." His letters are a useful tonic in days of general enervation; for, though he looks straight down into the depths of degradation

into which humanity had sunk, instead of penning lacrymose rhapsodies over the ills of poor human nature in the manner of our modern pessimists, he writes as a man who has risen to meet the dawn and bring in the day. The manifold ills and woes of life, which to others were thorns, to him were spurs; and when blood flowed from his wounds it was but an incident in a victorious battle.

Whilst we say that Paul was an optimist, we do not imply that his sunshine was never dimmed by clouds. He had his dark hours. But these came from the very excess of his joy and hope, the impatience of his sanguine temperament, the peculiarly tender relationship which subsisted between his disciples and himself. His attitude towards his disciples was more like that of a lover or nurse or mother than that of a master. Sometimes his longing to see their faces overpowered him, and he prayed "night and day" exceedingly that his affectionate desire might be gratified.¹ He reminded them at times of his gentleness among them "even as a nurse cherisheth her children," and of his willingness to impart not only the Gospel, "but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."² We cannot wonder that a man of such temper should have had passing fits of depression, which set off his prevailing optimism, as shadows the sunlight.

The capacity for great elation is a capacity for great dejection. When he found the Galatians falling back into the bondage of a beggarly legalism, and sacrificing the Christian freedom into which he had brought them, he felt as if his work were coming to nothing, and for the moment the springs of hope seemed to be stanchd:

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 7-10.

² *Ibid.* ii. 7, 8.

"I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."¹ We see the cloud passing over him again when writing his letter to the Philippians from his prison in Rome. He hears of the preaching of Christ in the city from many motives. Some are preaching from envy and strife; some to exasperate his bonds; some out of love and goodwill. His hands are tied, his sphere of influence circumscribed, providence seems to baulk his evangelistic zeal. At one moment in the elation of his faith he rejoices that Christ is preached, no matter how or why, and believes that Christ shall be magnified even in his body;² at another, in the depression of his outlook, he thinks his work is done and he may quit the scene: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."³ He is suffering from the want of human sympathy: "For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."⁴ It is the loss of hope which overtakes a man when deed and desire, means and end, will not square; but with him it is only the mood of the moment: he soon recovers his habitual pose of mind, and emerges into the sunshine of optimistic faith.

When we inquire into the reason of Paul's prevailing optimism, it is not far to seek. It was not merely his natural temperament. Its springs were in grace. The circumstances of his life seem at first sight to provide a hotbed for the seeds of pessimism. Men disputed and providence thwarted his ministry. Buffetings, persecutions, revilings, shipwrecks, imprisonment—everything

¹ Gal. iv. 11.

² Phil. i. 15-20.

³ *Ibid.* 23.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 20, 21.

seemed against him. What of his own way he got had to be won, and almost wrested, from his unpromising environment. But it is precisely in such circumstances that the optimistic habit of mind finds its nurture and strength, provided a man has a dash of idealism in his nature, and works upon a creed which reconciles him to his life and presents to him a worthy end for which to strive.

It is not in the strenuous days of the battle that men are pessimists. Give a man a great cause and fire his heart with enthusiasm for it, and he lives above the visible and beyond the present. The end glorifies everything. It is when men sit down in slippered ease to brood upon the woes of their fellows; it is when men are sated with enjoyments not earned by toil; it is when men retire only to be spectators of the stern tragedy and to gaze upon the stage from luxurious balconies—it is then they become pessimists. Warriors, philanthropists, missionaries, labouring men, wage-earners, mothers, are seldom pessimists. They have something to live for, and they live. They leave the luxury of groaning and complaint to philosophers, poets, and rich idlers, who make a little sad world for themselves and weep over it, forgetful of the fact that happiness and misery are not in circumstances but in souls, and that the most unpromising material of life is often transformed into occasions of joy and healthful discipline by those who have to shape their lives out of it.

The point of view is everything. Change the man and he reads his environment in a new light. Bring him into relation to God and Christ and eternity; let him see a far-reaching purpose and plan in the world,

and his own life as a harmonious tessera in the design of the grand mosaic, and he becomes reconciled to his lot and lives an optimist. It was because Paul felt his life drawn into the current of the divine plan of the world's redemption that he knew he counted for something in the execution of God's purpose, and he lent himself to it as heroes do, who think and live above themselves and have no time for hopeless weeping over a lost world because of the joy and duty of saving it.

There are many roads that lead to pessimism and few that lead out of it. We may walk into that dark *cul de sac* by the pathway of certain philosophies. Every system of thought which ignores or eliminates the person of God from the world brings with it the possibility of pessimism, for the reason that it robs existence of the rational foundation which the human intellect demands. The movement of thought from materialism and positivism and agnosticism to the goal of pessimism is almost inevitable. These systems are not necessarily of themselves pessimistic. If one could be content with the view of God and the world which they offer, they might issue in a contented optimism. But they breed pessimism because their conclusions do violence to our instincts and ideals. Truth thus construed to the mind spells misery to the heart, and under the guidance of reason man finds himself an anomaly in a world which flouts his best hopes and desires. It is not the belief that the world is bad that troubles us: it is the conviction that it might be better; it is the fact that we are condemned to live in a world which is inconsistent with and crushing to our nature. It is not that God is ruled out of the world and human life: it is that we look for Him all

around, and instinctively listen for His voice, and yet are imperiously told by the intellect that He is neither to be seen nor heard. The wail of pessimism arises when human nature lies bleeding under the heel of thought and revolts against the misery in which it is amazed to find itself.

Sometimes we reach the same goal by another path: that, namely, of our moral aspiration. *La maladie de l'ideal* is a disease which eats into the finest souls. It arises from the disparity between our highest moral aims and our meagre attainments, the gulf between the real and the ideal and our sense of inability to bridge it. "The real," said Amiel, "disgusts me, and I cannot find the ideal." "The ideal poisons for me all imperfect possessions." It is a pessimism which does not so much doubt God as man; which shrinks from the engagements and relations of life lest the ideal should be degraded by faulty attainment; which fights shy of the goal because it cannot be reached by a single leap or bound, if ever at all. It mourns over an imperfect world instead of working slowly and patiently to make it better. There is a deep gulf fixed between the life of actual experience and the ideal life which is ever inviting us; but it is not the function of faith to paralyse us. Its function is to dare the impossible, to believe that He who calls us will enable us, and to venture though we fail, and yet to venture again and again, in the confidence that every fresh effort will be seconded by a fresh access of power, and that the pursuit of the ideal may be as greatly blessed to us as its attainment.¹

¹ "In contrast with this Pessimism, the more difficult problem is the firm confidence that, in spite of all that is incomprehensible to us, the striving after a supreme end is at all events extant in

There is another path, however, which is more frequently trodden than either of these which we have mentioned. Its point of departure is not the denial of God, or the assertion of an ideal which paralyses effort, but the collation and rehearsal of the ills and woes and disabilities to which our humanity is subject. It starts with the real, the actual, the present. The existing scheme of things, it is argued, has no benevolence at heart. It is cruel, oppressive, relentless. Nature is "red in tooth and claw." The earthquake, the avalanche, the storm, the frost, are so many enemies of man. Nature yields him little of her bounty without sweat and toil. Nor is providence more kind. The accident of birth determines much. It sets limits to the possibilities of life. The original endowment of a poor constitution may make life one protracted misery of suffering. Then there are the social cancers with which humanity is ever afflicted—grinding poverty, soaking toil, the oppression of capitalism, the inadequate housing of the poor, the sordid environment of childhood in our cities. All these realities of the present hour may be dwelt upon by the mind till they affect it like a nightmare—a nightmare of waking thoughts which cuts our nerve and renders us helpless, in face of a problem which demands solution. The contemplation of this seamy side of life by those who will not "put on the whole armour of God" and fight, is the world. For this confidence takes upon itself the great and ever unavoidable task of always making renewed attempts to fill the gap which lies between this content of faith and our actual experiences. If we call every attempt of this sort in thought or action 'religion,' then 'religion' is never exactly a demonstrable theorem, but the conviction of its truth is a *deed* that is to be accredited to character."—LOTZE'S *Philosophy of Religion*, 128.

prolific mother of pessimism. Every effort seems so hopeless as generation after generation is born into this worst of possible worlds, which seems to mock our benevolence.

There can be little doubt that these hard facts of life are more productive of the pessimistic spirit than are speculative theories or frustrated ideals. But there are some things which are frequently forgotten by those who cherish this unfortunate spirit. These facts are, after all, selected facts, over against which we may set a preponderating selection from the sunnier side of life to be found in all classes and conditions of men.¹ Life is not all tragedy. The grim tragedians have some byplay of relieving comedy behind the scenes. The joy of life is not the product of the environment. Place man where you may—in palace or in hovel, in luxury or penury, in leisure or labour—and misery may still be part of his lot. The West-end has its sorrows like the East-end. If happiness is to be attained at all, it is not by pursuing it. We stumble across it by accident; it comes as a corollary of holiness, and is sometimes extracted from circumstances which to others are the most cruel miseries. Happiness is an end which may be reached when a higher end is pursued.

And this leads us to note that ills become blessings and hindrances furtherances according to the spirit in

¹ "Browning's optimism was not founded on opinions which were the work of Browning, but on life which was the work of God."—CHESTERTON'S *Browning*, 179. "When, in doleful dumps, breaking the awful stillness of our wooden sidewalk on a Sunday, or, perchance, a watcher in the house of mourning, I hear a cockerel crow far or near, I think to myself, 'There is one of us well, at any rate,'—and with a sudden gush return to my senses."—THOREAU'S *Essay on Walking*.

which we meet them. Joys and miseries have not constant values: they are transformable; they change as we change. In the vilest surroundings you may discover the happiest saints, and in the most paradisaical you may find the most miserable sinners. The spirit within makes the world without. The good man transmutes the most intractable material into virtue and joy, as the oyster produces the pearl from the occasion of its pain.

Do we not forget that much of the world's suffering and trouble is preventable, and is due to the indifference and selfishness and sin of man? It is not part of the divine plan, and seems to be tolerated by a merciful God as a prophylactic against worse evil. Can we imagine what the world might become if sin were not restrained by misery? But the pessimist usually ignores the fact of sin, and brings his railing accusation against God for not doing what man is left, in a good providence, to do for himself. He wishes the symptoms to be relieved without curing the disease, forgetful of the fact that God has provided in Jesus Christ and His Gospel a remedy which, whilst it removes many of the ills of life by removing their cause, lifts a man above others and enables him to bear all with courage and equanimity, if not with joy, as an intelligible discipline of which he approves.

When we examine more particularly the optimism of Paul, we see that it is not reached by ignoring what is difficult and disagreeable in the world. He finds a point of contact in each of these phases of pessimism. He, too, had learned how hard it is to see and know a personal God in the world; and, though he tried to believe in a holy God, and felt the inner demand for

66 CULTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

holiness, he seemed to get farther away from God the nearer he tried to reach Him. The struggle between his conscience, in which was written the divine command, and the power of sin, which dragged him down into disloyalty and disobedience, drove him into despair, and might have ended in pessimism, had it not been for the revelation of God as a God of grace in Jesus Christ. "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."¹ The point of contact with pessimism became the point of departure into optimism.

So, again, he felt the sublimity of the ideal life, and his insufficiency for its attainment. But the ideal which he discovered in Jesus Christ was a self-realising ideal. Christ did not stand apart waiting to be approached. Christ took up his life with all its faults, and hid it in His own, and imparted His own strength to his weakness. Paul was strong when weak; and, though he could do nothing of himself to get nearer his ideal, he could do all things through Him. In this way the *maladie de l'ideal* was prevented or cured. His ideal was not an abstraction of virtues which invited and rebuked, but a Person who loved him and attracted him and transformed him into His own image.

In like manner also Paul contemplated the sad facts of existence, and was as familiar with them as any pessimist. He listened to the groaning and travailing of pained nature,² which shared the curse of man's sin. He gazed upon the miseries of fallen humanity, and stood face to face with death. But he read a new meaning in them when he was able to fit them into an intelligible scheme of God's moral government.

¹ Rom. vii. 24, 25.

² Rom. viii. 22.

Nature herself was to share in the benefits of man's redemption, as she shared in his curse.¹ The ills and woes of life were removable or remediable, or at least tolerable, by the offer of salvation which God made in His Son ; and even the sting of death was extracted by the expiation for sin which was made by the Crucified. The riddle of providence found a solution in redemption, and the faith which apprehended Jesus Christ as "before all things,"² as "head over all things,"³ as reconciling all things,⁴ and as having a pre-eminence in all things,⁵ was able to look abroad upon life with the equanimity of optimism, and say, "All things work together for good to them that love God."⁶ Thus the optimism of the Apostle was based upon revelation, in full view of the facts by which men had been driven by various paths into the abyss of pessimism. To Paul the only way out was by Jesus Christ.

¹ Rom. viii. 21.

² Col. i. 17.

³ Eph. i. 22.

⁴ Col. i. 20.

⁵ *Ibid.* 18.

⁶ Rom. viii. 28.

IN PRAISE OF LOVE

‘Faith makes the Christian lord of everything ; love makes him the servant of every man.’—LUTHER.

“If you want a person’s faults, go to those who love him. They will not tell you, but they know. And herein lies the magnanimous courage of love, that it endures this knowledge without change.”—R. LOUIS STEVENSON’S *Men and Books*.

“The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one ;
Yet the light of a whole world dies
With the setting sun.
The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one ;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.”

BOURDILLON.

“Love giveth in paying debts, yet, after giving, always remaineth herself in debt. Time never will be that she is not paying ; nor doth she ever lose, but rather multiplieth herself in giving.”—AUGUSTINE.

“Forcey as death is likened love,
Through whom all bitter sweet is,
No thing is hard, as Writ can prove,
To him in love that let is.”

ROBERT HENRYSOUN, OF FORDELL.

CHAPTER VI

IN PRAISE OF LOVE

IT has often been said that John is the apostle of love, but too seldom do we realise the rivalry of Paul in this transcendent quality. We think of Paul as the keen logician, the passionate debater, the subtle metaphysician, and forget the tears and sacrifices and labours which he offered on the altar of the "God of love." We forget also that the greatest hymn of love in all literature came from his pen.

When we ask why Paul had such love for men—love which imposed upon him a life of suffering and toil—there is but one answer: the love of Christ. His love for all men is the overflow of Christ's love for him. The love of Christ overwhelms him with awe, and evokes his adoration: it "passeth knowledge" that it was He who was none other than "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me,"¹ the chief of sinners. It is a sweet tyranny, which "always leadeth us in triumph in Christ,"² as captured slaves of love bound to love's chariot. It is a victorious power, which makes the captive a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, carrying off his trophies from the battlefield of tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² 2 Cor. ii. 14, R.V.

that loved us."¹ It is the dynamic of omnipotence which possesses and uses us: "The love of Christ constraineth us."² It is the inexorable and defiant passion of Christ for those whom He has loved even unto death: "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."³ It is only when we apprehend the Apostle's conception of the love of Christ that we can appreciate his life as a life of love, for his love for men is to be measured by Christ's love for him. It signified something more than a passive sentiment of benevolence, something more than the negation of hatred and enmity: it signified all that Christ's love signified for him and the world. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God."⁴

When Paul discovered himself as the beloved of Jesus Christ the whole world became his creditors. Every man had a new claim upon him: "I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish."⁵ The love of Christ was in him not a pool, but a well. It was a well of water which Jesus had sunk in his heart that every wayfaring and thirsty soul might drink from it.⁶ It was his and yet not his: his not to keep, but to give; for love, like water,

¹ Rom. viii. 37.

² 2 Cor. v. 14.

³ Rom. viii. 38, 39.

⁴ Eph. v. 1, 2.

⁵ Rom. i. 14, R.V.

⁶ John iv. 14: "The water . . . shall be in him a well of water."

must flow forth in order to remain wholesome for ourselves and others. Love is always in debt ; and it goes the deeper into debt the more it draws from the treasures of love in Christ. But the more it pays out, the more it is able to pay ; for we get love in order to love. The one debt which we can never discharge is the debt of love ; for so long as we live either here or beyond we must love if we are to remain in the love of Christ.

This leads us to note Paul's conception of the relation of love and law. In a noteworthy passage in Romans¹ the Apostle maintains that love sums up the whole duty of man to man. He cites first some of our positive duties—our social obligations, which as Christians we should faithfully discharge : "Render therefore to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour." This is part of our debt. Then he cites our negative duties—some moral obligations : "Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet," and "any other commandment" there may be. Now love goes behind all these things as a duty which comprehends and transcends them all. The Christian may discharge all his dues to man except that which he is ever discharging—his due of love. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Love enables him to discharge all his social duties spontaneously, without any thought of mere obedience to law, and prevents in the very conception those unsocial acts referred to in the second Table. Love quenches our evil dispositions and becomes a universal law

¹ Rom. xiii. 7-10.

within, which fulfils and supersedes all particular enactments without. When we pay the dues of love all other moral dues are included in the payment. Love is therefore the whole duty of man to man: "For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Hence for the Christian to fall back from love to law is to fall away from grace¹—to forsake the fountain and to drink of the stream, to renounce universal principles and to live from hand to mouth upon rules, to bind oneself to obedience whilst forfeiting the power to obey.

But love is not only the inspiration of the Christian's conduct towards his fellows; it is also the key of the knowledge of God. And this does not signify to Paul's mind merely that our love of God is the secret of our knowledge of God, but that our love for one another quickens the instinct of love by which the things of God are apprehended. It was to the Colossians, who had fallen into the error of magnifying the powers of speculation, that Paul addressed the words which taught them to seek by the intuitions and affections the knowledge to which speculation could never attain. He tells them that he strives for them in his prayers "that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden."² The hearts that are "comforted" and "knit together in love" are in the moral condition which qualifies them for opening the door of the treasure house and enjoying the full certainty of Christian insight. For the Philippians

¹ Gal. v. 4.

² Col. ii. 2, 3, R.V.

also he prayed for the same blessing : "and this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment."¹

Love is also the interpreter of love. Faith brings Christ as a guest into the soul, but faith "worketh by love" in exploring the infinite dimensions of the love of the divine heart, which it "passeth knowledge" to discover or understand. Love outstrips knowledge in knowing love's contents. Love brings eyes and light even to faith. Hence Paul's prayer for the Ephesians : "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God."² Love thus ventures into regions in which knowledge fails, and acquires by the insight of its sympathies such a knowledge of the heart of Christ as is granted only to the saints, to whom Christ reveals His deepest secrets.

Again, love is "the bond of perfectness." It is that quality which suffuses all other qualities of the soul and imparts to them its own tenderness and beauty, thus producing homogeneity and harmony. In the building up of a Christian character love is all-powerful. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up."³ Love hews and carves the stones, sets them in their places, and binds them together into a unity which expresses the idea of the divine archetype of love in Christ. Mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering,

¹ Phil. i. 9, R.V.

² Eph. iii. 17, 19, R.V.

³ 1 Cor. viii. 1, R.V. margin.

forbearance—these may be only a heap of beautiful stones till love as the “bond of perfectness”¹ comes upon the scene and rears them into the temple of a holy character.

Love is the harmoniser of differences in churches. There may be “diversities of gifts,” “differences of administrations,” “diversities of operations,” yet “the same spirit” and “one body,” all co-operating harmoniously in love.² Love gives unity also to the family: it is the keystone of the home, the supreme quality which every earthly father, as the head of the house,³ derives from the God of love, “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”⁴

It is said that Amphion built Thebes by the music of his lute. The stones danced into their places, and palaces and houses arose to its persuasive strains. So with churches and homes and the characters of Christian men: love builds, hate destroys; love is “the bond of perfectness,” hate is the force of disintegration. When love continues, churches, homes, and men stand firm and fair as temples of God; when love is gone, the stones fall out just as they fell in.

When we turn to Paul’s hymn of love⁵ we find in it the core of his teaching regarding the spiritual life, the quintessence of his experience, the passion and poetry of his own life. It is a song of love’s victory and enthronement, written with his heart’s blood. Were his Epistles a ring of gold set with many diamonds, this chapter would be the centre stone of purest water—a diamond of many facets, each

¹ Col. iii. 14.

² 1 Cor. xii. 4-7.

³ Eph. v. 25 ff.

⁴ Eph. iii. 14, 15.

⁵ 1 Cor. xiii. R.V.

scintillating and reflecting the ineffable light of the love of Christ.

Why does Paul dilate so lengthily in praise of love? Was it not because he was rehabilitating a word that had been much abused in the literature and common parlance of the world? He was attempting to pour into it fresh contents—attar of roses instead of withered leaves which had lost their perfume. Christ had created a new virtue, and Paul had to recreate an old word to express it. Hence the laborious but sublime definition of this chapter, which has enshrined the word "love" with new significance in the language of the world. No trim, scientific, dictionary definition could have sufficed to set forth all the wealth of Christian love. It had to be contrasted and compared, differentiated and combined in many ways to tell what it is and what it is not. And this could only be done by the deeper ventures of poetry; for love, like the light of the sun, or the song of birds, is too great and too subtle to be confined in our little boxes or phials of definition. After we have done all to secure it in language, there is more left unsaid than is said. We may tell what it denotes, but not what it connotes. Love: what is it? God is love; Christ is love. We can never fathom it; we have no vessel into which we can pour the ocean.

This chapter in praise of charity presents to us love in its many phases. It is a bed of roses of love, of all colours and perfumes—the sweetest-smelling patch in all the garden of divine graces planted of the Lord: some crimson with the blood of the cross, some white with snow of purity, some pale with suffering, some lifting their heads with incense of joy, some drooping with tear-drops of humility; all scenting the air with

the savour of the quintessential love of Christ. At which can we marvel most—that Christ can rear such heavenly blooms, or that the poor barren soil of the human heart can be so fertilised as to bring them forth in such perfection?

This hymn of love has four stanzas, in each of which the apostolic poet works out a separate idea. The first may be called the Enthronement of Love; the second, the Crowning of Love; the third, the Reign of Love; and the fourth the Immortality of Love.

I. *The Enthronement of Love.* The Apostle begins by setting love high above all the high attainments of the Christian life—above tongues, and prophecy, and faith, and munificence, and even martyrdom. With love they may be much, without love they are nothing. Love must be above them on the throne, and beneath them at the foundation, if they are to count for anything before God; for the eye of divine love searches for the quality of love in each.

I may be an expert in all the languages of men and angels; but if I have not learned the language of love, I cannot speak to God. I may as well beat the gong or clang the cymbal as speak with tongues, if I have not charity in the heart. I only make a noise which men may hear; God wants the tongue to utter heart's music tuned to love. Without love, then, the ability to use all languages is only an *idle accomplishment*.

I may have the gift of prophecy, and my mind may penetrate all mysteries and comprehend all knowledge; but if I have not love, I am nothing. My eloquence and fervour may accomplish much in spreading the Gospel, and may win me repute and admiration—I may speak of God to men, but I cannot speak to God

of myself: I am nothing. For preaching is only an *art* if eloquence and fervour have not the wooing note of love.

I may have a faith that overleaps all obstacles—removes mountains from my own feet and the feet of others; but if I have not love, I am nothing. I may be only the Priest or the Levite, full of faith and devotion to God, but with no time or heart to help my wounded fellow-traveller on the roadside; so engrossed in my study of theology that humanity makes no appeal to me. But if I serve God in faith and neglect men in love, I am nothing to God or man. Faith without love is a mere *religious attainment*.

I may “bestow all my goods to feed the poor”; I may be a prince in what the world now calls charity, a master in munificence; I may make the great sacrifice which the rich young ruler withheld; I may follow the Master Himself and exchange my riches for the poverty of those whom I would enrich; but if I have not love therewith, others may profit much, but I nothing. God wants not mine, but me; and even me He will not take till I have given both me and mine to others. Munificence without love may purchase *honour* among men, but nothing of God.

I may “give my body to be burned” for some great cause of truth or righteousness; but if my heart is not consumed by the slow fires of love, I die the martyr’s death without the martyr’s spirit, and without the martyr’s reward. “It profiteth me nothing.” Martyrdom without love is only a bid for the earthly immortality of *fame*.

It is thus Paul enthrones love above all things which are high in esteem in the religious world—tongues,

prophecy, faith, munificence, martyrdom. Men have praised these, this he praises. Love sits queen over them all ; and so long as they are her handmaids they are exalted in honour and from her derive their glory and reward ; but so soon as they pass out of her government they are degraded, and the aureole vanishes from their brow.

II. *The Crowning of Love.* In the first stanza Paul lifts love above things that are worthy, and declares that without her they are unworthy. He now separates love from things which are unworthy, and tells what love is by telling what love is not. He has distinguished the pure gold from the gold : he now removes the dross. We see her now surrounded, as queen of graces, by eight attendant graces, which are suggested by their opposites, with which love has not lot or part. Her crown of glory is that she is the soul of each.

“Love suffereth long and is kind”—a beautiful preamble to the coronation. Without love we may suffer long. We may suffer in bitterness of spirit. Without love we may suffer long and be cross, but without love we cannot suffer long and be kind. Love is patient in enduring ill, impatient to confer good. Love is the *soul of sympathy*.

Then the eight follow. “Love envieth not.” When she finds herself poor, and unfortunate and despised, she has no green eye for the wealth and good fortune and honour of others. She is content to be love. She is the *soul of magnanimity*.

“Love vaunteth not” herself when it is her turn to be rich and fortunate and honoured. She never begs her neighbour by boasting. She is the *soul of humility*.

Love “is not puffed up.” She is never inflated with

the wind of vanity, ostentatiously puffing herself in showy advertisement and vulgar display. She is the *soul of meekness*.

Love "doth not behave herself unseemly." She does not make others feel small by her greatness, mean by her mightiness, rude by her politeness, vile by her goodness. She is the *soul of good breeding*.

Love "seeketh not her own." She curtails her liberties, and denies her likings for the sake of others; gives up her pleasure to give pleasure to those around her; forgets her rights in her duties. She is the *soul of unselfishness*.

Love "is not easily provoked." She does not retaliate and discuss. She wins or waits. She will not fight temper with temper. She will not descend from the calm dignity of her throne to wrangle with the mob. She is the *soul of placidity*.

Love "thinketh no evil." If another does her an injury she does not note it down in her memory to brood over it. She pities the doer of it, who has injured himself rather than her. Without love we may speak no evil of the neighbour who has wounded us, but it is only love that can so transfigure us that we think none. Love is the *soul of forgiveness*.

Love "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth in the truth." She never sits down in the seat of the scorner to whet her pride of purity by discussing the sins of others. She has no ear for the tattler and the talebearer, no unwholesome joy in gloating over the backslidings of her friends. She and her sister truth keep company, and rejoice together over all who are loving and true, and mourn together over the base and false. She is the *soul of ingenuousness*.

Thus love puts a chaplet upon the head of each of these eight graces who wait upon her, and they, recognising her as their queen, put upon her head the crown.

III. *The Reign of Love.* The Apostle now praises the benignant rule of love. One verse with four brief clauses suffices to sum up her universal sway. She reigns over four "all things"—four continents—stretching out her sceptre towards the four points of the compass. "Love covereth all things: believeth all things: hopeth all things: endureth all things." Such brevity is only possible to a master who has long practised the art of charity. It is only he who can compress in so few words the experience of as many years. But, as Ruskin has said, "Three penstrokes of Raffaele are a greater and better picture than the most finished work that ever Carlo Dolci polished into inanity."¹ Here love is presented to us in her four queenly attitudes towards humanity.

Love "beareth all things"—literally, covereth, roofs in: shelters from danger, from storm, from suspicion, from obloquy. As a hostess she brings the outcast under her roof-tree; as a hen she gathers her chickens under her wings. Love takes the coat off her own back and covers the shivering nakedness of the suspected one, and thus "covers a multitude of sins." "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me."² *Love is the shelterer.*

Love "believeth all things." She is slow to lose faith in men. She sees the "soul of good" in the bad, the man in the sinner; thinks the best of the worst, is blind to our failings, suns our withering graces

¹ *Modern Painters.*

² Matt. xxv. 35, 36.

in the smile of her approval, and by her surprising faith in us revives our expiring faith in ourselves. *Love is the encourager.*

Love "hopeth all things." Even when her faith in us is dashed to the ground by the knowledge of our guilt, her work is not done. She flees from the fortress of faith to take her stand and fight for us in that of hope. She still sees our possibilities. She stands tiptoe, ready to spring forward with winged feet to meet the dawn of the better life in our soul. *Love is ever the optimist.*

Love "endureth all things." When the worst comes to the worst; when her hospitality is violated and her faith spurned, and her hope clouded over by our obdurateness, she never gives up the quest for us: she sits down in the darkness and plants herself under our burden,¹ making our guilt her own, and waits for the breaking of a better day. *Love is the cross-bearer.*

Whom is Paul describing? Where is this wondrous archetypal Love? Is it not the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, who had appeared to Isaiah and set the prophet's lips on fire with burning words? For love and sorrow, love and suffering, love and death, are inseparable in God and in man.

IV. *The Immortality of Love.* The transcendent superiority of love is shown by its immortality. It is a pure and insatiable passion which feeds upon an infinite and inexhaustible object. So long as God is love, God will be loved. He needs us: we Him. Here, then, we may cultivate the faculty of love in our intercourse with men, for its exercise will never cease when we stand in the presence of God.

¹ "πάντα ὑπομένει."

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Prophecies shall fail, when the Gospel needs no longer to be proclaimed to a fallen world ; tongues shall cease, when the saints speak and sing in the new language of glory ; knowledge shall be done away, when we know even also as we are known ; but there remain, after these things and the need of them have passed away, these three : faith, hope, and love ; but even among these three love is still enthroned as queen. For the apprehension and acquisition of the love of God is the eternal joy and glory and labour of the saints, in which faith still worketh by love and for love, and in which hope still reaches forth eagerly for fresh discoveries of love to satisfy the undying love of the soul. "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three : and the greatest of these is love."

ON CHRISTIAN PRAYER

“Prayer thrives not, rather it turns into hollow, soulless, mechanical words, or even into vain, sinful craving, unless an earnest resistance to evil inclinations goes hand in hand with it.”—MONRAD'S *World of Prayer*.

“Prayer is the voice of one who was created free, although he was born in chains; it is at once self-assertion and self-surrender; it claims a will even in surrendering it, when it says, Not my will, but Thine, be done.”—DORA GREENWELL'S *Essays*.

“Mr. Dickson went away and prayed about ten words; but I confess that every word that he uttered would have filled a firlo! ”—WODROW'S *Analecta*.

“You seem to be a pretty lucky young man; keep your eyes open to your mercies. That part of piety is eternal; and the man that forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life.”—R. L. STEVENSON: From a letter to Haddon, the artist.

CHAPTER VII

ON CHRISTIAN PRAYER

IN the culture of the spiritual life a foremost place must be given to prayer. Prayer is the faculty by which faith satisfies its hunger and thirst. Prayer leads faith into the innermost, and sets her down at the fountain and the feast of grace. Faith without prayer is a bird without wings, a ship without a sail, a tree without a root. Prayer is the characteristic note of the Christian—that by which he knows God and is known of God. “Behold, he prayeth,”¹ marks the dividing line between our life in the world and our life in Christ.

Prayer is both natural and necessary to man. It is the index of our fall, the prophecy of our redemption, the instinct and the impulse by which we try to bridge the gulf between earth and heaven, between man and God. Man prays because he is a slave of sin and yet an heir of grace. Above him, the unfallen angels praise—their aspirations are fulfilled; beneath him, the world of created beings is dumb—it is satisfied with “the earth and the fulness thereof”: but man is an exile from heaven, sinning yet aspiring, a worldling yet dissatisfied with the world; journeying through the

¹ Acts ix. 11.

world with aching feet, his heart already across the Jordan in the land of promise.

Prayer is characteristic of all religions, but Christian prayer has its note of distinction: the note of thanksgiving and joy based upon redemption. We do not approach God as slaves who dread the exactions of a taskmaster, but as children who know the love of a father. We are sons and heirs, whose inheritance has been secured for us: and, although we cannot meanwhile enter into possession, we "rejoice in hope," "making request with joy" for those ever-increasing instalments of grace which are granted to the prayer which can appropriate and use them. As members of "the household of faith," our prayers are not for the appeasing of wrath or for the non-infliction of punishment, but for the fuller expression of love, the larger enjoyment of blessing. The prayers of Christians are the confidences of children.

But this joyful confidence of children which characterises our prayers to the Father is a privilege which has been purchased for us at a great price. We can never dissociate prayer from sacrifice. Prayer has not an immediate access to the throne. There is a barrier to prayer which must be put out of the way. The sacrifices of the heathen were blind ventures of the darkened mind to remove the great obstacle of sin and guilt which ever impedes the feet that would approach God in prayer. The heathen presentiment finds ratification in Jewish ritual, in which the association of sacrifice and prayer comes into clearer light. Man has always felt it to be true that "without shedding of blood is no remission"¹; and the sacrifices

¹ Heb. ix. 22

of the temple were but prefigurations of the Great Sacrifice, by which we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."¹ It is by His death that Jesus secures to Jew and Gentile alike the privilege for which they had been blindly groping--an "access by one Spirit unto the Father."² Since He died we are "no more strangers and foreigners" wandering outside the walls: the gates of prayer are thrown open by our great High Priest, our prayers take us into the divine presence, and we are admitted as "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."³

It is the thought of Christ's complete atonement for sin which creates within us a joyful confidence that our requests are granted for the sake of Him who is at once our High Priest and our Sacrifice. Strong prevailing prayer is inseparable from strong faith in the cross of Christ. The fact that God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,"⁴ is our grand argument and encouragement for boldness in prayer. With our eye fixed on Calvary, what is there that we may not pray for, if it be in the line of the purpose of the cross? and is not every good for ourselves and others swept into that divine current? The riches of that one gift beggar all our poor language and poorer expectation: it is as unspeakable in value as the stars and the shining of the sun. It is immeasurable in merit: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"⁵ is the "new song" which only saints and "the voice of many angels" can sing. And it would be

¹ Heb. x, 19, 20.

² Eph. ii. 18.

³ *Ibid.* 19.

⁴ Rom. viii. 32.

⁵ Rev. v. 12.

a great surprise if, after that unspeakable gift, we should not be able to say: "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things"?¹ Our faith in prayer thus depends upon our faith in the cross, and when we go into God's presence we travel along that way which has been consecrated by the blood of the Lamb.

But, since the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, is there no sacrifice needed of them that pray? Is nothing asked of us to lay upon the altar? We too have a sacrifice, a bloodless sacrifice, which we must offer, without which prayer is not prayer. It is our will—our will, which, as moral beings, we are free to give or withhold from Him who has given it. He supplies us with the material for our sacrifice, and asks nothing which He has not bestowed. We do not pray when we ask only what we wish. Prayer is but idle words so long as we expect to coerce the divine will into the granting of our requests. Prayer begins and ends with the surrender of our will. "Not my will, but Thine be done"; "Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven"—this is the undertone of all our supplications. Thus when we come to God by "the new and living way" we must bring to the altar the only thing which God has given us as our own—our will—and we must repeat the words of our great High Priest, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."²

It is the apprehension of this truth which prevents disappointment in prayer. When we make approach to God to get our own will, and not to do His will, our prayers come back to us as the echoes of our own voice. Is it not the forgetting of this truth which

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

² Heb. x. 9.

murders prayer on the very threshold of our lips? Are we not trying to speak the language of prayer without having learned prayer's alphabet when we expect to get anything from God which is not in the line of His will? Indeed, we cannot believably ask until we acknowledge the supremacy of the will of God. And the surrender He asks is not the annihilation of our will, as if it were antagonistic to His own: it is still our will, but, when consecrated upon the altar, all antagonism has passed away, and it realises its freedom in willing harmoniously with the will which created it, and of which it should be the expression.

But, it may be asked, if this is the end of all prayer, does prayer alter anything? Is the will of man the only thing that is altered? Are not the laws of God immutable? Will He alter the laws of nature at the request of man? Amidst all the mystery which such questions create, there are some things which are sufficiently clear and unshaken. We may press our knowledge of God and man and nature too far for what it is worth. Is not the whole scheme of redemption as displayed in history an interference with the established order of things? The Incarnation, the miracles, the Cross, the Resurrection, conversion, regeneration—how can we fit them into the known laws of nature? Did God create and set agoing the universe and then sit down to do no more? Is His will, which is the source of all law, bound by its own laws? Can God will nothing but what He has willed? So far as God has revealed His mind, the whole universe of material things is not so valuable as man, for whose salvation He gave His Son to die. If we are the children of God, why should it be incredible that our

Father should do at our request things that otherwise would not have been done? He seeks to educate our wills to bring them into harmony with His own, and it is surely reasonable to think that He is free to encourage us, and to win us to Himself by doing many things at our request which are not contrary to His purpose.

Besides, when we speak about fixed laws by which God governs the world, why should we not include prayer among their number? Surely prayer is one of the laws of God, and human experience has piled up its record of answers which have made it impossible to doubt its efficacy. The justification of experience is of more value than the justification of reason; when the former is forthcoming, the latter may be dispensed with. If we believe that "the Father knows how to give good gifts to them that ask Him," we surely believe that asking is the condition of bestowing, and that the human will calls the divine will into activity consistently with itself.

But, after all, our belief in the efficacy of prayer depends upon what room we make for the supernatural in our view of the world. When our thoughts scarcely rise above visible things, and, through indifference, ignorance, or philosophy, take no cognisance of such facts as Christ's person, His atonement, His resurrection, His work in history and experience, prayer is only speaking into a vacuum. But these facts remain, and have to be fitted somehow into an intelligent theory of the universe. To the Christian the supernatural is ever impinging upon the natural, and God is at work harmoniously in both. The God who interferes in his life for his redemption may interfere in a thousand

ways to prevent the frustration of redemption. "A Christian's daily common life is full of unseen, unrecognised miracles, and among the greatest of all miracles worked by prayer is faith in prayer itself."¹

When we leave the abstract questions which gather around the subject of prayer, and deal with it as one of the principal means for the culture of the spiritual life, it is best to consider the subject as presented to us in one who was distinguished as a man of prayer. Such a one was Paul, in whose life and teaching prayer played an outstanding part. We may therefore note the nature and characteristics of prayer as they present themselves in the great Apostle.

Prayer is a labour, a strenuous spiritual exercise, a wrestling. It is the athleticism of the soul. It never was to Paul a short and easy way of obtaining his desires. It was to him, as to our Saviour, an agony—an agony not so much of pain as of spiritual exertion. It is noticeable that the same word as was used of Jesus in Gethsemane² is taken up by Paul in speaking of his prayers. It is the exertion of the runner or wrestler contending with mighty combatants, unseen but real, in the secret arena of the soul. "Whereunto I labour, striving [agonising, contending with adversaries] according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."³ "I would that ye knew what great conflict [agony, inner struggle] I have for you."⁴ Whilst it is true that there are times—halcyon days of the soul—in which we commune with God as children, pouring out our confidences familiarly into the Father's ear, there are also dark days of moral distress in which

¹ Dora Greenwell's *Essays*, 139.

² Luke xxii. 44.

³ Col. i. 29.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 1 : cf. iv. 12 ; Rom. xv. 30.

we have to pray ourselves laboriously into prayer—days in which the Father's will is clear, but we cannot bring ourselves into line with it till we have beaten down many an opposing wish and interest and natural inclination which dispute our allegiance. For our wrestling is not with God: our wrestling is with ourselves to disencumber our will and set it free to identify itself with the will of the Father.

Prayer is often a laborious preparation for prayer. Prayer teaches to pray. The exercise of prayer is God's way of training His spiritual athletes to bring them into condition for prevailing prayer, which implies spiritual fitness for appropriating and using prayer's responses. At first we begin by "asking," as if all were to be got by asking. We find, however, that our appetite for blessing increases, and with it our urgency. We then exert ourselves more, and "seek." But for the best gifts the exertion is still more violent: we "knock" and the door of the whole house is opened to us.¹ It is the divine discipline in which prayer borrows strength from the obstacles which it overcomes. It is the method of Jesus Himself, who seemed to introduce impediments to prayer to excite prayer's urgency and strenuousness—as in the case of the Canaanitish woman, who, having prayed down all discouragements, at last prevailed. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."² A magnificent response! She got far beyond her request. She was not bidden eat the crumbs under the table like a dog: the pantry door was thrown open and she got the right, as the mistress of the house, to all it contained.

The experience and the teaching of the Apostle alike

¹ Luke xi. 5-13.

² Matt. xv. 28.

argue labour and urgency. Prayer was to him a great work. He did not make prayer a substitute for labour. It was the inspiration and strength of his ministry. Nor did he indulge in the modern sophism which makes labour a substitute for prayer. "To labour is to pray" was no part of his gospel. He held the balance even. For, whilst prayer without labour argues a lazy faith, labour without prayer degenerates into laborious idleness or irritating fussiness. His work of prayer is the very heart of all his work of labour. It is the storing up of divine energy for work. It is the recovery of the consciousness of God, which is so often lost in our contact and converse with the world. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith."¹ "For this cause we do not cease to pray for you."² "Pray without ceasing."³ "Patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."⁴ "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same."⁵

In this work of prayer we are not left to ourselves: we have the co-operation of the Spirit. Prayer without the Spirit is blind prayer, a speaking into the dark without the vision of the Father's face. It is only when we can say we "have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father,"⁶ that we have our introduction into the audience-chamber of the divine presence. In Christian prayer there are two voices—the voice of the Spirit and the voice of man. We pray, and the Spirit prays in us. We have an intercessor when we intercede, an interpreter of our prayers who sets us and them in order. "The spirit

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 10.

² Col. i. 9.

³ 1 Thess. v. 17.

⁴ Rom. xii. 12.

⁵ Col. iv. 2.

⁶ Rom. viii. 15.

of the man, which is in him," "knoweth the things of a man"; but "the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God,"¹ and it is this gracious co-operation of Spirit with spirit which brings our inexpressible needs into touch with divine satisfactions. Left to ourselves "we know not how to pray as we ought," but the Spirit "helpeth our infirmity," and "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."² As Jesus taught His disciples to pray, so His *Alter Ego* teaches us; and Christian prayer has this characteristic: it is prayer "in the Spirit."³

It is this which purifies our prayers of sordidness and selfishness, and prevents us from praying for those things that would harm ourselves or others. It is this also which often mysteriously guides our prayers in those directions in which our answers are to come, and makes us stumble unexpectedly upon open doors which lead into the presence of the Father of all mercies. It is this which emboldens us to pray when we are yearning for blessings which we cannot define, and for blessings which we cannot prognosticate. We know that our great Interpreter sets in order our wordless yearnings and verbal ventures before the throne.

Again, in the example and teaching of Paul, *prayer often takes the form of intercession*. The frequency of intercession arrests the mind of the studious reader of the Epistles. Paul believed he was doing God's work; but he believed also that he could not do the work without God. He was a fellow-labourer with God. It is one of the principles of the economy of salvation that the coming of the kingdom of heaven

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 11, R.V.

² Rom.viii. 26, R.V.

³ Eph. vi. 18.

is dependent upon the efforts of man. God waits upon the prayers of His people, and every effort of prayer in the line of the divine purpose is seconded by a divine exercise of power. We pray, and the Spirit brings us into the right condition for receiving the blessing which God is eager to bestow; but, what is neither more nor less wonderful, we pray and the Spirit brings others for whom we intercede into the same condition.

Intercession delivers prayer from self-seeking. It is a testimony to the universality of the Gospel and the kinship of men. We are members one of another, and, as God's children, cannot ask or enjoy God's blessings alone. "Thy kingdom come" implies that we intercede not only for ourselves, but for others. Hence there is in Christian prayer not only co-operation with the Spirit, but co-operation with one another in the privilege of intercession.

This co-operation in intercession was a work in which Paul habitually engaged, and to which he habitually exhorted others. "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling."¹ We "do not cease to pray for you."² His ministry was a ministry of prayer. Prayer was the very soul of his work. But in another sense also his was a ministry of prayer. He believed that his ministry was supported and rendered effective by the prayers of others. "Praying always for you"³ has the reciprocal claim "Praying also for us."⁴ "Brethren, pray for us,"⁵ expresses one of his deepest needs. "I know," he says, "that this shall turn to my salvation through

¹ 2 Thess. i. 11.

² Col. i. 9.

³ *Ibid.* 3.

⁴ *Ibid.* iv. 3.

⁵ 1 Thess. v. 25; cf. 2 Thess. iii. 1.

your prayer.”¹ “I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.”² Sometimes he arranges even a concert of prayer, a prayer-covenant: “Ye also helping together by prayer for us”³; “that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”⁴

Intercessory prayer presents to us one of the profoundest mysteries of the spiritual life. Our character and destiny are open to the influence of the prayers of others, as theirs are to ours. At first sight it is an appalling thought that we should be exposed to the prayer-influence of our shortsighted fellow-creatures; that their prayers should be capable of giving new form and direction to our lives; and that we likewise should have such influence by prayer over them. It is thus we are beset before and behind by unseen powers, whose action we cannot prognosticate or control, and life passes largely into the hands of others.

This may be accepted as part of the divine order. Prayer can never be confined to petitions for the desires of self; and immediately it passes beyond, it becomes intercession, and intercession from its very nature ceases to be prayer if faith in its efficacy be evacuated by the suspicion that those for whom we pray are not affected by God through our prayers. The great intercessory prayer of Jesus for His disciples and for the world would lose its significance if prayer made no change in their or the world's condition. It would be nothing more than a pious delusion.

But the efficacy of intercession is verified by the experience of the ripest Christians. The lives of such men as Müller and Quarrier present some staggering

¹ Phil. i. 19. ² Philem, 22. ³ 2 Cor. i. 11. ⁴ Rom. xv. 30.

facts to those who limit the results of prayer to subjective changes in those who pray. The answers to prayer which were so frequent in their experience point to the fact that God often answers the prayer of one man by moving another in the direction which issues in a response. And why should we marvel at this spiritual inter-action if we believe that each individual spirit is dependent for life and energy upon the Spirit of God? The spiritual kingdom is a community in which no one liveth to himself or prayeth to himself.

And yet the influence of intercessory prayer on the lives of others is no more appalling or mysterious than the commonplace fact of everyday experience, that our lives are twisted, enhanced, depreciated, spoiled, broken or ennobled by the *action* of others. We are exposed in a thousand ways to the error and hatred and malice of those around us. Half our sorrows in life are imposed upon us by others. Sickness comes to us by the carelessness of a neighbour. The act of another diverts our life into a path that we ourselves would never have chosen. Our life may be saved by another's care or lost by another's negligence. It would be strange indeed if in the spiritual world the interdependence of life did not hold good as in the natural world; if the subtle influence of prayer should not affect us in the shaping of our life in the same way as the more manifest influence of action.

But the mystery of intercessory influence is less to be dreaded than that of action, for this reason: whilst in common life man acts for good or ill directly upon man, in prayer we act upon each other through the beneficent and purifying medium of the Spirit of God,

which stifles all malevolence and can only operate in the line of the highest good. The water is filtered of all impurities before it is put into the cup which God gives to others to drink. This is our safeguard in interceding for others, our security in their interceding for us: neither they nor we can ever by prayer be taken out of the scope or reach of the all-controlling love and goodness and holiness of God.

It is interesting to observe that, in the example of Paul as a man of prayer, *prayer is almost uniformly associated with thanksgiving*. This is his "characteristic formula,"¹ his precept and his practice. When he comes into the presence of God he seems to unlock the doors of his memory, and his crowded blessings troop out to the amazement and joy of a heart which has so many trophies of prevailing prayer that it loses count of them in a wonder of thanksgiving, and, believing in God's delight in giving, it is bold to ask for more. I "cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."² "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers."³ "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you."⁴ "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy."⁵

It was because habitual association of thanksgiving and prayer had proved in his own experience a source of joy and power that he passed it on as a precept of devotion to the churches. "Continue in prayer,"

¹ Dean Howson's *Character of Paul*, 203; in which see this point carefully elaborated.

² Eph. i. 16.

³ Philem. 4.

⁴ Col. i. 3.

⁵ Phil. i. 3-5; cf. Rom. i. 8, 10, 11; 2 Tim. i. 3; Col. i. 9, 10, 12.

he writes to the Colossians, "and watch in the same with thanksgiving."¹ To the Philippians he writes, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."² To the Thessalonians he offers the same exhortation, "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks."³ Thanksgiving is the garnishing of all our prayers, the incense with which we approach the altar, the joyous expression of our filial love, the token of our confidence that God as the Giver rejoices in the joy of the receiver.

The Apostle lays down still another precept of prayer. As prayer is to be associated on the Godward side with thanksgiving, on the manward side *it is to be dissociated from wrath and disputing*.⁴ Our faith that God's wrath is averted from us demands the aversion of our wrath from men; and God's reconciliation in the great controversy between us and Him necessitates our reconciliation with those with whom we are at variance. The heart must be purified in its thoughts toward men before we can lift up to God holy hands—hands consecrated to the doing of His will: for there is as good reason why we should be pious in our lives as in our prayers. Forgiveness is the condition of forgiveness; the desire to bless, of the capacity to be blessed; and the best preparation for being right with God is to be right with men.

¹ Col. iv. 2.

² Phil. iv. 6.

³ 1 Thess. v. 17, 18.

⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 8.

ON THINKING THE BEST

“To have right *notions* and *tempers*, with relation to this world, is as essential to religion, as to have right notions of God. And it is as possible for a man to worship a *crocodile*, and yet to be a pious man, as to have his affections set on this world, and yet be a good Christian.”—LAW’S *Serious Call*.

“Querulousness of mind tends in fact rather towards irreligion; and it has played, so far as I know, no part whatever in the construction of religious systems.”—WILLIAM JAMES’S *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

“If we may assume that the keynote of a normal Christian life is not the thought of sin, or of penitence, or of suffering, or of anxiety of any sort, but rather that of a joyous realisation of the highest good, a realisation begun now and growing ever towards greater fulness—if we may assume this, then it follows that the Christian mode of life tends directly toward physical health. Other things being equal, a religion that ruled by fear would have less robust votaries than one ruled by love.”—COE’S *The Spiritual Life*.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THINKING THE BEST

IF prayer is the flower of the spiritual life, its roots are to be found deep down in the soil of our ordinary thoughts. It is important, therefore, that we should think the best in order to pray the best. Prayer that outruns thought is words, but prayer which expresses our thoughts takes character and value from these thoughts according to their meanness or nobility. The high-tide mark of prayer is only reached by us when we have "the mind of Christ." Then prayer is communion based upon community of thought. At this point prayer ceases to struggle with language: it is intercourse maintained for the very pleasure of the intercourse—not for self-seeking, but for self-realisation in the divine life.

But the best thinking is valuable for the best living as for the best praying. We cannot live above our thoughts, though we may think above our life. Of every man it may be said, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."¹ Life is an effort to express our thoughts in action—an effort in which we often fail, but from which we dare not cease. We begin at the wrong end when we try to force ourselves to do right things. Think the best thoughts and you live the best life.

¹ Prov. xxiii. 7.

Make your reservoir in the altitudes, and the pressure is increased: the water then comes down into the lower reaches of life and needs no mechanical force. In this also, when we have "the mind of Christ," life loses its straining and its effort; it has the dynamic of thoughts that flow from above. High thinking, then, is essential to high living.

It is our habitual thoughts, not our occasional thoughts, which shape our lives and fashion our characters—the thoughts that come to us so naturally as to come almost without thinking. For every thought which we entertain leaves its impress or its stain upon the mind, giving form and colour to all successive thinking. It never passes wholly away from us. It may lie sleeping in some unused corner of the mind—the subliminal consciousness, as it may be called—but it awakes and comes forth at unexpected seasons to reprove or to encourage, to shame or to appraise us. Our habitual thoughts are so much ours, so inwrought into the texture of the mind, that we realise them less as ours than as ourselves. These are the thoughts that guide the will in its unguarded moments: they decide the trend of conduct, and determine the minutiae of life which form so large a part of life's whole.

The weakness of our spiritual life often arises from our not cultivating the habit of thinking the best. We make occasional excursions into the higher altitudes, but too seldom find our mental life in the serener air; too seldom bathe our souls in the sunlight of the divine presence; too seldom rest our spirits in the sublime, simple, eternal certitudes. We live for the most part in the cities of the plain, thinking the thoughts of the multitude, pursuing the poor and passing ambitions of

the hour, content with the thought-fashions of the schools, and our spiritual life is half-starved. We must not become the slaves of what we call modern thought, though we may be its servants, adding our contribution to the solution of the problems of the day. Thought in the making can best be served by living in the higher plane of thought that is made; current opinion, by regard to the eternal verities. In other words, in order to fight well we must often escape from the battle: for great and good work in life is best performed by those who live in the higher elevations and come down to the doing of it, fired by the vision of the mount and calmed by the stillness of its solitude.

It is for this reason that the Apostle Paul argues for the transformation of life by the renewal of the mind. He does not attempt to enforce a new moral code in the shape of elaborate rules of conduct. These may come after, and may be drawn up by each Christian for himself. To change the life Paul begins above the life, at life's source—the mind, the thoughts. His guiding principle is, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."¹

When we look at the kind of life which the Gospel demands, we understand why we must begin with the mind. It is not a life of mere restriction and prohibition. It is a life of rehabilitation and sublimation, the metamorphosis of the faculties and capacities of our being. Our bodies, as the agents and instruments of life, are to be presented as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God"²: a *living* sacrifice, for what is demanded is not the deadening of our affections and thoughts and will, but the revivification of them by the

¹ Rom. xii. 2: cf. Eph. iv. 23.

² Rom. xii. 1.

renewal of the mind as apprehending new motives and ideals and ends. For the mind that is renewed by grace does not require to drive the body as a taskmaster drives a slave into blind and unwilling obedience to external laws. The renewed mind apprehends by its instincts, proves by its intuitions, "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"¹; and, having received for itself a new accession of power, wins the body as its instrument to the furtherance of new ends. In other words, what is wanted is not new machinery, but new energy; a new mind to empower the body to new and larger issues; a reinvigoration of the body as a living sacrifice by the regeneration of the mind. This, says Paul, is "your reasonable service"; for, after all, living the best is only possible by thinking the best.

It should be observed that the duty of thinking the best is based by Paul upon the Resurrection. "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."² It is the manner of Paul to vivify doctrines with ethical issues, and to strengthen ethical demands by doctrinal sanctions. Here the Resurrection is introduced into our life as a living force. We are to think the best because of what we are—men and women who are sharing already in Christ's resurrection; for, in the very act of faith's surrender to Christ, we have died to this world, and our life is already the heavenly life, hidden to the world, which cannot appreciate its beauty, its holiness, its peace, but "hid with Christ in God."

¹ Rom. xii. 2.

² Col. iii. 1-3, R.V.

We must look down on life from the standpoint of Christ; we must come down from thence to translate our vision into reality; we must embody our best thoughts in deeds. Our life which is "hid with Christ" is to be lived in the world: its spring there, here its issue. But if any man will seek these "things above," he must set his mind upon them: he must quicken desire by thought, by living in them as his mental atmosphere.

But what are these things which we are to think? Are they strange, unearthly thoughts, which never before entered the heart of man? "The things above" are the eternal types of virtue, which the human heart in all nations has partially seen in vision, and which the best men have everywhere been pursuing. All moral beauty which men have been groping after, Christianity assumes as its own. It is here Christianity comes in contact with the ethics of Pagan life, not to destroy, but to fulfil. It assimilates the best and makes it better. But it brings its own distinctive contribution to the moral life of the world—a double contribution: it gathers up in Christ's person and character the scattered fragments of all human virtue and displays them in unity and completeness; and, having taken up man's life into the risen life of Christ, it says, Think now on these things, these virtues which are and have been the heavenly forms of all true living—they are the native air of the renewed mind; as sharing the risen life, you have the power to live in them in your thoughts and to think them into your lives. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ;

if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. . . . These things do: and the God of peace shall be with you."¹

Paul regards this mind of Christ, this thinking the best, as the open secret of our victory over evil. Like Christ, Paul emphasises the inwardness of the Christian life. Make the tree good and the fruit will be good. Purify the fountain and you sweeten the stream. Think the best thought and you cannot do the worst deed. "Abhor that which is evil": be its enemy in thought; kill it in its very conception. But how? "Cleave to that which is good"²—attach, fix, your thoughts to the best: appropriate it inalienably. It is yours in virtue of the renewed mind. Store up in your mind every thought of holiness, and the thoughts of evil will perish of neglect. This is love "without hypocrisy."³ As Luther has said, "We cannot prevent an evil thought from coming into our head, but we can prevent it from making its nest there." The life of the best is the death of the worst. We conquer not by fighting against the bad, but by living for the good.

This is one of Paul's guiding principles, and he applies it in various ways—in our attitude towards God, in our attitude towards others, in our attitude towards ourselves.

In our attitude towards God, this is the weapon to which we trust in "casting down reasonings and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God."⁴ We are not to "war after the flesh,"⁵ with "carnal weapons," as if evil thoughts were a rival, as if reasonings had to be pitted against reasonings. The victory is to be won along other lines: not by

¹ Phil. iv. 8, 9, R.V.

² Rom. xii. 9.

³ *Ibid.* R.V.

⁴ 2 Cor. x. 5, R.V. margin. ⁵ *Ibid.* x. 3.

exhausting the strength of our mind by thinking about, and fighting against, thoughts of God which we feel to be unworthy of us, but by "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."¹ When Christ commands our thoughts and uses them in His service, the opposing thoughts lose their strength for want of opposition. The "mind of Christ" justifies its thoughts not by warring against the thoughts of the carnal mind, but by the very fact of being held in "captivity to the obedience of Christ."

So, in our attitude towards others, the same principle may be applied. Take the case of resentment. The carnal mind suggests retaliation. Paul says, "Render to no man evil for evil." But he goes farther than to give a mere counsel of perfection. He shows us how it is to be done: "Take thought for things honourable in the sight of all men"²—think beforehand, have the mind preoccupied with thoughts of things honourable. If we are preoccupied with the best thoughts, we scarcely require to watch against the worst. The good crowds out the bad.

The same principle is also applied in two ways to our attitude towards ourselves—over-estimate regarding our person, and over-anxiety regarding our life—the over-thinking of self, and the over-thinking of circumstance. In regard to the first, Paul's advice to every man who would live the spiritual life is "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith."³ The difficulty of the Christian life is that we so often pride ourselves upon our privileges, forgetting that they are concessions,

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5, R.V. ² Rom. xii. 17, R.V. ³ *Ibid.* 3, R.V.

and upon our graces, forgetting that they are gifts. We over-think¹ ourselves, measuring ourselves against the standard of conduct in the world instead of against the standard of faith in God. In this way the old worldly spirit of over-reaching, of pre-eminence, of seeking the uppermost seats, creeps in, and our thoughts regarding ourselves become swollen and unhealthy. The cure for this, says Paul, is to preoccupy the mind with thoughts becoming to the renewed mind²: think so as to think soberly, healthily, soundly,³ giving heed to your standing in faith before God, not to your posturing in pre-eminence before men. To think the best regarding ourselves is not to over-think ourselves, but to think "according as God hath dealt to every man."

So, too, regarding the over-thinking of our circumstances, which produces the divided mind. The cure of care and anxiety is not to be found in the attempt to unthink our troubles, but in preoccupying the mind with a higher set of thoughts. Attain to the "peace of God," says Paul, and distraction ceases. But how? Switch your thoughts into the upward path—the path of prayer. Rehearse your blessings and remember your mercies, and be thankful. "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"⁴; and the path of prayer will be to you the path of peace. And having attained to this "peace of God" by thinking the best, it will stand guard like a sentinel, and keep "your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."⁵ We do not get rid of care by

¹ Rom. xii. 3, ὑπερφρονεῖν.

² *Ibid.* 2.

³ *Ibid.* 3, φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν.

⁴ Phil. iv. 6, R.V.

⁵ *Ibid.* 7, R.V.

thinking about it, or by trying not to think about it, but by rising above it. When our thoughts are kept in Christ Jesus, we know how to leave our life and life's affairs also in His keeping.

This leads us to notice the therapeutic value of thought. There can be little doubt that many of the ills of life are not only aggravated but induced by what one might call diseased and unhealthy thinking. There are two planes of thought, in either of which we may live—the higher and the lower, each of which is dominated by a different set of thoughts and aims. In the lower plane men live from hand to mouth, pursuing the tangible, the immediate, and the near, cherishing short and narrow views of themselves and the world, eager for success, nervous of failure, worried by sickness, peevish in adversity, perverse in misfortune, over-reaching in business, greedy of pre-eminence and preferment, over-anxious in securing a competency—unable to live because of the stress and strain of making a living. All this gives rise to a nervous, fussy, neurotic temperament, instability of mental equilibrium, and the disturbance of the physical repose of health. It is one of the alarming symptoms of modern life, due in large part to the materialistic ideals of a poor but popular philosophy.

It is not to be wondered at that there should be a revolt against the life of this lower plane, in which such costly sacrifices are being offered to the idols of the market-place and of the world. Men are beginning to realise that this type of life leads to depression of vitality, to bondage, to fuss and fear, to the vulgarisation of their whole nature. Hence the call to the higher plane of thinking, and the rehabilitation of the mind as

a regulative and curative agency. Christian Science or Mind-cure, spite of all its extravagances, brings a needed message to the age, to those who have lost their bearings in the whirl and noise of city life, to those who are played out with business or pleasure, fatigued with formality or fashion, the enervated and the blasé, who demand some stimulant, some spice of novelty and mystery to whip up their jaded nerves. Ordinary people in country villages and quiet towns—people whose minds are calmed by the observance of nature in her sober and leisurely processes of growth and decay, who are engaged in honest and healthy labour and go to bed at a timely hour, do not need this new religious “pick-me-up.” They find in the Gospel all that is true in it, and what is new they do not require. To them the Gospel is a food rather than a medicine.

And what is the truth which is emphasised in this new semi-religious cult? It is the old Christian duty of thinking the best, of preserving mental sanity by engaging the mind in healthy exercise and feeding it with wholesome food. It preaches against care, worry, fuss, fidgetiness; it preaches against brooding, invalidism, grumbling, and all manner of pessimism; it ostracises all complaints against weather and misfortune and circumstance, all discussion of ailments and symptoms, and insists upon a healthy-minded optimism which sees the world and life bathed in roseate hues; it inveighs against the inordinate passion for wealth and social pre-eminence, and especially against the morbid craving for medicines, patent or otherwise, asserting that the best tonic is a mind well braced by wholesome thinking and wholesome living. All this is true, but not new; yet

all this is as appropriate now as ever—a fine practical philosophy for an over-practical age.

But when we look for the rational basis of this teaching of Christian Science, it is not easily discovered. In its cosmopolitan eclecticism it borrows from Christianity, Emersonianism, Idealism, Evolution, Spiritism, Hinduism.¹ It freely uses our Christian terminology without our Christian contents. It is a type of teaching which suits an age which demands quick returns and immediate results, come how they may; but a mind-cure which fails to meet the legitimate demands of the mind, a Christian science which divorces Christian morality from Christian doctrine, can be little more than an ephemeral religious cult, which lives by breathing a religious atmosphere which it has done nothing to create or maintain.

When we go back to the Apostle Paul we find all that is of practical value in Christian Science. Here it has a firm rational basis which supplies it with the necessary dynamic. We may freely grant that much of the teaching insisted upon by Christian Science has been neglected by Christians in the practice of life; and for the enforcement of its importance we are indebted to the new cult. It is easy, however, to say, "Do this," or "Don't do that," but sooner or later we ask "Why? How?" It is here Christian Science fails; and it is here Christianity, in its older and purer form, satisfies the mind.

Take one or two instances. "Don't fear; be healthy-minded; fear is bondage!" Good. But how? Are we simply to believe that we are healthy-minded, and we are so? What if we have regrets, failures, fears, shames,

¹ Cf. James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 94 ff.

which think themselves into the very texture of our mind? Paul brings us at once into contact with God. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."¹ "Don't worry!" That is excellent advice. But how? Are we to unthink our cares, or make-believe that they do not exist? Paul says: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."² "Think the best: let your mind live in the upper plane!" But why, and how? Paul says, because Christ is risen, and you are "raised together with Christ,"³ and you need not spend your thought and energy upon a world to which you have already died. Are you played out with conforming to the stupid fashion of the world? "Get rid of vulgar competition in getting and spending and hoarding and pleasuring!" Good, but how? Paul's answer is: "Be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."⁴ "Are you subject to the fear of death? Get rid of it!" How? "Christ," says Paul, "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel."⁵ "Don't think of sin: get rid of it: ignore it! It is nothing: it is a lie: it does not exist!" Paul lifts us above this region of make-believe and preserves to us the feeling of rationality in a world of facts. Sin exists, says Paul, but Christ died for sin, and by His

¹ 2 Tim. i. 7.² Phil. iv. 6, 7.³ Col. iii. 1, R.V.⁴ Rom. xii. 2, R.V.⁵ 2 Tim. i. 10.

death has delivered us, and set us "free from the law of sin and death."¹ "Be optimistic!" Good, but how? By putting on spectacles of a rosy tint to keep up the pleasing illusion whilst we wink at the facts? Paul, looking at the ugly facts of life with the naked eye, says from his own experience: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."²

On examining this new cult of Christian Science we can only say that "the old is better." It is a resuscitation of old truth: a needed emphasis of neglected truth. All that is good in it for food may be taken without harm, but its sauce of metaphysics and garnishing of philosophy may be dispensed with by a healthy appetite that has been accustomed to feed upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

¹ Rom. viii. 2.

² *Ibid.* 37.

ON CHRISTIAN COURTESY

“I am very happy in my present environment, though mean enough myself, and so, of course, all around me ; yet, I am sure, we for the most part are transfigured to one another, and are that to each other which we aspire to be ourselves. The longest course of mean and trivial intercourse may not prevent my practising this divine courtesy to my companions. . . . We are all of us Apollos serving some Admetus.”—THOREAU'S *Letters*.

“Courtesy is, like grace and beauty, that which begets liking and an inclination to love one another at the first sight, and in the beginning of an acquaintance and familiarity.”—MONTAIGNE'S *Essays*.

CHAPTER IX

ON CHRISTIAN COURTESY

COURTESY is the manner of the Court. It is the highest expression of refinement and good breeding—the flower of social conduct, produced after many and long experiments in cultivation. It is presumed that it grows to perfection in high places, and the Court sets the fashion to the country. There are many ways of dressing and discoursing and doing but the courteous way is acknowledged to be the best—the best for us, the best for those around us. It is the conduct which befits ourselves as men and others as our fellow-men ; for courtesy is the homage which we pay to our own higher nature as well as to that of others.

Courtesy is the oil that lubricates the social machinery and makes it run smoothly. Discourtesy is the sand which increases friction, creates noise, and wears down the bearings. Courtesy never finds pleasure in giving pain to others. It is slow to advertise men's failings, to discover their weaknesses, or to requite their insults ; but quick to appreciate an excellence, to praise a virtue, and to repay with interest a favour. Courtesy has an eye which knows what not to see, and a tongue which knows what not to tell. Courtesy is the informal

covenant entered into by refined minds not to increase the irritation and misery of a world in which there is already enough of both. It blunts the sharp edge of clever speech, and is the antidote of the acid temper. It is punctilious in small kindnesses, in the little delicacies of look and tone and gesture, the garnishings of speech and act. It gives grace to honesty, winsomeness to truth, and a touch of poetry to all prosaic things in life.

Courtesy is not a habit to be kept for high occasions and high company. It becomes the cottage as well as the Court, and the commoner as the king. In all spheres of society a spice of conventionality and ceremony is needed to prevent us from forgetting that we and others are better than we appear, and more than we seem. Courtesy enables us to pay respect to the ideal humanity which is struggling for expression in us all. It is due to friends and familiars as well as to courtiers and strangers, for the flower that is not nourished in the seedplot of the home will not bloom freely in the garden of society.

Courtesy may be nothing more than polish and vincer, smoothness of speech and suavity of manner; but even then it is better than rudeness and vulgarity. Besides, the habit of courtesy, like all other habits, tends to grow inward; for, though a habit may not be fashioned by nature, it may fashion nature: nature may accommodate itself to habit. Refined minds produce refined manners; but it is also true that refined manners may produce refined minds. External and internal react upon each other.

Christian courtesy is the behaviour which is becoming to those who move in the court of the highest of all

kings. We see this courtesy in its perfection in Jesus, in whom mind and manner were in such complete accord that we seldom think or speak of His courtesy : the word carries with it still too much the association of effort, of appearance, of externality. Yet Christ Himself set the fashion of courtesy to Christendom, as a King to His subjects.

The first and finest exponent of Christian courtesy was the Apostle Paul. He is acknowledged to be the master of manners, the greatest of Christian gentlemen, gentle and manly in speech and act, ever respecting what is highest in himself and others, never causing needless pain, quick to apprehend the good in his fellows. If the art of courtesy is the art of overcoming evil with good, of fostering flowers by sunshine so that weeds are smothered by their shade, Paul was a master in that beneficent art. In the Apostle Paul we may therefore study Christian courtesy both in precept and in practice.

There are three precepts uttered casually in his letters which embody the leading principles of courtesy as the art of Christian conduct in social life.

In the first he indicates that love is to courtesy what the soul is to the body. "Let love be without hypocrisy. . . . In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another ; in honour preferring one another."¹ Courtesy is not merely to be a mask in which we play a part prescribed to us on the social stage. The heart is to be behind the living face, in which the gleam of the eye, the smile of the lip, and the word of the tongue are true to the inner disposition. Courtesy is to be the language of love in speech and

¹ Rom. xii. 9, 10, R.V.

gesture and deed among those who, as the members of the same family, cherish towards one another the tender family affection which knows no posturing of hypocrisy. When such love is in the heart there is that courtesy which is never greedy of honour, but anticipates the getting of honour by the giving of it. "In honour preferring one another." Christian courtesy is not affectation, but affection.

The second indicates the method by which courtesy may be cultivated: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."¹ This is the mental attitude which love assumes in the cultivation of courtesy—humility and sympathy. We *know* the worst of ourselves; we can only *suspect* the worst of others. We have always reason to respect others, for we can always believe them to be better than we are, seeing we cannot know them to be worse. We can esteem the ideal in them to be better than the real in ourselves. But, whilst courtesy is based on this lowliness of mind, it grows up through sympathy. When we give up our self-seeking and self-conceit, and project ourselves into the feelings and interests of others, our manner towards them becomes tender and delicate, as of those who are dealing with their own flesh and blood. Christian courtesy is thus not the gracious condescension of a superior to an inferior, nor the patronising interestedness of a stranger in a stranger's affairs; that is only the mask of courtesy. The courtesy of the Christian is the homage of the heart to the ideal of humanity in our neighbour, and our identification with his feelings and

¹ Phil. ii. 3, 4.

interests so as to make that ideal real for him and us alike.

The third of these precepts relates to courtesy in one of its principal manifestations—speech. “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”¹ Courtesy is the flavour of our personality which we add to our conversation. All truth of soul is enhanced and commended by beauty of expression. A mere abstraction admits of no such embellishment. We cannot give a personal relish to a proposition of Euclid. But in all social intercourse the tone of the voice, the gesture of the body, the expression of the eye, as well as the little grace notes of our speech, may so stimulate the appetite of the hearer as to make the truth we utter more palatable and more easily assimilated. The same ingredients of truth, without the salt of courtesy, are only good victuals spoiled in the cooking and serving. The dishes and decorations and condiments on the table do not make a dinner, but without them a dinner is not so well relished. We are so constituted that the eye has to be fed as well as the palate. So speech is commended to the mind by those little delicacies and adornments of courtesy without which it is stale and insipid.

The commentary on Paul's precepts of courtesy is to be found in his practice. We may therefore select some typical examples.

When one speaks of one's self, of one's desires and purposes, especially if these relate to strangers, it is not easy to avoid the suspicion of egotism or to prevent the impression of presumption. Paul had a desire,

¹ Col. iv. 6.

which burned like a fire in his bones, to preach the Gospel at Rome. He had long prayed for this privilege, and refers to it in the opening words of his letter to the Romans.¹ But, with the delicacy of a refined mind, he perceived that this might seem to them to be gratuitous interference, self-assertive importance, an assumption of superiority which belittled their present Christian status; so he puts them and himself into a right position by the exercise of his characteristic courtesy. "I long to see you," he writes, "that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established"; but, lest this should cast any slight on their present Christian attainments, he adds, as if by way of self-correction, "that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."² He associates himself with them as receiving a share of the blessing accruing from his visit, and thus blunts the edge of apparent patronage.

Then observe how he again corrects a false impression which his words might leave behind them. He had long nursed the hope of visiting Rome that he "might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles."³ The Roman Gentiles might think that he was coming among them for self-glory or self-advantage; but he diverts their thoughts into a different channel by giving them a new view of his ministry, as a debt to Christ for favours received—a debt which he holds himself under solemn obligation to discharge by sharing these favours with others, and especially the Gentiles: "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the

¹ Rom. i. 9-15.

² *Ibid.* 11, 12.

³ *Ibid.* i. 13.

unwise."¹ Could he have commended his ministry with more delicacy to the favour of the Romans?

At the best it is but a thankless task to point out the faults and shortcomings of others, and when it must be done nothing but Christian courtesy can prevent us from making enemies of friends in the doing of it. Paul is never forgetful of increasing the social credit by praising virtue before detracting from it by condemning vice. He has always the delicate sense of proportion which is the quality of the Christian mind. He has none of the brutal bluntness of the candid friend, who makes it a cardinal virtue to speak his mind. We are not always obliged to say what we think of others, though we are never obliged to say what we do not think. Social life would degenerate into savagery if we were always expressing our candid opinions of one another. A large part of our duty in social intercourse consists in not saying what we think. We all feel the need of people who have that amiable hypocrisy which takes no notice of many of our failings, but labours to appreciate our struggling virtues. Some of us know as well as, and better than, they how faulty we are; but if they credit us with some good, we try to live up to our reputation, and all the more when we know how little it is deserved. If we have to open up a wound in the heart of a friend, let us see that we bring with us the oil as well as the knife. Candid friends often wear the mask of a friend to conceal the heart of an enemy. They have always high motives for their justification. It is always for our good—and their glory.

Perhaps there is no better example of Christian

¹ Rom. i 14.

courtesy in the difficult art of faultfinding than Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians. The Corinthian Church had developed many ugly characteristics which marred the fine promise of their faith and usefulness. Paul had to direct attention to these. He begins with a frank appreciation of all that is good in the Corinthian converts.¹ He tells them that he is always thanking God for the grace which is given them, for they are enriched in everything by Christ—in all utterance and in all knowledge: he is silent of their love. He rejoices that the testimony of Christ is confirmed in them, so that they "come behind in no gift"; and, spite of all their shortcomings, expresses the belief that, being called into the fellowship of God's Son, they shall be "blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is only after this friendly beginning that he proceeds to rehearse the sad tale of their failings.

We know what regret and anxiety and pain it cost Paul to enter into this unwelcome correspondence; how he did violence to his own feelings and suppressed his inclinations. But in letting out an ugly humour we are not prepared to operate unless we are prepared to suffer in the operation as much as the patient. We must quote a few sentences from the Second Epistle in order to understand how much Paul suffered. "If I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye

¹ 1 Cor. i. 4-9.

should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.”¹ “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent.”² We have only to read the letters themselves to understand how the salt of courtesy judiciously intermixed with unpalatable truth prevented the correspondence from becoming offensive to the Corinthian mind.

As an example of Paul’s courtesy before his superiors in social rank, we may select his appearance before Agrippa. He is not to be outstripped by Festus, who addresses Agrippa as King, though he was not much more than a king in name. Paul remembers the king and forgets the man, compliments Agrippa on his knowledge as being “expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews,”³ and considers himself fortunate in pleading before one who had such understanding of the circumstances of his case. He then tells the stirring story of his conversion, of his labours, and of the sufferings of Christ in which he participates. Festus accuses him of madness, but Paul turns to Agrippa with a benignant courtesy, which almost won the king: “The king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely.”⁴ “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?” But at once he credits his royal listener with a faith which his question seems to doubt: “I know that thou believest”⁵; and, having elicited the sneer that Paul was trying to make a Christian of him on very slender grounds, the Apostle presses home the courteous and delicate appeal, not only to the king, as if he needed it more than others, but to the whole

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 2-4.

² *Ibid.* vii. 8.

³ Acts xxvi. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.* 26.

⁵ *Ibid.* 27.

Court—a touch of delicacy which took off the personality of the reference: “I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”¹ But Paul had learned this courtesy in the Court of another King.

It is not easy to write to others on the subject of their liberality, especially on liberality which has been neglected. Yet with what delicacy Paul approaches the Corinthians regarding their arrears of benevolence! They had not been contributing as they ought to the support of the poorer brethren. He tells them how he had been boasting of their liberality to those of Macedonia, proud of their grace of giving. Their zeal had already “provoked very many” to generosity; but he would not find them unprepared when they of Macedonia came with him to visit them, lest “we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.”² The tenderest susceptibilities could scarcely have been wounded by such a delicate reference to money.

Take another reference to money—to the receiving of a gift. It often taxes the recipient’s courtesy to acknowledge and thank without an excess of dignity, without a suspicion of meanness, without an overdoing of gratitude. Paul had been in want and affliction, but a gift comes from his old friends in Philippi. He accepts it with a fine measure of courtesy,³ rejoicing that his suspicion of being forgotten by them is dispelled, and that “at the last” their care of him “hath flourished again.” But they are not to think that he desired a gift, but he desired “fruit that may abound to your

¹ Acts xxvi. 29.

² 2 Cor. ix. 1-4.

³ Phil. iv. 10-19.

account"; for in all generosity a reversion of interest falls to the giver. Nor would he wound their feelings by permitting them to imagine that he had hard thoughts of them for apparently forgetting him. He has their apology ready: "Ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." Then he recounts their early liberality at a time when others never thought of his needs, and regards their present gift to him as "a sacrifice, acceptable, wellpleasing to God," and promises that "my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The subject of benevolence, of gifts, is thus lifted into a religious atmosphere, which fuses the interests of giver and receiver and is too pure to allow any thoughts of patronage on the one hand, or of dependence on the other.

But the courtesy of a man shows itself best in the small delicacies of speech—omissions, suppressions, additions, turns and refinements of phrases, when there is no special occasion demanding carefully measured language. Little off-hand courtesies and compliments indicate the good breeding of a man. We see this feature of Paul's courtesy especially in the salutations of his letters. Note, for instance, how he begins his Epistle to the Philippians: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi."¹ How delicately the veteran honours Timothy, his young disciple, by bracketing his name with his own! How quietly he suppresses his usual and higher title of Apostle, which Timothy could not share! What an encouragement to a youth to be placed side by side

¹ Phil. i. 1.

on an equality with one who was honoured of all the churches!

Similarly he begins both his Epistles to the Thessalonians. There he brackets the names of Silas and Timothy with his own. These two, along with himself, had been instrumental in founding the Church by their labours, and, as they had shared the work, Paul pays them the compliment of associating them with himself in his greetings and rejoicings when writing to the converts in Thessalonica.¹

To take another instance, let us look at the little private gallery of portraits of his friends to be found at the close of the Epistle to the Romans.² Here is Phœbe, who may have borne this letter to its destination, "our sister, a servant of the Church," a woman of means who had devoted herself and her wealth to the service of the Lord, "a succourer of many, and of myself also." Here are Aquila and Priscilla—no: "Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus," tent-makers like himself, who had plied their calling to support him. This honoured pair had put their necks under the yoke to help him in bearing the burdens of his life. How delicately he characterises Epænetus as "my well-beloved," "the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ"; and Amplias "my beloved in the Lord"; and Urbane "our helper in Christ"; and Stachys "my beloved"; and Apelles, who had passed his probation, and was now "approved in Christ"; and Tryphena and Tryphosa, whose names suggest two ladies who live luxuriously, but who in Christ have belied their names, for they "labour in the Lord."³

¹ 1 Thess. i. 1: cf. iii. 6, 8.

² Rom. xvi.

³ Vide Godet's *Romans*, *in loco*.

He does not forget the old Christian lady, Persis, whose working days seem to be past, but whose works remain in the Apostle's grateful memory—"the"—not *my*, as in the case of his male friends—"the beloved Persis, who *laboured* much in the Lord"; and, without enumerating others of them, "Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother *and mine*." Rufus, probably the son of Simon who carried the cross of the Master on the road to Calvary, in whose house in all likelihood Paul stayed when a student in Jerusalem.¹ Tenderly he remembers how the mother of Rufus mothered him as her own son when a strange youth in a strange city! These were all humble folk, whose names he enshrined in this first calendar of the saints of the Church. What pleasure and encouragement they must have derived from finding themselves so thoughtfully remembered and so happily characterised by one who was the greatest figure in the Church! Paul was not too great to show courtesy to the obscure.

But the finest example of Paul's courtesy is the Epistle to Philemon, the only one of Paul's personal and private letters which has been preserved. The letter displays the grace of his mind as well as of his pen—so nimble in its movements, so subtle in its suggestiveness, so refined in its feeling, so persuasive in its pleading. He is begging a favour for a poor, runaway, thievish slave; an insignificant subject perhaps, but Paul lovingly lavishes upon it all the wealth of his grace of mind and heart, just as a great master may leave the heroic marble to devote his genius to the carving of a cameo. From this brief Epistle we may learn the art of Christian letter-writing.

¹ *Vide* Godet's *Romans*, *in loco*.

He enters upon the subject by saying that he might "enjoin" Philemon to grant this favour, yet he prefers to put it thus: "for love's sake I rather beseech." Authority is sometimes best exercised by foregoing it. And for whom does he plead?—a slave, a runaway, a thief? No. Courtesy forbids such epithets: "I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus." Onesimus! Paul lets his mind play upon the word. Onesimus—"helpful," "profitable." He had belied his name; but now, since Paul laid hold of him, he has merited it again: "Onesimus," the "profitable," "who was aforetime unprofitable to thee, but now profitable to thee and me." This unprofitable servant Paul now sends back, though he would fain keep him, for he is dear to him as his "very heart." But the Apostle would not serve himself with another man's property without consent; so he parts with him. But, in sending him back, he suggests to Philemon a higher view of the slave's escapade in going away: "Perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season that thou shouldest have him for ever; no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord." Onesimus, however, had gone away in disgrace with some of his master's property. Paul identifies himself with his convert, and promises to make good the deficiency, writing out, not without a touch of humour—for Philemon does not need his money—a sort of promissory note: "I Paul have written it with mine own hand: I will repay it." But, having written this, he ventures with gentle raillery to recall Philemon's own indebtedness to the writer—a debt not of money, but of life: "Albeit I do not say to thee

how thou owest to me thine own self besides." Philemon had gained more by Paul than he had lost by Onesimus. The accounts being thus squared, and more than squared, from the writer's point of view, Paul hints that, as Philemon owes him so much, he might do even more for Onesimus than take him back: "Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say." The whole letter is a marvel of grace and tenderness, of humour and earnestness, of dignity and condescension, of refinement and strength, such as only could be written by one in whose nature these same qualities were so abundant as to overflow without strain or effort on what might seem to be only a trivial occasion.

*ON SOME ELEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN
TEMPER*

“In religion, as in other things, few things command the respect of the world like courage.”—AUSTIN PHELPS.

“There cannot be a more humble soul than a believer : it is no pride for a drowning man to catch hold of a rock.”—SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

“The bosom of Christ is the grave, the only grave, of religious acrimony ; we learn secrets there which render it possible for us to be of one heart, if we may not yet be of one mind, with all who lean upon it with us.”—DORA GREENWELL'S *Patience of Hope*.

“There is small chance of truth at the goal, when there is not childlike humility at the starting-post.”—COLERIDGE.

CHAPTER X

ON SOME ELEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER

BY temper we do not mean temper in the restricted sense of irascibility or placidity, sourness or sweetness. We take the word in its larger significance as implying the proportion of parts, the admixture of qualities, the blending of moods, passions, and dispositions. A good temper is one in which each part of a man's nature works in co-operation with, and subordination to, all the other parts, producing that balance of judgment and confidence of manner which are incidental to strength and stability of character. A bad temper, on the other hand, is one in which one passion strives with another, moods are ever varying, and the combination of parts is never certain. The temper which becomes us is thus the harmonious adjustment of our passions and dispositions so as to produce homogeneity and constancy of character.

In the Christian temper, as illustrated by the Apostle Paul, there are certain qualities and dispositions which are so balanced by their complementary qualities and dispositions as to satisfy the moral sense, just as certain colours when placed in juxtaposition to their complementary colours satisfy the æsthetic sense. What one might call the three primary colours of

the Christian temper are Humility, Patience, and Yieldingness. But these three passive qualities are balanced by their complementaries of an active tendency: Humility by Courage, Patience by Perseverance, Yieldingness by Pertinacity.

These three pairs, however, are not opposites which neutralise each other; for humility has its opposite in self-assertion, courage in cowardice, patience in rashness, perseverance in sloth, yieldingness in obstinacy, and pertinacity in indifference. In each pair the one needs the other to give it that completeness or unity which comes from the due admixture of parts. Humility needs courage to save it from meanness; courage, humility to save it from bravado: patience needs perseverance to save it from degenerating into *laissez-faire*; perseverance, patience to save it from fussiness: yieldingness, pertinacity to save it from flaccidity; and pertinacity, yieldingness to save it from impertinence. Temper is the harmonious blending, the proper adjustment, of these complementary qualities, so that no one predominates over the other to break the unity and peace of the whole.

In the cultivation of the Christian temper Humility occupies the first place. It is a quality which was not included in the Pagan list of virtues. To the Pagan's mind humility was mean and unmanly, a negation of that self-assertion which was characteristic of his character. Why should a man humble himself? Why should heart or intellect or will bow down to the dust? The Pagan did not see into those mysterious vistas of holiness which open up to us in the character of Christ. He had to strive with his compeers to attain the virtuous ideal. He was not overawed and

humbled in heart by Holiness Incarnate. The Pagan was proud of his intellect as the instrument of knowledge. He had not the revelation of the wisdom of God in Jesus Christ to teach him the limits of the human understanding, or to discover to him those realms of thought which are forbidden to the selfish mind but free to those who submit to the teaching of the God of truth. And why should he humble his will? He might submit to an inscrutable will which was over him; but humility is not mere submission to an overmastering fate. It is the reverence that is paid by our will to a Sovereign Will which is instinct with the purpose and passion of love.

The appearance of Jesus upon the scene changed all this. Man measured himself in holiness of heart, in attainment of intellect, in force of will, against a new standard, which was infinitely above him, but not oppressive in its infinitude, for it was an infinitude which humbled itself to lift up man to its own level of goodness, knowledge, and power. Humility became the new attitude of the human mind towards a new ideal, which won its reverence and aspiration by its own example of humility.

To the Apostle Paul this was the characteristic note of the temper of Christ, and for that reason should be the distinctive note of the character of the Christian. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."¹ And what was that mind? Humility. Christ stooped lower and lower, from heaven to earth, from sonship to servanthship, from divinity to humanity, from life to death, from the throne of glory to the cross of shame. And why? That "in His name"—before

¹ Phil. ii. 5.

His power thus expressed in humiliation—"every knee should bow"; that we might stoop in humility so as to be lifted up into His fellowship. Christian humility has thus no taint of subservience. We bow before One who bowed Himself to the earth in His charity for the souls of men.

Humility is thus our restoration to true sanity of mind. When Christ throws open to us the new world of revelation, we see ourselves in a new and larger environment, and remeasure our attainments and possibilities in a new light and by a new criterion. The new relation in which we stand to Christ and God alters our estimate of ourselves, dethrones our pride and exalts our humility. It upsets the fashion of the world, which is accustomed to humble itself before the self-asserting pride of intellect, wealth, and power—"the kings of the Gentiles," who exercise lordship over men, and who, by the strange irony of the world's humility, are called "benefactors."¹ It is a relation which creates the temper of the renewed mind and transforms the whole character by revealing to man his true value: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."²

Humility is thus essential to our self-knowledge, and becomes the habit of the mind that dwells on Christ. His holiness, whilst it awakens our aspiration, beggars our best attainments: fresh peaks of eternal snow meet the eye of the most daring climber. With the increase of the circle of knowledge through revelation, there

¹ Luke xxii 25.

² Rom. xii. 3.

is an increase in the circle of our ignorance which humbles the pride of our intellect. And since Christ fulfilled the will of God by submitting to it, we cannot but be humble, for the doing of the will of God is the ever unfulfilled task of our life. All our pride is broken at the cradle and the cross of Christ where He humbled Himself for man. The vulgar glories of wealth and learning and power are but phases of self-ignorance and self-delusion, incidental to a small life in a small world, in which men think it better to possess than to be. But no man can set up this glory of the world against the glory of Christ without forfeiting his claim to Christianity.

Humility as a characteristic of the Christian temper is conspicuous in the Apostle Paul. He was a man of strong passions, eager impetuosity, restless intellect, iron will; yet, after the vision on the road to Damascus, these were all so well ordered and balanced and blended as to produce a well-tempered character, in which each quality was modified and strengthened by the others. His humility gave him such self-knowledge that pride was impossible. "I know nothing by myself."¹ "Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of."² "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all."³ "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."⁴ "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things."⁵ "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."⁶ All self-assertion vanished that Christ might assert Himself in everything.

And yet, combined with this humility there was the most undaunted courage. The strong qualities of

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

² *Ibid.* ix. 16.

³ *Ibid.* 19.

⁴ Phil. iv. 13.

⁵ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

⁶ Gal. ii. 20.

his original nature were harnessed to new motives and driven by higher powers. Luke describes Saul, the natural man, as "breathing out threatenings and slaughter"¹; and Paul remembers himself as compelling to blaspheme, "exceedingly mad," impetuously "persecuting even unto strange cities."² But, after his conversion, all this untamed strength and wild self-assertion keep pace and peace with humility. Sometimes we see the old nature flashing forth, like fire from a volcano which smoulders still in subterranean depths, as when he turned upon the unreasonable Ananias, the priest, and cried, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!"³; or when he "sprang forth among the multitude" at Lystra at the moment the priest of Jupiter and his followers threatened to violate the Apostle's humility by offering sacrifice to him as a God. But, habitually, his temper is that of calmness, of strength to bear and dare all things, of unwearied energy and tenderness in proclaiming the Gospel—the courage that faces the storm with inner quietude, and meets discouragement and danger with unbroken spirit. We have only to think of his temper and bearing in the wild tumult of the Ephesian mob, in the murderous throng at Jerusalem, in the shipwreck at Melita, in his incessant and often thankless journeyings, to approve him as a man of courage: a soldier, who could make and arm soldiers, fitting on them the whole armour of God which he himself had worn, and adorned in the wearing—a soldier, who at the end of the battle, having never fought for his own hand, could write with the humility of an unexhausted courage: "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure

¹ Acts ix. 1.² *Ibid.*, xxvi. 11.³ *Ibid.*, xxiii. 3.

is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."¹

In the Christian temper the next two ingredients are Patience and Perseverance. Patience waits in faith; perseverance works in faith. Patience needs perseverance lest she should weary in hope; and perseverance needs patience lest she should weary in well-doing.

These two qualities of the Christian temper form a divine combination. God is patient with the wrongdoer. He waits, and yet He works. He does not hastily smite the wicked. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"—blessed providential preludes of patience leading up to more blessed overtures of grace in the sending of His Son to die for men that He might win souls, which he would not compel into surrender and obedience.

Christ is not impatient, and yet He perseveres. He bears long, and forbears long. He never forces a victory: He waits to win. He speaks and is done. He sows the seed and passes on, not looking back anxiously for signs of growth, for He "must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following."² He lets the seed lie, believing in the potency of seed and soil. He has faith in truth and man, and is impatient with neither. The fisher of men must always have patience and must always persevere: he must let out line and take in line, if he would catch men. He will let the wayward be more wayward, and still a little longer wayward, till they be wearied of their waywardness; but he himself must never weary of their waywardness. If one will smite thee on the right cheek,

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, R.V.

² Luke xiii. 32, 33.

make no impatient remonstrance ; let him go a little farther : turn to him thy left also. Will he take thy coat ? Feed his greed to satiety by your generosity : give him "thy cloke also." Will he compel thee to go a mile ? Shame his impatience by your patience : go twain.¹ Give him line : play out till he wearies, but do not thou weary. Patience waits : patient perseverance wins. "The servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing [not obstructing] those that oppose themselves."²

Paul himself exemplified the qualities which he commended. He waited before he worked. In Arabia—probably in the solitudes of Sinai, where Moses and Elijah drank in their inspiration—he lingered awhile after his conversion, readjusting in the silence the dislocated elements of his old nature. At Tarsus again he waited, curbing his eager spirit, till he was summoned to work by Barnabas.³ Then he began his untiring ministry of preaching and praying, of peril and persecution, in which he persevered till the end.

He carries the burden of the churches patiently upon his heart, nursing and mothering them with self-sacrificing devotion. To the Galatians he writes : "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."⁴ To the Thessalonians : "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."⁵ When men are impatient with him, and providence itself seems to conspire to frustrate his plans, he never loses the patience of hope and the

¹ Matt. v. 39-41. ² 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. ³ Acts xi. 25, 26.

⁴ Gal. iv. 19.

⁵ 1 Thess. ii. 7.

perseverance of faith. He is always at the centres of activity—the great cities, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Rome, “witnessing both to small and great.”¹ He does not forget his calling even when being tried as a culprit before Felix and Festus and Agrippa; prosecutes his mission in the midst of the storm and the shipwreck; and still remains a minister of peace when in prison and in bonds. “Self-devotion at particular moments and for some national cause had often been seen before; but a self-devotion involving sacrifices like those here described (2 Cor. xi.), and extending through a period of at least fourteen years, and in behalf of no local or family interest, but *for the interest of mankind at large*, was up to this time a thing unknown. . . . Paul did all this, and was the first who did it.”²

The third pair of complementary qualities which go to the formation of the Christian temper are Yieldingness and Pertinacity. Yieldingness is that quality of mind which enables us to forbear enforcing our own desires or opinions upon others in matters of secondary importance where conscience is not involved. It is the opposite of obstinacy, which is “the will asserting itself without being able to justify itself.” The stiff, contentious, unbending spirit, like a hard-wooded tree, may break, or be torn from the earth, before the storm; but the yielding spirit, like a supple scion of the forest, bends, and rises again when the hurricane is past, pertinaciously holding by the soil of great principles. We see these qualities at their highest in Jesus, who yielded himself to ignominy and

¹ Acts xxvi. 22.

² Dean Stanley, quoted in Howson's *Character of St. Paul*.

scorn and derision, never seeking to escape, silently enduring all without contention or remonstrance, as if the wrath of man were ordered by the loving Father; whilst at the same time He pertinaciously held to His ministry of love, "obedient unto death" on the cross.

In a lesser degree the same qualities reappear in Paul. One of the maxims of his life had been hammered out of his own experience: "Let your moderation [yieldingness] be known unto all men."¹ Yield in small things in order to keep hold of the great. He never unduly asserted himself so as to cause opposition to the cause he had at heart. The cause demanded self-sacrifice. "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."² His pliability was not the compliance which takes the easy way out of danger and difficulty: it had a purpose, to which he persistently held—"to save some," not to please any. Self-pleasing or men-pleasing was not in his thoughts. "Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."³ "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self."⁴ He was willing to bow his head before opposition and contumely, bearing what he would not fight against or escape; but when a course of action was resolved upon, or a great principle was at stake, every root and fibre of his being held pertinaciously to it as for life itself.

We may illustrate this by one or two examples. Take first his fateful journey to Jerusalem, at each stage of which he is tempted to diverge from the path

¹ Phil. iv. 5. ² 1 Cor. ix. 22. ³ Gal. i. 10. ⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 3.

which God seemed to have chosen for him. It was at Ephesus that he set his face like a flint towards Jerusalem. "Now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus."¹ At Tyre the disciples try to dissuade him, but in vain. The inner *daimon* urges him on: to it, and not to them, he yields. At Cæsarea Agabus bound his hands and feet with Paul's girdle, and cried out, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle";² and again Luke and the disciples tried to dissuade him till their weeping nearly broke his heart. But to Jerusalem he went, and, by his resoluteness in yielding to the leadings of the Spirit, Jerusalem became the gate through which he passed to Rome, where he had longed to exercise his ministry. Looking back upon the events and issues of that journey, he could write from Rome, "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel."³

Take another instance. For the sake of the Jews in Lystra and Iconium, he yielded to have Timothy circumcised,⁴ lest, through their knowledge that Timothy's father was a Greek, the ministry of his young disciple might be hindered. He was willing to become a Jew to the Jews to win the Jews: for to Paul neither circumcision availed anything nor uncircumcision. Both

¹ Acts xx. 22-24.

² *Ibid.* xxi. 1-13.

³ Phil. i. 12.

⁴ Acts xvi. 3.

were matters of indifference in themselves. But, on the other hand, in relation to other things each might become a matter of primary importance involving great principles. Hence Paul declined to have Titus circumcised,¹ when the demand was made as of necessity. To accede to the request, as if circumcision availed anything, and were an indispensable rite of the Church, was to imperil the great principle for which he had fought—the liberty of the Gentiles to enter the Church of Christ without passing through the temple gates of Judaism. To those who demanded this of Titus, Paul “gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour.”

It is when we thus separate and examine the several elements of the Christian temper, as manifested by Paul, that we understand the harmonious combination of gentleness and strength, of pliancy and firmness, of tenderness and boldness, which is displayed in his nature. We might compare the Christian character to a cable with three strands: each strand composed of two minor strands which are counterparts of each other—humility and courage, patience and perseverance, yieldingness and pertinacity. When these three pairs are intertwined the whole will endure the strain of provocation, persecution, temptation, tribulation, and discouragement without breaking.

¹ Gal. ii. 1-6.

ON THE MYSTERY OF AFFLICTION

“She wanted—what some people want throughout life—a grief that should deeply touch her, and thus humanise her and make her capable of sympathy.”—HAWTHORNE'S *Scarlet Letter*.

“Sorrow is the tool with which God finishes the statue, and animates it with its beautiful expression. It is sad for us when we take it into our own hands.”—FABER'S *The Foot of the Cross*.

“The reason we are made, or seem as if we were made, for pain, is that we are made for love ; the predominance of sacrifice is a sign and proof upon how good a plan the world was formed ; upon how high a type of bliss. Our feeling it as pain proves something wanting in ourselves.”—JAMES HINTON'S *Mystery of Pain*.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE MYSTERY OF AFFLICTION

THE existence of suffering and sorrow and misfortune in the world has always been a source of wonder and awe to man, and sometimes the attempt to reconcile these evils with the beneficence of God has given rise to dumb doubt or to wild but futile expostulation. Nature in her savage moods is heartless: the storm, the lightning, the flood, the avalanche show no pity for mortal weakness or woe. Providence often seems indifferent to man's virtue or vice in the distribution of her favours and her ills. "The upright man is laughed to scorn," whilst "the tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure."¹ Suffering comes to all alike, and often the sorrows of life press most heavily upon the finest spirits. It has been felt by many that the moral government of the world is an outrage on the moral sense of man, and that it is hard to find apology or explanation. To many ears God is silent.

In all ages there have been rebellious spirits, who have ventured, in view of such mysterious facts, to dispute with God. Job and some of the psalmists staggered and stumbled under the oppressiveness of

¹ Job xii. 4, 6.

this perpetual riddle of life. The Stoics accepted the situation, answered silence by silence, schooled themselves into apparent indifference, and faced the troubles which they could not avert. In our own day the problem is still as keenly felt, and those who leave Christ out of account find in the apparent disorder of the world their main argument for the doubt or denial of the almightiness and benevolence of God and even of His existence.

The sad facts of human experience create no perplexity in the mind of Christ. He sees the miseries and misfortunes of men with open eye. He is full of sympathy with the mourning and the sick. The sufferings of men, and death, the culmination and end of all afflictions, open up the fountain of His tears and call forth His supernatural powers. Yet it seems never to have crossed His mind that the evils of life were inconsistent with the Father's love which He revealed and proclaimed. No one ever felt more keenly than He the grief and pain and woe of man. He identified Himself with it, endured it as His own, suffered and toiled to alleviate or remove it; but to Him the world's disorder was part of the divine order—the discordant notes of the music of the universe, which were yet to be resolved into a richer and deeper harmony.

How are we to account for the fact that, with all His knowledge of man's afflictions and with all His sympathy with afflicted man, the moral government of God is not only never questioned, but accepted and acquiesced in as wise and good? Was it not because He saw the completed circle of which we see but the segment? The larger issues of the purpose of God

were present to His mind. We see but a few threads shot through the warp of life and they often convey to us no clear conception of the pattern that is being woven, but the whole web and the complete design are exposed to His eye. To a mind that sees nothing beyond death the sufferings and sorrows of men must always be perplexing. Every affliction at the moment is grievous, and must remain so, if we cannot see the unseen background—the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” in the “afterward.”¹ But to the mind of Christ, as to that of the Apostle Paul, all things must be viewed *sub specie æternitatis*, the part explained by the whole, the moment by eternity, and then the verdict can be pronounced: “All things work together for good to them that love God.”

But the solution of the problem is not altogether relegated to “the afterward.” We can gather some indications of Christ’s mind on the subject. It must be patent to every one that Jesus lived His life on the assumption that the onus of blame for the disorder of the world lies upon man, not upon God. “The deep original wound” of humanity is self-inflicted. It is the moral disorder in man that occasions the disorder in nature and providence. Man is a fallen creature and must needs exist in a fallen world. Misfortune and suffering and death are not merely disciplinary agencies with a view to moral culture: they are punitive agencies, which witness to the wrath of God against all unrighteousness. Hence Christ strikes His axe at the root of all affliction by removing its cause through salvation from sin. He restores order by beginning at the beginning: by treating the disease, not merely

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17: cf. Heb. xii. 11.

by alleviating the symptoms. He purifies the fountain and thus sweetens the stream. He works from the centre to the circumference, from the man to the environment, redeeming nature and rehabilitating providence by the redemption and rehabilitation of man himself.¹

There is profound harmony and correspondence between the natural and moral world. The one is adapted to the needs of the other. We cannot imagine what nature would be if the world were inhabited by a sinless race. We know that the vision of a redeemed humanity necessitates the vision of a *new* heaven and a *new* earth—a new environment for the new man. But we can imagine what human life would become if an unredeemed humanity were set in the midst of a world which offered no resistance to man's efforts, put no check on his desires, imposed no penalty on his passions, and never rebuked his sins by pain or death. It would be a pandemonium, not a paradise. The evils of the natural world and the calamities of providence are the consequences, correctives, and memorials of man's sin.

The inter-relation of suffering and sin is hinted at by Jesus Christ. He does not say that every affliction of every man is correlated with a particular sin. He regards humanity as a unity—as man, not men; and each is involved in the sin of the race, as well as in his own share of it. It was the heresy of Christ's day to attribute special calamity to God's vengeance upon special sin. Men thought that the Galilæans, "whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices" were "sinners above all the Galilæans."² Jesus unveiled

¹ Rom. viii. 19-22.

² Luke xiii. 1-3

the mystery of misfortune. They were sinners, though no more than the rest of the Galilæans, and this was a visitation of God upon Galilæan sin; but the few suffered justly when all might have suffered justly. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." So, also, in the disaster which befell the eighteen by the fall of the tower of Siloam.¹ It was wrong to think that the particular suffering could be traced to a particular sin; that they who suffered were more guilty than they who did not. The calamity was a prophetic warning of the universal ruin that awaits sin, the anticipation of the final storm when nature will burst in punitive wrath upon man. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

In the same way Jesus associates affliction with sin in His advice to the impotent man whom He had newly cured: "Sin no more," said He, "lest a worse thing come unto thee."² Justice is revealed, but it is mingled with mercy. His suffering is the result of sin, though not necessarily of his sin; and it is a result tempered with pity. Nature has punished, but under restraint. Jesus knew that the affliction might have been "worse."

Affliction is part of the order of the world, and has its distinctive functions in the present economy. It is, first, God's punishment of, and protest against, sin. Nature and providence are utilised by God to express His displeasure with the sin of the race. But the sufferings and calamities which visit us create to Christ's mind no difficulty regarding the character of God; for they are not only consonant with His benevolence, but a proof of it: for the few suffer when all might

¹ Luke xiii. 4, 5.

² John v. 14.

have suffered, and the sufferings they endure might have been worse.

Second, affliction prevents the moral disintegration of society. Nature and providence form a vast system of checks and interceptions to the greed, lust, cruelty, and selfishness of man. Ruin prevents ruin; suffering prevents more suffering; the pain of the surgeon's knife prevents the pangs of death.

Third, affliction testifies to the unity of the race. We are one in the brotherhood of suffering as in the brotherhood of sin. We suffer for the sins of others, and they for ours. This vicarious suffering is one of the proofs of the solidarity of humanity. That the righteous and the redeemed should not yet be exempt from trial and sorrow does not, from this point of view, occasion surprise; for afflictions shall only pass away when the whole race is redeemed and the new environment created for the new humanity. Meanwhile the best must suffer with the worst and often for the worst, as we are all parts of one great whole. "Yea," as Paul has said, "and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer"¹; but "if we suffer we shall also reign with Him."²

It is from the cross of Christ, however, that a new light is cast upon the mystery of the sufferings and afflictions of man. The Christian will not argue that human suffering is inconsistent with divine benevolence, for on Calvary God Himself in Christ shares our misery and pain and woe. On the cross we see Him, who knew no sin, becoming sin for us. By Him the punishment of sin is borne, and the eternal protest of God against sin is announced. If we suffer, God suffers

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

² *Ibid.* ii, 12.

with us. On the cross the desolation of God meets the desolation of man, and all our sorrows are lost in His. If we endure affliction for others and carry burdens that others might have borne, the Man of Sorrows reconciles us to such vicarious sufferings, for He suffered for sins not His own. He bore *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows. And why? Because the love of the Father and the Son could not endure that the world should perish, but offered the great sacrifice to arrest its disintegration and to endow it with their own eternal life. God thus stoops to participate in the human pain and misery which made us so rebellious as to challenge His love, and He robs us of all hard thoughts and bitter suspicions by Himself suffering with us and for us, and infinitely more than we. Affliction is thus part of the divine order of our present life, and God in pity involves Himself in it apparently to reconcile us to our lot and to provide a door of escape into something better.

Ever since Christ suffered on the cross tribulation has been transfigured to the Christian. Our misery has become our medicine. Just as the curse of toil was transmuted into a blessing, and the sweat of the brow became the antidote of evil thoughts, so the afflictions of man, when endured in the right spirit, become the most valuable discipline in life. Though nature seems to be a hard step-mother to us all, and providence a stern and cruel schoolmaster to most of us, the raw material of our nature is such that softer ways and kindlier surroundings might have produced weaklings, not men. If we would have knowledge we must wring her secrets from nature by sleepless hours of wrestling; if we would have courage we must seize it from the

heart of the tempest against which we battle ; if we would have patience we must endure disappointment ; if we would have virtue we must undergo temptation ; if we would be holy it can only be by resisting sin. The evils which surround us, though originally sent with a punitive purpose, are ordained to have a disciplinary end ; and the faculties which were weakened and disordered by sin are revived and restored by the afflictions which were sin's punishment.

From Christ the Christian has learned that he conquers pain by submitting to it ; that he rises superior to his cross by carrying it ; that he reaps "the peaceable fruits of righteousness" by enduring the grievous chastenings of a loving discipline. The highest object in life is not to flee pain or to pursue pleasure. To shirk our cross is to forfeit our crown ; to seize the pleasure of the moment is to forego an eternity of joy. We purchase strength from the storm by facing it. Our moral heroisms are not attained without agony and blood and tears, in which the vanquished are the victors. It is a lesson which Paul learned from his Master : "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."¹

The kings of the earth have many orders with which they delight to decorate their favourites—the Order of the Thistle, the Order of the Garter, the Order of the Eagle ; but when our King, who had only a thorn-crown for His brow, would honour His subjects, He

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 8-10.

confers upon them the Order of the Thorn. It is an honour which no man would naturally covet, yet when the King gives with the Order grace to wear it becomingly the wearer would not exchange the bleeding glory of it for all the jewelled decorations of the world. "The power of Christ" comes to the afflicted saint, and his thorn blossoms as the rose. He conquers pain by suffering it, and "most gladly" glories in his infirmities, offering that strange homage of the saints: "therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."¹ It was the observation of this element of joyful suffering as witnessed in the general life of Christian society which drew from Romanes the remark that "Christianity, from its foundation in Judaism, has throughout been a religion of sacrifice and sorrow. It has been a religion of blood and tears, and yet of profoundest happiness to its votaries."

But Paul learned from the cross of Christ not only how personally to conquer affliction by enduring it, but also that the endurance of affliction is part of our common ministry as Christians. The ministry of the cross must be a ministry of suffering. It needed the Cross to commend the Gospel of Christ to the world: it is by our cross that we commend it still. We have to enter into "the fellowship of His sufferings," for the world which hated Him will hate us also; but suffering transmutes hate into love. It was thus that Paul regarded his ministry. It was in the commendation of what he called "my gospel" that he said: "wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds as a malefactor. .

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 10.

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."¹ His bonds were his cross, and seemed at first to defeat the great ends of his ministry; but, as suffering drew him nearer to the Crucified, he discovered that they were a needed accessory to his testimony, and that they turned out "rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel."²

It was in this conviction that he exhorted his young disciple Timothy, who, in the timidity of his gentle nature, might have been tempted to shirk his own cross whilst preaching the cross of Christ: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel."³ Nor did he refrain from warning the Ephesians against misinterpretation of his tribulation: "I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."⁴

The world has been moved by the cross of Christ, and it looks to see how we bear ourselves in regard to our own and that of others. We may glory in the cross of Christ and play the coward with our own, and so the Gospel may be made of none effect. But when we patiently bear our trials and bend our back to the burden of others, taking our share of the woes of humanity, the world sees in us the mark of a true ministry and votes us into the brotherhood of the saints and martyrs.

Suffering is often a mark of special favour which Jesus bestows upon His chosen disciples. The Master leaves not only work undone for His servant to do,

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 9, 10, R.V.

² Phil. i. 12.

³ 2 Tim. i. 8.

⁴ Eph. iii. 13.

but tribulation unborne for His servant to bear; and in the bearing of it the servant is conscious of the high honour of being permitted to supplement the sufferings of Jesus for His Church. In the great sacrificial sufferings of Christ His followers can take no part: they are completed by Christ alone, and no suffering of ours can add to their merit. But there is a profound sense in which the servant can supplement the afflictions of the Saviour in behalf of the Church. The Church is reared upon the one foundation of the cross, but it is built by the blood of the martyrs, the sacrifices of the saints, the self-denying labours of the humblest servants, the agonising prayers of lonely souls which are crushed under the thought of the world's sorrows and sins, the pain and patience of the great multitude of sufferers who enter by the strait gate into the fellowship of the Crucified. All who bear their cross and glory in the bearing of it for Jesus' sake; all who suffer for others in the spirit of the Master—these all, like the Apostle, "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in [their] flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church."¹ Suffering is part of that mysterious and unrealised inheritance in which we are joint-heirs with Christ: "We suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."²

In the school of suffering, as Paul assures us, we also learn sympathy. We ourselves suffer to suffer with others. We become the channels of divine comfort when we have extracted sweetness of blessing from bitterness of sorrow. For who can comfort but they who have been comforted? Who can understand the

¹ Col. i. 24.

² Rom. viii. 17.

sigh and groan of the breaking heart but those whose hearts have been broken and bound up by the tender hand of Jesus? It is only those who look through tears that we would wish to behold our soul's tragedy. Tears must mingle with our tears, sobs with sobs, prayers with prayers, if others may watch with us in our Gethsemane. It is the privilege of the sufferer to be rich in sympathy. His suffering brings him into the presence of the "God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ."¹ If we partake in the "overflow" of Christ's sufferings, our Christlike consolation will overflow to the help of others.

Blessed be suffering! All great things are born of suffering. In the midst of all its troubles the soul looks from the seen to the unseen, from the temporal to the eternal, and reckons the present affliction *light* in view of the "far more exceeding and eternal *weight* of glory," in attaining which our agonies are but incidents.² Step by step we rise on the ladder which stretches from tribulation to glory. "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."³

¹ 2 Cor. i. 3-5, R.V.

² *Ibid.* iv. 17.

³ Rom. v. 3-5.

CONSCIENCE TO OURSELVES AND OTHERS

“There is a neighbour within, who is incessantly telling us how we should behave. But we wait for a neighbour without to tell us of some false, easier way.”—THOREAU.

“Without the reason conscience is blind; without conscience reason is cold and languid.”—TRENDELEBURG.

“Conscience must be conquered, if conquered at all, not by direct opposition, but by evasion and deceit.”—ABBOT'S *Way to do Good*.

CHAPTER XII

CONSCIENCE TO OURSELVES AND OTHERS

EACH of us lives in a little world of his own ; for, although the world is the same to all, it is different to each. Each regards it from his own angle, and his view of life and duty is determined by education, social and domestic influences, natural temperament, and many other causes. The individual finds or makes his world, which to him is a consistent totality—the sum of his opinions and ideals. When we act in contradiction to this world of the soul, as we might call it, there is something within us which accuses and condemns us—a power which we do not create and cannot depose, whose judgments, though resented, are not to be ignored—a voice which speaks with an authority independent of our will, and witnesses to the eternal law of God's righteousness, in obligation to which our lives are lived. That voice, that power, that authority, we call Conscience.

But as the circle of life and duty which one man describes for himself is not concentric or conterminous with that described by another, neither can the conscience of one man be the measure of the conscience of another. Each lives in his own little world, and judges right and wrong by the standard of that world. One man's

conception of life and conduct may be narrow and ill-informed, another's may be broad and enlightened: what seems wrong to the one may raise no scruples in the mind of the other; but the conscience of the one cannot determine the duty of the other. Each must determine the right or wrong of his conduct by his own conscience. When conscience blames a man for being untrue to himself—to his self-consciousness, his manhood, his ethical ideal—for that man the verdict of his conscience is final. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin."¹

But conscience is a judge, not an advocate. It does not reason with us, nor is it safe to reason with it. It is not a man speaking with himself, an *alter ego*: it is the voice of One above who takes no counsel with us. We may argue it into silence, but its silence is not to be mistaken for approval. The verdict remains. There can be no debate, and there is no appeal. No man, under any circumstances, is warranted in going against his conscience. It can never be right to do what the conscience pronounces to be wrong; but, on the other hand, it is not always right to do what the conscience does not pronounce to be wrong. One thing is final: what our conscience condemns can never be approved; but it does not follow that all that is not condemned is permitted. That which is banned is banned, but that which is not banned is not necessarily blessed.

One reason for this is that conscience is limited by conscience: ours by others'. We live in society and are members one of another as parts of a social organism. Each must be true to his own conscience before God,

¹ Rom. xiv 23.

but each must have respect to the conscience of his neighbour. We live in a double relation—in relation to ourselves, and in relation to others. What is wrong for me, in relation to my little world of life and duty, I can never make right. I cannot do what conscience forbids. I must keep my conscience void of offence “toward God.” But what is not forbidden is not necessarily allowed. If I lived only to myself, I would be free to roam about at liberty in the unforbidden sphere; but as a social unit my liberty must not encroach upon others. I must keep a conscience void of offence “toward men.”¹ My conscience must take into account the conscience of my neighbour; and what may be right for me as an individual may be wrong for me in relation to those around me. Hence, though what my conscience forbids is for me absolute, what my conscience allows is only relative—relative to the conscience of others. What is wrong to me, to me is always wrong, and what is right to me individually may be wrong to me socially; and if wrong to me socially, it is to me ultimately individually wrong also. We must commend ourselves “to every man’s conscience”²; and “happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”³

Regarding conscience to ourselves, a good conscience is ours when our conduct is consistent with our ideal in life. When conscience has nothing to say, when the judge does not need to sit on the bench, we are living in harmony with ourselves, not violating that harmonious scheme of things which we call our world. “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly

¹ Acts xxiv. 16.

² 2 Cor. iv. 2.

³ Rom. xiv. 22.

wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."¹

But a good conscience is not enough. Our conscience is not the highest law: it is only our interpretation of the highest law relative to our view of life and duty. The highest law, the absolutely right, is the law of God, with which our conscience, though good to us, may not be in harmony. Hence the apparent paradox that to act against our conscience is always wrong, but to act according to our conscience is not always right.

Paul appreciated this ethical distinction. "I know," he says, "nothing against myself"—my conscience does not condemn me—"yet am I not hereby justified": the absence of the condemnation of conscience does not warrant the assumption that his conduct is absolutely right—God only knows that. "He that judgeth me is the Lord."² I may be wrong, though my conscience does not tell me that I am wrong. The speech of conscience is absolute; the silence of conscience needs interpretation.

In his own experience Paul exemplified this distinction. In pleading before the Council at Jerusalem, he began by saying: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"³; and long after this, when writing to Timothy, he makes the same strange statement: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience."⁴ He has not forgotten that he was a "blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious."⁵ But at his conversion he passed into a new world. His conception of life

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12.

² 1 Cor. iv. 4, R.V.

³ Acts xxiii. 1

⁴ 2 Tim. i. 3.

⁵ 1 Tim. i. 13.

changed after he had seen the Crucified. In the old world and in the new he was alike true to himself, and acted, according to the light given him, with a good conscience. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."¹ His conscience in the old world did not condemn him. He acted consistently with the totality of his thoughts and ideals. But his conscience in the new world of Christian enlightenment gave a different verdict, and he condemned himself as a "blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious." He justified himself to himself in the old, but he knows that he is not justified before the Judge. Conscience had misinterpreted the law of God.

We can see also, in his experience, his passage from the one world into the other. We usually speak of his conversion as the work of a moment. Perhaps it would be more consistent with the facts of the case to say that, though Paul died suddenly to the old life, he had been unconsciously dying to it for some time before. In his journey to Damascus he seems to have been fighting not only against Christ, but against himself—fighting in exasperation against the new light which was inevitably displacing the old. His conscience was struggling to be consistent with his former faith, although already Christ was asserting His supremacy over his soul. The appeal of Jesus implies this: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."² He had the compunction of a man who was ill at ease in the new environment of thought and duty into which he was passing almost against his will. He had not adjusted his conscience to the new light which was

¹ Acts xxvi. 9

² *Ibid.* 14.

dawning upon him and withering up the old life in which he had lived so conscientiously. But when the full day had come, and he saw Christ in that blinding vision of glory which struck him to the ground, his conscience righted itself and acted with its old fidelity in the new circumstances: "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."¹

It is evident, therefore, that it is not enough to have a good conscience. The burglar has a good conscience. His theory of society enables him to thief without any qualms or scruples. The nihilist may never give a second thought to the murder of a monarch, since he regards every king as the enemy of social well-being. Most criminals can justify their crimes to themselves. They are acting true to their world. But are they thereby justified? Are they thereby acquitted by society and by God? Have they fulfilled all their obligations? Obviously their responsibility is only removed back to another point. They are responsible for the world in which they have been content to live. A man has a duty not only to act with a good conscience, but also to provide himself with an enlightened conscience. A man may not know he is doing wrong, but he might have known, and, so long as he could have known, the fact that conscience did not check him is not sufficient excuse. Here again the maxim holds true: it is eternally wrong to do what the conscience forbids, but it is not always right to do what the conscience does not condemn.

When we pass on to consider conscience towards others, we come into the region in which casuistry finds its most subtle exercise. The casuist deals with

¹ Acts xxvi. 19.

cases of moral difficulty, with the view of reconciling conscience with duty. Casuistry is a science which we have all more or less consciously to practise. "It is actually supposed that casuistry is the name of a crime; it does not appear to occur to people that casuistry is a science and about as much a crime as botany."¹ It is a science, however, which may be used with a double purpose—to help us to obey the highest claims of duty, or to help us to evade them. We usually think of it in the latter sense, and consequently we classify it among the black arts, which debauch the consciences they pretend to guide.

In the difficult circumstances of his times, in which the Christian converts were passing over from a heathen to a Christian world of thought and life, Paul was obliged to discuss certain cases of conscience. How were Christian men to preserve a pure conscience whilst living in a society permeated by heathen ideals and dominated by heathen customs? The peculiarity of Paul's treatment of such cases is, that, unlike the typical casuist, he does not deal with them with reference to particular rules or precepts, but with reference to a few great principles of the spiritual life. He avoids the multiplication of laws of conduct, and makes every man the doctor of his own conscience, by providing him with a few simple principles which he can easily apply for himself. With a view to the discovery of some of these principles we may now examine a few of these cases.

The first relates to a matter of ceremonial. At first sight Paul seems to act inconsistently in dealing in different ways with Timothy and Titus. He allowed

¹ Chesterton's *Browning*, 193.

Timothy to be circumcised ; he forbade Titus. Now, so far as Paul was concerned, circumcision was nothing, and likewise uncircumcision was nothing. In itself it was not to him a matter of conscience either way. But he had to take into account the conscience of others. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."¹ In one set of circumstances a thing may be right, in another wrong. It was right to circumcise Timothy as a concession to the conscientious scruples of the Jews, but it would have been wrong to circumcise Titus as a matter of obligation, for it would have wounded the conscience of the Gentiles.

The next case is that of the Church in Rome. Among the converts in that city there was a section which practised abstinence from certain meats and drinks. They may have belonged to the sect of the Essenes, and may have found in Christianity nothing which demanded their renunciation of a life of abstinence. Indeed, self-denial was one of its cardinal principles. The question how the other section of the Church, which had more liberal views, was to conduct itself towards this section became accentuated probably at the love-feasts when both ate together.² On these occasions the two parties were likely to get into "doubtful disputations" regarding abstinence and non-abstinence, and the true significance of the feast was in danger of being lost sight of. What was the duty of the one to the other in such a case?

The first thing which Paul settles is the attitude

¹ Phil. ii. 4.

² Rom. xiv. 14, 15. The whole case is better understood by referring it to the love-feast; *vide* Godet, *in loco*.

which the two parties should adopt to one another. The liberal-minded were apt to look upon the abstaining members with contempt, and to regard their self-denial as a weakness; whilst the abstemious were tempted to look upon the liberal-minded with censoriousness, and to regard their liberty as laxity. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth."¹ Paul does not say which section is right. Each must justify its conduct to itself. Apart from their relation to each other, both were quite within their rights: neither abstinence nor indulgence was enjoined as a duty, and either might be adopted in practice. Hence Paul advises mutual forbearance. They are not there to judge one another; and, since both have been received of God, they may not be rejected by one another. The important point is that in certain circumstances these apparently opposite courses of action may be followed with equal fidelity to conscience before God, if every man is "fully persuaded in his own mind."²

But although we must not judge one another, we cannot go on our way independently of one another, as if each man's conduct were only his own concern. We are members one of another and cannot live as we like. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way."³ But why does Paul proceed to give advice to the liberal-minded, the "strong," and ask them to modify their line of conduct, whilst he does not ask the "weak" to make any change? The reason

¹ Rom. xiv. 3.

² *Ibid.* 5.

³ *Ibid.* 13.

is that abstinence is a matter of conscience with the one section of the brethren, and without wounding their conscience they cannot change their conduct; whereas the others, who claim a larger liberty, are free, without wounding their conscience, either to partake or abstain. The conscience of the latter is not injured by curtailing their Christian liberty; the conscience of the former is injured by extending it. Hence Paul calls upon the strong to modify their conduct for the sake of the weak, according to the law of love. "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."¹

There are two considerations which the liberal-minded have to keep before them. The exercise of their liberty in pursuing a line of conduct which they are free to modify may "grieve" a brother² who cannot pursue the same line of conduct. It may put a "stumbling-block" in his way and make him stumble,³ causing him to doubt his fidelity to conscience, and tempting him to imitate conduct which his conscience cannot approve. It may also destroy Christ's work of grace⁴ which is being furthered under these conditions of abstinence, that are being needlessly tested.

The question, then, is not what is lawful, but what is expedient: not whether I have a right to please myself, but whether my right is not modified by a duty towards a brother. To the Christian the law of love is above the law of liberty. "If because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love."⁵ A man may believe that "all things indeed

¹ Rom. xiv. 19.

² *Ibid.* 15.

³ *Ibid.* 13, 21.

⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, R.V.

are pure," but if his life is lived alongside a brother who has scruples of conscience, which make it evil for him to adopt the same law of liberty, then the former may with a good conscience curtail his liberty for the sake of the latter. The one who is at liberty has liberty to deny himself, whereas the other, whose conscience is yet bound, is not at liberty to indulge. The one can change his ways without being untrue to himself; the other cannot.

But is liberty not a matter of conscience? Certainly, says Paul. I am not asking you to give up your liberty. I am only asking you to exercise it in the line of self-denial. You have it still in your own heart and before God. "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God."¹ We are only following the law of the Highest when we reckon it our duty "to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves,"² "for even Christ pleased not Himself."³

The last case which we cite occurred in the Church at Corinth, and in many of its features is similar to that which occurred in the Church at Rome. The question was whether Christians should eat meat which had been sacrificed to idols. The matter was urgent, as the heathen festivals played an important part in the social and domestic life in which the Corinthian converts found themselves inextricably involved.

We need only briefly summarise Paul's treatment of the case. We know, says Paul, that idols are nothing: there is but one God. "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge";⁴ many of the converts have not yet got rid of their scruples of conscience in this matter. We can eat with a good conscience, but they cannot

¹ Rom. xiv. 22. ² *Ibid.* xv. 1. ³ *Ibid.* 3. ⁴ 1 Cor. viii. 4, 7.

without their conscience being defiled.¹ The eating of meat offered to idols, or the not eating of it, is a matter of indifference to us so far as our relation to God is concerned.² But we live in relation to men also, and every act has a social reference. The question is not what is allowable before God, but what is expedient in the sight of men. If a brother follow our example without having our knowledge, his soul is wounded by doing that which he cannot justify at the bar of his conscience.³ Who is responsible? Our liberty has become a stumbling block to the weakness of our brother,⁴ and in sinning against him we have sinned "against Christ,"⁵ who died for him and for us.

At this point Paul interpolates an illustration drawn from his own mode of life. Why does he not take the remuneration to which his services as a minister of Christ entitle him? Why does he still engage in manual labour to support himself? "Have not we power to forbear working?"⁶ The soldier has a right to his hire; the vinedresser to the fruit of the vine; the shepherd to the milk of the flock: the very ox to its share of the corn that it treads:⁷ so, "if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"⁸ Why deny myself this liberty which my conscience allows? My object in life is not merely to make a living; and, lest my acceptance of remuneration should reduce my ministry in your eyes to the level of the occupation of the Sophists, who go about Corinth displaying their rhetoric for money, I prefer in the circumstances to maintain myself by my own handiwork. My ministry is more than a profession. "We

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 7. ² *Ibid.* 8. ³ *Ibid.* 10. ⁴ *Ibid.* 9.
⁵ *Ibid.* 12. ⁶ *Ibid.* ix. 6. ⁷ *Ibid.* 7-9. ⁸ *Ibid.* 11.

have not used this power ; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ.”¹ My chief end is to serve Christ by winning men to His allegiance, and my highest liberty is to deny myself any liberty to gain my end. “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”² In the same way he argues, why should a Christian grudge to curtail his liberty for the sake of the end he has in view? Liberty is not an end in itself. The Christian is doing no more than the runner, who sacrifices everything for the prize—“so run, that ye may obtain”³; or the wrestler who denies himself for the sake of the corruptible crown—he “is temperate in all things.”⁴ Self-denial even in things legitimate and innocent is the law of life, and those who are free to deny themselves should deny themselves for the sake of others, for “all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.”⁵

In returning to the subject under dispute, Paul points to the end, the prize, the crown, which the Christian has in view, and for which all things, even those which are lawful, must be sacrificed: “Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour’s good.”⁶ Applying that principle to meat offered unto idols, Paul says, if a Christian has no scruples of conscience he may for his own table buy any meat in the market, and eat it, asking no questions: “For the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.”⁷ Again, if you are asked to the table of a heathen friend, you may go, “if ye be disposed to go”; and, if nothing is said, “whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.”⁸ But

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 12.

² *Ibid.* 22.

³ *Ibid.* 24.

⁴ *Ibid.* 25.

⁵ *Ibid.* x. 23.

⁶ *Ibid.* 24, R.V.

⁷ *Ibid.* 26.

⁸ *Ibid.* 27.

if any brother Christian at the table says: "This is offered unto idols," abstain for conscience sake—not for your conscience, but for his. And why? Not because you renounce your liberty, but you refrain from using it lest your liberty should conflict with his conscience.¹ What an unedifying spectacle to the Christian and heathen guests alike, to see you giving thanks to God for what you eat, and yet at the same time to hear you evil spoken of for eating it!² Is it to the glory of God that I eat or that I abstain, that I use my liberty or that I waive it, that I please myself or that I edify my brother? "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God."³

¹ 1 Cor. x. 28, 29.

² *Ibid.* 30.

³ *Ibid.* 31, 32.

THIS GRACE ALSO

“ Christians are like the several flowers in a garden that have each of them the dew of heaven, which being shaken with the wind they let fall at each other’s roots, whereby they are jointly nourished, and become nourishing of each other.”—BUNYAN.

“ A man has a right to nothing : he is under obligation for the good he has received, and so he can exact nothing. Even if he were to give up his whole life to the service of others, he could not pay the debt he has incurred.”—TOLSTOI’S *My Religion*.

“ Quia non quantum detur sed quantum resideat expenditur.”—AMBROSE.

“ It does seem to me that men make a wonderful mistake in trying to heap up property upon property. If I had done so I should feel as if Providence was not bound to take care of me ; and at all events, the city wouldn’t be ! I’m one of those people who think that infinity is big enough for us all,—and eternity long enough.”—HAWTHORNE’S *House of Seven Gables*.

CHAPTER XIII

THIS GRACE ALSO

OF all the graces usually welcomed and entertained by the Christian there is one that is often not admitted with the rest. She is kept standing at the door, neglected if not despised; but when she is admitted, all the other graces become more gracious by her presence. She enables them to be active, working, social graces, and is to them, as it were, hands and feet. Her name is Liberality.

It is strange that we covet all the other gifts of God more and sooner than we covet the gift of giving. For giving is a gift of God's grace,¹ bestowed upon those who receive His gifts on the condition that they give away.

Giving is a grace which is needed in order to round off the Christian character and to make it complete. The Corinthians were said to "abound in everything; in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence," and even in love, yet the one grace of liberality had been left out.² But what is faith in God without charity to man? What is an eloquent tongue without an open hand? What is all our knowledge if we have no active sympathy? What is all our zeal for righteousness if we neglect the poor and needy? What

¹ 2 Cor. viii, 1, 6.

² *Ibid.* 7.

is our love of others if we take care that it never costs us anything? "See that ye abound in this grace also," says Paul, with the view of completing their Christian attainments. For we may abound in all other graces, and they may lie in the heart like water in a cistern; but it is when "this grace also" is added, that the other graces spring up like a well for the blessing of our fellows. Yet how often we pray for the gifts that are got, how seldom for the gift that gives!

Though liberality deals in material things, it is itself spiritual. It is instructive to notice how Paul elevates this homely serving virtue into the sisterhood of the graces. He calls it "this grace also,"¹ love's "proof,"² "your blessing,"³ "this act of worship,"⁴ "this ministration,"⁵ Giving is part of the soul's liturgy—a form of worship in which its faith and knowledge and love find fitting expression. The offering is part of the service, an act of homage whereby we acknowledge our indebtedness to God for all other gifts as well as for the gift of giving itself.

Paul has much to say on this crowning grace of the Christian character; and much is still needed to be said. The history of the Church of Corinth has been an epitome of the history of the whole Church of Christ, in this respect—in the one as in the other liberality is a plant which has flowered late, though the seed was sown early by the Great Sower Himself. It is among the last graces to appear in a Church, and also among the last which the Christian appreciates and practises. The getting graces first attract; religion seems only to be a reception of the gifts of God. We

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 7, 19. ² *Ibid.* 8, 24. ³ *Ibid.* ix. 5, margin.

⁴ *Ibid.* 12, λειτουργία.

⁵ *Ibid.* 13.

learn afterwards the value of the giving grace—that we retain possession by giving away, and that, like our Master, we receive “gifts for men.” It is a strange psychological fact that we may be spiritually minded but stony-hearted; pious but mean; willing to take all from God but to give little to man; eager to press into the kingdom of heaven ourselves, but slow to make sacrifice of time and labour and money to bring others in. But, after all, if we have not “this grace also,” our other graces are largely discounted. A small heart is greedy of getting and is never full: a large heart is generous in giving and is never empty.

When we seek for the principle of Christian liberality, we find that the Apostle, like his Master, presents it in the form of stewardship. “Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.”¹ The life which has been redeemed by Christ from sin is given back to be lived by us as stewards. It belongs to Christ, and we are only trustees. We may alienate or misuse the trust by regarding it as our own. We may serve ourselves with it, ignoring the will of God in the getting and the spending of the fruits of life’s labours; but His possession is inalienable, and we must give an account of our stewardship at the last. This is the fundamental truth of all Christian liberality. “We are not our own”; and if *we* are not our own, then what we call *ours* is not our own. Our possessions are part of our personality.

Looking at it from lower ground, it is because our faculties belong to God that what is earned by their use must, in the last instance, be His also. So, too, if “the earth is the Lord’s,” that which the labour of mind

¹ 1 Cor vi. 19, 20, R.V.

or body gets out of it cannot be ours: both the instrument and the material are His. By right of creation, then, the wealth of all men belongs to God and should be used for God. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"¹

But the Christian recognises a still higher claim. He sees the great proof of his redemption in the cross, on which is written in blood the price of his life and of all his life is worth or can bring; and he knows that, as Christ died for him, so his life must henceforth be lived for Christ. The stewardship of the Christian life is based upon the right of redemption; and a Christian's liberality is based upon stewardship as an acknowledgment of the fact that neither he nor his is his own.

This principle of stewardship which underlies the whole administration of the Christian life is enforced, in the teaching of Paul, by various motives.

First, the Apostle cites the example of Christ. It is worthy of note that Paul sees everything in the light that streams from the cross. Even when pleading for a collection, he does not hesitate to find the motive for our liberality in the Crucified. The humblest duty is brought into relation with that great act of history which has transfigured our common life. The poor saints in Jerusalem were to be supported by the self-denial of others because Christ denied Himself. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."² The grace of giving is thus traced back to the giving of grace through Jesus Christ; the giving of money, to the

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

² 2 Cor. viii. 9.

giving of life ; the collection, to the cross. "He was rich"; "by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by Him, and for Him : and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist"¹; and yet for our sakes He "emptied Himself"² on the cross of all this wealth of being and power and possession that He might give us back our life redeemed and restored. What divine liberality! He gave till He could give no more: He gave Himself.

According as we appreciate and appropriate this wondrous grace of giving in Christ, we manifest the same grace of giving in our own humbler way. Our use of money is consecrated when we remember that, though we should give all to God, we could never give as much as we owe to discharge that debt which is due to Christ who gave His all for us. The Christian, who knows the value of his salvation and the price which it cost, never asks with how small a gift he can escape, but with how large a gift he can give expression to his gratitude. He does not measure his gift by the standard of his fellow-men, but by that of the cross, and all his giving is an honourable acknowledgment of a debt which he can never repay and never renounce.

But another motive is adduced—a motive of a different sort—the example of the Macedonians. He had cited the example of the richest—Christ ; he now cites the example of the poorest—the Macedonian Churches. They were poor and persecuted, but they were joyous and generous withal. "Their deep poverty abounded

¹ Col. i. 16, 17.

² Phil. ii. 7, 8, R.V.

unto the riches of their liberality."¹ They willingly gave even "beyond their power."² The example of Jesus might seem beyond the common Christian ; this beneath him ; but to Paul both are animated by the one spirit. He refers to the Macedonian liberality not to get more money, but to create more of the grace that gives : not to increase the collection, but to refine and complete the character of the givers. The mere desire to overtop the Macedonians in their gifts would have been an unworthy motive, but to incite the Corinthians to a healthy rivalry in a Christian grace which men are slow to cultivate was quite befitting the Apostle and the occasion.

The generosity of the Macedonian churches was an encouragement to the poor and a warning to the prosperous. Paul knew that the Corinthian church, to which he was appealing, had "not many mighty, not many noble"³ among their number, but even their poverty did not deprive them of the privilege, or relieve them of the duty, of acknowledging their indebtedness for salvation by their gifts. Indeed, as a matter of experience, poor churches and poor Christians often give more to God, in proportion to their means, than the rich. The sense of dependence upon God is keener when we know that there is provision for little more than our daily wants, and when the future is contingent upon the health and strength which God may give or withhold. The man who thinks he is too poor to give any of his substance to God is not likely to give much when he becomes rich. Generosity is hard to cultivate late in life. The one-talent man is a steward as well as the man with ten talents. Both are expected to

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 2.

² *Ibid.* 3, R.V.

³ 1 Cor. i. 26.

honour God, not with equal gifts, but with equal fidelity and equal gratitude. Even though God gives us little, it is God who gives; and, if we think of the unsearchable riches which He bestows upon us in Christ, the poorest will not come behind the richest in acknowledging the debt.

But the "riches of the liberality" of the poor Macedonians was also a warning to the rich. How few Christians increase in their giving to God as they increase in the wealth that God gives them! With the gaining of wealth there is often a losing in the simplicity of our tastes and desires, and things which were luxuries to us in the days of our poverty and struggle become necessities to us in the days of affluence and ease, and thus the margin of what we think we can give to God shrinks as our selfish expenditure enlarges.

Then, again, the sense of dependence upon, and obligation to, God is often weakened by a good balance at the bank, a competency gathered together, or a life well insured. To keep alive a sense of our true relation to God, as a relation of loving and grateful dependence, we must strive against selfishness and avarice by beginning early in life—even in the days of pinch and poverty—to honour God with our substance, that in better days we may not be worse, appropriating and using all the wealth that God has given us as if it were our own. The fate of the avaricious soul which builds barns and counts on many days of ease, leaving God out of the reckoning when counting up its goods, is held up by Christ as the great warning to men who sit in security and independence and selfish comfort, ignoring the stewardship of wealth.

But the Apostle adduces still another motive for Christian liberality. It is "the proof of your love"¹: it serves "to prove the sincerity of your love."² It is somewhat remarkable that Paul omits many of those arguments which we are accustomed to use. He does not draw pathetic pictures of the suffering poor. He does not speak of the misery and want that are to be relieved. He does not enforce liberality as a debt which we owe to society. He keeps on higher ground. It is a debt we owe to Christ; it is a duty we owe to ourselves as Christians; it is a grace which we should cultivate in order to be complete in Christ; it is part of our likeness to Christ, who forfeited His riches to enrich us in our poverty. These Corinthians were being exhorted to assist the poor brethren in Jerusalem. Gentiles to give to Jews! Gentiles to give to Jews whom they had never seen or known, and never would see or know! Had it been for poor neighbours in the next street, their liberality might have been a proof of their pity for, and suffering with, humanity; but, being for Jews and strangers far away, it could only be a proof of their love of Christ. What other power can constrain us to make sacrifices for the unseen, the unknown? All men are brought near to us in Christ. When we see the wounds in Christ's hands and feet and side, the wounds of suffering men never cry out in vain. When we see the King of glory setting aside all the riches of His nature on the cross and becoming poor for our sakes, the cause of the poor everywhere is defended. Love calls for proof, and the proof it calls for is liberality—liberality which finds its satisfaction and end not merely in relieving the want and

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 24.

² *Ibid.* 8.

pain and woe of man, but in responding to the love of Christ, who gave proof of His love for us and all men by giving Himself upon the cross.

We may turn now from the consideration of the motives to that of the spirit of Christian liberality. A gift is nothing in comparison with the spirit of the gift. The spirit in which we give is the ethical measure of the gift. "Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury"¹—*how*, not *what*, nor *how much*. He scrutinised the man, not the money.

Paul has much to say on the spirit of giving. *We must first give ourselves*. This is the Macedonian spirit of giving. They "first gave their own selves to the Lord."² In this they were followers of Jesus, who gave Himself for us. God does not ask the gift without the giver. When the giver gives himself then he acknowledges that he owes to God all he has, as a steward to his Lord. Giving is never hard to him who has given himself: the greater includes the less. When we have given ourselves, how shall we not with ourselves also freely give God all things? The battle with avarice is won when a man surrenders himself to Christ: he may have to fight a few skirmishes with his selfish desires and his greed in hoarding, but he can already count himself victor.

*There must be also "a willing mind."*³ We must give to God "as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion."⁴ This is the same spirit of liberality as was taught by Christ: "freely ye have received: freely give."⁵ God was under no compulsion to give us such a gift as He

¹ Mark xii. 41.

² 2 Cor. viii. 5.

³ *Ibid* 12.

⁴ *Ibid.* ix. 5, R.V.

⁵ Matt. x. 8.

gave, except the inner compulsion of His free grace; so man's offerings to God are worthless, except they are given freely as the offerings of gratitude and love. The gift that is grudged is already discounted by God. We may give all our goods to feed the poor, but without love it is nothing. He credits us only with the gift that comes as naturally from the heart as the flower from the seed, or the song from the bird, or the answering smile of love from the face of a child. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."¹

There must be the willing deed as well as the willing mind. The willing mind is not enough. There must also be the substantial expression of it. The test of our love is not merely the feeling that is present to our consciousness, but the course of action which it inspires. The will cannot be taken for the deed, except when there is inability to perform. The Corinthians were ready to consent to make a collection; but the collection had not been made, and the willing mind did not count. It is a cheap love of Christ which sings about it, and prays about it; what it is worth is tested by the sacrifices we make for it. What is the salvation of your soul worth? Pay your debt and prove your sincerity. "Now therefore," says Paul, "perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."²

There must be the sympathy of brotherhood as of a

¹ 2 Cor. ix. 7.

² *Ibid.* viii. 11, 12.

family dependent upon the Father. Paul anticipates an objection. Charity begins at home, the Corinthian might say: why should I impoverish myself that another may be enriched? His answer is, "I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality"¹; and then he aptly illustrates his meaning by the feeding of the Israelites with the manna: "As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."² Charity begins at home: yes; but what and where is home? The family makes the home, and the Father the family. The whole world is home to the Christian and the Christ. All men are brethren, members of the one family: God provides the manna for all His children. What is given us is not merely for the good of each, but for the good of all. There is enough for all, and no one needs more than enough. And no one need have less than enough, if only the superfluity of the few were applied to the wants of the many. It is not a matter of enriching and impoverishing: it is a matter of equalising the gifts of God among God's children, who are brethren. God has made ample provision for all, and has so ordained that with money as with manna, he who gathers more than he needs finds the worm and the canker in what he hoards and will not share. In the end of the day, he that gathered much hath nothing over. But He has ordained also that they who by sickness or age cannot gather for want of opportunity should not lack; for the abundance

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14.

² *Ibid.* 15.

of their brethren is sufficient, if distributed, to supply their necessities. There is enough in God's world for all the Father's family, if only the greed and indifference of His children did not prevent brotherly distribution. Paul thus advocates "an equality," not on the unreal assumption that all men are, or can be, made alike like bricks, but on the ground that all men are alike as brethren, with different tastes and endowments though with the same love of the Father. The contrast in ability and attainment may be mitigated by the spirit of brotherhood based upon mutual dependence upon the Father's goodness. He pleads for a free communism of love, not a compulsory communism of law.

But the Apostle apparently realises so fully the importance of cultivating this grace of Christian liberality that he even supplies us with a method of giving—a method which, were it adopted, would sanctify wealth to the Christian and revolutionise the whole life and organisation of the Church. His method is formulated in his first letter to the Corinthians in a single sentence: 'Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.'¹

There are three things to notice in this method. Giving is to be (1) Systematic; (2) Proportionate; (3) Deliberate.

1. Systematic. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store." Giving is to be systematic in time and in manner. "Upon the first day of the week." The time is significant. There are three great natural divisions of time which are

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

determined by the movements of nature. The day is fixed by the sun ; the month by the moon ; the year by the revolution of the seasons. The first day of the week, however, is associated with the great event of grace—the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and for that reason “this grace also” is associated with that day. The day of our spiritual getting is most appropriate as the day of our spiritual giving. On that day, when our thoughts are dwelling on the grace of Jesus Christ and on all we owe to Him in life and death and eternity, we are to worship God with our gifts, to sanctify all our substance by dedicating to Him part of what He gave.

The manner is also significant: “Let every one of you lay by him in store.” The first day of the week is not necessarily the day on which our gifts are *distributed*: it is the day upon which they are *dedicated*. All our gifts are to be given to God first, before we allocate them to churches or philanthropic institutions or men. We are to keep a fund sacred to God, dedicated to Him in grateful acknowledgment of our indebtedness to Him for His blessings of grace and providence. All our givings are to be paid out of that sacred store. That is to be reckoned as no longer ours, but the Lord’s portion, to be distributed by us with wisdom and fidelity as the Lord’s stewards. The secret of Christian giving is giving to God first as an act of worship, obedience, and gratitude, and giving to objects of religion and charity afterwards out of the gifts which are no longer ours, but His—laid by in store.

2. Proportionate. “Every man . . . as God hath prospered him.” Gifts are to be in proportion to prosperity. Each person should set aside at stated intervals

—weekly, Paul suggests—a portion of his income, to be fixed, not in view of the claims or merits of the various objects which he is called upon to support, but in view of the claims of God upon him based upon the temporal and spiritual blessings he has enjoyed. The portion is to be regarded as an acknowledgment of a debt to God which we can never repay. And that portion is to be in proportion to our income—to increase with our prosperity, and probably to decrease with our adversity, but never to be *nil* so long as we have any income at all. “*Every man . . . as God hath prospered him.*” The Corinthian Church was very poor, but no one was too poor to give to God, even though it was only out of his poverty. What the proportion should be is to be settled between a man and his God. The ancient Jew gave at least a tenth, and the Christian with his larger blessings may calculate from that basis; but the main point is that a proportion be fixed upon between the soul and God, and that this proportion be strictly adhered to.

3. Deliberate. “That there be no gatherings when I come.” This apostolic method of giving saves debatings, misgivings, grumblings, and grudgings. We know first of all what we have to give away: that is already fixed and dedicated to God. The “gathering” is made. When we come to the allocation and distribution, we have no need to discuss what *we* can afford: the only point is what the Lord’s portion can afford in view of the various claims which the Lord might regard with favour. We are stewards of that portion, and have to disburse it with wisdom and discretion. We are saved in this way from acting on sudden impulses or under emotional appeals. The

Lord's portion has been gathered, and laid by in store. What we have to do is to spend it as He would approve. The conviction that we are disbursing the Lord's money enables us to give more carefully and more prayerfully than if we thought we were giving our own.

The Lord prospers them that share with Him their prosperity. "And He that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God." ¹

¹ 2 Cor ix. 10, 11, R.V.

MAN AND WOMAN

“All that is most distinctive in Christian civilisation is bound up with its elevation of women. And not its least distinctive feature is the value which it sets upon the virtue of chastity, whether in the virginal or in the married state. The conception idealised in the Madonna would have been absolutely unintelligible to the ancients. ‘Born of a woman’ is the true account of the modern ‘home,’ with all its moralising influences. We may indeed say that the peculiarity specially differentiating the Christian from the pre-Christian family is that it is founded on woman, not on man.”—LILLY'S *On Right and Wrong*.

“That quality in each sex, which is in some measure alien to it, should commonly be kept in subordination to that which is the natural inmate. The softness in the man ought to be latent, as the waters lay hid in the rock in Horeb, and should only issue at some heavenly call. The courage in the woman should sleep, as the light sleeps in the pearl.”—HARE'S *Guesses at Truth*.

CHAPTER XIV

MAN AND WOMAN

THE spiritual life of the Christian is not a life by itself. The inner life of the soul has to be lived in the outer life of the world. It is a false spirituality which separates itself from the common social order, and attempts to create a little ethereal world of its own. It dwindles and dies of inanition. The leaven is to be cast into the lump: only thus can the qualities of the leaven declare themselves: only thus can the lump be lightened and raised.

The sanity of Paul is attested by the fact that, with all his passion for spirituality, he never tried to originate or foster a spiritual cult. Life in a vacuum had no attraction for him. He never coveted the wings of angels. He was a man among men, and found himself in a world which God had made for men—a world in which men may walk abroad in innocence and must walk abroad in duty. Hence his protest against a spurious spirituality: "if we live in the Spirit, let us also *walk* in the Spirit."¹ The inner fire of the spirit can only be kept alive by being fed by the fuel of the ordinary engagements and duties of common life. The social order and the natural relations of humanity provide a sphere in which the new spirit finds its

¹ Gal v 25.

realisation; whilst it, on the other hand, repays its debt to these by sublimating and sanctifying them.

Though Paul advocated no social reforms, he sowed the seeds of many. There was in him a characteristic indifference to the social grievances of his times. The environment seemed not to trouble him—scarcely to interest him. His sole aim was to regenerate life at its centre, and to leave the circumference to be re-fashioned by the centrifugal forces of the new spirit. He was not blind to the social anomalies and disorders of his day, but he believed that they were to be broken up and dissipated from within. Hence he was no iconoclast, hammering down the images to which he could not pay reverence. He preached Christ, as the truth and reality of human life. To his mind the Gospel was the solvent of all error of thought and disorder of social well-being. And the idols which he could not break by bars of iron were left to crumble and fall through neglect and decay.

No seed-thought of truth that is dropped into the human heart ever perishes. There are always some choice souls which receive, fertilise, and cultivate it, and sow it again in a higher state of culture in other souls, until the perfect flower is attained. And in the culture of the flower there is also a concurrent culture of the soil; for the seed must have soil in which it can grow. When seed has been prepared for soil and soil for seed, the time of true reform has come, and the new life finds its congenial environment.

These two facts—the absence of any attempt to set up a spiritual cult, and the apparent indifference to social reform—have to be borne in mind when studying Paul's conception of the Christian life. His principle

is that the new life should be lived in the existing forms of our social order until it can find or fashion better by its own inherent vitality and worth. It is for that reason that the Apostle figures before us as a radical in principles but a conservative in practice; an advocate of things as they are in his own day, but the sower of the seeds of silent revolutions in the generations to come. The voice of truth has often to speak across the ages into the ear of the future. It is heard and not heard at the moment, but the day dawns, perhaps long afterwards, when the significance of its message is understood, and humanity is prepared to give worthy response.

Paul found himself in a Pagan world, whose ideals and order were strangely inconsistent with, and even hostile to, the new life which he preached and fostered. The ideal of virtue in man was low, the position of woman was degrading, the relations of man and woman in social life were not favourable to the higher life of either, the marriage bond was so commonly desecrated as to be shunned by the best and despised by the worst, the domestic relations of husband and wife and parents and children had few of the sanctities of affection which make the home to us the vestibule of heaven, the natural rights of a large portion of the race were trampled under the cruel heel of slavery, whilst the lot of the widow, the orphan, the weak and the sufferer was unmitigated by that compassion which is the foundation upon which so many of the most humane institutions of our day are built. In view of such a social order and environment a man with such a message of regeneration might pardonably have drifted into the aims and methods of the revolutionist,

intolerant of the social disorder of his times, eager for the quick results of immediate change. But Paul had little faith in the productiveness of the seed that "forthwith" springs up because it has "no deepness of earth," and, having "no root," as quickly withers away.¹ He had that patience of hope and that faith in the future which enable men to wait till truth takes deep root in deep soil.

When we turn to consider Paul's ethical teaching regarding man and woman, it is important to bear in mind his method of reform from within by infusing the new spirit into common everyday life.

Take first his teaching regarding moral purity. In the Pagan world chastity was a virtue that was scarcely even expected of *men*. The ideals and conditions of society were unfavourable to its cultivation. The arrogant sense of the superiority of the male, the inferior domestic and social position of woman, the prevalent possession of, and power over, slaves, the ethical worthlessness of the public games, subsisted upon the assumption that the chastity of men was either not demanded, or demanded only as a counsel of perfection. The remarkable thing is, that, in view of all these hindrances to the spiritual life, the Apostle scarcely raises any question of social reform or hints at any remedies of social grievances. He takes a longer but quicker way to reach his goal: he proclaims positives rather than declaims negatives.

Some of the Corinthians seem to have argued that the fleshly appetite had to be satisfied just as the appetite for food. It was natural and imperative in its demands. It is an old argument which still

¹ Matt xiii. 5, 6.

maintains its ground in the mind of the natural man, though it may seldom be stated so bluntly. It was, however, at the very foundation of Pagan life, and Paul struck at it indirectly and effectively by proclaiming the spiritual dignity of the body.

Apparently Paul's broad maxim, "All things are lawful unto me,"¹ was being wrested in support of the low standard of Pagan morals, especially among men. Whilst maintaining the validity of his maxim of Christian liberty, Paul objects to the false application of it. In the sphere of things which are morally indifferent, or good or bad in relations, "all things" may be "lawful unto me." These things, such as eating meat offered to idols, lie on the ethical borderland, and may be indulged in or refrained from according to circumstances. Rights may be waived without being renounced. But the appetite of the flesh is different. It concerns a man's person, of which the body, as the organ of the soul, is an integral part. Christian liberty can never degenerate into licence and lust. "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any:"² for, if I am, then my liberty is lost. The liberty of lust is suicidal, because the *Ego*, the personality, the whole man, becomes the slave and is "brought under the power" of a passion of which he should be master. A man is at liberty to be free, but he is never at liberty to sell his freedom and become a slave to anything which obliterates his freedom.

But Paul goes farther than this. Eating and drinking are not on an equality with fleshly appetite. These are only temporary arrangements for bodily sustenance, and may be in themselves non-moral ; this, on the other hand,

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 12.

² *Ibid.*

has eternal significance and is a moral act which affects the whole personality. "Meats for the belly and the belly for meats" is a necessity of our physical life; but the necessity passes away: "God shall destroy both it and them."¹ The body itself, on the other hand, is desecrated by unchastity, for it is part of the eternal human personality which is redeemed by God, and over which He exercises the rights and duties of Lordship. "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body."¹

Nor is this all. Paul cannot dissociate the body from the spirit. He cannot conceive of them as separated from each other. The body is the organ of the spirit, the spirit the informing element of the body; both make the unity of the human personality. And both share the blessings and privileges of redemption. For, as the spirit of man requires the body for the expression of its life, so, when the spirit is renewed by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, the body is still needed as the medium of its activity, and shares in the Christian sanctification. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid!"² The body thus becomes "the temple of the holy Ghost,"³ and is no longer our own. It is Christ's by right of purchase,⁴ and is exalted to a privilege unheard of in the Pagan world—the privilege of participation even in the Resurrection: "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power."⁵ It is because Paul believes that our moral and spiritual destiny cannot be attained apart

¹ 1 Cor., vi. 13.

² *Ibid.* 15.

³ *Ibid.* 19.

⁴ *Ibid.* 20

⁵ *Ibid.* 14

from the sanctification of the body, as the organ of the spiritual life, that he lays upon men the obligation of purity, and calls them to a higher and more comprehensive spirituality which embraces and sublimates their whole personality: "therefore glorify God in your body."

This protest against the profanation of the body by unchastity was the first great step towards the moral elevation of man to that standard of purity which had always been more or less exacted of woman—not so much as an obligation which she owed to herself and God, as an obligation which she owed to man as her lord and master. Here, however, Paul makes no distinction between the ethical ideal of man and of woman. Purity is the moral duty and destiny of both, and for the same reasons.

But Christianity provided new and higher sanctions to the crowning grace of womanly virtue. Woman is no longer regarded as a mere thing, a mere appanage of man. She also is a person, and has her rights and duties before God and apart from man. The virtue which men exacted of her, for selfish reasons, God claims on purer ethical grounds. Chastity is not her doom, but her destiny; not the badge of her inferiority to man, but the sign of her equality and dignity in the eyes of God.

The emancipation of woman from personal degradation and social disabilities was not argued by Paul: it was assumed. His great pronouncement that "there is . . . neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"¹ was the formulation of a principle which even he did not seek in his day to push

¹ Gal iii. 28.

to all its logical conclusions. It provided, however, the motive and the inspiration for the complete emancipation of woman from every hindrance to the exercise of her womanly rights and the development of her womanly nature. It proclaimed that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Ideal of the woman as of the man; that her spiritual duties and privileges are her own personal concern with which no man can intermeddle; that every avenue of spiritual culture is open to her; that distinctions of sex have no place in the domain of her life as a spiritual being. All this was at once evident on the face of the Apostle's great declaration; but there was more latent in it, which time and experience alone could evolve. Her new relation to God implied a new relation to man as a social being. Beneath the solvent of this principle of spiritual equality, her inferiority and disqualifications in social position and in the eye of the law were destined to disappear, till, as a person in herself, she was free to live her own proper life and fulfil her own proper destiny as a woman.

But *as a woman*. A woman is not a potential man: she is of herself a creation, with an honour and glory of her own. The woman and the man may reach the same high destiny in Christ Jesus, but they are not ordained to travel along the same lines in reaching it. The facts of creation are not forgotten or annulled by the facts of redemption. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."¹ They are alike in their spiritual nature and in their spiritual destiny; they are "one in Christ Jesus," as they are "one in the

¹ Gen. i. 27.

image of God": one in the beginning and one in the end; but they are not the same. They are, and ever on earth must remain, separate creations—"male *and* female." Alongside of man woman is equal, but not identical. Her true emancipation does not lie in the direction of striving to be a man. Christ, not man, is her ideal; and her true ideal is reached by the full and free development of her nature as a woman.

For, after all, the excellencies of a woman are not the same as those of a man. Sometimes her excellencies are to be found in the very limitations of her nature. She cannot exercise authority and governance in great affairs as he; but she can rule in her own sphere with more absolute authority and win more implicit obedience than he by the gracious tyranny of her love. The courage of a man is not that of a woman. He will die for a cause, she for a person. But the tenderness of a man has never the same touch, the same pathos, the same dove-like meekness, as that of a woman. In matters of taste her discernment is unerring: in matters of judgment his. The decisions of a woman's instincts are just and final, her flavour for the goodness and rightness of things is more delicate and keen than that of a man. She may have greater limitations in her power of ratiocination, but her defect is also her strength: unlike a man, she seldom argues herself into error, or discovers apologies for wrong. In great subjects of thought she is deficient in power of synthesis and analysis: she is seldom a discoverer in the sciences—her instruments of mind are too delicate and are adjusted for other undertakings. What she can do, however, she does with more thoroughness than a man, and in things for which she is equally adapted

she often excels. She becomes more absorbed, more whole-hearted, in her devotion to a study, an art, or a profession. But here also her excellencies may prove to be her limitations. She cannot usually sustain her interest in, and devotion to, more than one great object at a time: she cannot detach herself so easily as a man and pass from one thing to another, from one sphere of life into a different sphere. Her mind and heart cannot readily be separated: they go together and go solid as one. A man may be devoted to an absorbing study, and yet shut off his interest in it for a time and take up another. He may be a great scientist in the laboratory, whilst an excellent husband and devoted father at home. A woman lives for one thing at a time, and is wholly possessed by it. She must be what she is, and do what she does, all in all, or not at all. But this limitation is her excellency in other directions. It gives purity and strength to her love, whole-heartedness to her devotion, tenacity to her grasp of all matters of truth and righteousness. There is thus an original and organic distinction between the sexes, which no arguments or comparisons can obliterate. The perfect ideal of man is not found in male or in female, but in both. Each has proper qualities which are denied to the other, and each in the other finds the complement which makes completeness. The old account of creation embodies an eternal truth: "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; Male *and* female created He them; and blessed them, and called *their* name Adam, in the day when they were created."¹ Adam is *man*, not *a man*. He is one, yet a double one. Man is male

¹ Gen. v. 1, 2.

and female, and is only perfect when the two personalities blend into one.

Paul was not blind to the fact that in his time there was a tendency unduly to emphasise the woman's oneness with man in spiritual rights and privileges, and as unduly to minimise the distinctions and differences which are indissoluble from the nature of both. It showed itself in small things, not without great significance—in the aping of masculinity of dress and behaviour. In the city of Corinth the licence of women acknowledged no bounds. It was known to be one of the most immoral cities in Greece. Paul apprehended that to break through the accepted customs of modest dress and behaviour would bring with it grave moral danger. To cast aside the form is often the first step in destroying the spirit which finds expression in it. Some of the Christian women, in view of their new status in the Church, endeavoured at once to usurp the style of dress and the functions of men. Paul offered no objection to women praying and prophesying in certain, probably smaller and more private, meetings of Christian people. Indeed, he assumes it to be a recognised custom for a woman to pray or prophesy under the influence of a sudden inspiration. But he does object to her taking such part in an assembly "with her head uncovered" like a man.¹ She was unsexing herself and asserting a false equality with men.

The way of true emancipation was not to be sought in this fashion. And, although some of the reasons given by Paul are somewhat archaic, his contention has eternal validity. The dress of a woman is the symbol of her

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 5.

sense of womanhood. To renounce the dress is to renounce her womanly distinctiveness and proper glory. To him it indicated a want of refinement of feeling, of self-reverence, and of modest reserve, which are the expected characteristics of the feminine nature. The unveiled head of a woman in a public Christian assembly might not be wrong in itself, but in those days in Corinth, and under such circumstances, it argued that the woman, who thus claimed the right to dress as a man, broke away from the acknowledged canons of feminine modesty.

There were some also who usurped the functions of men in the regular meetings of the church for worship, by playing the rôle of public preachers or teachers. Paul's prohibition of this feminine assertion of equality with men may sound strange and reactionary to us now, but in the interests of decorum, and of good order, in society and in the church of his own time it was justifiable and wise. Women in those days took no part in public affairs. Their voice was not heard in public assembly. They kept aside from the political strife of tongues. Even in the dramas of the Greek stage a woman found no place. Her part was represented by men. In itself there might be nothing wrong in women preaching and teaching in the church, but what is not wrong in itself may be wrong in relation to the times and the circumstances in which the right is asserted. It might be lawful in itself, but it was inexpedient, for it shocked even heathen society with its traditional notions of female propriety. It might be lawful in itself, but it was not edifying, for it brought the Church into unnecessary criticism and disrepute in the eyes of the world. Nor was it necessary to the

culture of the spiritual life of women that they should assert themselves by this assumption of masculine functions. It was no hardship to their sex to keep the head covered or to remain silent in the house of God. Every means of grace was secured to them, and the right to fulfil all their Christian duties and to enjoy all their Christian privileges was conserved.

Paul advances three reasons for this prohibition. It is in the interests of order. Why should women assert themselves thus in the Church at Corinth, in a city in which womanly reserve was already brought into evil repute? It was not the custom in other Churches. Why should the women in Corinth introduce this Corinthian boldness into the Church of Christ? In Corinth especially the women should take heed that their good be not evil spoken of. "As in all churches of the saints, let *your* women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak."¹

It was also in the interests of decency. There were women in Corinth, as in other Greek and Roman cities, who mingled freely with men in public life, and were known and praised for their brilliancy of wit, and readiness of speech, and courage of opinion. But "it was only the women recognised as unchaste who were permitted to frequent public lectures, and to be on terms of equal association with artists and scholars."² For a Christian woman, therefore, in a city like Corinth, to assert the right of preaching and teaching in public assembly was not only a breach of order, but of decency. She thus identified herself with the style of behaviour which prevailed in a

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 33, 34. So Meyer and Godet *in loco*.

² Storr's *Divine Origin of Christianity*.

class of female society from which the women of the Church should wish to be farthest removed. Indeed, in Paul's days publicity and immodesty were almost synonymous in the conduct of women; and although the Apostle would not restrain women from prophesying and praying in an assembly of Christians when imperatively moved by the Spirit of God, he felt that, in view of the social code of honour of his times, "it is a shame for women to speak in the church."¹ For men and women alike he advocated restraint, and respect for all established customs. "Let all things be done decently and in order."²

But, apart from these considerations, was it in the interests of the spiritual life of women that they should assert their equality with men in this fashion? That depended upon the spirit and the motives of those who thus asserted themselves. The mere assertion of rights is not in itself a duty. It is often a higher duty to forego the assertion of them. If it were in the spirit of mere *self-aggrandisement* and *self-assertion*, if it were with the motive of testifying their equality with men, and of obliterating the distinctions which obtained between the sexes, there can be no question that Paul was right, and acted wisely in the interests of the spiritual life of women themselves when he advised them not to break through the established code of propriety of their day.

The question, however, arises: Is this prohibition valid in the present day? Should women still be denied the right to teach in public Christian assemblies? The answer to that question depends upon the answer which we are prepared to give to other questions. Is it

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 35

² *Ibid* 40.

consistent with present-day conceptions of order in society and in the Church? Is it subversive of present-day canons of decency, modesty, and refinement? Is it demanded as a mere right of the sex, or as a duty from the non-fulfilment of which the Church and women themselves may suffer in the culture of the spiritual life? If, as we think, Paul's prohibition is an accommodation to the ethical and social standard of his times, rather than an absolute interdict, the question is not so much whether the right should be conceded, as whether it should be exercised. All we need say is that the right has been, and is being exercised, not without respect to decency and order, and under the strong compulsion of the Spirit of God, and with a single eye to the extension of Christ's kingdom and the edifying of His Church, by many women in the Salvation Army and in the Churches of Christ at home and abroad. But a general pronouncement or movement in this direction is not to be forced by any abstract agitation of women's rights on the part of those outside. We believe that the Church will never deny the right to women, when the exercise of it becomes an imperative duty in view of the spiritual needs of the Church and of the world at any given time. Paul's general attitude towards all such questions should never be lost sight of: that changes in the forms of conduct which outdistance the life of the spirit are always dangerous and seldom permanent; that the spiritual life does not subsist on the assertion of abstract rights, but upon the performance of necessary duties; that great principles may be hazarded gratuitously by the irritating insistence upon trifling reforms; that all genuine reforms are to be

secured by the inner movement of the Spirit ; and that the kingdom of God is not a matter of meat and drink, dress, or speech, " but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." ¹

¹ Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

*THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IN RELATION TO MARRIAGE
AND CELIBACY*

“Celibate, like the fly in the heart of an apple, dwells in perpetual sweetness, but sits alone, and is confined and dies in singularity; but marriage, like the useful bee, builds a house and gathers sweetness from every flower, and labours and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and feeds the world with delicacies, and obeys its king and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and promotes the interest of mankind.”—JEREMY TAYLOR’s Sermon on *The Marriage Ring*.

“We must consider, that nothing is more dangerous than to unite two persons so closely in all their interests and concerns, as man and wife, without rendering the union entire and total. The least possibility of a separate interest must be the source of endless quarrels and suspicions. The wife, not secure of her establishment, will still be driving some separate end or project; and the husband’s selfishness, being accompanied with more power, may be still more dangerous.”—HUME’s *Essays*.

CHAPTER XV

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IN RELATION TO MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY

WE have seen how Paul's conception of the relative positions and rights of man and woman affected certain questions of social purity and order. His view of the human body, as sharing in the redemption of Jesus Christ, provided a new basis and standard of chastity both for man and for woman. His elevation of woman as a substantive personality before God, with the same privileges and rights as man in all matters pertaining to the spiritual life, started the movement in favour of the emancipation of woman from all her disadvantages and disabilities. This new leaven, however, was not without danger. It began to ferment into social discontent and unrest, and threatened to produce premature changes in the standard of womanly decorum.

But whilst Paul's assertion of the sanctification of the body and of the abolition of the inequalities of male and female in Christ Jesus laid the same obligations to social purity upon man and woman and extinguished the distinctions between the sexes in the sphere of the spiritual life, it was pushed to other conclusions which required to be carefully guarded against. The purity

which Paul advocated was in danger of being construed so as to glorify and necessitate celibacy, whilst the disappearance of difference between man and woman in Christ Jesus seemed to cast a slur upon the dignity and the holiness of the marriage-bond. In the attempt to adjust the claims of the new life in Christ to the old order of things there were many blunders and excesses which had to be avoided. It was not easy to see how the changed life could be lived without a changed environment ; how the new wine could be poured into, and preserved in, the old wine-skins. It is in handling questions of this kind, however, that the Apostle appears at his best as a Christian casuist of the first order ; for he had not only to preach the Gospel, but to see that it was not put into practice along false lines.

The question of the relative worth of single and married life, in view of the claims of spirituality on Christian men and women, was raised, as might have been expected, very early in the history of the Church. It reached an acute stage in the city of Corinth, in which the converts were surrounded by a type of Pagan society which made the discussion keen and inevitable. The Christians of that city saw how the body was abused and the spirit restrained and crushed by the licentious manners which prevailed. All around them the marriage-bond had failed as a preservative and guarantee of chastity. In their fresh enthusiasm for, and devotion to, the spiritual life it was not to be wondered at that they discounted the value of marriage as an institution by which the natural life is guarded and the wellbeing of society conserved. It seemed to many of them that the spiritual life could only be lived when dissociated from the life of nature, and that the

bond of marriage should not be entered into, and should even be dissolved, by those who would prove true to their high calling in Christ Jesus. To some, on the other hand, these extreme views appeared to be subversive of social order and Christian sanity. Nature had her claims alongside those of grace: Christians had obligations to society as well as to the kingdom of God. It was felt that, though these claims were difficult to harmonise in the present emergency, they were not essentially antagonistic.

It was because of this dispute in the Corinthian Church that Paul was appealed to by letter for his guidance,¹ and it has to be borne in mind that his judgment on the subject is given in view of the condition of social and domestic life in the city from which the letter emanated. His teaching on the relative worth of celibacy and marriage is therefore incidental, though it contains outstanding principles which are valuable for all time.

What does he say regarding celibacy? Is it a Christian's duty to abstain from marriage? Is he justified in remaining single? Is celibacy the only form of life consistent with true spirituality? These are questions which cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. They need careful balancing of assertion and reservation, the casting of subtle qualifications now into this side of the scale and now into that.

Two things are to be noted as outstanding amidst all that he adduces in favour of single life. The one is that his preference for single life is not based upon any consideration of affording greater licence or laxity of morals, or upon any antipathy to the restraints of the

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 1.

marriage-bond. His advocacy of single life is on the ground of the greater opportunities which it offers for devotion to the culture of spirituality. Celibacy is justified when it is adopted as a means to the consecration of the body, never as a means to its desecration. It is not in itself holy ; it may be a means of holiness. When it is not a means of holiness, its ethical sanction, so far as Christianity is concerned, is lost. Much of the praise of single life sung in the present day comes from motives diametrically opposed to those of the Apostle. The value of celibacy depends upon its motive. The celibate may be a sinner or a saint.

The other thing to be noted is that Paul, viewing celibacy as the vow of perfect abstinence and chastity, regards it as a calling. It is not a mode of life which every one can adopt, and therefore can never become a rule of life, even for Christian men and women. It may be the vocation of the few, but it never can be, and never was intended to be, the practice of the many. Indeed, the Apostle regards it as a "gift of God"¹; but it is not the only gift. One may be called to marry, another not ; but the path of holiness is open to each in the exercise of his gift ; for there is a chastity in marriage as in celibacy, and the one is as virtuous as the other. Paul does not say that single life is holier than married life : both are becoming to Christians, and Christians may be called to either. In this he followed the teaching of his Master, who regarded the married life as the normal life. "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, *For this cause* shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife ; and

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 7.

they twain shall be one flesh?"¹ and yet there are those who have the special gift for the celibate life, and who, because of that gift, "have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."² Celibacy, therefore, is only advocated as a mode of life to be adopted for the sake of holiness by those who have the gift of living up to the stringency of its claims; but the same ends of the spiritual life may be reached by those who fall in with the existing institution of marriage. In other words, both modes of life are justified as consistent with the claims of spirituality; and whilst no one should adopt the former unless his inner life can sustain the high demands which it imposes, no one should shun the latter as interfering with his fidelity to the Lord.

Why, then, does Paul manifest a certain preference for celibacy both in his teaching and in his personal life? There are three reasons.

The first is prudential: "by reason of the present distress."³ It was a time of great struggle and tension. The new life had to contemplate an acute conflict with the old. In cities like Corinth, in which it was almost impossible to find a social environment suitable to the Christian, the policy of thoroughness was commendable to those who could carry it out. The struggle in adapting the spiritual life to existing institutions would inevitably lead to great mental strain and grave moral danger. These were incidental to the beginning of the new régime, and might pass away when the life of the world had become more saturated by the spirit, and more conformable to the life, of the Christian; but, in the interests of the first concern of holiness, the single life was to be preferred.

¹ Matt. xix. 4, 5.

² *Ibid.* 12.

³ 1 Cor. vii. 26, R.V.

The second reason was providential: "the time is short"¹: "the fashion of this world passeth away."² In view of the Lord's expected coming and of the end of the present dispensation, it is not worth while entering into new engagements and becoming entangled with fresh obligations. Our first duty is to keep spiritually detached. The single may keep as they are. They should not concern themselves with cares and duties which are only for a time. For the same reason, they that have wives should be "as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not."³ Christians were to sit loose in the world: everything was to be regarded as *ad interim*. They were to be ready to strike their tents any morning, and to move on, unencumbered by regrets and interests and cares. Here, again, everything is to be sacrificed to the interests of the spiritual life. That is the eternal principle involved, and the application was wise in view of the expectation of the speedy coming of the Lord. If it be asked whether Paul's teaching on this point is still valid, the answer is, that the principle remains. We must learn to be spiritually detached, to keep the spiritual life clear of all obligations and distractions that would hinder its development; but the application may take a different form with the postponement of the expectation. We may "use this world"; it is not wrong in itself to marry, or weep, or rejoice, or buy, or possess; but we must so use it "as not abusing it,"⁴ for it also may be made to the Christian a minister of holiness.

The last reason may be called provisional. In the

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 29. ² *Ibid.* 31. ³ *Ibid.* 29, 30. ⁴ *Ibid.* 31.

first days, as indeed, to some extent, in all days, it was necessary that some should devote themselves so completely to the propagation of the Gospel as to deny themselves many of the legitimate solaces and pleasures of human life. These are the "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." The family life was legitimate; but in order to further the interests of the kingdom, it was a necessary provision that some should keep themselves free from its encumbrances. The interests of the home and the interests of the kingdom were not incompatible, but they were difficult of adjustment in certain situations and emergencies. If a man were required to move quickly from place to place, and to devote himself undistractedly to his calling, the burden of joy and care incidental to a home created a divided heart and mind. "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married, careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife."¹ It is not wrong that a man, even a missionary, should marry, or that he should please his wife; but if he has "the gift" of living singly and the call to go out as a missionary wandering freely wherever the Spirit leads him into service, it is better that he should, for the Gospel's sake, remain unmarried. The Church must always be free to exact this provision where it can be exacted, and under circumstances which demand its enforcement, but it must always be in the interests of the kingdom of God, and not contrary to the interests of the spiritual life of those who serve under such conditions.

So much in justification and praise of the single life; but what has Paul to say regarding married life? The

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33.

first thing that arrests our attention in this passage of his Epistle to the Corinthians is the qualified approval which he accords to the married state: "but and if thou marry thou hast not sinned."¹ It would be unfair, however, to conclude that this was all that Paul could say in favour of marriage. In the interests of an ethereal type of spirituality there were some who regarded marriage as a sin, and argued that celibacy, as exemplified in Jesus and in Paul, was essential to the realisation of Christian holiness. It was a symptom of the Christian reaction from the licentiousness of the times. Extremes always afford an easier, and, for most people, safer and more satisfactory, solution of an ethical difficulty, than the delicate discernment and adjustment of right and wrong which lead to the middle course or the compromise. It is much simpler and seems to take us much farther forward to say, celibacy is right and marriage wrong, than to say that it is not a matter of right and wrong in itself, but in its relations; that under certain circumstances the one may be a duty, the other a necessity, but that both are honourable and may become a means of holiness. The latter course was that adopted by the Apostle. Having balanced the *pros* and *cons*, he concluded that whilst celibacy was good, marriage was not ill.

But Paul recognises marriage as a divine institution. He accepts the creative purpose of male and female. In the married state they form a unity: "they two shall be one flesh."² In marriage the natural desires become chastened and sanctified by mutual love and fidelity, by the joys and griefs of the home, by the duties and cares of cherishing each other and of pro-

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 28.

² Eph. v. 31.

viding for the family. In the married state the selfishness of sinful alliances is transformed into self-denial and benevolence, and chastity of mind and heart is preserved without recourse to an austere asceticism which may be more in the form than in the spirit.¹

Nor is this all. In this letter also Paul strikes a still higher note, though it be but incidentally. The natures of man and woman are different, but they are complementary of each other. Neither sex is complete in itself. The man is not perfect without the woman, nor the woman without the man. There is not only a divine sanction, but a divine necessity for marriage. "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."² They were created to find their counterpart and completion in each other. In their "togetherness" each discovers the qualities which the other lacks—qualities which modify, guide, and sustain each other in the spiritual as well as in the social and domestic life. If the man is "the head of the woman,"³ "the woman is the glory of the man."⁴ To her he gives strength of purpose and will; she to him beauty of love and tenderness.

But it is in the Epistle to the Ephesians that the Apostle reaches the highest point in his ethical conception of marriage.⁵ Here he is writing to a Church in which the Christian ideal of the home had been somewhat realised. He sketches with a few pregnant strokes the ideal towards which marriage should ever tend. The relation between husband and wife is sublimated and sanctified as the type of that highest

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 2-5.

² *Ibid.* xi. 11.

³ *Ibid.* 3.

⁴ *Ibid.* 7.

⁵ Eph. v. 21-33.

and mystic union which subsists between Christ Jesus and His Church. Each finds in the other the object which consecrates the home and makes it a sphere of high spiritual discipline. Husband and wife are subject to each other in mutual submission;¹ he in self-denying love, she in self-yielding love. As the object of Jesus is to save the Church and to present it to God without spot or wrinkle, good as pure and pure as beautiful, so also the object of the husband as head of the wife is the perfecting of her nature. Likewise, as the duty of the Church is to submit to the offices of Christ's purpose of love, so also it is the duty of the wife, and becomes the highest privilege of wifeness, to submit to the husband who makes sacrifices of love on her behalf.

Marriage, therefore, as a type of the highest spiritual relationship—that of Christ and the Church—provides a sphere for the culture of the spiritual life unique in its opportunity and discipline. In the attempt to realise the ideal of marriage in relation to each other in the home, the husband and wife are cultivating the very graces and virtues which enable them to realise the ideal of the Christian life as members of the Church of Christ. No doubt it is in view of the Christian opportunity and discipline afforded by the home that Paul advises Christians, when they marry, to marry Christians—"in the Lord"²; and warns them of the danger of stunting or even imperilling their Christian culture by being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers."³ Marriage may be a means of grace; and husband and wife, in their devotion to each other in love and reverence and self-denial, are

¹ Eph. v. 21.² 1 Cor. vii. 39.³ 2 Cor. vi. 14.

fitting themselves to fill their true place as citizens of the kingdom of God.

It is in this way, therefore, that Paul subtly adjudicates upon the relative value of married and single life as favourable to that spirituality which is the first demand upon the Christian. Each has its own advantages, and, under certain conditions, the one may be preferable to the other. Neither the one nor the other, however, is a sin: the holy life is possible to both. The circumstances of the times, the demands of one's vocation in life, and the personal equation have all to be taken into account in determining which is to be chosen. The single life is, however, not to be chosen for liberty in self-indulgence, nor the married life to be shunned because of its self-restraint. The former is to be entered upon and persevered in as a vocation only when the inner life is able to sustain the purity which the outer life professes; the latter is to be regarded as a school of the highest Christian discipline and culture. There is no need, then, prematurely to disturb the present social order. The acceptance of the new spirit does not demand a new environment. The world is never so bad that a saint cannot live in it. The natural and social obligations of life need not be changed or abolished, though they may be modified through time by the inner working of the Spirit. "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."¹ With God—that changes everything by sanctifying it; and what we often need is not new things, but old things made new. In whatsoever state of life God can abide with us, we may abide—with God.

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 24.

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF THE HOME

“Slowly the new home grows holy as the deepening wedding thus goes on ; holy, for the making of two souls—two yet one—is going on in it. Each soul is overcoming its own faults for love’s sake, and helping by love to overcome the other’s faults. Business, sorrows, joys, temptations, failures, victories, ideals, are all shared in it. By-and-by the awes of motherhood and fatherhood are shared, and the new co-education that children bring their parents is entered on together. The supreme beauty is attained when both realise that the inmost secret of true marriage is—to love the ideals better than each other.”—GANNETT’S *Blessed be the Thorn-bearer*.

“I want her to have some one marvellous thing impressed on her memory—some one ineffable recollection of childhood ; and it is to be the darkness associated with shining stars and a safe feeling that her father took her out into it. This is to last all through her life—till the ‘great dark’ comes ; so that when it does come, it shall be with an old familiar sense of fatherhood and starlight.”—WILLIAM CANTON’S *Invisible Wifemate*.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF THE HOME

A HOME is a little world by itself—a little world of souls. It is a spiritual community, a society complete in itself, with its own laws, its own traditions, its own life. It is the unit of the life of the nation; for the nation is not an aggregate of individuals, but a social organism in which each home is a living cell. Though each home is complete in itself, it is related to all others around it. It gives and gets, influences them and is influenced by them. Home breeds home. The child becomes the parent, and builds a home like the home that is left behind. In the home all great lessons of life are learned: it teaches the alphabet and rudiments of everything that is great and noble, mean and base. So that the life of the greater world never rises higher than the life of the smaller world of the home. The homeless scarcely count in a nation's wellbeing. They are not organic parts of it. It is when the solitary are set in families that a nation's life and history begin.

But the home is also the unit of the Church. The Church was born and cradled in the home. The home-church, "the church in the house," under the ægis of the family, was the first Church. The Christian communities met in the homes out of which they sprang.

And there was a deep ethical significance in this fact, for the graces and virtues of the Christian life are first learned and practised in the home. In the home community obedience, reverence, self-denial, and every form of altruistic virtue find of necessity a sphere. It is not difficult to transplant these virtues from the natural institution of the home to the spiritual institution of the Church.

The Christian home, as we know it, is not the growth of a day. It is a flower which it has taken ages of unconscious experiment to cultivate. There were always homes, but not such homes. Sometimes they were almost obliterated in the tribe, sometimes polluted by the harem, sometimes loveless and cruel and despotic ; but after long evolution the Christian home stands out fair and wholesome and sweet, acknowledged by all civilised nations to be the fittest and best nursery and school for the rearing and training of good citizens modest women, and honourable men. And this is so because Christianity, which found in the home the fundamental elements of morality upon which it drew, paid back the debt by giving to the home new and divine sanctions, a purer atmosphere of peace and love, fresh grace to its beauty and stability to its strength.

But the Christian home, being a little world in itself, as all homes must be, requires an economy, a rule of the house, to ensure order. Each member of the home must have his and her proper place and function. In every living organism efficiency and health can be secured and maintained only by each organ fulfilling its own part in the economy of the whole. Each member of the home cannot be everything and do

anything, else it were no longer a home, but a common lodging-house. The members are related to each other by natural ties, by moral obligations, by spiritual affinities, and these relations create distinctions in position and duty. If there is to be order there must be authority ; if there is to be authority there must be submission ; but, in the Christian home, if there is to be submission there must be love, and if there is to be obedience there must be the recognition of freedom. The home must have a head to whom the members render obedience and reverence, but the head must be one to whom they can look for wisdom and guidance. It is only when each member of the family fulfils his and her proper function in relation to each other and to the whole family that the true life of each is realised. To have order in the little world of the home, there must be government, and to have government all cannot have the same rights and duties ; and these being different they must be defined.

It is precisely this which Paul does for the Christian home. He finds in the home certain natural and social relations, which he recognises and accepts—husband and wife, parents and children, masters and slaves. These relationships can never be confused or ignored without destroying the home. He therefore defines the duties of the members towards each other in the light of the new life which has come to the world through Jesus Christ. In the home we find a centre and two concentric circles—an inner and an outer. At the centre are husband and wife, the nucleus of the family, two yet one, the head and heart of the home. They have relations to each other, which do not exist so far as the rest of the family are concerned.

They are husband and wife to each other. To the children, who compose the inner circle, they are parents; to the slaves, who compose the outer circle, they are masters. Paul provided what we might call the Rule of the Christian home, which might well be printed in letters of gold over every domestic hearth, for it has done more to elevate and sweeten and sanctify family life, and to make it a school of the highest ethical and religious training, than any other words that were ever penned.

The relations between the centre and the circles are regarded as a series of submissions or subjections—the wife to the husband, the children to the parents, the servants to the master. But there is nothing in them that is galling or degrading, or, at least, need be so. They arise out of the very nature of things, and are essential to good order and harmony. They are softened and sanctified by three considerations which should not be lost sight of.

First, obligation is not all on the one side. Corresponding duties are laid upon husbands, parents, masters; so that they who claim submission must make it possible to render that submission consistently with the inherent and inalienable dignity of human nature.

Second, the various submissions are tempered by mutual submission. If the one side has to submit to obedience, the other has to submit to duty. "Submitting yourselves one to another."¹

The third regulative idea gives divine sanction to the whole. On both sides the obligations are to be rendered by a free spirit, not merely as due to each other, but as to the Lord of all: "In the name of

¹ Eph. v. 21.

the Lord Jesus"¹; "In the fear of God"²; "As unto the Lord."³ The reciprocal duties and obligations of the home are to become a service rendered by each and all to the Father, in whose name every household is named. The sting of a degrading subjection and the bite of a harsh authority are thus taken away, and all co-operate harmoniously as an economy, bound to each other but free towards Christ.

At the centre of the home are the husband and wife. Their relations to each other are beautifully and delicately defined by the Apostle. The duty of subjection on the part of the wife was no new thing. It was the order in all the homes of the Pagan world. Paul accepts it as part of the natural order, and makes no attempt to disturb it. It is an arrangement into which humanity has been divinely led. He expressly confirms it as the law of the Christian household for this reason—that, with the new relation of woman to Christ and the Church, there was a tendency to revise and break down the old relation to her husband and the home. That relation must stand, he says, not merely as a natural arrangement or social convention, but as a divine appointment. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, *as unto the Lord.*"⁴

But, whilst the Apostle insists upon the validity of the old régime of subjection, he teaches woman to see in it a means of grace to assist her in the education of her spiritual life. The Church, of which she is a member, subsists in the same relation to Jesus Christ, its Head. Her subjection as a wife to her husband

¹ Col. iii. 17.

² Eph. v. 21.

³ *Ibid.* 22: cf. vi. i, 5, 9; Col. iii. 18, 20, 22, 23.

⁴ Eph. v. 22.

is the same in principle as her subjection as a Christian to Christ. In fulfilling the one obligation she is learning to fulfil, in fact is fulfilling, the other. "Therefore," he says, "as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."¹ The same spirit is needed in both relations, and in cultivating it in the one sphere she cultivates it for the other.

The wife's subjection, then, is not that of an inferior, but the free subjection, in the interests of order, of a personality which is equal to that of man in the sight of God. It is not a subjection which crushes by fear. It subsists in the atmosphere of love created and maintained by the husband. Her submission is not to be exacted as a right, but won as a duty freely rendered. It is a reciprocal obligation which meets, and responds to, the loving care and sacrifice of the husband.

It is noteworthy that when Paul turns to speak of the duties of husbands he writes at greater length—and not without cause. For, whilst all over the Pagan world the subjection of the wife was rendered to, and exacted by, the husband, the obligations of the husband were regulated, for good or ill, by the caprice of an unsanctified will. One thing Christianity has certainly done for the home. It has elevated and in many respects altered the attitude of the husband to the wife, and for that reason has changed the character of the relation of the wife to the husband.

The husband's duty is summed up in the one word, Love; a love with which, in quality and degree, the Pagan heart had seldom, if ever, throbbed. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church."²

¹ Eph. v. 24.

² *Ibid.* 25.

Even as! The words needed interpretation, measurement; and for that reason the Apostle ventures to sketch the ideal of love with a few significant strokes. The dignity and glory of the wife are presented to the husband's mind by the fact that she is raised as an object of love to a position alongside of the Church, the bride of Christ. She is worthy, therefore, of all the love which the husband's heart can lavish upon her. The love he owes is not the mere condescension of lordship; it is, as seen by the love of Christ for His Church, self-sacrifice—"He gave Himself for it"; and service—"that He might sanctify and cleanse it." Nor is it a form of self-seeking or self-gratification: the object is to "present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."¹ All thought of self is lost in the well-being and the high destiny of the bride. "So," says the Apostle, "ought men to love their wives"²—with a love to the fulness of which they can never attain, but to which they must ever aspire.

But, after all, in the true conception of marriage, the idea of lordship on the part of the husband gives way to that of identification. Husband and wife are not two, but two in one: "and they two shall be one flesh"³: he, the head; she, the body; both a living organism, in which the one is nothing in the home without the other. Love exacts no submission. It so identifies itself with the interests and cares and labours of the beloved as to make them its own. He loses himself in her, and she finds and forgets herself in him. He thus identifies himself with her in a self-love which has no stain or strain of selfishness. "He

¹ Eph, v. 27.

² *Ibid.* 28.

³ *Ibid.* 31.

that loveth his wife, loveth *himself*.”¹ The old Pagan lordship is lifted up and absorbed in love.

The home thus becomes to man, as a husband, a school of the richest spiritual culture. Here, in the discharge of his simple and natural duty towards his wife, a man learns Christ in His highest and crowning activity of love. Love, the greatest of all Christian graces, comes home to the fireside and sits with husband and wife, teaching them how to practise it in the little world, that they might know how to use it beyond in discharging the larger debt of love towards God and man. “This is a great mystery,”² but it is a mystery which casts a halo around the home; and, whilst it obscures many defects, it glorifies many graces. It is a mystery which we cannot read plainly; but it tells us of the illimitable and divine love which husband and wife owe to each other, “even as the Lord the church.”³ The home is an embryonic Church; the Church a glorified home. Than the best home there is always a better, because there is always a higher love than the love we can render to each other—the love of Christ to His Church, in which husband and wife, and men and women in all life’s relations, participate.

But husband and wife have other relations in domestic life. Towards their children they stand in a position of perfect equality. They are parents, and what is due from the children to one is due to the other. Children have a double duty towards their parents. The first is obedience; the second is honour.

Obedience: it is the first lesson a child has to learn, and it is the hardest and best. It is the great lesson

¹ Eph. v. 28.

² *Ibid* 32.

³ *Ibid*. 29.

of submission to a higher will. The child must learn to do and not to do, before it can judge the ethical basis of its actions. Habits have to be imposed upon the child before it knows or even can understand the reasons for them; for a child learns the right and wrong of life not by abstractions and arguments, but by the doing of the right act and the abstaining from the wrong. The will of the child must therefore be bent in the direction of the best forms of conduct as known to, and insisted upon by, the parents. These forms of conduct are part of its natural patrimony which every parent has a duty to convey. In the long struggle of social life they have been found the best, and the child must comply with them until it can judge maturely for itself and, if possible, discover better.

The Apostle gives two reasons for this obedience. The first is "for this is right"¹; it is according to the law of nature and the law of God. Our instincts tell us it is just. All over the world this duty is exacted of the children of the home. There could be no economy, no rule in the house, if the weak and unformed will of the child should have its own way. But there is another reason: "This is well pleasing unto the Lord."² It is what God expects of every child. His own well-beloved Son came not to do His own will, but the will of His Father; and in Him the Father was "well pleased."³ So every father's son who follows the example of the Son of God merits the same approbation.

The earthly relationship between father and son is thus lifted up to a higher platform and set alongside of

¹ Eph. vi. 1.

² Col. iii. 20.

³ Matt. iii. 17.

the heavenly relationship that subsists between God and Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that the Apostle can demand an obedience which is the highest freedom: "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*."¹ On this ground parents may exact obedience with a good conscience; for the home must become to the child, as God ordained it should become, the school in which that virtue which is the foundation of Christian culture and service is learned—the virtue of obedience. Though hard to learn, the child is sharing in that discipline of life to which Jesus Himself had to submit; for "though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."²

The second part of the duty is Honour.³ Honour is the homage of the mind and heart, as obedience is the homage of the will. It is the debt which we owe to our superiors in wisdom and goodness, as obedience is the debt we owe to our superiors in authority. Obedience is the first lesson which the child must learn, even before it awakens to the qualities in the parent which evoke the sense of honour. Honour comes next, and makes obedience reasonable and easy; for it is not hard to obey an authority which we know to be inspired by a wisdom and goodness which we can honour.

To the duty of honour a promise is attached—the promise of well-being; "that it may be well with thee."⁴ Honour is not merely a quality which wears well and becomingly in the home; it wears well and becomingly all through life: it is part of our wellbeing. The child who honours the father and mother is not merely a good child, but has the promise

¹ Eph. vi. 1.² Heb. v. 8.³ Eph. vi. 2.⁴ *Ibid.* 3.

of being a good citizen, a good husband or wife, a good father or mother, a good lover or friend. He has learned to look up and to bow down. He has learned to expect and find in others a better than his best. He has contracted in the home a habit of mind and heart which sweetens and sanctifies all his relations with his fellows in the world. It shall be well in the world with him who has learned honour in the home.

But he has learned more. He has learned something which lies at the root of all religious culture. He has learned to honour God—a lesson which the Divine Son had learned when He could say "I honour My Father."¹ In the duty of honour, as in that of obedience, the ethical sanction and impulse are found not in custom or in prudence, but far back in the religious life, even in the life of Christ Himself. The qualities which adorn the children of the earthly home are none else than those which the Son of the heavenly home adorned in His manifestation of them.

To these duties of children, however, there are corresponding duties of parents. If the children are to obey and honour them, they must obey and honour God. Their authority over their children is "in the Lord." It is a vested authority, and the seat of it is above. One thing they ought not to do: one thing they ought.

The first is "Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."² Children are not to be exasperated by the exercise of an authority which is unreasonable and tyrannous. Wrath provokes wrath. Though the parent is not obliged to give to the child reasons for the obedience which he exacts, he must

¹ John viii. 49.

² Col. iii. 21.

be able to give reasons to himself and to God. He is not to forget that the child is not a thing, a chattel, but a person, with the potentiality, though at present without the power, of a free agent. The man that is to be must be respected in the child that is. The parent must honour the child, if the child is to honour the parent. The parent must remember the child's destiny, and the obedience exacted must be tempered so as to further it. He must not excite the wrath of his child, but elicit his love; for the love of the child is the joy and privilege of fatherhood and motherhood. Children are to be encouraged, not discouraged; brought up, not held down; not to be depressed by fear, but taught to express themselves in joy and love.

The second is the positive side of parental duty, and is summed up briefly in the words "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."¹ There is to be a careful education of the child in all that is best, and as careful a correction of it in all that is worst. For the child is like a plant, which requires to be nourished, and watered, and sunned, and supported to confirm it in health and in habit; but also pruned to prevent ungainly growths and disfigurements. Nurture and admonition, education and correction, must go hand in hand; for even in the child-mind there are seeds of error, as well as seeds of truth, and the root of bitterness springs as from the ground alongside the root of love. Weeds grow as well as flowers, and more easily, in that garden of the child-nature which seems so fair a paradise; and the parent must be watchful to keep the soil clean, when the spring-growth is on, lest the former outgrow the latter as the

¹ Eph. vi. 4.

seasons advance. But both the nurture and admonition are to find their regulative force "in the Lord." The children are the Lord's by redemption, and have been acknowledged to be His, in the baptismal covenant. They are therefore to be reared as His. Education will never be profane, and correction will never be harsh and unfeeling, when "in the Lord."

Here once again the earthly duty finds its sanction in the heavenly example. The duties which God expects of fathers are none other than those which He Himself adopts in His relation to the great human family. In grace and in providence he employs a vast system of encouragements and checks which secure the nurture and admonition of men. He is ever the bringer of the best out of the worst, and knows how to choke the weed by the cultivation of the flower. In the history of His chosen people, and in the inspired record of it, every virtue of man is encouraged and every sin reproved. What book praises us so fully, or blames us so fearlessly, as the word of God? It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The heavenly Fatherhood is therefore the antitype of the earthly, and in this relation also man sees himself in God, in whose image he was originally made. Thus the conduct which a father has to observe towards his children receives a new basis and a fresh impulse, for he realises that it is nothing else than the line of conduct which God has ever pursued toward himself and toward the whole family in which he, though a father, still remains a child.



BOUND YET FREE

“To use force first, before people are fairly taught the truth, is to knock a nail into a board without wimbling a hole for it, which then either not enters, or turns crooked, or splits the wood in pieces.”—FULLER.

“The hardest question ain't the black man's right,—
The trouble is to 'mancipate the white ;
One's chained in body an' can be sot free,—
The other's chained in soul to an idee :
It's a long job, but we shall worry thru it ;
Ef bag'nets fail, the spellin'-book must do it.”

LOWELL'S *Biglow Papers*.

“On every side men were asking: What is the end of liberty, or of equality, which in its ultimate analysis is only the liberty of all? The *free man* is only an *active force* ready to work. In what manner shall it work? Capriciously? In every direction that presents itself? That is not *life*, rather a simple sequence of acts, of phenomena, of symptoms of vitality, without connection or relation, or continuity: its name is anarchy. . . . Though our chains are lengthened, we are prisoners still, and we brag of our liberty because we are free to move round the post to which our chains are fastened.”

MAZZINI'S *Faith and the Future*.

CHAPTER XVII

BOUND YET FREE

THE outer circle of the home in Greek and Roman society consisted of the slaves. Slavery was regarded as an institution of nature. It was accepted as a legitimate part of the social order even by the philosophers. The rightness of it was not questioned. The conception of man's dignity and destiny in relation to God, which ultimately forced the question and answered it, had not yet dawned upon the Pagan mind. The ancient civilisations of Paganism were founded upon slavery. It is computed that in the time of Paul fully one-half of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire were slaves, and of the Greek cities about one-third. Yet these dumb millions, who were little better than the living tools of the rich, accepted their destiny, and had no advocate to plead the injustice of their lot, or even to tell them it was unjust.

For what was the lot of the slave? He had no rights, no responsibilities; and few virtues, for they were not expected. His one virtue was to be pliant in the hand of the master. He was a thing, not a man—a thing to be bought and sold, fed and fawned, or kicked and lashed, according to the temperament of his superiors. Sometimes he knew the luxury of kindness and consideration, but these condiments of

life were not due to him. He had, for the most part, to eat his bitter herbs without the sauce of love. He was a live chattel, a human beast of burden, with a will for which he had no use, with instincts for good which were superfluous, and with blind aspirations for freedom which it was monstrous to acknowledge and criminal to cherish. This gigantic institution, hoary with age, and stained with blood of cruelty, was not only tolerated, but unquestioned in the Pagan world, accepted by its philosophies and sanctioned by its religions.

Paul discovered in the religion of Jesus the instrument—lever and fulcrum—by which this inhuman institution was to be overturned. The Christian conception of man's equality before God and man's brotherhood in Christ, transcending all racial and national, all social and civil, all conventional and artificial, distinctions among men—that was the heaven-fashioned instrument which Paul found at his hand, took up, and—apparently laid down again.

Did Paul know the potency of this new instrument which God had put into his hand? Did he appreciate the enormities of slavery which everywhere met his eye? Was he aware that the one was given for the destruction of the other? There can scarcely be a doubt that no man ever knew these things better than he. Yet he headed no agitation, started no revolution, suggested no grievance, denounced nothing, disturbed nothing. Nevertheless he did all these things, or led to the doing of them.

It was part of Paul's method. It was the method of reserve, of silence, of waiting, of preparation—a method which he found unformulated but acted upon by his

Master. The greatness of Paul is seen in his restraint ; his faith, in his foregoing temporary advantages in view of future triumphs ; his humility, in silently asserting great principles of thought which were destined to change the face of the world long after he had passed away. For he believed that changes in the social order were of little value without change in the spiritual life ; that the first thing was to regenerate men, and then leave them to reform the institutions in which they lived ; that the destruction of the bad was only effectively secured by the upbuilding of the good ; that the driving out of the devils and leaving the house empty gave no security against their return in greater force ; that all permanent reforms were effected from within. In fact, his method was a silent protest against the ancient and still modern idea that the environment makes the man, and that all we have to do to regenerate humanity is to provide better laws, better institutions, better houses, better food, and less work. All these things grow out of human life. The life is more than meat, the body more than raiment. Change the spirit, and the spirit changes the form. Change the form and leave the spirit as it is, and the new form gradually and inevitably reverts to the old type. There is a haste which is not speed, and a short-cut which proves to be the longest way in the end.

What, then, was Paul's attitude towards slavery? Did he do nothing? On the contrary, he outlined the charter of man's freedom and left it to be filled in and presented when the world understood it and was ready to adopt the principles which it embodied. He anticipated the abolition of slavery, and laid down the lines along which Christian philanthropy has ever worked

towards that end. He was the pioneer in the long struggle—the first to ring the death-knell of slavery.

His first word of advice is—contentment, submission. The new faith was not incompatible with the old form of life. The fact of a man's servitude had not prevented his being called as a Christian, and could not prevent his living as a Christian. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."¹ It is the general policy which the Apostle advocates for adoption by Christians in the various relations of life. Christianity is not to become embroiled in premature efforts at social reform. The order of domestic life is to be retained till the new principles are sufficiently adopted and diffused to transform it. The Christian religion has not as its first aim social revolution, but spiritual regeneration; though ultimately the former is to be effected by the latter.

Hence his next advice is to transcend their limitations, rather than to renounce or break through them. They may live their spiritual life as slaves, and yet as if they were not slaves. "Wast thou called being a bondservant? care not for it."² Overlook the fact, transcend it, live above it. Not that the Apostle is indifferent to the repression of servitude: "if thou canst be free, use it rather"; if your freedom is offered you, take advantage of your freedom. Slavery is not a divine institution, in which any man must remain. But when a man comes out of it, he must do so honourably. Neither society nor the slaves themselves, however, were ripe for making a change, and individual action would prove unwise and disastrous. Hence Paul advises the slaves not to think so much of their rights as of

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 20.

² *Ibid.* 21, R.V.

their privileges, not so much of their inequalities as men among men, as of their equality as brethren in the sight of God. Their true equality, which in time would effect the abolition of all inequalities, was in the higher plane of the spiritual life. Live in that plane, says Paul; for in these deeper relations—the relation of a man to God and Christ and eternity—the distinction between bondman and freedman disappears. “He that was called in the Lord, being a bondservant, is the Lord’s freedman: likewise he that was called, being free, is Christ’s bondservant.”¹ In this spiritual sphere we are all servants in an equality of servitude to Jesus Christ. Thus the sting of slavery is taken away, though its fangs are not yet drawn. The divine corrosive is already attacking the chains, though they are not yet eaten through. Paul knows that time will work universal liberation; but it would have been the madness of a fanatic to cry that the time had now come, and that every slave should burst his bonds and go free. Meanwhile, he says, remain *where* you are, but you do not need to remain *as* you are. The spirit of freedmen is yours, though all privileges cannot yet be claimed. Your freedom is purchased: your title is secured: “ye were bought with a price.”² Though slaves of those who are “masters according to the flesh,”³ live as men who are free under the Master according to the spirit. In your inmost nature “become not bondservants of men.”⁴ Transcend your present limitations by realising your highest freedom in Christ Jesus.

But the Apostle goes farther. He exhorts the slave not only to transcend his servitude, but to transfigure

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 22, R.V.

² *Ibid.* 23.

³ Eph. vi. 5.

⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 23, R.V.

it. There was the danger of the slave acquiescing in his lot with a sullenness and a surliness which would spoil him as a servant and degrade him as a man. He might live so much above his servitude as to despise it and make his service exasperating to himself and to those to whom it was rendered. The Apostle doubtless saw this disposition already fermenting in the class. Nor was it to be wondered at, when we consider the apparent contradiction between the position assigned to the slave in the Church and the status still imposed upon him in the world. But, as the slaves numbered a large proportion of the converts, this spirit of insubordination, if it were allowed to spread, would bring Christianity into suspicion and contempt. The ordinary courtesies of their station, the Apostle held, ought to be observed, so long as they could not renounce their station. As Christians, they should "count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed."¹ It was a debt which the slaves owed to Him who had set them spiritually free by His Gospel, which had brought sunshine into their lives. So long as they were slaves, they should be Christian slaves, and should renounce the habits and manners of the common slaves of the world. They must get rid of the slave spirit by living as the freedmen of the Gospel: "not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity"²; "not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God."³ Indeed, Paul puts the Christian slaves upon their honour, as having a most important part to play in commending the Gospel to the world. The beauty of the Gospel was to be exhibited by

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 1.² Titus ii. 9, 10.³ Col. iii. 22.

them. They were to be the ornaments of the Christian community. It was they who were called upon to "*adorn the doctrine* of God our Saviour in all things."¹

There was one thing, however, upon which Paul touched, which brought hope to the heart of the slave. The slave had no rights, no property, no reward. His labour and its fruits belonged to his master. He might do the work, but he was a mere tool, and had no more expectation of being benefited thereby than if he were a horse, or a plough, or a spade. When Paul invites him to do his service "with goodwill," "as to the Lord and not to men," he assures him that in doing his daily task in the service of others as service rendered to Christ he shall not go unrewarded. He may earn no money, but he shall earn better than money. The deed he does shall be credited to him as his own by the Master in heaven. It shall belong to him; and, in the doing of it, it shall form part of his character, a deciding factor in the shaping of his destiny. For this law holds good for slave as for master—"whatsoever good thing *any man* doeth, *the same* shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."² The work of the slave shall be reckoned as the work of a free man.

Such was the advice which Paul gave to the slave of his day. But he did still more for him by his actions. His conduct towards the bondman shows that he himself was ripe beyond the times for the abolition of slavery. He treated him as a man and as a brother. He, at least, acknowledged his equality in the social as well as in the religious sphere. This is evident especially in his bearing towards Onesimus,

¹ Titus ii. 10.

² Eph. vi. 8

the Colossian runaway, whom he had picked up in Rome. His letter to Philemon, the master and owner of Onesimus, has well been called "the first anti-slavery petition." It contains the seed-thoughts of all that followed. This Onesimus Paul had begotten in his bonds. He is "my son," and Paul had fathered him in the Gospel.¹ Onesimus had responded to the affection of Paul, and had ministered unto him, as a son to a father, and a servant to a master. It was like tearing his heart out to part with this man; but part they must. Paul will be true to his own principles, and the runaway's freedom must be got by consent, not by constraint. He will not be a party to social disorder. So he sends the slave back to Philemon. But he delicately insinuates the new worth of the Christian slave. He addresses Philemon, the master, as "brother"; but he does not hesitate to speak of Onesimus, the slave, as "a brother beloved."² He acknowledges that the bond remains, that the old relation of master and slave still stands; but both are now in the brotherhood. He himself has acted towards the slave as towards a brother, and he suggests to Philemon to go beyond the request to regard him also as such, by granting him his liberty.³ But the Apostle goes farther. In restoring Onesimus to Philemon by sending him back to Colosse, he introduces the slave, once of bad repute, to the Colossian Church as "a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you."⁴

Both from his advice and from his personal example, it is apparent that Paul believed that the spiritual life was not inconsistent with the most untoward conditions. It could be lived in any environment. He who brought

¹ Philem. 10. ² *Ibid.*, 7, 16, 20. ³ *Ibid.* 21. ⁴ Col. iv. 9.

that life to humanity came in "the form of a bond-servant"¹; He was among us "as he that serveth."² So the new spirit could rise above the external limitations, and by still submitting to them could transfigure them. It was something to have learned the spirit of service, which, after all, is the spirit of Christ and of His Gospel. The slave could accept his position as qualifying him for Gospel freedom even though his discipline was hard and oppressive.

But Paul rendered a further service to the slave by laying upon Christian masters a new code of ethics in their treatment of him. In the Apostle's day much of the harshness and cruelty of earlier times had disappeared with the growth of humaner feelings; but still all through the Roman Empire and the Greek States this better attitude towards the slave was devoid of ethical or religious sanction. The bondman was still a thing, a chattel, a tool. Paul did much to establish and elevate the kindlier sentiments which masters had begun to cultivate, by giving them a rational basis upon which to rest.

"Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening."³ "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal."⁴ These were new ideas, and must have given a shock of surprise to the Pagan mind. How could masters have duties towards slaves, when slaves had no rights? How could there be reciprocity in obligation? Why should masters not threaten if they would? How could they be just and equitable towards a thing, a chattel? Justice and equity cannot be due to those who cannot demand

¹ Phil. ii. 7, R.V. margin.

² Luke xxii. 27.

³ Eph. vi. 9.

⁴ Col. iv. 1.

them. Yet Paul enjoins masters to treat slaves as men who have rights, inherent natural rights, which although they are not asserted are none the less due, and he enjoins them to treat themselves as men who have duties which they cannot renounce.

On what are these duties based? They are based upon two great facts—the relation in which masters stand to the Master, and the nature of the Master's character. These two facts change the relation of masters towards slaves, and change even the characters of masters themselves.

“Knowing that your Master also is in heaven.”¹ In relation to slaves they are masters, but they are themselves slaves in relation to Christ. Both masters and slaves occupy the same position in this higher relation. Here is their essential equality, upon which is based reciprocity in duty. They must learn to “do the same things” to one another, for they are alike men and servants in the sight of God. The slave is to serve his master, and in serving him to serve the Lord; but the master also is to respect the slave, for his treatment of the slave is part of that service which he has to render to his Master, Jesus Christ. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”²

But the giving to servants of “that which is just and equal” is a duty which is based upon the character of that Master whose servants masters are: “Neither is there respect of persons with Him.”³ He is just and equal in His dealing with master and slave. Men may show greater respect to masters, and credit them with all the rights and none of the duties, but justice

¹ Eph. vi. 9.

² Matt. xxv. 40.

³ Eph. vi. 9.

and equality are the characteristics of God, and He respects neither master nor slave because He respects both. Now, if He who is the Master of masters, and has a right to the service of masters, is Himself just and equal in his character and dealings, He has a right to demand of His servants that they be just and equal in their character and in their dealings with their slaves.

In this way the slave emerges into the Christian consciousness as more than a mere thing: he is a man with rights as well as duties. The master also becomes more than the possessor of a chattel: he is a servant of Christ in relation to his own servants, and has duties as well as rights. And, just as the slave could be a servant of Christ though a slave of men, so the master must be a servant of Christ in being a master of men. The service the latter renders to his slaves is the service he owes to Christ, just as the service of the former rendered to men is service rendered to Him who is the Master of both. There is here, therefore, the ethical and religious basis upon which the great problem of emancipation was to be solved, with much struggle and not without bloodshed, during the course of the ages. Paul struck the rock, and struck it at the true line of cleavage; each successive blow struck afterwards by others hastened the breaking of the rock asunder. But it should never be forgotten that the first blow was his. He discovered the vulnerable spot. He furnished the hammer also, and, having himself struck, passed it into the hands of others.

AN APOLOGY FOR THE WEAK AND OBSCURE

“As to what we call the masses and common men; there are no common men. All men are at last of a size; and true art is only possible, on the conviction that every talent has its apotheosis somewhere. Fairplay, and an open field, and freshest laurels to all who have won them! But heaven reserves an equal scope for every creature. Each is uneasy until he has produced his private ray into the concave sphere, and beheld his talent also in its last nobility and exaltation.”—EMERSON'S *Representative Men*.

“Surely no achievements of the Christian Church are more truly great than those which it has effected in the sphere of charity. . . . It has covered the globe with countless institutions of mercy, absolutely unknown to the Pagan world.”—LECKY'S *History of European Morals*.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN APOLOGY FOR THE WEAK AND OBSCURE

COMPASSION was but a rudimentary virtue in the scheme of heathen morality. Usually the weak, the humble, and the obscure were neglected or despised. Right went with might. Honour was bestowed upon the strong. The policy of nature was too often the policy of man; the fittest survived, and the weak were allowed to go to the wall, to sit in the shade, to wither and die. Christ gathered up the fragments, found new uses for the potsherds, sunned the feeble with His favours, healed the sick, comforted the mourner, encouraged the feeble-hearted, and rehabilitated the neglected portions of humanity.

Paul, entering sympathetically into the genius of the new religion, made a striking apology for the weak, the humble, and the obscure—an apology which has left an indelible impression upon the Christian character. It was not an easy task to root out the old disposition from those who had come into the heritage of the new life. It sprung up in many forms within the Church itself, and Paul struck at it there, knowing that if he could kill it in the Church it was not likely to survive with such vigour in a community in which Christians set the standard of conduct.

It was in the Corinthian Church especially that the

Apostle saw the old heathen disposition of self-assertiveness displaying itself. Those who had special gifts of grace exercised lordship over the commonplace people who sat silent in obscure corners; the honoured were greedy of honour; the prominent sat proudly in high places as a spiritual aristocracy, regarding the common herd as existing only to feed their ambition. As a result pride begat prejudice; self-aggrandisement, depression; ambition, jealousy; the somebodies, the nobodies.

Paul protested against the invasion of the Church by a spirit foreign to, and destructive of, its very existence. But whilst exorcising this evil spirit, he propounded a theory of the Church, which gave a proper place to the weak and the humble and the obscure, and offered a rational basis for a change in the old aristocratic disposition. The Church is a living organism, the body of Christ, in which each organ has its assigned function, and is worthy of honour according as it fulfils that function. The body is not all eye, not all hand, not all tongue. These were nothing without feet and legs, stomach and heart. The hidden and obscure are as necessary as the visible and prominent; the uncomely as the comely. The Church of Christ is a unity subsisting in diversity, one body with many organs; having one life and purpose with many parts and functions harmoniously co-operating. It is a living tree with many roots and branches and twigs and leaves; not a dead log. It is a Gothic pile, with apse and nave, and pillar and tracery; not a four-walled barn. It is a full-voiced chorus with complex harmony; not a solo or a song sung in unison. The obscure and subsidiary have their place in the Church and are

necessary. The hidden roots are necessary to the umbrageous tree, the unseen foundation to the cathedral, the humble chorister to the leading voices. The strong *need* the weak; the prominent, the obscure; the honoured, the despised. There is a place in the economy of the Church for the feeblest member of it. "Much more those members of the body, which *seem to be* more feeble [not *are*; for no organ, however humble or obscure in itself, is feeble if it fulfils its function], are necessary."¹

But this need of the obscure creates a claim for honour. The whole body is interested in the health and activity of each part. There is a solidarity and symmetry in the body which demands that the whole be respected by every part receiving due attention. The beauty of the open face requires from us no decoration. God has bestowed honour upon it. Eye and brow, and cheek and chin, give expression to the soul's beauty, and are in themselves comely, and have an inherent honour of their own. We do not need to bestow honour upon them: God has done that. "Our comely parts have no need."² But our uncomely parts have need. We are not all face. The beauty of the face requires that the rest of the body be adorned with appropriate dress, that the whole body may be beautiful. God has so "tempered"³ the body that the parts which He has specially honoured with comeliness should so honour the uncomely as to make the whole comely and honourable. This is what the body owes to itself. There must, therefore, be no schism in the body; "the members should have the same care one for another,"⁴ for they are parts of a symmetrical structure in which nothing is ugly or

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 22.

² *Ibid.*, 24.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* 25.

useless or base. The body has the care of making the *tout-ensemble* beautiful. Our very dress has an ethical and spiritual significance.

Nor is that all. Pursuing the analogy farther, the Apostle touches a deeper chord. The very life of one member is indissolubly bound up in the life of the other—comely or uncomely, honoured or unhonoured. The disease of the obscurest part may cloud the beauty of the face; the health of the unseen organs makes “all the members rejoice”¹; the shame of one brings shame on all. This is so because of the solidarity of the body as a living, harmonious unity, in which no part can suffer or rejoice without the thrill of joy or anguish passing through the whole. It is, therefore, upon the organic unity and solidarity of the Church, as the body of Christ, that the Apostle founds his plea and apology for the weak, the uncomely, and the obscure. They, too, have their necessary place in the economy, and have a pre-eminent claim to honour.

In all this quiet undermining of the old standards of worth and honour Paul was in complete harmony with the Spirit of Christ. The Master Himself passed by the great and the prominent, and set the obscure and unapplauded in high place. The Apostles whom He selected were humble and unlettered men. Fishermen were preferred to Rabbis. He lavished His love upon the uncomely members of society—the diseased, the dejected, the wastrel, the despised, the outcast. He honoured mean men by sitting at their table as a guest. He recognised the place of feeble children in the social economy, and spoke tenderly of their worth

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 26.

for its welfare. He recognised, and indeed discovered, the value of the by-products and waste of humanity, and transformed them into social usefulness and beauty. He gathered up the human fragments so that nothing should be lost.

Nor did Paul fail to exemplify his plea by his own teaching and example. He did not despise the highest gifts. But when he praised the flower he did not forget the gnarled stump, the hidden roots, the feeble fibres, which contributed to its life and beauty. Those who had learning, and eloquence, and high spiritual vision, were not to be applauded at the expense of the multitude, who could only live a commonplace, though not common, life of homely piety, charitableness, sweetness of temper, and unquestioning faith. The self-effacing grace of love was to him the superior of all, and he honoured it with a eulogium which still echoes through every Christian heart. When we read over the lists of men and women whom he greeted with his *fine* courtesy and discernment, what do we know of the persons whose names are enshrined in them? They are nearly all the "feeble," who were "necessary," unrecognised then, now unrecognisable. They did their part in their time as humble day-labourers, obscure hodmen, in building up the edifice of the Church. The master-builders needed them, however, and he, as a wise master-builder, gave them the "abundant honour" which in themselves they lacked.¹

The same principle of judgment has a wider area of application than the Church. The weak and uncomely and frail have their place also in the home,

¹ 1 Cor. xii, 24.

and claim our compassion and our honour. The infant in its feebleness is beatified by parental affection, but it awakens a new beauty and grace and tenderness in the hearts, and the very faces, of its father and mother. The sickness of one member is felt by all, and creates a sympathy with suffering which extends its gentle ministrations far beyond the limits of the home. There is in the home a communism in affliction and joy, in sorrow and honour and shame. Those members "which seem to be more feeble, are necessary."

In society also the truth of this holds equally good. The obscure and unapplauded are necessary, and they are to be honoured. The world might get on without its millionaires, but not without its day-labourers. Money is nothing without labour. Where would the landlord be if the farmer did not till the soil? Poets and philosophers give grace to society, but the food-producers are indispensable. A nation of millionaires and poets and philosophers is impossible. Even they have to be fed and clothed. West-end needs East-end; and common men who lead hidden lives of virtue and industry and honesty are the bones and muscle and blood of the body politic. The nation, like the Church, must be "tempered" so that the unhonoured receive honour from the honoured.

But the Apostle formulates this principle in another way and gives it the highest religious sanction. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself."¹ Self-pleasing

¹ Rom. xv. 1-3.

is alien to the Christian temper. In the Christian community all must work for an end which is above self and yet includes it. The higher self is found in the Church, which each must labour to "edify," as his spiritual home. But there are within the Church those who have what we regard as "infirmities"—the prejudices and scruples and imperfections which are incidental to a weak faith—a faith that has not realised its full privileges and powers. The "strong" are not to crush these, not to depise them, not to domineer over them. It is not necessary that we should all have the same view of Christ. It is necessary that we should all see the same Christ, though not from the same angle. It is not necessary that we should all approach Him by the same road. Many roads lead to Christ, and men may reach Him at last from all points of the compass—some, indeed, by strange untrodden paths. We need not thrust our views, or convictions, upon others. "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." We need not knock him down because he differs from us. "He shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."¹ All opinionativeness is self-pleasing. We may have a larger faith and a broader liberty and a wider mental horizon; but when we impose these upon others we may wreck their faith, make them suspicious of their liberty, and fill their horizon with clouds. Everything grows from within a man, roots itself in his instincts and education and experience, but the faith that is imposed upon him by others is only cast-off clothing which may be better than his own clothes, but does not fit. We must learn to please others, not by the way

¹ Rom. xiv 1-4.

of pleasing ourselves, but by the way of edifying them. Our victories over them are to be found in lifting them up. The end we have in view is not to triumph over others, but to make them triumph over themselves. The spiritual destiny of others is what we must ever seek. For us Christ sacrificed everything that we might be built up as living stones in the living temple. "Even Christ pleased not Himself."¹

The principle, however, which is to guide the strong is not one from which the weak are exempt. Both come under the general law of love—that altruistic self-love, if we might so call it, which is the motive power of all Christian conduct. "By love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."² Here self-pleasing and neighbour-pleasing meet and merge. When I identify myself with my neighbour, and make him part of my life, both being members of the one body of Christ, my pleasure is found in him, and his in me. "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another"³: that is the highest self-comfort and self-edification. But when the law of love is broken, edification ceases. Love builds up, strife breaks down. Love secures mutual victories, strife procures mutual destruction. When the spirit of self-assertion manifests itself in a Church and one contends with another for the mastery, the victory of either is the defeat of both. The spirit of brotherhood is extinguished by contention. "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another."⁴ "There should be no schism in the body: but that

¹ Rom. xv. 3.

² Gal. v. 13, 14.

³ 1 Thess. v. 11,

⁴ Gal. v. 15.

the members should have the same care one for another."¹

If this principle holds good with regard to feeble faith, it holds equally good with regard to moral frailty. In his application of it in this direction Paul exhales again the spirit of Christ. His apology for the morally feeble is contained in a passage which breathes the tenderness of humility. It is brief but complete. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."²

The appeal is addressed to "brethren," members of the same spiritual family, with the same Father, sharing each other's sorrow and joy, honour and shame: brethren in sin, and brethren in redemption. The sympathetic restoration of an erring brother follows naturally from such a relationship. But Paul, as is his wont, gives the ethical duty a spiritual sanction and support. He finds that this simple duty is "the law of Christ"—a law which He not only uttered, but exemplified. We may turn, therefore, to examine the method of Christ in dealing with moral frailty: that method becomes the norm of Christian conduct.

It is remarkable that the hard words of Christ were not spoken of the sinner, but were reserved for the hypocrite. It was not the contradiction of sinners that aroused the denunciation of Jesus: it was the contradiction of the saints—the brazen pride and prudery which claimed mercy and gave none. When Christ overtook a man in a fault He did not seek to punish

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 25.

² Gal. vi. 1, 2.

him. He brought home the sense of wrong by creating the sense of right. He taught men to rebuke themselves—which is always a severer rebuke than the rebuke of others. He saw the *man* in the sinner, and, by revealing Himself as The Man, awakened in the sinner a new sense of manhood and of its claims. In this way He elicited penitence. But that was not all. He transferred the sinner's burden to Himself, made the sinner's cross His own, interpreted the deep, dumb desire for good in the heart of the evil-doer, and surprised him with trust and confidence and hope.

The method of Jesus, said the Apostle, must be ours. If Christ did not think it His duty to denounce, we cannot claim it as our right. If we are free of the sin we rebuke, is it not of grace? There is no sin which another has committed which we have not the capacity to commit. Every sin springs from the same root—sins from sin. When a censorious saint came proudly to one of the Fathers and told him how one of the brethren had fallen, the good man replied, "He fell yesterday; I may fall to-day." "Consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted." We must learn to project ourselves with sympathy into the sinner's place, so as to see ourselves in him. We do not heal a wound by rubbing salt into it. When we suffer with the offender, bearing his burden as if his suffering were our own, he sees in us that sorrow for sin which he himself has not experienced. The sinner has to learn that sin crucifies all that is best in a man. He may learn that lesson in Christ through the Christian. Till he learns that, he is impenitent, denounce him as we may. When he has learned that, he knows something of the

significance of the cross, and abhors himself in dust and ashes.

The censoriousness of 'the spiritual' did not escape the notice of the Apostle, and it is not without a touch of irony that he writes: "Ye that are spiritual restore such an one." Censoriousness is the sign of rawness, not of ripeness, in the Christian character. It is the reaction of the sinner against sin; only, instead of spending itself on his own sins he exercises it on the sins of others. As men grow in grace, they grow in tenderness. The Christian has to learn the divine art of encouragement and restoration. By this he stoops and lifts up the downcast, and keeps his own soul sweet and wholesome. And he must go even farther. When he lifts him up he must also take a lift of his burden. It is not enough to forbear, to be silent, not to interfere. He must bear: put his back beneath his neighbour's load, and let him feel something of the power of Christ. "Bear ye one another's burdens." It is part of the method of Jesus in His dealing with the Christian; and the Christian, according to his power, must make it his own in dealing with the morally frail.

There are two interesting applications of this principle. The one refers to the weak in the inner circle of domestic life, the other to those in the outer circle of society. It is noteworthy that Paul has displayed in his letters very little of Christ's tenderness for children. Perhaps occasion was wanting; perhaps the lonely and somewhat homeless life of a childless man failed to elicit this refining quality in his soul. But he certainly did show great tenderness to the aged and lonely and unfortunate, whose presence in the home was for the

most part more tolerated than welcome. The position of widowhood in the domestic life of antiquity appealed to his fine Christian instincts. The widow was despised for her misfortune. She had fallen out of her lot, and to a large extent out of honour and liberty. No doubt, the active benevolence of Christianity opened up a new sphere of usefulness for the widow, and gave her a new avenue for the exercise of her womanly instincts and inclinations. But it also claimed for her that honour which the weak had been denied, but which was her due. The Apostle enjoins that the Church should not see any widow of its number neglected. It must honour her as a feeble member of Christ's body, that the whole body might be fair and comely in the eyes of Christ. Children and grandchildren were not, however, to cast aged widows upon the support of the Church. Their filial duty was inalienable. Their membership of the larger organisation of the Church did not supersede the natural obligations of the family; no spirituality could atone for the neglect of kith and kin. "Let them learn first to show piety at home."¹ The younger must provide for the older, the strong for the weak, in the domestic circle.

So also the younger widows, daughters and daughters-in-law, had a claim for honour and sympathy. They were generally unprovided for, and their blighted lives were often maintained by a grudging charity. The Apostle appeals to the older members of the family to help the younger in their misfortune. The ties of blood and of faith make this a duty to be cheerfully rendered. "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not

¹ 1 Tim. v. 4.

the church be charged.”¹ “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”²

The other application is to the outer circle of society—the general poor—the weak in wealth. In the early Church the poor formed a large proportion of its membership, and the Church was forced to meet their needs. The Apostle felt, however, that this providential circumstance had a moral compensation, for it enabled Christians to realise the true ethics of work and money. Property, the right to possess, is the impulse of free personal development. The man who works has opportunity to bring out the best that is in him, and by his money to give new value to his life. But the object of property and labour is not self-aggrandisement which always debases work and degrades the worker. We get to give. The moral value of property is not exhausted in the pleasure of the possessor: it should add to the efficiency of the social whole, which in many ways has contributed to its acquirement and its security. The money of one is made by the co-operative labour of many; so that possession carries with it distinct obligations to the working world. The selfishness of the miser and the money-grabber is rebuked, and property and labour are sanctified by an altruistic end: “Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”³ But idleness is not condoned. It is not an arrangement of providence that the idle poor should exist as affording an opportunity and sphere of benevolence to the idle rich. The Apostle maintains

¹ 1 Tim. v. 16.

² *Ibid.* 8.

³ Eph. iv. 28.

the dignity and duty of labour. "If any *will not* work [not, if any man *does not* work], neither let him eat."¹ The can't-works and out-of-works should be fed—they are living members of the social body, and should be honoured; but the will-not-works, the wastrel and the loafer, as parasites of society, are to be starved into honest labour.

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 10, R.V.

ON OVER-SPIRITUALITY

“Even Luther said of his adherents, that they were like Solomon’s fleet : some brought back gold and silver, but the younger peacocks and apes.”—PUSEY.

“He wants better bread than can be made with wheat.”—DE QUINCEY.

CHAPTER XIX

ON OVER-SPIRITUALITY

THE religion of Jesus brought with it intellectual and moral demands that were strange to the Christian mind which had just emerged out of Paganism. Paul apprehended that there were many dangers immanent in the effort to found a Church among the Gentiles. The Church had not only to grasp firmly the cardinal doctrines of the faith, but it had to accommodate itself, as well as accustom itself, to the new ethical principles of its Founder. The infant Churches were subjected to a severe test by the pressure of Paganism in their several environments. For this reason Paul had to nurse them and had to teach them how to spell out the new doctrines of grace and how to walk in the new life of faith.

The difficulties which met him were incidental to the early years of the Church's life. They presented themselves in almost every centre in which Christians were associated. Here the new converts, in the exuberance of their faith, revelled in the extraordinary gifts bestowed upon them, and were inclined to cut themselves off from the ordinary interests and duties of life; there they lived on the borderland of Paganism and made compromises with its ethical ideals and standards.

Here they corrupted the distinctive creed of the Church by assimilating too readily the prevailing ideas of the day ; there they tended to make Christianity little more than the latest of the many schools of philosophy. At one time the Christian life, in its protest against the surrounding vices of the world, veered towards asceticism and was threatened with the loss of breadth and sanity ; at another time the free life of the spirit was fettered with new laws and ritual and suffered from a recrudescence of legalism.

In these ways the Church, in shaping its course during its first years, was in danger of drifting now into the shoal and then into the backwater, and needed the clear vision and the strong hand of the Apostle to keep it resolutely in the main current of Christian thought and life. The constant tendency of the young Church to shift the emphasis, to change the perspective, to upset the balance of truth and life under the desperate impingement of heathenism on every side of it, forced Paul not only to define, but to defend the Gospel—and to defend it not so much against its enemies without as against its misguided friends within.

It is for this reason that we are led to study some of the aberrations which threatened to weaken or corrupt the Church. As these aberrations are not merely tendencies begotten by the peculiarities of apostolic times, but are deep-seated in human nature itself, they are constantly reappearing in the Church's history, and may therefore be studied with more than antiquarian interest. On account of this fact Paul's Epistles, as containing his polemic against the excesses and eccentricities and deviations to which the Christian life is subject, form an indispensable handbook for every Christian

Church which seeks to steer its course in the deep and safe waters of the mid-stream of Christian truth and holiness. These aberrations of Paul's time—Over-spirituality, Intellectualism, Asceticism, and Legalism—present to us types of degeneration not unfamiliar to the studious observer of Church life even in the present day.

The first of these aberrations which we notice is Over-spirituality. We do not mean by this that there were converts who were too spiritually minded. But there was, as there always is, a tendency to run after, affect, and emphasise the extraordinary, the extravagant and the exclusive; to indulge in spiritual exercises which are not the natural expression of spirituality of mind; and sometimes to substitute the spiritual form for the spiritual reality—a tendency to ostentation and singularity and the needless advertisement of distinctiveness from the world.

The young converts, surrounded by the stupendous forces of a dominant Paganism, needed wisdom to temper their zeal. They were apt to become heady and over-assertive, and to claim a spirituality which was their nascent ideal rather than their present possession. Paul had a difficult task in regulating a zeal which was as natural as it was dangerous. On the one hand, he had to restrain it from breaking through wholesome limits and thus hastening disaster instead of working reform. On the other hand, he had to guard against damping down the sacred fires that had been kindled, lest, for want of courage and thoroughness, the young converts should become compromising and effeminate.

Over-spirituality showed itself in many forms. Some-

times it affected the doctrine of the Apostolic Church. Among the Corinthians, for instance, spite of all their sensuality, and perhaps to some degree as a protest against it, there was a section which regarded the resurrection of the body as inconsistent with the spirituality of their faith. This section had probably been affected by Greek thought, which regarded the body, the material part of man, as the seat and source of all evil. Their "evil communications" with these Pagan minds had corrupted their "good manners."¹ It is quite possible that these over-spiritualists were like Hymenæus and Philetus, against whom Timothy was warned by Paul as holding that "the resurrection is past already,"² meaning that the true resurrection is only spiritual and is completed in man's resurrection from sin. Paul rightly withstood this method of spiritualising the faith, as a method which ate into the truth "as doth a gangrene."³ He declared that he had seen the Risen Christ, and he contended for the redemption of the whole man—even of the body, believing that God would give him a body "as it hath pleased Him."⁴

We see a similar tendency among the Thessalonians. Among them it took the form of an exorbitant regard for a single doctrine, which blinded them to the prosaic claims and duties of common life. The belief in the immediate coming of Jesus Christ is one of the Church's most cherished hopes and expectations. It is the spring also of many of her most blessed activities. But there is an extravagant manner of holding the doctrine—fixing the date, and crying, "Lo! here, and

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 33.

² 2 Tim. ii. 18.

³ *Ibid.* 17, R.V.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 38.

lo! there," which even in our own day leads many away from the path of sobriety and industry, and fosters an unlovely type of spirituality which brings Christianity into disrepute. Paul had to regulate this over-spirituality by calling back the Thessalonians to the simplicity of the quiet life of faith and expectation and toil, by exhorting them "that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands . . . that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without."¹

It is never safe to neglect the balance of truth. Each truth must be held in relation to the body of truth, lest it should become a light that leads to error. We may believe in the justice of God so exclusively as to conceive of God as a tyrant rather than as a father; or in His love, so as to rob us of our faith in Him as the moral governor of the world, whose righteousness is the ground and guarantee of all justice and equity. Christ's divinity may be so over-spiritualised as to take Him out of contact with, and out of reach of, our humanity, just as the Holy Spirit may be so etherealised as an influence as to dethrone Him from His place as a Person in the blessed Trinity. Each truth must be apprehended in its relations, as part of a whole.

But there is a much more unlovely form of over-spirituality—that which holds by the great doctrinal symbols with an ostentatious display of orthodoxy, with much loudness of profession and punctilious correctness of technical language. Paul was not blind to this hard and wooden orthodoxy, which prides itself on correctness of creed and falls into the baneful

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12.

error of a life which is one long heresy against the charity and peace of Jesus Christ. We may speak the language of saints and live the life of sinners. We may make the doctrines of Jesus Christ our shibboleths for testing our neighbour's faith, whilst they scarcely hide the meagre anatomy of our own. Paul himself no doubt insisted on the value of holding fast "the form of sound words." But when he exhorted Timothy to this duty he was not ignorant of the danger of holding fast the form and letting go the spirit. We require to quote the whole exhortation in order to preserve the balance of truth and avoid the error: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, *in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*"¹

It was never intended that the Christian should live in a world of metaphysical abstractions which rarified his religion till it became useless for common life. It is always easier to protest our orthodoxy than to live like a Christian. It is, however, a striking fact that the judgments of Jesus are not based upon theological correctness, but upon social conduct. The "idle word,"² which does no work of helpfulness, has to be accounted for. They who show no charity to the poor, the naked, the prisoner, the sick, do no service to Christ and are unfit to be in His presence. They who have prophesied in His name, and in His name have cast out devils, and yet have broken the law of neighbourliness, are compelled to depart. Dives is punished because he ignored the social contrast as presented to him in Lazarus. Zacchæus, the religious outcast, is counted a son of Abraham because he

¹ 2 Tim. i. 13.

² Matt. xii. 36.

cultivated the common grace of charity towards the poor and made honourable restitution for his faults.

Paul falls into line with the teaching of Jesus: for, although he works out the doctrinal issues of the facts of Christ's life and death and resurrection and glory, he never fails to use these great doctrines for furthering his ethical teaching, and to correlate them with the culture of the Christian life of charity and holiness. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."¹ "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."²

This over-spirituality, however, manifested itself in Paul's day in worship as well as in doctrine. There grew up sometimes an unhealthy desire for the extraordinary, the eccentric, the exclusive. The converts thus singled themselves out from the common herd of unobtrusive Christians. In the Colossian Church there was the tendency to fall away from Christ by worshipping angels, and by brooding over visions which had appeared in moments of ecstasy—the prototype of our modern spiritualism.³ It sometimes took the form of a morbid love of the mysterious, which, as a "form of godliness," led captive especially the women of the Church, corrupting their minds by feeding them on a knowledge of things which never satisfied—"ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."⁴

In Corinth, on the other hand, the gift of tongues was greatly coveted. It is evident that the tongues were

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19. ² 1 Cor. xiii. 2. ³ Col. ii. 18. ⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 5-8.

not the same manifestation of the Spirit as those of Pentecost. At Pentecost the tongues were intelligible to others: in Corinth they were not.¹ The Corinthians revelled in this new excitement and almost identified it with the spiritual life.

Paul made the needed correction. He pointed out that the object of worship was not self-pleasing or self-glorying, but the edification of the Church: "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church."² These tongues were given "for a sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not."³ They are, therefore, not intended for social worship, and should not be indulged in, as they encourage display and self-glorying. But he goes deeper, and asserts the pre-eminence of charity as the flower and fruit of the Spirit; and deeper still when he declares that all these extraordinary spiritual gifts are valueless if this homely quality of charity is wanting.

To Paul the greatest miracle of the Spirit is the redemption of the sinner from a life of selfishness to a life of love. His contention is that the chief function of the Spirit is not the bestowal of miraculous powers, such as tongues, but the quiet inspiration and guidance which are afforded to the ethical and practical life of man. In his enumeration of the qualities which constitute the "fruit of the Spirit," love takes the first place,⁴ and in that exquisite hymn in which he sings the praise of charity⁵ all other gifts and acquirements and graces pale before its brightness as stars before the sun. To Paul's mind spirituality is not to be measured by the ecstasy of our speech, by the extent of our knowledge,

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 2.

² *Ibid.* 12.

³ *Ibid.* 22.

⁴ Gal. v. 22.

⁵ 1 Cor. xiii.

by the munificence of our benevolence, or by the heroism of our self-sacrifice,¹ not by the occasional, the extraordinary, the ecstatic, but by that habit of the character which becomes the Christian's second nature—charity.

Such tendencies as these encourage an unwholesome conception of the Christian life and breed qualities which are not indigenous to the Christian character. Our religion is apt to be dissociated from ordinary life, to become a mere cult suitable for the few, and to lose that universal note which differentiates it from all other religions. Whenever we regard spirituality as a type of life which needs an environment exclusively for itself, the common life in the ordinary environment becomes profane. The life of the ascetic and the monk may be justified as a temporary protest against luxury and sensuality, but the Christian saint finds the material for actualising his holiness, not in special regimen of conduct and ritual of worship, but in the common duties and courtesies and charities of everyday life. Spirituality does not consist in aloofness from the world, but in actual contact with it, together with a certain spiritual elevation of character. The Christian weaves his web of life like other men, with the common weft and in the common warp of everyday affairs—but with a divine pattern. His spirituality is not in what he does, but in how he does it—not in the material he uses, but in the design he works out. In other words, religion is life, not a part of life. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."²

When we cultivate a formal or official spirituality of character we end in a refined hypocrisy. We must

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3.

² *Ibid.* x. 31.

not clothe the child in the garments of a man on the plea that he will grow up to fit them. We must make the clothes fit the child for present wear. An overstrained religion, a spirituality that is over-spirituality, is both a hypocrisy and a self-deception. A man may think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but the world also thinks, and perceives the real face behind the mask. "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."¹

It is worthy of our attention that these over-spiritualists of Paul's day were characterised by a pride and censoriousness such as we might expect. It was to the "spiritual" among the Galatians that Paul addressed these words: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."²

The advice is a rebuke, for true spirituality is never censorious. When spirituality prides itself on its privileges or endowments, upon its intellectual or rhetorical accomplishments, upon its ecclesiastical or social credit, it ceases to be the spirituality which comes from Christ. Its origin must be sought in some other spirit than that which proceeds from the Father and is the witness and advocate of the Son.

¹ Gal. vi. 3.

² *Ibid.* v. 25—vi. 1.

*THE PLACE OF THE INTELLECT IN THE
SPIRITUAL LIFE*

“It would be a cold world in which no sun shone until the inhabitants thereof had arrived at a true chemical analysis of sunlight.”—HATCH'S *Greek Ideas and the Christian Church*.

“Well might the ancients say, God made practical divinity necessary, the devil controversial.”—WESLEY

“Reason has exposed many superstitions only to become itself the final object of superstition. Men forget that, after all, ‘reasoning is only re-co-ordinating states of consciousness already co-ordinated in certain simpler ways,’ and that which is unreasoned is not always irrational. Rationality in man is not shut up in one air-tight compartment. ‘There is no feeling or volition which does not contain in it the element of knowledge.’ This is the truth which Hegel has seized when he speaks of religion as reason talking naively.”—*Lux Mundi*.

CHAPTER XX

THE PLACE OF THE INTELLECT IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

THE Gospel had not only to contend against a type of spirituality which detached it from common life, but it had to define its relation to the intellectual demands which threatened to divert it from its proper purpose. There has always existed a tendency to regard the Gospel as offering a solution of the problems which press hard upon the intellect, rather than as providing a way of escape from the conviction and the power of sin which weigh heavily upon the conscience.

The tendency manifests itself in many ways: sometimes by rationalising the Gospel till its supernatural basis is undermined; sometimes by overloading it with metaphysical subtleties till its directness and simplicity are lost; sometimes by aiming at a systematic scheme of thought which satisfies the cravings of the mind, but starves the heart; sometimes by sacrificing the breadth and simplicity of Christ's teaching to the limitations and fixity of human dogmas. Whichever form it may take, the danger remains of turning the Church of Christ into a school of philosophy, of giving more importance to the play of man's intellect than to the revelation of Christ's mind, of glorifying correct

thinking above holy living, of crushing simple faith under the heel of intellectual arrogance.

It cannot be reiterated too frequently that Christianity, in its essence, is a revelation. It is a revelation of the heart and mind and will of God. It is not a philosophy, though men may philosophise upon what is revealed. It is not a theology, though men may formulate and correlate the doctrines implied in it. The Gospel is not man's thoughts about God, but God's good news of Himself to man.

Christianity is revelation set forth in facts. The ultimate fact of revelation is the fact of Christ. He Himself declares the mind, heart, and will of God, and makes the divine appeal to the mind, heart, and will of man. His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation are facts. These facts may be stated as doctrines, but any doctrinal statement of them which obscures the facts or weakens the force of them, constitutes an aberration from the truth as it is in Jesus.

We sometimes forget that the early Christians had no theology; at least, their theology was not fixed and formulated. Christ to them was the revelation of God's grace, which opened up to them a new way of life. It was not that He changed their opinions merely; He changed their manner of living. It was not that He solved their intellectual difficulties regarding the universe; He solved their moral difficulties regarding themselves. And, if we inquire into the process by which they verified and actualised the Gospel, we find that it was less by the efforts of the intellect than by the ventures of experience. Christ, as the incarnate love of God, appealed to the conscience to meet His claim of love and obedience, and enabled men to meet

it. "Follow Me," was His appeal ; and the effort of faith to meet the appeal and to live the life verified the truth of the Gospel.

Whilst it is true that the mind of man may, and indeed must, ratiocinate upon the facts presented to it, and cannot do other than construct a view of God and the world based upon these facts, yet this is only a means to an end, and at the best secondary. The mind must apprehend the Gospel before it can act upon it ; but the Gospel itself is not merely illumination, but redemption ; and, so far as it is illumination, it is such for the purposes of redemption. A system of theology is not the requisite of every Christian. The Gospel of Christ may be sufficiently apprehended by our instincts and intuitions, our unconscious reason, to warrant us in putting it to the test of experience by living it. And it is this fact which secures the Gospel as the inheritance of the unlettered and the unlearned, who form the vast majority of those who need its hopes and comforts and inspiration. In the Church's infancy "not many wise men after the flesh" were called.

At first sight it seems strange that the Apostle Paul should have led the way in carrying out to their logical issues the cardinal facts of the Gospel. But it was essential to the peculiar task to which he had devoted himself—the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. There was a difference in the characteristics of the Jewish and Gentile mind. The former was ethical and practical, and eager for righteousness ; the latter was metaphysical and logical, and eager for wisdom. Almost everywhere Paul came in contact with the Greek mind which played upon the Gospel with its

keen dialectic. He was forced therefore to defend the Gospel philosophically against the tendency to philosophic aberration.

But whilst Paul theologises he never mistakes theology for religion. He adopts this mode of presenting the Gospel because it is one of the main avenues of access to the Greek type of mind. Yet to him religion does not consist in correct opinion, but in holy living ; not in an illuminated mind, but in a renewed heart. He is willing to be "all things to all men" that he may win some. He never loses sight of the fact that the springs of the Christian life are not found in man's thoughts of God, but in God's thoughts of man and in the faith which apprehends and yields itself to them. Hence he does not pretend to come before his hearers as a sophist "with wisdom of words," desirous of intellectual conquest won by trick of oratory, but as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, resolved to win men into a new life by presenting to them the new way which God has revealed in Christ and Him crucified.

Nor was Paul unobservant of some of the dangers of the speculative type of mind. One of the dangers was that of substituting speculation for revelation. All around Paul were schools of thought in which the disciples were more anxious to press the Gospel into their theories than to adjust their theories to revealed facts. Even within the Church this tendency manifested itself and led to schismatic results. Christ was divided, each school presenting a partial Christ to its disciples.¹ This partisanship was wisely and firmly resented by Paul, as causing rivalry and confusion among the many

¹ 1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

members of "the one body,"¹ and as making the cross of Christ "of none effect" by "wisdom of words."² Why, says Paul, what is the result of all speculation? "In the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God."³ The only remedy was in the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified; for Christ is the only "wisdom of God" which leads to redemption, as it alone is conjoined with redemptive power.⁴

Paul does not seek to curb the natural desire of the intellect to solve the mysteries by which it is surrounded. The indestructible impulse of thought is part of his own endowment of nature and is to be respected; but he knows its limits and perils in the religious life. Not that he considers himself debarred from all philosophy: indeed, he ranks himself among the thinkers who seek wisdom: "Howbeit," he says, "we speak wisdom among the perfect [fullgrown]: yet a wisdom not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age [the philosophers of his day], which are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery."⁵ This wisdom however, is something to which he has attained not by intellectual effort, but by spiritual illumination: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."⁶

Paul is justly jealous of the encroachments of the reason in the religious sphere of life, lest the philosophising spirit should quench the Spirit of God in man. Christ makes His appeal to the whole man—affection and will, instinct and intuition, as well as intellect—to bring the whole man, including his every thought into

¹ 1 Cor. xii. *passim*.

² *Ibid.* i. 17.

³ *Ibid.* 21.

⁴ *Ibid.* 24.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii. 6, 7, R.V. margin.

⁶ *Ibid.* 12.

His redemption and service. Hence Paul affirms that he does not use "carnal weapons" in his warfare with those who divert the allegiance of men from the Gospel; but, that nothing should come between the soul and God, and in protest against the enticements and interests of a purely intellectual life, he determines to wage war with weapons which are "mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds; casting down reasonings, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing *every thought* into captivity to the obedience of Christ."¹

But there was also the danger that men should entertain the assumption that the Gospel was to be verified only by the reason. It is one of the chronic weaknesses of faith that it so often waits upon the verdict of philosophy. Faith has to find its verification in a more direct way—in experience. We do not believe that reason as such is opposed to Christianity;² yet we must not look to it for the confirmation of our faith. Does the truth of Christ appeal to you? Then live it. Life will prove whether it is the power of God for your salvation. "Taste and see." The last word that reason has to say of our Christian faith is something more than agnosticism. As has been said by Romanes, one of the most fearless but reverent thinkers, "The unbiassed answer of pure agnosticism ought reasonably to be, in the words of John Hunter, 'Do not think: try.' That is, in this case, try the only experiment

¹ 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, R.V., margin.

² "In every generation it must henceforth become more and more recognised by logical thinking, that all antecedent objections to Christianity founded on reason alone are *ipso facto* nugatory."—ROMANES, *Thoughts on Religion*, 166.

available—the experiment of faith. Do the doctrine, and if Christianity be true, the verification will come, not indeed mediately, through any course of speculative reason, but immediately by spiritual intuition. Only if a man has faith enough to make the venture honestly, will he be in a just position for deciding the issue. . . . It is a fact that Christian belief is much more due to doing than to thinking, as prognosticated by the New Testament. ‘If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.’ And surely, on grounds of reason itself, it should be allowed that, supposing Christianity to be of God, it ought to appeal to the spiritual rather than to the rational side of our nature.”¹

When pre-eminence is given to the speculative tendency there is the danger of applying to the Christian the test of a metaphysical creed rather than that of a living faith which issues in a Christlike life. But to judge a Christian’s faith by the creed which he claims to be his, is like judging a student’s knowledge by his library, or a musician’s technique by his piano, or the chemist’s skill by his laboratory. The Christian’s faith is not to be judged by his adherence to certain metaphysical opinions regarding the facts of revelation. His opinions are his, and, at the best, human: the facts are God’s, and in their austere simplicity are always divine. These facts were not revealed to supply data for speculation, but to give inspiration for holy living. Creeds may assist us in the interpretation of these facts: they may help us to see the rounded whole of the various parts of divine truth; but, after all, they are only scaffolding, and the question remains: what

¹ *Thoughts on Religion*, 167, 168.

sort of a life we are building up as the temple of God's spirit? We may erect an imposing scaffolding and never even begin to build.

We have been slow to learn that redemption is the only test that can be applied to the Christian. How far has this work, which is the work of Christ, progressed in a man's life? A man may be a true Christian without having any well-defined theories of the revealed facts of the Gospel; he may not be able even to understand the creed of his fellows; but Christ may be none the less to him, as to the first Christians, "the power of God unto salvation." If it were not so, the Church would be little more than another school of thought and the disciples within it only a select coterie of aristocratic intellects.

As the end of revelation is the new life, so the presence of the new life is the ultimate test of the Christian. Paul speaks about adorning "the doctrine of God our Saviour."¹ But the adorning of the doctrine was not effected by merely intellectual adherence to a creed. There was a higher test applied—the ethical issue. "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing *salvation* to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, *that He might redeem us from all iniquity*, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works."²

It was in the same strain that the Apostle counselled his disciple Titus to "affirm confidently, to the end

¹ Titus ii. 10.

² *Ibid.* 11-14, R.V.

that they which have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." But he is to "shun foolish questionings," "for they are unprofitable and vain."¹ Everywhere throughout the New Testament the legitimate issue of the Gospel is the new ethical dynamic which it supplies. Where this is absent, all our speculations and dogmas and intellectual judgments go for nothing.

It is, however, when we turn to Paul's Epistle to the Colossians that we have the chief example of his treatment of this aberration of intellectualism. In the Church at Colosse intellectualism had appeared in the form of a more or less defined Gnostic tendency. There was apparently a section of the Church which was oppressed with the problem of reconciling the existence of evil with the creation of the world by a wise and beneficent God. In its attempt to solve this old difficulty it resorted to a series of speculations which tended to cater to intellectual vanity and to eliminate the facts of revelation which appealed to faith. Paul apprehended the danger of the Church being spoiled "through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men."

It is interesting to observe how he deals with this typical heresy. He does not ignore the difficulty which presses upon the mind. He meets it by showing that all this wisdom of which the Colossians boast as a solution of their difficulties is a wisdom of words:² the true wisdom is to be found treasured up in Christ, the wisdom of God,³ the supreme fact of the universe, who hath reconciled "all things to Himself . . . whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Then

¹ Titus iii. 8, 9, R.V.

² Col. ii. 4, 18.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 16, etc.

he brings them down to the essential fact of their redemption from sin by the grace of God in Christ, which should be the basis of their faith and hope as Christians, and was of more importance than the solution of the riddle of the universe: "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight."¹

Paul subjects this intellectual aberration to two tests. First, he tries it by its ethical issue. What has it produced? What is its outcome in life and character? It had issued in a mere ritual of life, which forbade things in themselves innocent, and enjoined things in themselves indifferent, and placed the ethical emphasis on the doing of things instead of on the spirit in which they are done, as if there were some fixed regimen, other than faith in Jesus Christ, by which holiness could be attained. This ascetic spirit showed itself in matters of meat and drink, and feast days and new moons and sabbaths, in worshipping angels and dwelling on visions, and in subjection to ordinances of self-denial.²

But, strange to say, alongside of this ascetic punctiliousness in the observance of the supposed higher ethical forms there was a great laxity in the matter of obedience to the elementary duties of the ethical spirit. The superior thinkers may have curbed many of their lower desires, "but now," says the Apostle, "put ye also away all these; anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth."³ The fact was, they were degenerating into an ascetic

¹ Col. i. 21, 22.

² *Ibid.* ii. 16-22.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 8, R.V.

Pharisaism, which substituted the letter of the ethical life for the spirit. This, Paul asserts, shows that what they need is to understand Christ better. If they were risen with Christ they would set their affection on things above, and not on things on the earth;¹ they would think more of their liberties and less of their restrictions; and, instead of crushing this and that desire piecemeal, exhausting their energies in fighting against sin, they would die right off to all sin, and mortify their members at once, in the very act of rising into the new life in Christ.² Thus their intellectualism failed in not producing a wholesome ethic, which is the natural outcome of a simple unencumbered faith in Jesus Christ.

It failed in another way—when tested by the canon of Christian catholicity. Then, as always, a rationalising and speculative tendency when found within the Church produced an intellectual caste, exclusive, arrogant, pretentious, and somewhat Pharisaic, which claimed wisdom as its peculiar prerogative and privilege, and left simple faith to simple folk, who were content to “mind not high things.”³ It is a type which never dies out, though now it takes the form of “a show of wisdom in will-worship,” rather than in “humility and severity to the body.”⁴ They are high-class Christians, into whose select circle none can enter except those who have been initiated into their peculiar intellectual mysteries.

Paul properly withstood all this as hostile to the universality of the Gospel, which knows nothing of castes and schools and higher and lower wisdom. No barriers of mysticism or asceticism or intellectualism

¹ Col. iii. 1, 2. ² *Ibid.* 5. ³ Rom. xii. 16. ⁴ Col. ii. 23, R.V.

are to be raised up in the Church in which all things are free to all. Men are not accepted by God because of these human distinctions, nor are they disqualified by the absence of them. Whatever men may do, "God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery" to every man, "warning *every man*, and teaching *every man* in *all* wisdom; that we may present *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus"¹; for in the "new man," who is the highest product of the Christian faith, all distinctions are done away: "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."² "The aristocracy of intellectual discernment, which Gnosticism upheld in religion, is abhorrent to the first principles of the Gospel."³

¹ Col. i. 27, 28. ² *Ibid.* iii. 11. ³ Lightfoot's *Colossians*, p. 98.

*THE LIMITS AND DANGERS OF THE ASCETIC
SPIRIT*

“It is in these respects, then, that I ask you to show me your progress. If I were to say to an athlete, Show me your muscles, and he were to say, See, here are my dumb-bells! What I want to see is, not them, but their effect.”—EPICTETUS.

“The power of the Masters is shewn by their self-annihilation.”—RUSKIN.

“It is true, however, that the farewell to happiness is the beginning of wisdom and the surest means of finding happiness. There is nothing sweeter than the return of joy which follows the renunciation of joy; nothing more vivid, more profound, more charming than the enchantment of the disenchanted.”—RENAN’S *Marcus Aurelius*.

“No court-marshal or provost-marshal’s cord would stop thieving in a regiment, or make a coward brave; but an *esprit de corps* and honour have done it again and again.”—F. W. ROBERTSON’S *Life and Letters*.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LIMITS AND DANGERS OF THE ASCETIC SPIRIT

ANOTHER form of aberration against which Paul was obliged to contend was the denial of the sanctity of the natural life. The ascetic spirit was not a creation of Christianity. The Christian religion found it in the world as a force making, somewhat blindly, for righteousness, a discipline created by the higher impulses of the spirit, a cult which won the allegiance of many of the most earnest souls. Christianity had to define its attitude towards asceticism as a way of holiness by which many were travelling in search of the solution of the oppressive riddle of the moral life—a way frequently trodden by bleeding feet, and hallowed by the sufferings of martyrs.

Asceticism is a manner of life which necessarily issues from a mode of thought. The old antithesis between the one and the many, spirit and matter, God and the world, has always arrested the mind as involving a moral antithesis between good and evil, happiness and misery. The Oriental and Greek minds could not reconcile these hostile elements; they could find no higher unity which embraced both.

Man is not a mere spectator of this universal conflict.

He is involved in it because of his very nature. He himself is the microcosm of the universe. He is spirit and matter, one in his self-consciousness and many in his passions, torn asunder by willing the good and doing the evil, seeking happiness and finding misery. How is he to escape from this dilemma? How is he to overcome the innate dualism of his nature?

That was the ethical problem which presented itself to Buddhist and fakir and dervish; to stoic and cynic and Essene and Nazarite. The answer came in many forms: fight, mortify, deny, ignore, renounce, withdraw; but whatever the form might be, it was based upon the assumption that the material world and the present scheme of things and the human body were in themselves necessarily and irrecoverably evil. The path of illumination and happiness was one which led out of the world and away from the flesh: neither the world nor the flesh could be brought into the service of God and holiness, as both were totally depraved.

The data of this problem are still the same, and the old difficulty remains. And although Christianity offers a higher solution, as we shall afterwards see, it is remarkable that within the Church, and often with its sanction, the ascetic spirit has frequently sought expression in the old forms of seclusion, self-torture, and mortification. The reason of this is not far to seek. The heroic element in man despises the easy way, the quiet unhistrionic life of spiritual detachment, of subtle reconciliation and compromise. It demands the visible act, the costly sacrifice, the pain, the loss, which defy the world and the flesh. But, none the less, the problem is not to be solved in that

way. It is only shirked, or at best postponed, for it leaves the world and the flesh outside of God's divine purpose and providence, unreconciled and unreconcilable with His beneficence, and in eternal enmity to His sovereign will.

How does the matter stand? Man finds himself, as a spiritual being, the centre of three concentric circles, which hem him in, imprison and enslave him, flouting his freedom, and preventing his absolute devotion to God and the Good. The outermost circle is the material world with its material possessions. The nearer circle is the body with its passions and fleshly desires. The innermost is that which binds his will as with a band of iron, rendering it powerless to escape towards God.

What is a man to do when he finds himself the centre of these three circles of hostility, which seem to be gradually closing in upon him and crushing his true being? Obviously there are only three courses left to him.

The first is to spend his strength and his days in resistance, fighting against their encroachments and contesting every inch of the ground. This is the old-fashioned warfare of the Oriental fakir and of some of the more modern saints.

The second is to ignore or renounce. We may assume the non-existence of the hostile forces: deny that they have any power, and sit at peace in our tent as if the hostile circles had vanished away under our contempt. Or, which comes to the same thing, we may turn our back upon them, resolved to hold no parley with the enemy, casting back the challenge as from one unworthy of blunting our steel.

If we thus ignore, we may live our lives in two ways diametrically opposite. We may sit down as if we were outside the outermost circle, as if in a non-existent world like the Buddhist devotee, given over to the contemplation of the one absolute being, God, with whom the spirit seeks rest and union; or we may still sit at the centre in ease and pleasure, as if the hostile lines were blotted out, following our impulses, satisfying our natural desires, indifferent to the issues of a battle in which we have no concern, asserting our independence of the material world by denying its power to harm. So easily may the principles that breed the ascetic give birth to the libertine.

But, on the other hand, renunciation may see the enemy and decline to give battle. We may leave the enemy in possession of all within the radii of the three circles except the centre, man himself as a spirit, who claims and conserves his rights and affinities with God. We may renounce the material world in the vow of poverty, and thus the outer circle is disposed of; the inner world, as embracing the desires and passions of the flesh, we may give up in the vow of chastity; the innermost circle of the will we may set aside by the vow of obedience. Renunciation thus makes its escape not by fighting through the lines of the enemy, nor yet by ignoring them, but by giving over to the enemy the ground he claims and occupies, and by keeping clear only the straight upward access of the spirit to God. It is the solution of the problem offered by the monastic life.

There is yet a third course left to us. We may change the venue of the contest. The dispute is not between us and the world, or between us and the

body, or between us and our will. It goes far deeper : it is between us and God. The seat of evil is in ourselves : the enmity is in our minds, not in material things. Our worldly possessions, our bodies, our wills, take colour of good or evil from the inner life of the spirit. In themselves they are morally indifferent. They are to us as we are to them. They master us if we serve them : they serve us if we serve God. Hence the solution does not lie in fighting, or ignoring, or renouncing the world and the flesh and the will, but in dying to them by becoming alive to God.

With the new life in Christ comes the new spirit which can only use the material world to the glory of God. The word which sums up the asceticism of the Christian is not "fight," "ignore," "renounce," but *sanctify*. All things are brought into the service of the spirit ; they are consecrated by the consecration of those who walk unsexed in the midst of them. The dualism between God and the world disappears when man is reconciled to God and attains the unity of the spirit. It is now we arrive at the solution of Christ, which is also that of Paul.

It may seem strange that Christianity, which itself is strongly ascetic in spirit, had to face the task of distinguishing its way of life from the ascetic practices with which the Pagan mind was familiar. It is apparent that it frequently assimilated these and made them its own with too great ease, forgetful of the higher way that was trodden by the blessed feet of the Master, and fenced in by the Apostle, who in the first days of the Church perceived the tendency to aberration. For, though the spirit of the Christian religion is ascetic, it can never be adequately expressed in the ascetic forms

of Paganism. It has a form of its own, more subtle, more difficult, because more spiritual.

It is in Jesus Christ that we see the assertion of a purer ascetic ideal. It is presented to us in Him as a life of beauty, simplicity, and naturalness. There is no histrionic protestation, no self-immolation, no denunciation of a wicked world, no torture of an evil body. To Him the world is God's world, full of beauty and instinct with worthy joys and utilities. He sees in the processes of nature and in the creatures around Him symbols and parables of the divinest things. His body suffers no self-inflicted flagellations. He does not withdraw from the society of men. He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners. He visits freely the homes of His friends, and enjoys the comforts of simple hospitality. Nothing is profane around Him, because nothing is profane within. The world and human life are sanctified by His presence.

Yet His life was essentially an ascetic life—a life of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and pain, as the higher life must always be in a world where there is so much misery, suffering, and sin. But there is this distinction between the asceticism of Jesus and that of others; His was not a mere self-mortification for the attainment of personal sanctity. He preserved His sanctity by other means—by His oneness with the Father. The impulse of His asceticism sprang from His love of others and had its motive in the salvation of humanity. His pains and agonies, His Gethsemane and Calvary were not moments in His own seeking after union with God, but self-chosen means of redeeming the world; for it stands eternally true that we can only relieve pain by pain, and ease the miseries

of others by becoming miserable, and take away sin by sacrifice and cross-bearing.

In all this Jesus has left us the rule of the true ascetic. It is not separation or withdrawal from the world that is demanded, but elevation. When Perseus fought the dragon which threatened to destroy Andromeda, he fought from above, poised on wings in the air. So we fight our evil passions and rescue the soul by fighting from the spiritual elevation of faith in Jesus Christ. It is not weary vigils or bleeding flagellations which conquer lust, but the indwelling of the Spirit in the body, as in the temple of the Lord. We do not attain to sanctity by long battle, by sacrificial processes, by a life of agonies, by piece-meal mortifications. We die at once to the world in the very act of becoming alive to God in Jesus Christ. The victory over the world is not won by our doing, or renouncing, or resisting; but "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."¹ So the asceticism of the Christian life is not the means but the result of our holiness, and has as its object the bearing of the world's burden and the bringing of the world back to God.

Whilst there was much to be admired in the ascetic types of life which were resorted to as a means of self-culture in holiness, they could seldom be justified from the point of view of thought or from their practical results. They were too frequently based upon the assumption that the material world, including the human body, is essentially evil, and therefore irreconcilable and intractable in God's universal scheme and purpose. This could never satisfy the mind, which

¹ 1 John v. 4.

instinctively demands a view of the world in which God is supreme and absolute. It was an assumption which changed the locus of sin from the centre in the spirit of man to the circumference in the body or in the material world. It produced only a stunted type of manhood in Pagan and Christian alike, not without much moral grandeur, but without that rounded fulness and completeness which Christ has taught us to demand.

Again, it tended more and more to be regarded as a moral ritual engaged in as a service of God.¹ Whilst we can conceive of self-immolation and self-seclusion as being pleasing for their own sakes to the gods of heathen conception, we cannot conceive that they give pleasure to our God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who made the great sacrifice for us and for the world. We "enter into the holiest," not by our blood and pain, but "by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."² We do not serve God by denials and protests and abnegations and renunciations: these are negations; we serve Him in the Spirit, rejoicing in the Spirit, living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit.

Nor can we ignore the fact that all ascetic culture engaged in for its own sake as a method of holiness almost inevitably dims the glory of the cross and depreciates the merit of Christ. If life is turned into a daily crucifixion we may think more of our cross than of His, and may come to think of ourselves as

¹ "Will-worship," which is "volunteered, self-imposed, officious, supererogatory *service*."—LIGHTFOOT'S *Colossians*, ii. 23.

² Heb. x. 19, 20.

adding to or sharing in the merit which brings salvation. Our thorns may compete with His, and our self-inflicted wounds may claim reward.

It is so easy to forget that we die to self and the world with a blow; not by inches, but the whole body at a stroke; not through years, but in a moment. And the death-blow comes with the access of the new life through faith in Christ. When we see our great sacrifice in the Crucified, the world is crucified to us and we unto the world, and we know that we are "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."¹ There is a glorying in our own cross which may impair our glorying in the cross of Christ. The pursuit of self-abnegation may end in self-esteem and self-righteousness.

Notwithstanding all these aberrations to which the ascetic spirit is liable, asceticism has, however, a "soul of good," and it is this which the Christian takes over as his own. But he does not regard the world as evil in itself. It is evil to the evil and good to the good. So also with the body: it may be "dead because of sin"²; but sin is only a usurper and intruder entrenched in the flesh: "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"³ The body is "for the Lord; and the Lord for the body"⁴; and so "the redemption of the body" is included in the scope of Christ's purpose of salvation.

It is with this view of the moral indifference of the world and the body that Paul denies the validity of the ascetic cult of mere self-seclusion and self-mutilation as a healthy moral discipline. The world and the body are recovered to us by Christ, and sanctified to us, who

¹ Rom. vi. 11. ² *Ibid.* viii. 10. ³ 1 Cor. vi. 19. ⁴ *Ibid.* 13.

have ourselves been sanctified to Him. "All things are yours," says the Apostle, when ye are Christ's. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.¹" In Paul's view, man has been rehabilitated in the use and enjoyment of the world by the fact of his own reconciliation to God.

In the same way the old conflict with the flesh takes a new turn. We do not conquer the body and make it serve us by thinking about and fighting against it, but by rising above it in our thoughts and aims. Being quickened² and risen with Christ, we are to "seek" and to set our "mind on the things that are above."³ To think so much about our abstinences and restrictions is unworthy of us as citizens of eternity, who have died to these things, and whose "life is hid with Christ in God." These are all passing things—things which "perish with the using"⁴; whereas Christ is our life,⁵ and our thoughts should also be with Him. Why? When we rise with Christ out of the grave of our sins we die with Him to all these "rudiments of the world"; we come under the power of a great living principle—the Spirit of Christ—and our subjection to ordinances,⁶ our ascetic restrictions and severities, are a falling back from the all-sufficiency of Christ upon the "commandments of men," and, as a matter of fact, "are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh."⁷ Asceticism as a means of attaining holiness is both superfluous and futile. We are not sanctified by self-

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, R.V.

² Col. ii. 13.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 1, 2, R.V.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 22.

⁵ *Ibid.* iii. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.* ii. 20, 22.

⁷ *Ibid.* 23, R.V. : cf. 1. Tim. iv. 8.

discipline, but by faith in Jesus Christ; and being thus sanctified, all things are sanctified for our use and enjoyment. As Augustine has said, "If only you love God *enough*, you may safely follow all your inclinations."

Yet we find the ascetic element present in the teaching of Jesus and of Paul; it is not, however, as a rule which applies to the whole of life, but as an occasional advice to meet some spiritual emergency. Take two instances in Christ's ministry.

On one occasion Christ advocated an extreme measure of self-repression. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off"¹; "If thy foot offend thee, cut it off"²; "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out."³ Two things may be remarked concerning this. First, it is not a counsel given with a view to self-discipline. It has a social reference and is uttered with a view to preserve the health and amenity of the infancy of another's faith. The hand or the foot or the eye has offended thee, because it has offended "one of these little ones that believe in Me."⁴ The ascetic act has its sanction in the principle that no man liveth unto himself. And the second is, that Jesus only commends it as *better*: it is better to sacrifice the member than lose the whole body. But it is implied that there is a higher alternative—a better still, a *best*, which is to "enter into the kingdom of God" with full use of both hands, both feet, both eyes. For Jesus did not come to curtail and repress life, but to enlarge and enrich it: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."⁵

¹ Mark ix. 43.

² *Ibid.* 45.

³ *Ibid.* 47.

⁴ *Ibid.* 42.

⁵ John x. 10.

The other instance is that of the rich young ruler, and deals with the Christian's relations to material possessions. In this case it may be noted, first, that Christ invited him to take a far wider outlook. The young man imagined that he fulfilled all his duty to man when he kept to the letter of the second Table. Jesus teaches him that the eternal life which he desires is not to be got by the solitary quest of holiness which ignores the misery and poverty and pain of the world: it is to be attained by the path of social duty—by restoring the conditions of a fuller life to those who are hindered by less fortunate social and material circumstances. The "good thing"¹ for him to do in this spiritual emergency is to part with his goods for a greater good, and to realise the wider conception of the holy life by alleviating the distress of the poor.²

But this also is to be noted. The ascetic renunciation of the great possessions is only an incident. It might or might not be necessary. The necessity is to follow Christ at all costs. Renunciation may not be the best thing in itself, but it is the best for the young ruler. Better than this best it might have been to retain his possessions and use them in sanctified stewardship when following Christ; but best for him, in his circumstances, to part with them so as to be free to follow. When we cannot spiritually detach ourselves from material riches so as to have as if we had not, we must forfeit the less worthy for that which is more worthy of our divine nature—goods for the good.

The ascetic spirit is also found, as we might anticipate, in the life of Paul; but here also it has its distinctive note—a note not in discord with the teaching of Jesus.

¹ Matt. xix. 16.

² *Ibid* 21.

Sometimes his words imply a regimen of self-torture which reminds us of the mortifications of the saints. "I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected."¹ But this is not his last or highest word on the subject. It is only an undertone. We have not heard the music when the bass notes are played without the other parts. He buffets the body to bring it into condition; but the buffeting is only an incident with a view to its submission and service, after which all its faculties and capacities work harmoniously together to the great end for which they were created. "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?"² Our bodies are not ours to use them for our selfish inclinations and desires; our bodies are part of the redemption, and we must not let them fall back into the old service of sin. "Ye are not your own: for ye were bought with a price."³ "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?"⁴ We hold them as a trust to be administered for Christ, and the trustees must see to it that they are not diverted to false uses.

It is for that reason that the Apostle asked, with indignation and surprise: "Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot?"⁵ The body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and that temple must be cleansed even though it be with the "scourge of small cords." "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh."⁶ But it is also to be sanctified, that all its energies may be used in

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 27, R.V.

² *Ibid.* vi. 19, R.V.

³ *Ibid.* 19, 20, R.V.

⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ 2 Cor. vii. 1, R.V.

their highest power to "glorify God."¹ And this end is not effected by our self-repression, but by the Spirit's indwelling. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."² This complete surrender of the body in all the fulness and freedom of its powers, un-mutilated and unrestrained, is a debt which we owe to Him who has redeemed us by Himself and for Himself: "We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."³

The contention of Paul may therefore be summed up thus: Holiness is not attained by self-severity, nor is self-severity holiness. Holiness is won for us and given to us by Jesus Christ. He has redeemed even the body, and all ascetic practice for that end is superfluous. The passions of the body are conquered, not by fighting against them in our own strength—body against body—but by the indwelling of the Spirit. We make the doings of the body die *through the Spirit*,⁴ as the earth is released from the bands of the winter's frost by the genial breath of the spring. Paul's highest word regarding the body is not "buffet" or "repress," but *sanctify*, that the healthy body may be the servant and shrine of the Spirit.

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20. ² Gal. v. 16. ³ Rom. viii. 12, 13. ⁴ *Ibid.*

THE REVERSION TO LEGALISM

“If you are exchanging measurable maxims for immeasurable principles, surely you are rising from the mason to the architect.”—F. W. ROBERTSON.

“Sects are evil only when they become sectarian; that is, when differences of apprehension count for more than the object apprehended; when everything is spent on fences, while the fields themselves are given over to weeds and briars.”—HYDE’S *Social Theology*.

“A philosopher’s life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others; and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time.”—BROWNING’S *Soul’s Tragedy*.

CHAPTER XXII

THE REVERSION TO LEGALISM

ONE of the greatest services which Paul rendered to Christianity was his defence of the Christian faith against the various aberrations to which it was exposed on account of the tendencies of thought and life which played upon it in his time. These tendencies forced him to define not only what the Gospel was, but also what it was not. Indeed, one might say that the Apostle has met and fought the vanguard of the various hostile forces which have from time to time attacked the Christian faith, and has formulated the general line of defence which the Church must ever adopt. These tendencies spring perennially from the depths of human nature. They are in all ages the same in spirit, though different in form; and their recrudescence in the "carnal mind" may be anticipated as part of the providential discipline by which the Christian faith has to assert itself in order to preserve its purity and wholesomeness.

We have already considered Paul's defence of the Gospel against spiritual extravagance, against an intellectualism which threatened to reduce Christianity to a mere philosophy, and against the ascetic movement which threatened, in the interests of a false spirituality, to deny the legitimate claims of the natural life. We

now pass to the consideration of another aberration, more subtle and for that reason more dangerous, having to all appearance deeper affinities with the Christian faith—the tendency to fall back on the law and the doing of righteousness as a substitute for, or as a supplement to, the Gospel. This is the aberration of Legalism.

At first sight the tendency to legalism seems comparatively innocent. Is not the law the law of God? Has it not a permanent validity? Is it not holy and just? Is not the doing of the law the end alike of the law and of the Gospel? Was not Christianity born and cradled in Judaism? Why should not the old faith live with the new?

Paul apprehended the danger that lay in the blood-relationship of the law and the Gospel. The latter was in a profound sense the child of the former. Yet the one was so much an advance upon the other that the new inheritance secured by the Gospel had to be maintained at all costs and against all comers. By keenness of spiritual insight and by bitterness of experience the Apostle knew that the legal tendency was a falling back upon "weak and beggarly elements," a denial of the strength and richness of the Christian faith, a making void of the grace of God, a glorification of Judaism which detracted from the glory of the cross of Christ, a return to a method of life the failure of which in Pharisaism was the strongest argument for the Gospel of grace. Hence he contended against legalism with all the earnestness and passion of personal conviction, assured that the faith which justifies and sanctifies must be kept free from all legal assumptions and restrictions and additions if it is to preserve its

simplicity and power and universality. It is, he says, "a different Gospel ; which is not another"—so different that it is not only not a second Gospel, but no Gospel at all, for it would even "pervert the Gospel of Christ."¹

Paul himself could speak on this subject as few others. He had tried to scale the weary steps of legal obedience with the shining peaks of holiness ever before him, luring on his willing but aching feet ; but, having exhausted all the possibilities of legalism, he was forced to give up and retrace his steps. He found an easier and better way : a way to which no man directed him, which he himself had not discovered, but which was made known to him "by the revelation of Jesus Christ"²—the swift ascent to the summit on the wings of grace and faith. Having reached the end of all his striving, he could look back upon his futile experiments in righteousness by legal doings as one who was more than a critic, as one who had put all the resources of the law to the test and could only confess that, as touching the law, he remained but a Pharisee, whilst, as touching righteousness, he could claim nothing but the negative merit of blamelessness.³ The Apostle saw in his own experience the epitome of history. Devotion to law as a means of righteousness had in Israel ended in the stereotyped life of punctilious and pusillanimous Pharisaism. He himself had been swept away in the current of his times and had only escaped by the intervention of the Deliverer.

But, although the law did not, and could not, secure salvation for man, it fulfilled an important part in the divine economy. It was a negative preparation for

¹ Gal. i. 6, 7, R.V.

² *Ibid.* i. 12.

³ Phil. iii. 5, 6.

the faith in Christ Jesus. It discovered sin and brought home the sense of guilt to man ; it intensified sin by calling out its resistance ; it showed its own strength and weakness in condemning sinners whom it could not save ; it proved its own futility as a means of salvation, and left men no escape but in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "I through the law," said Paul, "died unto the law."¹ In the Apostle's religious experience the law worked out deliverance from the law ; and yet it had attained its true end in shutting him up to faith in the Crucified : "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."²

The truth of this judgment which the Apostle passes upon legal righteousness may be verified by any one who cares to make the experiment. Let any man set righteousness before him as the end of all his conduct, and lay himself under strict obedience to a set of injunctions and prohibitions with a view to that end, and what will be his experience? His verdict will almost certainly be this: he never knew that he was so bad till he tried to be good ; his rules exasperate him and make every breach of them a spiritual pain ; on every side his laws condemn him and afford no inspiration or help by which they can be kept. What he needs for all this mechanism is a new dynamic, and that is not to be discovered in any regimen of conduct. He finds that the attempt to produce holy living to order is futile, or ends at best in nothing better than Pharisaic externalism, so long as the heart is unchanged ; that the change cannot come from the circumference of doing, but from the centre by a fresh

¹ Gal. ii. 19, R.V.

² Rom. x. 4.

access of being; that the endeavour to live by law makes him die to law, and forces him back to Christ. The attempt of legalism, when honestly carried out, works its own cure, and becomes a negative preparation for the adoption of the Gospel method, which begins by renewing man in the springs of his life, and regulates the circumference from the centre, doing by being.

The truth is that all legal righteousness is vitiated by the effort to produce by the enforcement of rule what we can only produce by the spontaneous action of our own inner nature. It is a noble hypocrisy in which we strive to appear what we know we are not—a decoration of the tree of life with fruits which do not grow, but are only mechanically attached. Our best actions are but works of the law, strained piety; ours and yet not ours. Whereas the product of faith in Jesus Christ is "the fruit of the Spirit," and is brought forth, as fruit always is, without effort, without strain, as the natural expression of the new life of grace.

Experience had thus proved that legalism could not be a substitute for the Gospel. Nor could it be a supplement to the Gospel. It was not only "not another" Gospel, but it was "a different Gospel," which could not harmonise with, far less supplement, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet the attempt was made in the Churches of Galatia to put a patch of outworn legalism upon the fresh new garment of the Christian faith. Paul regarded the attempt to compromise with observances and rules and traditions as a distinct retrogression from the freedom with which Christ had made us free. It was a return to the "weak and beggarly elements," a deliberate resumption of the

“yoke of bondage,” an entanglement which was inseparable from ritual.¹

Ritual in worship or life as a fresh creation may be the genuine and fitting expression of the spirit, but when it becomes a tradition it voices the spirit in falsetto notes. We have to do violence to the spirit by forcing it into old forms, by dressing it in the cast-off garments of a previous generation; and the tendency always is to sacrifice the spirit of liberty to the letter of obedience, to make the doing of righteousness more important than the being righteous, to give God the service of acts approved by men rather than to love God with a filial heart. It is the old Pharisaic story of legalism—the tithing of mint, anise, and cumin, and neglecting the weightier matters of the law; only it is a new and worse version of the story; for it is the stifling of the freedom of the Christian life of faith by sacrificing the fresh and spontaneous impulses of the new life in Christ to fixed forms of worship, stereotyped conceptions of duty, limitations and prohibitions and observances, which may be right or wrong, true or false, to the soul. The legalism which is introduced as a supplement to support or eke out the weakness of our faith may remain as a substitute to supplant it.

This tendency to legalism forms one of the principal movements incidental to the spiritual life of Churches and individuals. There are three such movements. The first is that of simple buoyant faith, confident in itself, beautiful as the bursting of blossoms in spring, instinct with hope, and rejoicing in the prospect of the new life. Then the reaction—faith, fatigued by

¹ Gal. v. 1.

its own energetic action, exhausted by its own impetuosity and zeal, falling back upon forms of words and service and act, which were once instinct with significance, cleaving fast to correct evangelical phraseology, leaning its weakness on the crutches of rules of life once approved as right and natural. It is the period of legalism—dreary, disappointing, censorious, strained. Then comes the revival of faith—a more serene and sober and lasting faith, in which we know our weakness and strength, and cease to stake off life with fixed rules for ourselves and others. We become more tolerant of deviations from our ways of thinking and doing, believing that the Spirit may find many ways of expression in word and act. Enriched by a sobering experience, we learn to trust again with our first implicit faith in Jesus Christ, whose pity is our refuge and whose power is our strength.

We see the first stage in Abraham, the father of the faithful, who trusted God as a simple child, and it was counted to him for righteousness.¹ The faith of God filled his heart as a great wonder: he laid down no rules for his life, fixed no plans for the serving of the Lord, but trusted to the inner impulse of the Spirit, and went out into life "not knowing whither he went," believing that the land of promise was ever in front of him. In the first movement, or stage, are also all those "children of Abraham,"² the fresh converts of the Church, who rejoice in their deliverance from sin and in their new freedom of holiness, who believe, hope, and endure all things, whose love knows

¹ Gal. iii. 6.

² *Ibid.* 7. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

no weariness, whose services know no grudging or reckoning; to whom the love of Christ is the touchstone by which they try all things as to allowance or prohibition; in whom the new spirit, like a divine instinct, gives its verdict as to right and wrong, and liberates from external judgments. It is the time of love's espousals, when duty is clear and imperative, and deeds of love come spontaneously from the fulness of the heart that is wedded to Christ.

The second stage or movement may be seen in the later years of Judaism, when the first faith of its father Abraham was exhausted, and the old delight in doing God's will had passed away. The awe and mystery of God had been lost to the soul, and men craved for definiteness in opinion and conduct, refining and double-refining rules for regulating a life which had lost the self-regulation of the Spirit—a time in which, as it were, man roamed over the slopes of the mountain of the Lord in search of geological and botanical specimens, but blind to its beauty and mystery and awe; the age of Rabbinical casuists and petteifogging law-makers, not the age of law-givers and poets and prophets who lived in the ineffable Presence. It is the age of censoriousness of others rather than of self; of burden-laying rather than burden-bearing; of deadly doing rather than of living faith; the age which breeds the Pharisee and the Legalist.

Through this stage also passes many a young convert of the Church, in whom the first flush of faith has given place to spiritual fatigue and depression. When simple faith seems to fail, there is a falling back upon mechanical obedience, a self-exaction which is joyless,

a censoriousness which in its exasperation ceases to turn upon self and exercises itself upon others. It is in this mood that the fatal suspicion begins to creep over the soul that, whilst Christ is sufficient to justify, He is not sufficient to sanctify; that the work which He has begun by grace we must complete by merit; that we must add to the purchase-price by a dreary round of loveless doings. It is the aberration into legalism, the falling away from the Gospel into "a different Gospel, which is not another."

In the third stage we may place the Judaism of the Christian Church, represented by Peter and John and Paul, in whom the flame of Abrahamic faith bursts forth in new brilliancy and warmth—a faith enriched as well as chastened by the discipline of its experience in the wilderness of Rabbinical legalism and Pharisaic righteousness. Here, too, we find all those who have learned that they can add nothing to what Christ has done, that the Christian life is not lived by rote and rule as a drudgery, but by great principles imparted by the Spirit, that simple faith is good for everything, and that Christ is all in all. It is the season of the Spirit's fruition, in which experience worketh hope, "and hope maketh not ashamed"¹—a period in the life of the Spirit corresponding to that of the autumn-pause in nature, during which the trees rest after their struggle with the elements and their labour of growth, putting on their sober and beautiful tints before the ripe fruit is garnered and the branches are stripped of the glory of their foliage.

The failure of legalism as a substitute for, or as a supplement to, the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be

¹ Rom. v. 5.

attributed to several inherent defects. These defects may best be seen when set against the saving efficacy of the evangelical faith. The contrast may be expressed in three ways.

All laws—the law of Moses, the Sermon on the Mount, the maxims of present-day rationalistic philosophy, as well as our own self-made rules of conduct—*command from without*¹; *the Gospel constrains from within*. Laws come to us as an external authority, laying upon us burdens of obligation, without enabling the will to obey that which it approves. We may mistake approval for obedience. Many men accept the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, as the Christianity which they profess; but the Sermon on the Mount is a law, more spiritual than that of Sinai, and more difficult. The effort to regulate life by the Sermon on the Mount, because of its inward scrutiny and its high demand for purity and righteousness of heart, if the effort be made apart from Christ, is certain to result in the usual effects of legal obedience—an intensified sense of sin and guilt, a severer self-condemnation, and a conviction of inability to purify the springs of action by the effort of obedience. We need the impulse from within, the renewed will that is brought into harmony with the will of God, of which the Sermon on the Mount is the highest expression. We may approve the Sermon and reject the Cross, but unless we accept the Cross we cannot live the Sermon. When we have been crucified with Christ, and have risen with Him in newness of life, the Sermon on the Mount is no longer an external command: it is the natural expression in life of the new nature

¹ *Vide Strong's Christian Ethics, 22.*

which we have received from God through Jesus Christ.

Again, *legalism demands only the obedience of servants, faith expects the loyalty of sons.* In a sense it is easier to live as a servant than as a son. The one gives his service, the other his heart; the one the part, the other the whole; the one regulates his conduct by duty, the other by love; the one has exhausted his obligation when the master's command has been performed, the other finds no limit to his service save his father's will. In the legalism of servants we may do our daily task with automatic exactness, but with the loyalty of sons we need no rule or ritual of service, for, "because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father,"¹ and the Father's will is interpreted and obeyed by the "faith which worketh by love."² In this way we pass out of a life dominated by formulated laws into that which has the inspiration of the illimitable principles of faith. A high standard of morality is never reached by mechanical obedience, but by the ventures of faith and love made by those who believe themselves to be not the slaves of a hard task-master, but the children of a loving Father.

The third contrast between legal obedience and evangelical faith consists in this: *the former approves of Christ as an Ideal, the latter appropriates Him as a Power.* These two attitudes towards Christ are very different. If Christ be to us only an ideal, our highest endeavour is to approach His perfection by imitation. We imitate Him in words and spirit and act. But the imitation of Christ produces at the best only

¹ Gal. iv. 6.

² *Ibid.* v. 6.

imitation Christians—Christians who have not got beyond the copying stage. What Christ expects is that we appropriate Him as “the power of God unto salvation,” as a new life which expresses itself naturally after the manner of His own. In the one case, we are left to ourselves to realise the ideal; in the other case, the ideal becomes a self-realising power within us.

Still, though we thus contrast legal obedience and evangelical faith, there is a higher plane in which the contrast disappears. The essence of the law is love, and love is the very soul of the Gospel. Love fulfils the law. “The whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹ In the exercise of Christian faith, thy neighbour has become a brother, and the love of members of the same family is not something which we need to force: it is natural. Thus “faith that worketh by love” ensures obedience to the law, not on the line of legal obedience, but on that of family loyalty.

¹ Gal. v. 14, R V.

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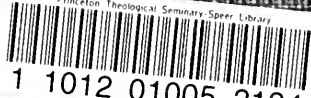
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