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THE FAITH OF CENTURIES.



THE  
FAITH OF CENTURIES:

ADDRESSES AND ESSAYS

ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

“We cannot remind ourselves too often or too seriously that the questions which are so freely discussed among us now, and are forced upon us with increasing reach of aim and urgency of argument, are questions of life and death to human hope.”—DEAN CHURCH.

*SECOND EDITION.*

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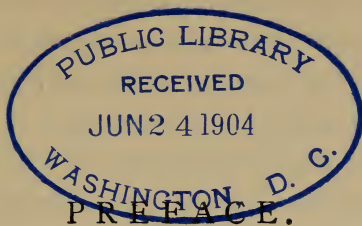


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IT is a commonplace to speak of the mental restlessness of the present age. Whether, as we are sometimes tempted to assume, that restlessness is greater than it has been at many past periods of our social history may perhaps be questioned. Each age is apt to exaggerate its own difficulties and troubles, and our present religious difficulties and troubles doubtless loom larger in our eyes than they will appear to our children's children to have really been. At the same time there can be no question that doubt and inquiry and a deep-seated anxiety about the religious doctrines which have been handed down to us are not the least prominent characteristics of our generation. The times are not indeed positively infidel. Quite apart from the wide field which Christianity can claim as her own undisputed possession, there is no great amount of

unqualified repudiation of Christian teaching. This age, even when it is not convinced that Christianity is true, is generally willing to regard it as at any rate a subject for investigation. But it is an investigation about which many minds are uneasy. There is no fierce hurricane of disbelief, but there *is* movement on the surface of the waters. Nor is that movement confined to one particular spot. The spread of intelligence resulting from our universal education, and the remarkable cheapness of modern literature, have opened the doors of religious inquiry to all classes. The clerk in the counting-house, or the mechanic in the workshop, or the pitman digging coal, may each know and feel something of the pressure of religious problems. Such a circumstance is not necessarily a matter for regret. Doubt as often as not issues in an increase of faith. The discipline of struggle bears here, as elsewhere, its good fruit. Nor is the battle with adverse modes of thought, adverse interpretations of Christian doctrine and history, one that in the long-run "nought availeth." Calvary is not to be regarded as typical of the world's final judgment on Christ. Harder contests have before now been fought and won. Our Lord's question, "When the Son of Man

cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" does indeed suggest the possibility of failure, and forbid any belief in mechanical success; but it is at least a question left open. It is impossible to suppose that He who bade us pray for the perfecting of human obedience, for a kingdom on earth in which the Divine will should be done "as it is in heaven," has by some terrible decree ordained that that prayer shall of necessity fail to find an answer—that the coming years shall bring in, not an era of perfect faith, but a time of almost universal denial and rejection. The gift of the Holy Spirit was made that the world as well as the Church—the world through the Church—should be guided into "all the truth"; not that the greatness of our failure should be made the more apparent, and the tragedy of human history be deepened beyond describing. Doubtless there is an urgent call upon our zeal, our persistence, our earnestness, our ability; but it is not one to which we need respond as to some summons to a forlorn hope. We *are* called on to strive, only not with the mad despair of a doomed army, but with the calm courage of those whose hearts anticipate victory—not as pessimists, but as Christians.

This volume had its origin in an attempt to help

those who may be spoken of as, not only socially, but educationally, members of the middle class to confront some of the more common difficulties of belief, and at the same time to realise with less insufficiency and inadequacy the nature of Christian doctrine. It may thus do something, perhaps, to fill up what seems a gap in our apologetic literature. The book was originally intended to consist of a selection of addresses from a series which one of the contributors had arranged at an East London church. A certain number of these addresses were given, but circumstances prevented the series from being finished. It was, however, desired to bring out the book, and various essays were therefore contributed in place of the missing addresses. It is only reasonable to ask that the volume should be judged by what it aspires to be, and not by a standard to which it makes no pretension. There is here no attempt to add to the theological thought or the religious scholarship of the day. There is no more than an attempt to put in a plain and straightforward way, before a particular type of mind, some of the reasons why the writers themselves adhere to the Christian creed, and still interpret the lights and shadows of life by it, and still claim for it



men's entire loyalty, and still urge them to "amend their lives," in accordance with its precepts, its warnings, its promises. The book is not written in the interests of a party, but of the Church as a whole. Indeed, it will be observed that the contributors are by no means drawn from one school of thought alone. It ought perhaps to be added that each writer is responsible only for his own contribution, although there cannot in the nature of things be any very wide divergence of opinion among Christians upon the topics selected for treatment.

If this brief and halting discussion of them—a discussion by men who feel that they speak but with "stammering lips" and see but with half-opened eyes—shall do anything to help any of those who may read it to remain true to "the faith of centuries," then the purpose of this little work will have been abundantly fulfilled.

W. E. BOWEN.



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# THE FAITH OF CENTURIES.

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## I.

### Faith in God.

FAITH in God—is it a possible and reasonable thing? does its possession exalt a man or degrade him? is it something to be proud of, or something to be ashamed of? These are the questions which press upon a thinking man in an age of “progress” and “enlightenment.” It may be easier to arrive at an answer, if for the moment we leave out the words *in God*, and ask what faith means in itself, and whether faith is not necessary to all that we think best worth knowing or doing. I think we shall see (1) that man walks by faith in all that makes him most truly man, and that the more faith he has the further he goes in the way of knowledge and achievement; and (2) that this faith must rest on a belief in God, if in the long-run it is to overcome many trials and one great paradox, and if human life is to be regarded as a rational and satisfactory

thing. Faith I would define, then, as *belief in order and system*—a belief, in other words, that the world of nature and of man is not a mere chaos of conflicting facts, unrelated and irreconcilable, but that there is an intelligible plan underlying it, a network of intelligible principles weaving it into a coherent whole. Now, if this plan were fully grasped in all its details and subdivisions, if these principles were fully worked out in all their minutest applications, faith would no longer be required; absolute knowledge would have been achieved. Faith, then, presents us with ideals of truth: knowledge is the realisation of these ideals. Take a simple instance. We see a child playing with “blocks,” square bits of wood, each painted with a fragment of something, a head of a man, a door of a house, a trunk of a tree, etc. He places them together *in faith*—that is, in the belief that there is some plan by which they can be connected into a satisfactory picture. In themselves they are meaningless and ridiculous; but he works on with the conviction that they must fit in somehow. This conviction is inspired by faith, and realised in the picture which results at last. In this case, as in others, “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. xi. 1). When the hope is fulfilled, and the things are seen, knowledge takes the place of faith. Here, then, two truths would seem to emerge: (1) that faith, far from being irrational, is itself the source from which all rational inquiry springs; and (2) that faith is temporary, stimulating effort, and superseded by

achievement. All science has its roots in faith. Without faith, men would have rested content with the bare "facts" reported by the various senses; but faith insists that they shall be made subject to law and explanation, and hence comes science. Faith, then, must not be contrasted with reason, since it is rational to the core. It may profitably be contrasted with knowledge, as the process is contrasted with the result. Faith is the rational pursuit of truth; knowledge, the rational attainment of truth.

And so, as we look at the great men of science, we see that faith is the very breath of their life. They *believe* that there is some great rational law which connects and explains what are now mere disjointed items of truth. Their ideas as to the nature of that law are crude and unsatisfactory at first. Their theory will not work; it does not explain things; the facts reject it; the tight-shut doors of truth do not fly open at their talisman. But they do not despair; their faith does not fail: they recast their hypothesis, modify, alter, enrich it. Again and again they manipulate their blocks with a clearer and more luminous picture before them, until at last the stubborn facts group and relate themselves; the ideal of the mind is realised before the eyes; the magic formula which induces order has been pronounced and faith has given birth to new knowledge. Thus, Darwin believed in the kinship and common origin of species now quite separate and distinct, and set himself to find the law of their derivation. If their



parentage was the same, how is it that the members of the family diverge so widely in after-ages? "Variation through natural selection" is the answer, the hypothesis of faith, which by vast and patient labour is shown to fit and explain the most alien and discordant facts. It was only by unconquerable faith in system and order, and in the ultimate connectedness of things, that the greatest discovery of our age was won.

Or we turn to practical life, and watch the philanthropist and the social reformer. Both are occupied with "the substance of things hoped for." The philanthropist has before his mind a glowing picture of man's nature as it might be, pure and upright and unselfish; and inspired by *that*, he sets to work upon his "facts," the men and women so unideal at present, in whose lives that picture has got to be reproduced. Again and again the facts reject him, defy him, laugh at him. He thought they would understand that he was sent to work their deliverance, but they understand it not. But at last, if his faith holds out, it proves and substantiates itself. In the soul of at least some of his subjects calm succeeds to storm; wild thoughts, incoherent impulses, passionate desires, come together and find their place; the unity of a man's nature asserts itself; the outlines of a ground-plan grow visible; the ideal picture of an orderly human life is reproduced on the fleshy tablets of the heart.

So, too, the reformer sees visions of a perfect state, in which law is the free expression of an



enlightened people's will, in which class and wealth erect no barriers between a man and his fellows, in which equal opportunities are offered to all who have the wit to use them. It is by faith that he discerns the outlines of that perfect city, and by faith that he tries to build it upon earth. Habit, prejudice, and interest are all against him. The stones that he handles are alive, and delight to thwart his efforts to fit them into their place. It will be much if at the end he has built some portion of a single wall after the pattern hid in his soul.

In each of these instances—the student, the philanthropist, the reformer—faith is the source of effort ; and in each, as we have seen, faith has its trials, its temptations to yield to scepticism and despair. But there is something more. In each there is a cruel paradox—an insulting contrast between the greatness of the infinite ideals and the shortness of the finite life.

The man of science has trained his faculties of observation and inference to their highest perfection, and is in the triumphant pursuit of truth, when some miserable bodily ailment strikes him down ; the bright ideals, on which he had laid his grasp, begin to fade ; their outlines grow blurred and confused ; a fitful flame lights up fragments of the picture, only to distort the whole ; then it too flickers away ; black darkness settles down, and all is gone.

So, too, the man of action is working out his schemes for the reform of individuals or of society. "Give me ten years more," he says, "and my ideals

will be firmly built on solid ground"; and suddenly the overwrought nature gives way and snaps. The scheme was *his*, the offspring of *his* faith and love. Others do not understand it; and when he is gone, there will be no one to carry on the work. Albert Dürer, in one of his greatest pictures, shows us the "melancholy" which springs from this awful contrast between the infinite eternal ideals of truth and goodness which man's faith conceives, and the ludicrous smallness and uncertainty of the achievement that results.

This is the great paradox of faith—a paradox which is only overcome when faith in truth and goodness has become also faith in God. In fact, if I were asked how I justify belief in God, I should answer that I believe in God in order that I may be able to believe, fully and unreservedly, in the eternal reality of truth and goodness. With faith in God, the difficulty vanishes. Truth and goodness are infinite and eternal. Why? Because they are not mere abstractions which appear and pass away, but attributes of the nature of God Himself. Man is able to grasp these infinite ideals. How? Inasmuch as he is made in God's image and can share in God's life. If so, they belong to him for ever, and the glimpses which he has of them in this life are to be followed by a steady contemplation of them elsewhere in the nature of God, to whose character they belong. Thus, heaven rounds off and completes the work, apparently so futile and fragmentary, begun on earth.

Others mistrust, and say, "But time escapes :  
Live now or never !"

He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes !  
Man has For Ever !"

Was it not great? Did not he throw on God  
(He loves the burthen)

God's task to make the heavenly period  
Perfect the earthen?

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success  
Found, or earth's failure :

Wilt thou trust death or not? He answered, "Yes !  
Hence with life's pale lure !"

That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
Sees it and does it :

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
Dies ere he knows it :

That low man goes on adding one to one,  
His hundred's soon hit :

This high man, aiming at a million,  
Misses an unit.

*That*, has the world here—should he need the next,  
Let the world mind him !

This, throws Himself on God, and unperplexed,  
Seeking, shall find Him.\*

But is this more than a poetical fancy? I answer, that faith in God is only the logical outcome and completion of the faith of which we are conscious in our efforts after knowledge and goodness.

Faith presents itself as the obstinate instinctive pursuit of order and system and completeness in human life ; and faith is tested and verified by its ability to attain them, by its power to accomplish the work which it sets itself to do. Why have people in every age believed in God? Because of problems

\* Browning, *The Grammarian's Funeral*.

in their life which demanded a solution—problems which must, unsolved, have driven them to madness or despair, and of which the only solution was to be found in the existence of an eternal and personal God. Thus, from the side of man we may say (with all reverence) that God represents a great hypothesis, set up in order to explain what would otherwise be inexplicable, to introduce peace, harmony, and order into a life which must otherwise be discordant and chaotic.

The first great problem was: Is there a Divine Being who is Himself the source from which truth and goodness flow, and in which they eternally exist?

A second: Can *we* stand in any real living relation to such a Being?

A third: *How*, assuming such a relation to be possible, are we brought into it, and maintained in it?

How does a Christian's faith in God answer these questions and satisfy these aspirations? First, then, faith in God guarantees the reality and eternity of human truth and goodness. For if faith in these stop short of belief in God, it is a disastrous failure. For then the old paradox remains. Then there is no order or completeness about man; his whole life becomes an illusion and a mockery; he is condemned to passing glimpses of an ideal which he can never really grasp or understand.

He weaves, and is clothed with derision;  
Sows, and he shall not reap;  
His life is a watch or a vision  
Between a sleep and a sleep.\*

---

\* Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon*.

In that case faith, which aimed at bringing order and completeness into our mental outlook, will have failed disastrously in its work. It will have fired us with aspirations after a world to which we are hopelessly unable to attain. Whilst unfolding its great ideals of knowledge and love, it was all the time teaching us to seek after the Infinite ; and now it turns round and tells us that the Infinite is an empty dream. A faith which does that, destroys itself and discredits its own previous achievements. The fact is that faith cannot for ever be poised in mid-air. It must either soar to God or flutter down into the mire. If there be no God in whom our ideal of truth lives and has its being, how can we be sure that there *is* any ultimate order and connectedness of things? or even that our knowledge represents reality at all? May it not be essentially fragmentary and relative? And, again, if there be no God to sustain and purify our wills, is unselfishness really possible at all? Can we really work *for others* in any true sense? Are we not always acting for ourselves, the gratification of our pride, the triumph of some hobby of our own? In other words, agnosticism and indifference are contagious diseases. They cannot be confined in a sort of isolation ward, and strictly limited to the destruction of men's belief in religion. Rather, the infection spreads, and he who disbelieves in God tends to become a sceptic as to knowledge, and a cold critic of philanthropy.

Of course, it will be objected that there are a number of people who are agnostics in religion,



and yet who believe in truth and try to do good! Certainly there are. But the question is, not only whether such a position is logically tenable, but also whether it is likely to endure—whether, when the influence of religion (felt, but not acknowledged) has passed away, it will be able to withstand the pressure of such scepticism as I have described. Certainly in the life and literature of to-day we seem to see that this scepticism is not satisfied with religion, but aims equally at the destruction of all ideals. With the denial of God, true knowledge and moral responsibility are apt to be abolished; bare sensations and appetites take their place. But for ourselves, we refuse to believe that faith must be driven to this act of suicide. We believe that there *is* a real truth to be pursued and a real goodness to be achieved, because both truth and goodness exist in real substantial perfection in an eternal, personal God.

But this answer itself raises a second and deeper problem. Assuming that there is a God, what is our relation or attitude to Him? How can we receive His gifts? how can we regard heaven as our natural home? how can there be any affinity at all between Him and us? The matter would be comparatively simple, if we could regard ourselves as mere impersonal channels through which God is making a continuous revelation of Himself, so that our thoughts and acts are simply and literally the thoughts and acts of God. But we cannot accept that theory. Perhaps the thing of which we are most entirely certain concerning ourselves is, that

we have a distinct personality of our own. We may seek after God, but are certainly not part and parcel of God. All the facts of the religious life—its struggles, prayers, and aspirations, its tempests of love and humility and remorse, together with the convictions underlying such words as “sacrifice,” “mediation,” “redemption”—are all a proof of this. The human spirit is deeply aware of two facts—first, that in the nature of things it is necessarily *distinct* from the Divine Spirit, and, secondly, that by its own fault it has been unnecessarily *alienated* from Him; and what it aspires after is, not absorption in God, but sonship to God.

But how can that be? If we are separate from God, can we find any other relation to Him than the savage’s—of blind terror and grovelling superstition? Can we, without forfeiting our own individuality, share in the life of God now, so that the fulness of truth and goodness (which are that life) may be enjoyed by us in heaven? The Christian’s answer is this:—Truth and goodness, as they exist perfectly in the nature of God Himself, became incarnate in Jesus Christ, and are there brought within the grasp of man. Christ is “the wisdom,” “the word,” “the express image” of the Father; in union with Christ we gain the assurance that *our* knowledge is not merely relative and misleading, but expresses the truth as it is in God.

Moreover, the “love of God” was manifested in Christ, and, through union with Christ, makes real unselfishness possible for us. In a word, the Christian

doctrine is, that in himself man could have no other relation to God than the one I have mentioned,—of blind terror flowing from a consciousness of sin, and of ignorant superstition which such terror must produce; but that the Son of God was revealed in the flesh, to save him from sin, and give him the adoption of a son. Thus faith in Christ harmonises and ennobles human existence. It makes it possible for men to look up and say, “Our Father which art in heaven”: love and confidence take the place of terror and distrust; peace and order are restored; eternal life is no longer a thing hoped for in another world, but a present possession, a gift already received in and through the knowledge of the Father and the Son. “This is the record, that God *hath given* to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (I John v. 11). “This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John xvii. 3). Thus, in the Christian revelation, heaven and earth are brought very near to each other; and men may well be content to wait for the perfect consummation of goodness and truth in heaven, when on earth they stand in close communion with Him who is the perfect expression of them both.

And, thirdly, how can each individual enter that union with the Son of God? It is nearly nineteen hundred years since Christ lived on earth, and since He returned to heaven. How can that eternal life which He brought about be communicated to us so long afterwards? The answer is, Through the opera-



tion of the Holy Ghost, perpetuating the work of Christ. By virtue of the Incarnation, all material things are transformed, exalted, and turned into channels for the transmission of grace. Human agency is used for Divine ends in the ordained ministry of the Church: water is sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin; bread and wine are consecrated to become the Body and Blood of the Lord. The Sacraments are presented to us as the special means by which the Holy Ghost claims and dedicates each individual; applies to each the merits of Christ's atonement; strengthens them in loyalty to Him; brings them back to Him when they have wandered away; feeds them with the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation, "making Jesus present still" to each successive generation.

In this way the Christian faith explains and harmonises our life, by connecting it with the life of God through the three great laws of Dependence, Restoration, and Renewal: the dependence of creatures on the wisdom and love of their Maker; the restoration of the race through the atoning work of Christ; the renewal of the individual through an indwelling, purifying Presence.

English Church people are thus able to say, with a full appreciation of the meaning of the words: "First, I believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world; secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind; thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God."

The language which I have used in the last few paragraphs has been largely *religious*; and, in spite of everything, people will say, "Yes, that's all very well for people who have got a ready-made belief in Christianity and the Church and the Catechism and all that; but it's got nothing to do with those problems of knowledge and goodness which you started with." Now this assumption that faith in God has no bearing on scientific and moral effort is precisely the theory against which I am protesting. How terribly familiar it is! People keep one pigeon-hole of their mind reserved for "religious feeling," as expressed often in highly sensational hymns; another is devoted to "secular knowledge"; and there is no communication between the two. The result is that religion is taken to consist in mere sentiment, irrational and often overdrawn sentiment, and "faith" is regarded as a cant term for unreasoning belief. In opposition to that view, I have tried to point out faith laying the very foundations of secular science; I have tried to show that without faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," knowledge could never have advanced a single step; and that faith in God is only a higher phase of that very same faith which is at work in other spheres of knowledge. In a word, faith first produces knowledge, and, in the practical life, philanthropy; and then rises to God, in order to guarantee their reality. So far from faith being opposed to knowledge and confined to religion, faith is really the bond which unites knowledge and religion together,

as different aspects of one great rational effort after truth.

And so the theological doctrines which I touched upon just now have a profound connection with the problems of ordinary knowledge. They give us, expressed in terms of religion, certain principles which are necessary to any system of truth that is to be really coherent and satisfactory. What qualities are implied in the word "truth," if it is to be worthy of the name? Two emerge into view at once. If truth is to have any meaning for us, it must be in some relation to us; it must be capable of being grasped by our human faculties, pictured by our imagination, systematised by our reason. Truth must be a possible object of experience to human minds. That is obvious. But, then, we find that the human mind does not receive items of truth ready-made, but gradually arrives at them by elaborate processes of inference and comparison, whereby bare sensations are worked up into intelligible facts. These complicated mental processes are the machinery by which the raw material is transformed into manufactured items of knowledge. But what of this knowledge itself? A horrible suspicion makes itself felt that these mental operations which gradually produce knowledge also gradually remove it further and further from reality. The world of reality sends us certain messages in the form of sensations; but these sensations are so dressed up and tricked out and transfigured by the mind that perhaps their own mother would not know them. In that case the

whole vaunted system of our knowledge will be exactly like a dream. For a dream, too, takes its cue from memories of the waking world, but distorts and garbles them into ludicrous parodies of fact. No doubt the system of knowledge which our reason builds up out of sensations of colour and sound and touch is a wonderful and elaborate creation ; but what is its relation to reality? This is a question which we are bound to face, and it is one which is causing much perplexity to thinking men. The fact is, that in some way or other, if truth is to be real and solid, it must not only be *our* truth, but also *the* truth—not only true relatively to us and to our faculties and capacities, but absolutely true, true in itself, as well.

Now a Christian believes that *the* truth, real and absolute and eternal, exists in the nature of God ; and he believes also that in the person of Christ a human mind and a human will were united to the Godhead. In this union he finds a proof and guarantee of the trustworthiness and reality of human knowledge. No doubt there is a difference of method. Man learns, and God knows. Man acquires knowledge in a painful and piecemeal fashion ; God enjoys the restful “contemplation of all time and all existence.” But still if Christ could submit to the limitations of a human reason without ceasing to be God, the measure of knowledge attained by human reason must itself be real and genuine and authentic. Here, as elsewhere, the Incarnation ratifies and confirms man’s efforts, and reveals to us that, in his

capacity for knowledge, as well as in his capacity for goodness, he is made in the image of God Himself. It teaches us that man's mind, with all its complicated machinery, comes from God, who created it as an instrument for attaining truth ; that it was used by God, in the person of Jesus Christ ; and that, therefore, its work is trustworthy and can be accepted without misgiving as a genuine picture of reality. In this way Christianity gives us the assurance that *our* system of truth, that world of knowledge so laboriously built up, is also a portion of *the* truth as it exists in eternal and absolute completeness before the mind of God.

Or take the other department of truth, practical truth, truth expressed in moral character ; here, too, Christian doctrine establishes and ratifies human effort. We all know what a poor, dry, starchy thing philanthropy is apt to become ; how narrow and partial we are in our own human sympathy ; how hard it is to keep straight ourselves, quite apart from straightening others. And so we are inclined to ask whether there is after all anything in the nature of things that corresponds to this "struggling, tasked morality" of ours ; or whether it is not a law of the universe that every one should think only of himself, act for himself, and "make no neighbours." And Christianity answers that the highest law of the universe is not the law of self-preservation at all, but the law of love ; that love is older than creation ; that the eternal love of the Father for the Son is continued in the love of the Son for men, and is the measure



of the duty of man to man. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John iii. 16). "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you" (John xv. 9). "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John iv. 11). How these words strengthen and encourage us in our morality! How abundantly they justify our poor efforts after "altruism" and self-denial, by showing that these qualities, of which we were growing half ashamed, belong to the character of the "Author of nature" Himself.

Yes, and the revelation of love not only justifies duty, but glorifies it too.

Duty! how the word smacks of board-rooms and committee-rooms and "case-papers" and superior people! But the Gospel of Love makes us see, not cases, but men and women, endowed with the splendid capacities and the awful responsibilities of a spiritual life—men and women who, in virtue alike of their grandeur and of their perils, have an inalienable claim on our sympathy and help.

Christianity thus strengthens enormously our confidence in human knowledge and human goodness, by teaching us that they truly represent the wisdom and love of God. And the faith which accepts that Christian teaching is the same faith which started as a vague instinctive sense that goodness and truth, *somehow or other*, existed. That early faith was building an altar to an "unknown God," and in Christianity finds that God declared and

manifested as the source of all that it prized and pursued.

Moreover, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity goes a step further, and insists that the whole of man's nature, in its complex unity, is an image of the Godhead. Each of us is a trinity in unity. For each consists, first, of reason; secondly, of passion or desire; thirdly, of a will, which is not the same as either, but partakes of the nature of each, and is the bond of union between the two. Each of these elements of our nature is entirely distinct from the others. We cannot possibly reduce reason to a mode of desire, or regard passion as a sort of reason. Reason leads us to knowledge; passion prompts us to action. And yet, distinct as they are, each requires the other. Without an element of passion, a devoted *love* of truth, reason will never do its work, but will remain a mere undeveloped capacity for knowledge. And an admixture of reason is necessary, if the object of desire is to be clearly conceived and steadily pursued. And at the same time the will is present in both, and gives strength to both, uniting them together as complementary expressions of one great effort of self-development. Thus man is both three and one. His personality comprises three distinct elements without ceasing to be an unity. And, oppressed by this mystery of his nature, he turns to religion and finds that God, too, is Three in One. There is a Father whose thoughts are mirrored in an eternal Word, who was with Him in the beginning, and is the express image of His nature (John i. 1; Heb. i. 3).

Father and Son are distinct, but inseparably united; so that where the Son works, there the Father is working too, and every one who has seen the Son has seen the Father also. The Son is begotten of the Father, as the thought is begotten of the thinker; but having a distinct personal life of His own, expresses His Sonship in filial love. The life of the Father issues out as Thought, and returns to Him as Love. And there is the Holy Ghost, who "proceeds" or comes forth from the fount of the Godhead, and is the life-giving, creative power, who gives effect to the wisdom and love of the Father and the Son. When the Father planned creation, it was the Spirit who moved on the face of the waters, and fashioned the order and harmony and beauty of the world. When the Son yearned to restore the lost creation, it was by the operation of the Holy Ghost that He was made man of the substance of the Virgin Mary, His mother. And when the grace of the Incarnation is to be offered to successive generations, so that by it they may come to the Father by the Son, it is the Holy Ghost who brings the means of grace. Thus the Creator Spirit, the active personal Will, is the bond of union between the Father and the Son, whose gracious purposes He brings to pass. The Trinity of the Godhead, then, unfathomably mysterious as it is, has its counterpart in the trinity of our manhood. Our trinity consists of three faculties in one human person; the Trinity of God consists of three Persons in one Divine Nature. And the doctrine thus justified and illustrated by our manhood has a practical lesson



for us. It teaches us the ideal harmony which should prevail amongst all the elements of our nature ; reason and desire, knowledge and action, contemplation and philanthropy, are not to be aliens and rivals, but friends and partners, belonging to one another, and working together in the unity of a sanctified and spiritual will.

What has been said may help us to see that faith in God verifies itself by its intimate correspondence with the needs of men, the explicit answer which it makes to the problems which otherwise make man's nature so confused and contradictory. But, lastly, we must remember that this verification must be practical ; it must not only be contemplated as it lies before us in a system of theology, but must be worked out in action. There must be not only *verification by correspondence*, but also *verification by obedience*. Peace and happiness are not gained merely by accepting and assenting to the revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but by committing ourselves unreservedly to its demands. Our nature is so constituted that our actions have a great deal to do with our beliefs. If we live in sin, we wilfully blind our eyes to truth about God ; spiritual things *can* have no meaning, must become foolishness to the natural or carnal man. To such a man the words of religion gradually come to have a far-off sound ; he gets impatient with them, condemns them as cant and hypocrisy. It is to the pure in heart that the vision of God is given ; and in proportion as we purify ourselves we get to see God more clearly.

Those same phrases which are "cant" to the sinner and the worldling are "the words of eternal life" to the sincere disciple.

This then is obvious—that if a man is really searching after God, and is anxious to weigh impartially the evidence for religion, he is logically bound to lead a decent and upright life. Otherwise he is prejudging the result of his inquiry, and deliberately putting out the eyes which were to guide him to the truth. Christ laid down this principle very clearly: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." The man who will, first, impartially study the scheme of the Church's faith, and, secondly, try honestly to carry it out in his life, will not fail to "have the witness in himself," in the shape of an enlightened understanding, purified desires, peace, harmony, and order reigning throughout his nature.

Thus the Christian faith presents itself as an answer to the questionings and as the satisfaction of the needs of human nature. The faith is backed by an immensely strong external evidence for itself in its documents and its history. With that I am not at present concerned. I have been looking at it from the inside, regarding it as a principle which brings order and coherence into human life, and have been asking whether it works well, solves difficulties, and makes that life an intelligible and a satisfactory thing. If it does (as I hope I have shown reason for believing), thinking people will recognise in it a philosophy of surpassing interest ;

and if they are convinced also that its historical evidence is adequate, they will welcome it, not merely as a good working hypothesis, but as the most supremely important *truth*, in which all other truths are implicitly contained.

A. CHANDLER,

## II.

### The Knowledge of God.

OF all the questions which have haunted the minds of men, two, and two only, are of the first importance: Is there a personal God? and, Does the individual life survive the grave? But at the root of both of those questions there lies a third: Can God be known at all; and if so, by what power or faculty can we know Him? It is to this question that I am called upon to ask your attention; and you will bear with me if I use the time at our disposal in reminding you of one or two facts, simple, yet not seldom forgotten, which, in dealing with such a question as this, ought always to be kept in view.

Now, an inquiry into the knowledge of God—the discussion whether God can be known to man, and by what means that knowledge is to be attained—is not primarily a Christian problem. It goes deeper even than Christianity itself in this respect—that Christianity never asks at all if God can be known by man, but simply assumes from the outset that He can be known. Christianity has, no doubt, its own witnesses and its independent evidence; and therefore,

when you are assured of its truth, it can give you very valuable help on the question of the knowledge of God, opening out a broad field upon which we cannot now enter. On the other hand, if it could be definitely proved that God cannot be known by us, then, of course, the whole fabric of Christianity, as a religious system, would fall immediately to the ground. Hence the importance for the Christian, when need arises, of being able to give, on this as on other points, a reason of the hope that is in him. When we consider how many intellectual difficulties, and antagonistic beliefs and modes of thought, the faith of Christ has had to contend with, we cannot help feeling that the mere fact that it exists at all in our day is a striking proof of its singular vitality. Imagine the strength and stability of a creed which was born nineteen centuries ago, which has faced criticism in every conceivable form, which has overridden the most sweeping revolutions in social order, in national life, in the world of thought and knowledge, and which still survives, in all its essentials, unchanged! All through the past Christianity has been like a great ship in a storm at sea: wave after wave of thought or discovery has borne down upon it, and time after time it has seemed impossible that it could escape being submerged; yet a moment later, the white crests have broken, the mountainous drift of water has sunk away, and we see the great ship riding on as buoyantly as ever. To-day it has to meet, like the fabled ninth wave of the flood, the wave of Agnosticism—the denial that God can be

known ; and this, as we have just seen, is the most formidable by far that it has ever yet encountered. We cannot anticipate in the future any anti-Christian movement likely to be so serious as this. Other theories and systems have aimed only at this or that side of Christian truth ; difficulties have been raised, perhaps, as to miracles, or as to the authorship of the Gospels, or as to the inspiration of the Bible as a whole ; but Agnosticism, and Agnosticism alone, strikes at the very root of religion itself. You may hold the broadest views on many subjects, and yet be not merely a religious man, but a Christian ; but you cannot be agnostic and also religious—in any sense, at least, of that word “religious” in which the world has hitherto understood it. For Agnosticism says to men : “You cannot know God. Phenomena you may know ; the external and visible aspect of things, as they appear to your eye and touch, you may know ; but that which lies behind phenomena—the Invisible, the Absolute—you cannot know. There may be a God, a personal God even in the Christian sense. I do not deny it ; but, as I do not think that we have power to judge, I suspend my judgment. If I worship at all, it can only be, like the Athenians of old, before the shrine of the mystery of the world and at an altar raised to the Unknown God.”

I. Now, in the first place, we must observe—for it is worth observing—that, although Agnosticism is somewhat fashionable at present, it is by no means a new thing. New things, we know, have an inherent attraction for some minds simply on the ground that



they *are* new ; and it cannot be doubted that Agnosticism has gained numerous adherents who have gone over to it with the idea that it is the very latest product of nineteenth-century science. This, however, is not the case. Like many other things supposed to be new in modern thought, it will be found to have left very marked traces on different periods of the past. Not to go back any further, let us take, as an example, a man of considerable importance in the history of Greek philosophy—Pyrrho, the father of Scepticism. As Pyrrho lived about two thousand two hundred years ago, he is certainly old enough for our purpose. His creed was one of the purest Agnosticism ; and when I take down a history of Greek philosophy and read his views, I can easily fancy that I have before me a treatise by one of our latest scientific professors. We cannot know, he said, the reality of things. We may express *opinions* about things as they appear to us ; but about that which lies behind appearances—the Absolute, the Invisible, the Eternal—we can know and say nothing that is definite. The true attitude of a wise man is suspension of judgment. We cannot know anything certain about God ; and all opinions are equally futile and worthless. And further, as the difference between this and that opinion is insignificant—because we cannot know the truth, and it does not much matter what we *think* about it—so the difference between this and that action is insignificant ; and so indifferent and careless did Pyrrho become, in



behaviour as well as in thought, that it is reported of him that, when walking in the road, he would neither stop, nor hurry, nor walk slowly, to save himself from being run over by a carriage or bitten by a dog—simply because, on his principles, it did not matter whether he was bitten and run over or not. Here, at any rate, four hundred years before Christ, was an Agnostic of the purest type; and from his day to our own you will find many others like him. Indeed, the whole history of modern thought starts with the great philosopher Descartes, who began by doubting the very existence of everything and everybody in the universe, including himself, and who based the whole of his wonderful system, including the belief in God, on the one famous saying, "I think; therefore I am." And thus we are justified in taking note of the fact that modern Agnosticism is prominent among us, not because it is (as many have supposed) our latest discovery, but simply because, being a mode of thought as ancient as the human mind itself, it has been revived in our day with the support of some distinguished names, and because it has claimed, rightly or wrongly, the sanction and authority of modern science.

II. But science must be, and ought to be, agnostic. Let us mark that fact, which so many of us have failed to notice—that *science must be, and ought to be, agnostic*. So far from being surprised or disturbed that pure science has no message for us as to the knowledge of God, and confesses her ignorance in that sphere, it is precisely what we ought to expect, and

even to require. We have all heard of the gentleman who swept the heavens with his telescope, and proclaimed that he could find no God—as though, a modern writer has justly added, God were “an optical phenomenon.” As a man of science, he kept strictly to his own sphere of work until he began to hope that with a telescope he would find God: for God is indeed not an optical phenomenon, but a Spirit; and it is not through telescopes that spirits can be seen. What is science? Science is the research into the phenomena of nature. Its weapon is the human intellect. Its methods are the methods of observation and experiment. It weighs, it analyses, and it deals, by the help of physical organs and physical instruments, only with those things which may be perceived by the bodily senses or inferred from the information which they have given us. In that department of the world of sense, the world as we see and hear and touch it, science is supreme. But the moment it goes outside that sphere, and enters the realm of the unseen, which is independent of this world of sight and touch, it ceases to be science: you may call it religion, you may call it philosophy, you may call it what you will; but science it is not. As science, it pushes its bright circle of knowledge wider and wider out into the dimness of the unknown region beyond, as it finds what seemed to stand out of reach coming gradually within its grasp; as science, it even draws inferences as to probabilities within that unknown region, as, for instance, when an astronomer draws reasonable inferences from his

study of the stars as to the probable power and majesty of their Creator ; but to speak directly of the invisible world does not fall within the province of science at all. How could it, unless God *were* "an optical phenomenon"? All that science can say, and with perfect justice, is : "That is not my sphere. There my methods are useless and my intelligence at fault. Of that world I know nothing and teach nothing." You look at a rose, and you argue, perhaps, that a thing so exquisite must be the product, not of the blind forces of nature, but of will and design—in a word, of a Divine Artist. But observe that in so doing you act, not as a botanist—a man of science—but as a man of faith, a man of religion. It is not the duty of a botanist to deal so with the flower. His sole business is to treat it as a member of the vegetable kingdom, to analyse its different parts, and to assign it its proper place in the economy of nature. If he chooses to make your inference, and say, "God made the flower," he is a botanist no longer. The inference lies outside the sphere of botany, outside the region of science ; and science, so long as it is true science—so long, that is, as it deals with the material, and not with the spiritual—is, and must always be, agnostic.

III. But now, if we have thus driven science and her intellectual equipment and methods and instruments out of the spiritual world, what is to be done? Is that world to remain a blank to us, so that God indeed cannot be known ; or can we set foot within it, and if so, how? Well, here, of course,

some scientific teachers have overstepped the limits of their own work, and have fallen into a fatal error. Because science rightly says that she knows nothing outside her own domain, they have come to the strange conclusion that therefore nothing *can* be known. Hence has arisen a new and entirely unscientific Agnosticism, which declares dogmatically that God cannot be known at all—not merely that *it* does not know Him (which is a perfectly just statement), but that He *cannot* be known at all. This is as much as to say that there is no knowledge apart from science, and no way of attaining to truth except by the intellect. What is our reply? Our reply is that there is a power in us—not that of the reason or intellect, as we call it—through which we can know God. Between this new Agnosticism and any religious view of the world, such as that of Christianity, there lies this first and fundamental difference: the Agnostic seeks to know God by the help of the reason or intellect (the only weapon, as we have just seen, which is permissible or possible in science); and the Christian holds that God is known by another faculty in man—the Conscience, or Moral Sense. If we can know God only by reason, then the Agnostic is right; but if we can know God by the conscience and by spiritual experience, then the Christian is right and the Agnostic wrong. Who is to judge between the two?

We appeal for judgment, in the first place, to Christ Himself. His decision, at any rate, is plain. The pathway to the knowledge of God lies, He tells

us, through conscience and spiritual experience. "If any man will *do* His will"—if any man, that is, will be true to the light of his conscience—he, and not the man who reasons about God, "shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Again, when the Jews asked Him to tell them "plainly" whether He were indeed the Christ, His only reply was to point them to His *works*. He would not argue with them, nor give them intellectual proof of His mission: He appealed at once to that spiritual nature, that moral insight, which alone could rightly understand what He said and did. And here the argument concerns, not merely the Christian who, for whatever cause, has faith in Christ, but every man who sees in Christ a teacher of real wisdom and goodness. Is it likely, we might fairly ask, that a man so good and wise as Jesus Christ is everywhere confessed to be would be mistaken on this supreme question of God being known to man, and mistaken, therefore, on the one point on which the whole of His life and teaching depends? Is it likely that that moral and spiritual power of His, unparalleled in the history of our race, would be at fault on this first and greatest of all questions? Is it likely, is it credible, however marvellous the progress of mechanical ingenuity and the advance of scientific discovery, that we, whose lives still stand out so poor and stained and narrow in comparison with His, are yet in the right, if we dispute His deepest thought, reject the human words of His prayer, and say no longer, "Our Father which art in heaven"? Such a question we have at least



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The knowledge of God.  
a right to ask of the completest sceptic of them all.

So we appeal first to Christ Himself on this faculty of ours for knowing God. But when we have heard Him speak, we turn, again, to the facts and the experience of human life. Here, it would seem, the decision is the same. Everything in life goes to prove that the highest knowledge comes to us, not through reasoning and argument and intellectual proof, but through that moral insight—a thing mysterious, but most real—which we call faith, or intuition, or conscience, or the voice of God. You are guilty of a secret sin. Something within rebukes and disturbs you, and warns you that the thing is wrong. What is that something? It is not reason; for you can easily prove by reason that, as the act or thought remains unknown, and does no harm to any man, it cannot be materially wrong. And yet you *know* it to be wrong. Why, or how do you know it, if not by that gift of conscience which of itself guides you to the truth? Ask the martyr how he knows that he ought rather to die than to renounce his faith. He can give you no logical reason. Argue coolly with him, as Crito with Socrates, and it would not be difficult to show that his death, far from doing good to his cherished cause, will almost certainly pass unnoticed—wasted and worthless—and that he will do a much greater service to his fellow-men, if he will only save himself at the expense of a few idle words, and live for many years to fight for his religion. All that he can say is that he *feels* that he

is right ; and the benediction with which humanity has crowned the martyr shows that we do, unconsciously, accept his reason. He has not told us "plainly," but we believe him "for the sake of his works" ; assured and convinced that no one of the great deeds of the world was ever accomplished for purely intellectual reasons and on purely intellectual grounds. Or finally, to take that sense of beauty which is, I think, in reality nothing but our moral sense looked at from a special point of view, ask the critic of literature how he knows that Shakespeare's *Othello* is a greater play than certain modern plays which I might name to you. He can no doubt give you intellectual reasons for his preference ; but those reasons are an after-thought, and it was not by means of them that his choice was settled and his knowledge attained. He knows, as we call it, intuitively, or instinctively, or as a child might know it, that the one drama is greater than the rest.

IV. But if this be so, and if there is in man this Divine instinct which helps us to the highest knowledge in art and in life, of beauty and of goodness, then it will help us also in the knowledge of God, of which all that other knowledge is itself a part ; and the failure of modern Agnosticism has lain in the fact that it has ignored this instinct and set up the reason to be the sole measure of the world. To the Christian, we may say, there are three steps in the knowledge of God. First, he has faith ; next, he finds his faith justified and enlarged by experience of life ; and so, lastly, he comes to a



reasonable knowledge. These steps are found even in the knowledge of that mystery of the Trinity which might appear so entirely an intellectual thing. If a man, refusing to be a materialist, believes in the Divinity in Nature—that is, in the Fatherhood of God ; if he believes in the Divinity in Man—that is, in the Son of God ; if he believes in the Divinity in Conscience—that is, in the Spirit of God : if, believing this, he believes also that there can be but one God by whom and in whom are all things, and finds this belief justified by his experience of nature, of human life, of his own heart and soul—then, I say, he knows something of that truth which in our weak and inadequate phraseology we call the doctrine of the Trinity. And it is by experience that he knows it. Would you know God better? Do, and you shall know. Would you know a God at present unknown to you? Why not take the faith of another—yes, of Christ Himself—as a working hypothesis (since you cannot take your own), and see whether in time, by patience and purity and uprightness, it is not confirmed by results? There is for all of us no other approach to the paths of knowledge save through the golden gates of Faith and Charity. No intellectual apprehension of religious dogmas, no repetition of set phrases, no adherence to orthodox opinions will avail us at all without charity and faith. But if we have those two in any measure, we may go forward well content. We shall remember, indeed, that while God is too complex to be summed up in any

single formula, He is also so great that we cannot touch, as it were, more than the hem of His garment ; that, therefore, the language least befitting a Christian to apply to Him is that which may almost be used with regard to a man of whose actions we are practically certain and whose character we perfectly understand ; and that therefore, also, in a very real sense it is still at the altar of an Unknown God that we worship, and before a Holy of Holies never to be trodden by human foot. Yet at the same time we believe that even to us will God reveal Himself in proportion as we try to do His will ; that though, like the seraphim of old before the burning glory of His presence, we have to veil our faces as we go about His service, yet even for us will be fulfilled the promise of the benediction of Christ : "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

S. A. ALEXANDER.

### III.

## Faith in Immortality.

THERE are a certain number of ideas which seem to be common to the whole human race. All men have the same ideas of numbers—that is, when they take to counting, they use the same conceptions of number—though many of the less advanced peoples can go but a short distance in arithmetic. Again, it seems to have been made clear by recent investigations that all men have some notions of religion, and develop in a somewhat similar way their religious theory and practice. The idea of immortality has also a very wide prevalence. Almost all nations seem to have some hope that man will in some sense survive the shock of death and continue his existence, though he passes out of the companionship of his fellow-men. The great exception to this rule seems to be, curiously enough, the nation whose religious genius was far the highest in the whole history of man. The Jewish people, though it is perhaps going too far to say that they had no idea of a future life, seem to have given strangely little attention to it at first. With this partial exception

the idea or the hope of immortality seems to have been common to all men, and to have been usually connected with religion. The dead seem to have been treated as if they belonged to a world beyond this of sight and sound, out of which the Divine Powers exercised their influence upon men. Hence, in considering the question of immortality, we must always remember that it has usually appeared to men to stand in very close connection with religion, as if the solution of the problem of man's life were to be expected to follow from religion. This connection survived at a time when a great many things were lost, in the so-called natural religion of the last century. The Deists, who endeavoured, as they thought, to recall men to the simplest type of religion—a type which was natural to all men and almost self-evident—enrolled immortality in their list of primary religious certainties. They thought that religion was almost completely covered by the two propositions, that God exists, and that man is immortal. The connection between these two seems to be really rather remote. And as a matter of fact, when we come to treat man's destiny as a problem, it is not strictly a religious question at all, but simply a question as to the nature and constitution of man. It may be brought within the purview of religion by being made an item in a revelation, but in itself it belongs purely to the theory of human life.

I. We will now consider some of the various lines of argument which have been adduced in support of

the belief, remembering always that the belief exists and has maintained itself as a conviction quite independently of any argument. And, first, let us notice that for the purposes of *argument* a distinction has been made in the nature of man. The body obviously surrenders to the law of corruption; it has therefore been assumed, when the subject was brought under scientific investigation, that practically only the soul need be discussed. Various practices in connection with the dead—such, for instance, as the Egyptian method of preserving the body by embalming—show a desire to retain even the body in existence; but historically the discussion has been restricted to the immortality of the soul.

It is clear that if this is to be the point to which attention is to be directed, the whole object of the proof must be to show that the soul does not share the death of the body—that it is in some way exempt from the law of change and decay which rules the body. And it is also clear that this is extremely difficult to prove. There are no direct lines of evidence. The soul is as completely outside the range of experience after death as the body. The body corrupts by degrees and disappears; the soul, which has never been the direct object of experience, leaves off making even indirect signs of its presence. And the half-real, half-imaginary visits of ghosts hardly amount to anything that science can lay hold of. We are therefore thrown back on argument from the general characteristics of human life.

There are two regions of human life in which man

seems most independent of the material world—his intellectual and his moral life. And the question is whether these tell us anything as to the permanence of his nature. On the intellectual side a great deal has been said. Plato, for instance, laid great stress on the capacity of the mind for attaining universal ideas. He found that men go through life calling this, that, and the other action good and brave and the like, claiming to know what these words mean, and why they are applied in particular cases. As a rule, for instance, it is called brave to stand against the foe; but there are occasions when flight, or at least apparent flight, seems the truer bravery. Plato argued that men *must* have somewhere in them such a knowledge of bravery as would enable them to apply the term rightly on occasions apparently so contrary as those instanced above. They cannot really use the terms without significance, nor can they really be believed to use them casually and without any guiding principle of reference. Their experience in the world would never give them this rule, for all such ideas are confused by being individualised. The true goodness and the true bravery are only partially manifested in the brave and good actions which men do: the circumstances of the action make differences which are all declensions from the ideal. Hence he argued that men must have obtained this knowledge outside this life, in a world where the soul lived without the body and looked face to face on truth. The bodily life was only a temporary eclipse of the soul's true life. It



was immortal, and never began or ceased to live ; only from time to time it entered by means of birth into this mortal state, and passed from it by death.

This argument, which appears in this form in the dialogue called the *Phædrus*, is typical of the line of argument pursued both by Plato and other subsequent writers. The point of it is that the mind in its intellectual history proves itself independent of the transient material world. It has the power of creating ideas, or of recognising them as embodied in the material order ; and these ideas have, as it were, the element of eternity in them. They are not dependent upon the changeful processes of nature ; but rather they control these processes, and enable us to attain such knowledge as is possible to us of the world around. That is, they show that the soul is independent of matter. Matter is inert, and depends for movement upon some impulse conveyed to it. The soul is akin to the force that gives the impulse. The world is chaotic and moves without conscious reason ; it is soul or mind which really guides it, and the individual soul or mind recognises its kinship with the universal Reason in the world.

It is manifest that this is an argument of considerable importance. The exercise of the intellect in universal ideas is certainly its most fundamental characteristic, and it is obvious that in our experience we get not universal ideas, but particular illustrations of them. We see not the ideal man before us, the man who is neither tall nor short, dark nor fair, fat



nor thin ; but we see before us a particular man who has some of these and other characters which are unimportant, but also has all those characteristics without which he would not be man at all. And when we say This is a man, we apply to him a universal predicate which is true not only of him here and now, but of him and all other men now and for ever. It is certain, therefore, that the mind has the power of dealing universally with the experience presented in particular form ; and it may be added that without such a power it would be impossible for it to think at all, in any serious sense of the word. Hence in its most fundamental activity it deals with ideas which are independent of time, place, and change. Plato thought this a sign of the immortality of the soul ; and the question now is whether this is so.

It seems that there are two points that may be taken in regard to it, one of which forms a serious and the other a fatal objection to it. It is a very serious objection that it proves rather too much. It proves not only that the soul survives the shock of death, but also that it is eternal in both directions. It has existed as well as is to exist through all eternity. As death is only an apparent end to human life, so birth is only an apparent beginning. Our human experience here is only an episode, an accident, in a history that is essentially different from it and superior to it. And thus this life can never be fully accounted for. It is really impossible to say why the soul should have come into this state, and what good it gets by coming. In the *Phædrus* Plato

regards the descent of the soul as being in some way a moral lapse, thus making the whole of this life a blunder. This view of it is naturally common to those who have found the true life of the soul elsewhere than here. But, after all, we do require to explain this life ; it will not do, in our anxiety to prove immortality, to destroy the value and significance of this life altogether.\*

This then is a serious objection to this point of view, though by itself we can hardly call it fatal. The fatal objection is that by Plato's theory an impossible relation is established between the soul and the body. It is assumed, consciously or unconsciously, that the soul is really an independent thing that lives by its own laws, and is able to treat the body as if it were simply a part of the material world. The body is simply its organ, and is almost passive under its influence. The reason why the soul fails is for the simple reason that the body is a clog upon its energies, and a barrier between it and truth. Thus the true life of the soul is independent of the body ; the body drops off at death, and leaves the soul free. This is unfortunately a mistake in fact, as Aristotle was quick to point out. The soul may be independent and separate in a sense, but we know it only in

\* The idea of pre-existence is untenable for two reasons : (1) it offers no rational explanation of the entry of the soul upon this state of being, which is *ex hypothesi* inferior ; (2) it fails to explain moral life. Morally speaking, a soul is proved here in this life ; its experience here is real, and this life determines its future : it cannot be that this is one of a crowd of forgotten lives : this would deprive it of all real meaning. See below, p. 50, for idea of probation.

connection with a material environment. And, what is more even than that, the soul only obtains its knowledge of things through the body. We not only have no experience of a soul acting alone ; we cannot even conceive what such action would be like. The whole of our knowledge reaches us ultimately through the body, and we are entirely in the dark as to any further possibility of thought. Hence the failure of this argument is complete. Not only does it involve a conclusion as to the pre-existence of the soul which causes considerable difficulty ; it also contains within itself an assumption as to the relation of soul and body which is not verified in experience. The whole of succeeding thought has only tended to emphasise this failure. Modern investigations as to the nature of the soul have shown beyond question that, as we know it, it is most closely united with the body. It has become possible to locate in the brain different activities of the soul, and to bring into the closest connection the physical condition of the nervous system and the contents of the mind. Hence, though the actual points raised by Plato are true enough in themselves, the assumption upon which he goes in his arguments is invalid. It is perfectly true that the mind contributes a universality which it does not derive from experience ; but it does not follow from this that the mind works independently of the body altogether. The dissolution of the body, so far as we can infer from the phenomena of thought, involves the extinction of the soul also. There is no *proof* of the immortality of the soul in this region.

These remarks upon the form of the argument which Plato used apply to all arguments based upon the functions of the intellect, or indeed upon the functions of the soul, as such, altogether. There is no part of the soul's activity of which we know anything that is not in connection with some bodily activity. And therefore there is no part of the life of man here which implies that it is itself eternal and imprisoned in the material environment. Even spiritualistic phenomena, though they seem to imply the continuous existence of persons in some condition or other, reach us only through material means. Ghosts, as they are described to us, bang on tables or appeal in some shadowy way to our sense of sight, and therefore use similar means of communicating to those we use in ordinary life, only much less effectually. It is impossible, therefore, to quote these in defence of a theory of immortality which rests upon a dualism between soul and body. They prove, if they are true, the continuity of life; they are valueless as regards the immortality of the soul.

II. But it is time to pass on to the consideration of the moral life. We have already set aside the evidence of moral life, considered merely as a function of the soul. If, therefore, it is to be of any value, it must be from a different point of view altogether. It is obvious that as we survey the world the moral sense is very far from being satisfied. The moral sense has certain clear and definite rules of conduct which it expects to have illustrated in the order of the world. It is not content to move on its own lines, and regard

the world as an alien thing ; it expects and demands to find itself at home in the world. And this is contravened by the presence of injustice and wrong. Men act as they like, to all appearance ; and it looks as if it did not much matter to the world. Those who do wrong are not uniformly punished in this world. The incidence of misfortune is not easy to bring under any moral principle. At times, when society thinks that it is in any danger, it turns upon some criminal and punishes him severely. At times, when their wickedness does not interfere with the general comfort, men are left to do exactly as they like, and grow rich, if they can, at the expense of better men than they. In view of this the conscience rebels. It cannot endure the thought that this world is all there is, or that the principles of which it is so profoundly certain are defied by the existing order of things. In the presence of such an experience as this world offers, it can only infer the existence of another, governed more firmly, less subject to deceit and injustice. This world being what it is, the conscience must either assume the existence of another or admit that the rule of evil is supreme.

This argument has, of course, taken various forms at different times. It had much to do with Plato's anxiety on the subject of immortality, and it was the line on which the question developed among the Jews. In its simplest form it is merely a means of correcting the inequalities of the present life, and of strengthening the conscience in its convictions ; it is the resource of a mind that would otherwise be



driven towards despair. So, for instance, in Plato's *Gorgias* the false judgments of this world are attributed to one special cause of error—the confusion engendered by the material covering of things. He tells, under the form of a myth, how in old times men were judged on the day of their death and before they actually died. Hence rich men brought up all their friends to say how excellent they had been, and the mistakes of this world were continued in the world below. Zeus therefore, finding that the isles of the blest were getting full of scoundrels of all sorts, altered the arrangements of things. Men were no longer to know the day of their death, and were to be judged after it. They were to leave behind the various coverings in which they had concealed the true character of their souls, and go before unerring judges who themselves had escaped from the trammels of the flesh. Thus the errors of this world would be corrected in the next, and absolute truth and justice would reign.

In somewhat the same way, but with even deeper moral disturbance than was possible even to Plato, the Jews looked upon the confusion in the world. To their minds, as the Psalms show clearly in many places, the breaches of moral order in the world and the success of the wicked seemed to involve the justice and providence of God. It was not only a serious blow to the convictions of the moral sense to find the ungodly triumphing and the righteous forsaken; it seemed as if God had forgotten to fulfil His promises. Their religion as well as their moral sense

was in jeopardy. The intensity of the problem as it presented itself to their minds is seen in the Books of Job and the Preacher. They are unable to settle the question ; they retain their convictions in the face of what is very near despair. In the Book of Wisdom we have the clearest assertion of the doctrine of immortality in this connection. The author describes the confidence of the ungodly, reasoning with themselves, but not aright, arguing from the shortness of life to the justification of immorality. There is nothing beyond, they say, and therefore they may as well amuse themselves while this life lasts, persecuting the poor righteous man whose life is a constant rebuke to them. "But the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die." The world beyond the grave, of the reality of which the author is certain, redresses the wrongs and confirms the religious convictions of righteous men in this world. The greatest confusion and disorder in this world is rectified in the world to come.

This is the simplest way in which the moral order leads to the conviction of immortality. We will pause here again, then, and consider exactly how far it takes us. It is obvious at once that it is far from the objections which we raised to the previous line of argument. It does not involve us in any theory of pre-existence, and it introduces no breach of unity into the nature of man. It starts from the idea of wrong which is certainly present, and certainly affects the whole of life. And it is true that, if this life is



all there is, the justification of moral impulses is very hard to find. It certainly is not always to the advantage of a man in this world to follow the lead of the moral law ; there is no possible claim upon him to do so, if he can break it with impunity—that is, if he can break it without causing sufficient injury to others to call the attention of society. From this point of view, success or failure in avoiding punishment would make a very fair test. To be punished would mean that a man had got beyond the line of society's toleration, that he had done a thing which society felt bound to condemn and prevent. Otherwise there would be no harm in his satisfying his own desires. Society would change ; civilisation would grow ; different things would be condemned and ignored ; but the rule would be ultimately the same. Under these conditions the moral law would represent a gratuitously exacting ideal. Its presence might be a convenient factor in the evolution of society, but it would not be finally justified as absolutely right. Thus the facts upon which this argument proceeds are so far made good : the moral law may have a strong hold upon the individual conscience, but it is not verified in the outer world.

The fault of the argument is that it establishes no certain connection between this world and that beyond the grave. It simply *assumes* another, in order to correct the deficiencies of this. This world exists, and is defective ; but if the defects could somehow be eradicated from this order, the necessity for a world beyond would seem to disappear. The connection

between them is weak ; it belongs rather to the region of imagination or hope than to that of argument ; it does not prove the existence of a world of justice—it only declares man's very profound desire for it. As an argument, then, it fails.

But it is possible to take a wider view of life than we have done so far. So far we have considered evil merely as a fact—an unfortunate fact, that is certainly real. We have thought of the moral law as a system of principles existing, again as a mere matter of fact, in our own consciences. We have made no effort to connect them. But now, supposing that we endeavour to trace the moral value of the existence of evil, we are brought in view of the idea of *probation*. As we see things, evil has this function—to test and prove the character of men, to reveal their moral affinities. So far as we can understand, a firm moral character is always developed by means of the possibilities of evil—that is, by means of temptation. The untried nature is at a lower level, even though it is far from actual evil, than one “that has seen, by the means of evil, that good is best.” And thus evil, though we do not necessarily regard it as essential, is at any rate partly explained.

And from this point we get a new outlook towards the other world. Probation means not only that this life is touched with failure, but that it is *preparatory*. It is incomplete, educational, formative. Those who live here are building up their character day by day, and developing towards some fixed mould or ideal. Now it is clear that if this is a true view of life, to

spend it in education, and to be extinguished as soon as the process is complete, would reduce it at once to an irrational absurdity. The moment that the idea of probation is allowed, there comes in with it the necessity of a future life. It is almost a contradiction in terms to talk of life as a preparation or probation, if nothing follows.

It is clear then that the value of the idea of probation for our present purpose lies not in any conjectural redress of mere wrong, but in the fact that it definitely connects this life with a future with which it is organically one. It goes to show not merely the presence of deficiencies here, but the actual incompleteness of this life. And thus without any complications from the direction of pre-existence, it brings this life and the other into one scheme.

The whole question then now is whether we can sustain this notion of probation, whether we can give reasons for thinking it valid. It has certainly prevailed very widely. The doctrines of the world to come in most nations usually indicate its presence. The souls of men are assigned to different forms of life, according as they have succeeded or failed under this world's test. Plato combines the notion with his theory of transmigration, and regards one life as a means of acquiring experience enabling us to choose rightly for the next. In his myth at the end of the *Republic* he describes the souls coming up one by one to choose the destiny that is to govern them in the new life that is shortly to begin for them. He tells us of one unfortunate man who rushes upon

the destiny of a wealthy but wicked tyrant, and he explains the mistaken choice by saying that it was the soul of one who had spent his days in a quiet state without philosophy ; it was the soul of one, as we should say, who had never had to face temptation. His life, though it had been virtuous, had failed to fit him to make his choice.

It is not, however, by referring to particular instances that the idea of probation can be made good ; it really assumes a belief in a particular theory of the world. No doubt the existing facts in the world imply, as Butler thought, a tendency to reward virtue and punish vice ; but it does not get far beyond a tendency. On the other side are all the obscure cases which startled the moral sense of the Old Testament writers, and provide still the stock arguments of sceptics against the moral order. The idea of probation requires us to assume not merely a future life, but the existence of a providential Governor of the world. It can only be sustained if the world is under the government of God, and forms one system guided and sustained by Him.

Thus we return to the theological view of life with which we began. Immortality is a notion which, if it is to hold true, involves us in a theological view of all human existence. The universal range of man's thoughts will not prove it, nor the pressing demands of the moral sense, though both these lines of reasoning involve the purely material theory of life in perplexity. We cannot feel sure that man is made for some purpose which this world does not satisfy,

until we see his life in the light of the Divine Providence. Then the moral ideas which connect it with a future are themselves justified, and the whole is systematised and its rational cohesion declared.

But we have not yet said all that belongs to this particular line of argument. That aspect of life which brings it under the purview of Providence has other associations. It means that God is on the side of the moral law; in other words, that the moral law represents His will for man. And this throws quite a new light upon evil. From this point of view it cannot be regarded as a necessary element in the world's constitution, even though it plays a part in the process of probation; it is a breach of the moral law, a rebellion against the will of God. It requires to be ejected in some way from the order of the world; it has to be declared openly to be wrong. Now in this connection, which it would not be to our purpose to develop further, we come in sight of the whole scheme of salvation, culminating in the Cross and the Resurrection. Among other things, one conspicuous result of the whole process of Christ's life was to affirm beyond dispute the moral intuitions of men. It declared the reality of their sense of evil, and of their sense that it was something more than a mistake or a miscalculation of expediency. And it declared the invincible supremacy of good in the wider order of the world. And thus the Resurrection is more than a salient and striking instance of the return of one from the dead: if this were all, the matter might have been taken as settled in the case of Lazarus. It



affirms the reality and truth of all those ideas with which the notion of immortality is most closely connected, and from which, as it appears, the most hopeful line of proof seems to come. It is impossible to believe that the moral claims upon the order of the world are satisfied, if death is the end of all things. The Resurrection is a declaration both of the validity of moral intuitions in themselves and of their extension into a further range of life. It is a fact in the moral and spiritual world that Christ could not be holden of death; it indicates the degree in which the physical world is at the command of the moral order. Thus the Resurrection leads us to approach the question from a totally different point of view from that of pre-Christian speculation. In earlier days the question had been whether we could select out of the various elements in man's life any one that could be regarded as permanent through death—whether it was possible to distinguish the permanent from the changeful elements in it. The result of the change produced by the Resurrection is that the life of man as a whole is seen to have a hold upon eternity. That aspect of it which most conspicuously rebels against the limits of time is declared to be essentially true and valid. The sense that the moral ideas fail unless man is in some sense immortal is justified by the Resurrection. Man is shown to be a spiritual being, living in a spiritual world.

This is of the greatest importance in connection with certain difficulties which we have already considered. We have seen that ancient writers, and



many modern ones who follow in their train, have met with disaster in their attempts to show that the soul was immortal, as distinct from and opposed to the body. It was urged in opposition to these assertions that there was no evidence of the soul acting in separation from the body. The wider knowledge of the bodily organism in later times has only confirmed this position. The more we know of the action of the mind, the more closely it seems to be united to the body in all that it does. It must therefore be cause of considerable congratulation that the conception of immortality to which the Resurrection gives rise is not that of the immortality of the soul. This doctrine, as such, is no part of the Christian creed: the doctrine which is part of the Christian creed is that of the resurrection of the body, which is a very different thing. It remains for us to consider this doctrine in connection with our present question.

Let us first ask what it is that the body does, in what relation it stands to the soul. It is clear that, so far as we know it, it is the invariable instrument of the soul's action. We do not know ourselves even in this life except in connection with bodily changes. Further, the body presents an appearance of continuity, which is not, however, borne out by the facts. Some changes are perceived occurring over considerable periods of time; others are minute and imperceptible, though they are ceaselessly in operation. It has been said, indeed, that the entire body of every man changes every seven years. Hence, when we say that a man's body is the same all through his

life, we use the word in a very general sense, without any attempt at scientific precision. We recognise by its means the presence of the same individual ; the changes which take place do not seriously affect his appearance as a rule ; but the idea of sameness is very loosely applied to the bodily organism. We mean much more the continuity of a life which is manifested in much the same way, under much the same conditions from day to day. Moreover, there are certain limits, it would seem, to the changes which we should allow within the range of what we call sameness. In some sense the soul is supposed to impress the body with its own character ; the body is moulded and displays the features, so to say, of the soul. Hence, though it gives us little mental disturbance when we learn of the continual process of change which the body undergoes, we should regard the transplantation of a soul into another body than that which properly belonged to it as a hopeless break in continuity. The history of body and soul is somehow assumed to be the same, and such a breach as this would practically destroy all conception of identity. In other words, physical continuity, however great the changes may be which it involves, is of the essence of our idea of sameness as applied to the growth of the bodily organism : its relation to the soul is always the same ; the bodily organism is the instrument and exponent of the soul.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body seems to assert two things : (1) that the soul continues to express itself through a material medium ; (2) that

this material medium is somehow to be identified with that which has all along formed the home of the individual soul. It should be observed that in the original languages of the Creeds the emphasis lies upon the first of these two points. Belief is expressed in the resurrection of the flesh (*carnis resurrectionem*—*σάρκος ἀνάστασις*)—in the material medium rather than in its individual embodiment. But it is obvious that the second is involved in the first; flesh is nothing, if it is not individualised and informed by the spirit.

It is true that a very great obscurity hangs over what we may venture to call the physiology of the risen body; and crude notions of the Resurrection have greatly tended towards making the whole idea impossible. The physiology of paganism has been applied to the illustration of the Christian creed; the future life has been imagined on the analogy of the descriptions of Hades in Homer. And, again, it has been assumed that the resurrection of the body implied the collection of all the scattered atoms of the human frame: cremation, for instance, has been condemned on the ground that it would prevent such a reconstruction of the body. Difficulties such as these have arisen from an excess of wisdom in dealing with the subject. There is very little said in the Bible as to the nature of risen humanity, and what is said is in many cases couched in symbolic language. We have fragmentary accounts of our Lord's appearances after the Resurrection, and these are all set forth in the simple, unexplained fashion which is

characteristic of the Gospels throughout. The authors tell of occasions when Christ reappeared to His chosen friends ; but they describe only the method and occasion of His appearance, and do not discuss or explain the condition of His body. In some important respects it seems to have resembled the body which they had known before the death upon the cross ; in others, it differed wholly from all human bodies as we know them. It was apparently free from certain limitations which bind us, and did not always bring instant recognition (St. Luke xxiv.). But changed though it was, they had no hesitation in identifying it as really His by various sure tokens, as men recognise through some familiar gesture or word a friend who has been long absent, and upon whom earthly change has passed.

Apart from these historic records, the language we find in the New Testament is largely symbolical. St. Paul speaks (1 Cor. xv.) of the analogy of the seed and the full-grown plant, and has been sharply criticised in recent times for so doing. It seems, however, as if there might still be something to be said for his argument. He is endeavouring to meet a scepticism which rested on the impossibility of such an event as the Resurrection, and he calls attention to a case in nature where a radical change takes place by imperceptible degrees. The final shape taken by the plant is physically continuous with the condition of the seed : there is no breach of continuity ; there is an identity between seed and plant in spite of all the change. And this is exactly what is wanted for the occasion.

St. Paul emphasises the possibility of an identical life persisting through the most complete changes. And this is surely what is meant by the resurrection of the flesh. It means that the life we live here is continuous with a life beyond the grave; that there no less than here the soul will express itself through a body; and though we may know but little in the way of detail as to the constitution and character of this body, yet the example of the Risen Christ gives us hints of that which is to come upon us.

By means of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body the Creed does for the belief in immortality what is required to complete it and make it rational. It is not, as might at first appear, an additional difficulty in our way; it is a conception of immortality which is free from the objections which haunt the older views of it. It enables us to give credence to the deep-seated belief in the continuity of human life beyond the grave, without calling upon us to solve the insoluble question of the exact relation between soul and body. And, moreover, it saves the question of immortality from being an isolated matter of metaphysical interest, by connecting it closely with the whole Christian theory of things.

T. B. STRONG.



#### IV.

### Faith in Jesus Christ.\*

I WOULD speak to you to-night of this faith of ours in Jesus Christ; and I suppose I am to speak in defence of it as to those who believe or who would believe, but who find themselves, as we all do, in the presence of many perplexities and inquiries in our own hearts, or from others asking, "How am I to believe? How am I to hold this belief? What, after all, are my grounds? I would believe if I could, but I cannot, so dim, so puzzling, so doubtful seems the ground on which we walk here." So the beseeching cry goes up from hearts that are bewildered to those who preach, saying, "Tell me, you who believe, who seem so firm in your belief, so strong that you can deliver it and implore others to share it, how did you believe, and why? What are the proofs and evidences that seem to you so clear? Give me your reasons, that I may know what is your mind about it, and may share that belief and that joy which seem to be yours. Tell us your faith." That is what people, I suppose, are asking the preacher.

\* These two addresses were given from rough notes, and are printed from the corrected shorthand report.



And first, to meet that inquiry, let me just say a few words about the nature which belongs to all grounds of belief and all evidences of faith of whatever kind. These grounds, these evidences, will never account for the whole belief. There are never such proofs and such evidences as can mechanically create faith in this person or in that, wherever they are applied. For just consider what belief is. Belief is a personal intimacy with God ; it is the contact of the soul with God ; it is the friendship between God and man. That is faith. Faith means that these two have learned somehow to know one another, and to trust one another, and to love one another. Now what proofs and what evidences are you going to give for a friendship you have formed—a friendship with another man? Can you tell the grounds why you trust him, why you have singled him out and said, "This is my friend"? Could you explain to another person perfectly what reasons you have had for holding on by that man's word? Can you tell another why you love him? And friendship is the note of faith ; faith in God is friendship with God. Faith is the meeting, the mingling, of spirit with spirit, when the soul touches God, and, touching Him, knows Him and believes. And every soul touches God for itself, and touches God at a separate spot ; forms a special intimacy of its own with God—an intimacy of friendship and love which belongs to it alone in all the world ; so that it alone knows God from that place where it is, having that character which it has—knows Him individually with that peculiar intensity which it

can share with no other, for with no other can it share its own personal identity. So the faith of each soul has a separate story of its own—the story of how it found its God, learned to know Him and to trust Him more and more, and at last to surrender to Him and then to love Him.

Now that is the story of faith—the story of each soul's discovery of the God who loves it. And if, then, you ask me the grounds for my faith, how can I tell it you? I should have to tell you the whole of my spiritual history, if I were to give you the story and the grounds and the evidences of my faith. How can I deliver that up to you? What words could convey it? Why, I cannot tell it myself to myself,—the story of how I came to believe in God through Jesus Christ—the story of the organic growth of my life—the story, the long troubled story, of how the Holy Spirit toiled within my soul to succour it, and to recover and to cleanse it, and to warn it, and to revive it, and to quicken it, and to turn it towards my God. That long story would go far back to the earliest memories of life, of my mother,—to childhood's habits, customs, associations; to youth, with impulses, instincts, aspirations, sins, falls, temptations, recoveries, stumblings, risings—all the growth of the faculties and capacities—all the brimming tide of life coming upward, now stained and tainted, and then purified and absolved:—all that is the story of my faith. Thousands and thousands of prayers, and of entreaties, and of cries—all the eucharists and absolutions—all the good instincts and impulses

that are felt coming and going like the wind under the impulse of the Spirit, who is Himself the wind—imagination, movements far out of my control, stirrings, voices, calls, friends, companions, and the Church and the Saints,—they all belong to the story of how it was that I believed in Jesus Christ. How can I tell it? How say what has happened? Yet that is belief, that is faith; and the whole of that will have to be told in order to tell why I believe. Grounds, evidences, proofs—these have only a limited work round and about this story of the life, which is a separate story for each soul, and can never be handed over in a parcel by the post to any one who wants it. There are, no doubt, reasonings and arguments; there are grounds, there are proofs, very often, which faith has dug up for itself when it has been formed,—reasons which it found to be at work in the act by which it won its faith, or suggestions which just touched it at the right moment or which turned it in a direction which proved favourable, or probabilities which influenced it at crises, or broad general arguments and pressures and influences such as belong to the whole movement and current of men's lives and tell them to look and see and believe. But, then, these influences have to make their entry into each soul separately; and though the grounds of the evidences be the same, yet they acquire a different proportion and a different perspective with every new soul that they touch. These are the grounds, the broad general abstract influences, pressures, tendencies, which can be brought out and laid before you; but

the faith which uses them, the faith which assimilates them, the faith that succours itself by them, as by undergirdings of the ship when the waves are strong—that faith must be alive and active. Faith is an impulse of God within us; and it must use these things and experience these things all for itself alone; and only according to the use it makes of these arguments, and according to the measure of its own personal experience of what they are worth, will it find that they do anything at all to create the faith which they satisfy in others.

This, then, is the first limitation with which we must approach these grounds, these evidences, these argumentative influences, which might lead us to believe in Jesus Christ.

And now let us note another limitation. We are offering grounds of evidence for faith in Jesus Christ; and faith in Jesus Christ has this broad character about it—that it always depends upon an earlier preliminary faith presupposed in the soul. Faith in Jesus Christ appeals to a belief which the soul already has—a belief assumed, a belief in God, a belief in goodness, a belief in a great Divine law about and abroad somewhere. That is the necessary temper which must be already in possession and already active before the faith in Jesus Christ can make its appeal. Faith in Jesus Christ is a faith which addresses itself to a believing soul; it does not enter into all the arguments which could create this preliminary belief. If that belief be not there already, this faith in Jesus Christ will never come about; but

given that there is such a faith, and given that there is something in the soul that is looking out for a guide, that is feeling after a spiritual kingdom, that is aware of goodness and virtue in life and righteousness—given that, given these needs, given these movements, given these aspirations, then the faith in Jesus Christ says, “If you believe so much, you must go on to believe in Jesus Christ our Lord.” That is the way the argument will always run. And let me just remind you how much our Lord Himself impressed this upon us. He always said that there must be preliminary conditions of faith already there before He could do anything at all: His mighty works presupposed that. One famous occasion I would recall to you in which our Lord is challenged to meet the very question that we are putting to-night—challenged in the Temple to say, “By what authority doest Thou these things, and who gave Thee this authority? Why are we to believe in these extraordinary assumptions You make?” He is facing the very question Himself. What did He do? He asked these people a preliminary question. “Before,” He said, “I can meet your question, I will ask you a question Myself. The baptism of John—was it of heaven or of man?” And they debated, we know, and they disputed this way and that, and discussed it, and finally they said that they had not made up their minds, they could not tell. And our Lord says, “Then neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.” What did He mean? He meant that it was perfectly useless for Him to speak of His authority or to tell



them anything about it, for they will not understand one word of it, unless they have already had a spiritual experience, and have passed under the baptism of John. They must have known already what it is to have a soul; they must have known what it is to have recognised in that soul that they stand before a God who is a Judge, and that they have sinned; they must have felt the power of the preacher who has convicted them of that sin, and has compelled them to go down to Jordan and confess their sin there and be baptised. If they have gone through that, if that spiritual experience is theirs, if they have been able already to believe so much, then they are in a position to hear the arguments by which Jesus Christ would justify His authority. But until that state of mind is there the way is blocked, the ears are stopped, and our Lord gives no answer at all and offers no argument. So always He told the Jews, "If you believe not Moses, how can you believe Me?" And we know that tremendous text that is so startling to us at the end of the parable of Dives the rich man—the awful text which says, "If they believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead." Our Lord might die and rise again, but unless these souls had already felt the pressure of spiritual influence, felt the call to spiritual life conveyed to them through Moses and the Prophets, they would never believe though one rose from the dead. Always it is so. "If you were children of Abraham, you would believe in Me." First be children of Abraham, first have faith in the



great God, first have a spiritual movement which constitutes you a pilgrim here on this earth, and then you will know what His words mean, then you will find yourself at last believing in Him. "My sheep hear My voice: ye then hear Me not, because ye are not My sheep." Everybody may be of the flock of Christ,—He does not limit it; only He is stating a preliminary condition. They will only hear His voice by being already given of the Father to Him, under the movement of the Father, touched by the Father—that is a preliminary condition for every soul. And if every soul in the world were saved, still it would be true that "no man cometh unto Me unless God the Father draw him." It is not a limitation of the scope, but a statement of the conditions under which every soul comes to Jesus.

This, then, is always supposed by our Lord Himself. Grounds for belief in Christ presuppose that you have already found ground enough to believe in something; and I think that this something in which men believe before they believe in Christ—this preliminary faith to which Christ appeals—can be divided into two main forms.

Its first form is that which is conveyed in the great typical text of our Lord, "Believe in God, believe also in Me." The preliminary faith is faith in the great God—God the Father, God the great Will and Power in life; believe in that, have faith in that, then you shall be given grounds and arguments for going on from that faith to believe

in Jesus Christ. That is one great form—believe in God, and out of your faith in God believe in Jesus Christ.

Then there is another form of approach to Christ. You may have faith in man, may believe in his destiny, his hope—you may see grounds to trust him, and may see about him signs of a great heritage. You may have faith in his virtue, in his righteousness, in the truth that is in him; and then the faith of Christ can say, "Well, that is a great thing; if you have that faith in man, if you trust him, if you really do believe in righteousness and truth and purity, I will appeal to that faith in you, and I will give you grounds and evidences that, having that faith in man, you must go on to a faith in Jesus Christ, the true Man." Here will be two main lines of argument: (1) having faith in God, go on to believe in Jesus Christ; or (2) having faith in man, go on to believe in Jesus Christ. I will take the first to-night—faith in God as a preliminary faith, which faith in Christ supposes to be already there; and I would try and show you who have that faith, you who, I trust, are living by that faith, you who find that faith in difficulties, why, having such a faith, you must recognise grounds, evidences, arguments, which compel you to carry it out and to find yourselves believers in Jesus Christ our Lord. So let us try and see how these arguments will run.

You believe in God? Yes. That means you believe in a God who is real and alive. You do not

mean, for instance, that you believe in some vague philosophical abstraction, a mere formula required as a first cause, a sort of hypothetical background for existence, a logical something far away without which the world of things and of nature could not have begun. You do not mean that you believe merely in a God who must be supposed a very long time ago to have made the world, and who then left it to go on by itself. Such a belief, no doubt, might remain stationary and blank, and might feel no necessity to go further and believe in Jesus Christ. I should say it was no faith in God at all. To believe in God at all is to believe in a living, energetic personal Will which is actively making and sustaining the world to-day as we see it—a God who is the centre and force of all our forces, who is the fount of life and the heart of life, and the moral and the spiritual spring of our being. *Vigor tenax rerum.* God is the inherent force that holds things together ; He is the Father of man, the vital necessity to the existence of men and women. He is alive, not in some remote bygone age of creation, but to-day—as in the beginning, so always, face to face with life to-day, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. Faith in God could hardly claim the name if it fell short of this. It believes in an unchanging God who is ever face to face with the facts of to-day.

But then the facts are ever changing. And by this perpetual change they make ever new demands upon God. Face to face with each changing fact, He can only remain the same, He can only retain His old

identity, by taking new measures to meet new situations. He must change His relationships to the facts as they move ; He must keep level with them as they advance, must lay Himself alongside with them ; only so can He verify the validity of His personality. A person is one who among all the shifting circumstances of life ever retains his own identity by perpetually adapting himself anew to circumstances as they come and go, so that through every change he remains ever the same. That is what we mean by calling man personal. And God is a person ; God is one who is ever meeting the change of facts by a corresponding change in Himself, in order that He may retain His old identity in the face of new circumstances. As the situations shift, God shifts His relationship to the circumstances. He must ever be moving on to occupy new positions as new positions appear. We must believe in God as a Father who is keeping Himself in touch with history as it grows and changes and develops ; with man as he discloses himself ; with all the new needs and powers that have come to man. If God has not kept pace with these, kept Himself level with that new movement, then He has been left behind in the race, and does not stand where man stands to-day. But to believe in God the Father is to believe that He is at the side of His children, ever present as they disclose all these new powers. He must constantly be doing something for man and with man. Since those first days when the story began, there must be new acts of God going on. God must have done something more than create

man and set him moving, or He would not be a living God. God must have disclosed Himself in order to keep level with the disclosure which man has been making in history. And this fresh disclosure of Himself is what we call Revelation. Revelation means something more than was involved merely in creation; it means acts of God in addition to the old, by which God has kept Himself in touch with the facts as they have come to be.

And now let us ask what are the new and changed facts which history has disclosed? Growth, development of capacity—this, of course, there has been. But with this other facts have appeared, alarming and critical. There has been sin, the awful shadow that haunts the development of man as it is disclosed in history; and pain, the awful curse that still is entwined with this growth of man. Sin and pain—these are the ever-new facts which come out as the disclosure proceeds; and God's disclosure then, as it moves along with the moving scene, must indicate the revelation of God's relation to these new facts of sin and suffering—His disposition towards them, His handling of them, His remedy for them. He must be level with these terrible things. What is He going to make of them? How is He going to preserve His own stainless Name in the face of sin, in the face of pain? How is He going to manifest Himself the same eternal God, loving and gracious, in front of, and in the thick of, facts like these? Some change there must be, something He must have done. God's old action towards the sinless and



untroubled earth cannot continue the same, now that sin has entered, now that suffering has begun. Is He to withdraw? That would be the one impossible thing, for God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He alone is the Upholder of life. A God who withdraws from the scene in disgust is a dead God, and no God at all. No; to believe in God is to believe that He is here now—here in a new and unhappy situation. What will He do? How will He adapt His purity and justice to the changed conditions?

Any belief in God, we see, must involve belief in a God who has done something in view of the bitter facts of sin and pain. And this argument for God having made some revelation of Himself gains new force with every year, with every century; for year by year and day by day these terrible factors, sin and pain, give ever-fresh evidence of their sway—they disclose new power. The horror grows as we watch the evil spirit prevail over the new hopes and the new movements and the new aspirations; and as the life becomes more high, as the development proceeds further, the fall is worse, the corruption is viler—hearts become more sick and heavy, and the road becomes ever more terrible and sad, and the scene is filled with yet more pitiful cries than before. And so we watch this great book unrolled of man's story that he writes himself—his history—a book so full of glorious promise, and yet written indeed within and without with lamentations and mournings and woes. And ever as this tale proceeds further the question



becomes more and more urgent: Can it be that God has kept silent? Can it be that God has done nothing at all? Has He not shown what all this means to Him? A living God, has He proved Himself lifeless? Has no hand been put out, no help, no hope been given, no pity shown, no purpose been disclosed, no new goal opened before man's eyes? Has there been no remedy? What is the solution of this awful world of pain? Is it to be just as if He had taken no measures, left it utterly alone, and never grappled with the tragedy of man? A living God, and been silent! A living God, and done nothing! And more, He is the Father of His children. These are His children that are suffering, His children that are sinning, His children that are dying; and has their Father given them no clue as to His intention, now that they have sinned? Has He never entered into their conflict? Has He never opened out the fountains of His pity? A Father in face of suffering children who keeps silence! Silence! We all know the terror of such a silence when we look for help. In a shipwreck, the crash, the screams, the hubbub, the confusion—and then silence. The ship has sunk; the great waters have passed over it. It is gone down into silence. It is this silence after a great disaster which makes the heart sick, and the blood cease to flow, and the perspiration of fear start in beads on the brow; it is this silence which strikes panic into the soul. And has the world suffered this tremendous disaster, and has God kept silent? Sin is still so strong, and suffering is still so

cruel ; and the great world that God made is so awful in its silence. The sun travels over the face of the sky in silence, the rivers pass in silence, the stars look on in silence ; and we sin and we suffer and we die, and the woods and the earth seem aware, seem as it were to look at us with conscious eyes, and yet they cannot speak. The dreadful silence of this created world to all those who have been touched by the misery of this long tragedy—that is the thing that chills the heart and strikes panic into the spirit ; and this is surely the reason why men are losing faith so largely. They look abroad, they see the sorrow, they know it, it touches them in their nearest and their dearest ; and they are told to believe in God, and yet a God who has never spoken—to believe in God whilst this awful silence reigns round the disaster which is sweeping over the world. That is what they cannot do. “No, I cannot believe in God, if He is silent in face of London to-night.” That is the refusal which explains why all belief in God that stops short of revelation is dying to-day—why what we call the old Deism of the last century cannot live. No people now can believe for long in a God who does not reveal how He proposes to deal with a situation that is so appalling. And therefore, outside our own Christian faith, we know that there is hardly anything left to-day except Agnosticism, which means the impossibility, the despair, of believing at all. More and more this is the challenge ringing out in men’s ears : “If you would believe in God at all, if you would hold fast to that belief in a Father in heaven which is your life,

then you must go further ; then you must move on and believe in a God who is alive to-day, and if alive, then a God who is at work, a God who is doing something to meet the crises in which men find themselves. There must be a word of help that this God has spoken. He must have revealed His purpose to His children who sin and suffer and die. There is no believing in God without believing in a God who has revealed Himself."

Where then has He revealed Himself? Where has He spoken? I think, if ever men get so far as that, if ever, convinced that God must have spoken, they ask themselves, "Where has He said it," there can only be one answer possible. They will once more take up the old Book called the Bible. Here is the word that breaks the silence. Take that Book—it is quite alone in the world, whatever men may say—take it and compare it with any other book that claims to be a book of religion, and you will see that here, at least, is the one Book which speaks of God as moving along in history by the side of man ; of a God who discloses Himself according to the situation as it comes ; a God who century after century offers new words and new explanations and new interpretations to man, according to the changing life ; a God who goes on with man down his long story, is there by his side, whispering in his ear, and deals with this and that crisis when it comes ; a God of history ; a God of gradual revelation ; a God in the thick of the facts, recognising doubt, recognising sin, recognising sorrow, recognising pain, recognising

death, and meeting all with His Word. You may discuss that Word, you may dispute its efficacy ; but it is *a Word*, and the other religions have no Word at all. They cannot tell of a God who has broken the silence, and has spoken ; of a God who walks by man's side, accompanying him down all his long story, supplying him with all those needs and succours that he wants at the moment ; a God of revelation, revealing Himself according to the measure with which man discloses himself in his acts and capacities, in his sins and sorrows. Here is a Book which at last meets the case. Here is a Book which says that God is no dead God, in a far-away world, who created man long ago, and has done nothing since. God is a friend ; God is a lover ; God walks close at our side ; He follows things as they occur ; He is here, patient with our patience, sorrowing with our sorrow, offering with our suffering—yea, and at last dying with our death. Here is a God who says what He proposes to do with the situation which so alarms us. Here is a God who at least has a mind about what pain and suffering and sin may do. Here is the word spoken which breaks the silence, which dissolves the panic. Here is the loud cry of a God who is begging and beseeching His children to hold fast by Him, though the night be dark, though sorrow be sad, though death be hard. He knows it all ; He feels it all ; He recognises the alarms and the perils and the great fear that is before them, and yet He cries to them, "Oh that My children would hearken unto Me!" Here is a

God who speaks when silence would be intolerable. And it is not only a Book in which He speaks, but that Book tells of the Word of the Lord, who will stand at last on this earth, whose voice shall break the silence—Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God. He is the Word we want, the Word delivered and disclosed, who in His own person will reveal how it is that God means the world to continue as it is, how it is that He proposes to handle it, what He will make in His pity and love out of souls that have sinned, out of souls that know indeed that they must suffer for their sins, but who yet, by holding on to God and to Jesus Christ, can find that there is a way which God has opened out for them, by which, in spite of the sin, and through the suffering, and right through the darkness of death, they may yet pass into that blessed home where they will be gathered as children of their Father in heaven.

That is the argument, I think, in its breadth for believing in Jesus Christ. Believe in God—that first. Believe in Him as alive; believe that He must therefore, being alive, have shown how He is at work to-day in the world such as we know it too well in London. Believe in a God who has acted and spoken in face of the terrors that are about us; a God who has made it known to us that His pity and His righteousness and His love are stronger than sorrow, and stronger than suffering, and stronger than death; a God who has come here and Himself taken His stand by man, has known his sorrow, has shared all his woes, has taken upon Himself all his pains, has

sent His own Son to bear His cross and win His crown. Believe in God. Believe in a God who has spoken. Believe in the Word, the one Word that He has spoken, that avails in face of the facts as you know them in their urgency, in their terror. Believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Amen.

HENRY SCOTT HOLLAND.



V.

## Faith in Jesus Christ.

WE are to speak once more of these grounds that we have for belief in Jesus Christ ; and these grounds, we say, are so deep and so strong because they run far back into those primal faiths with which man starts on his career. There are preliminary beliefs without which man is not man ; there are in him tendencies, inclinations to belief which are vital, which are essential to his advance ; and it is to these that Christ makes His appeal. He enters the world appealing to what is already there, coming to rescue and to fulfil that which man already holds deep down in his heart.

And this attitude of the Lord is no position invented for Him by His apologists, but is due to the historical facts of His coming. Our Lord Jesus Christ comes late into the world—comes to the world far on in its development ; and there is a long story, before He arrives, of hopes and fears and joys and defeats, all of which have built up this process of man's history. Old experiences going far back into the earliest years, old hopes that have been there and

have become tangled and perplexed—these have continued century after century, and still God waits for the moment at which they will be ready for their solution. These hopes are presupposed by the Lord ; these perplexities must have been already experienced and become part of the feeling and thought of man before Christ enters and can be understood. And so this had been the Christian argument from the very first. All primitive beliefs, they said, tend to Jesus Christ, and all the goodness that has been in the world before Him is working, as we hold, towards Him who shall come. The good impulses are waiting for their revelation and their completion in Him who claims to carry forward that which man has hoped to do, and yet cannot do. All is working out towards this one fulfilment ; all has been presupposed by the Christ ; all is there already for Him to lay hands upon it, and to draw it out, and to free it from all that encumbers it, and to make it aware of that which it really intended. So, wherever in the world a man believes in anything good and high and holy, wherever there has been a man in all the heathen races feeling after a God, there has been a man to whom Christ makes His appeal ; and He makes His appeal to him as He did to the centurion in the Acts, because already there is something there which has been going up before God, because already there have been experiences which will enable the man to understand why it is that at last there stands on the earth One who says, “ I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

Christianity said this from the very first ; it always

supposed that there had been what it called a preparation for the Christ who only comes in the fulfilment of times. And let us therefore all remember that Christianity was eighteen hundred years ahead of human knowledge in discovering the doctrine of evolution—*i.e.* of the gradual growth of the Divine purpose. All that we have learned so much of in these later days from Darwin and others is already in the Bible long ago; and Christianity was the first force in the world that brought it out, and showed how God works bit by bit—first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. So, in many ways, and in many manners, and in varying degrees, God reveals His Word by stages, line by line, precept upon precept; and still there is development, and still there is evolution, and still the seed grows and the bud ripens into flower and into fruit, and at the end He arrives who completes the whole and carries forward the evolution to its consummation. So it was said by every apostle in the Bible; so by St. Peter in the Acts; so, over and over again, by St. Paul in his Epistles; so again by the writer of the Hebrews. Christ follows on that which has gone before—that is the first position of Christianity. And the argument, therefore, that it always uses is, “Believe in what you have, believe in what you know, believe in what is good, believe in the highest that is in you, and you are on your way to believe—nay, you must go on to believe—in Jesus Christ, who alone completes it.” So we showed in the last lecture that if you believed in God, then you must move forward step by

step, until the process ends in your delivering yourself up into the arms of Jesus Christ. And now, to-night, I will ask you to take another line of advance, and I say, "Believe in man, in what is good in him, in what is alive in him, in what grows in him, and in what aspires in him—believe in man, believe man to be what he declares himself to be ; and then you will find yourself moving on, point by point, until at last your belief closes in Jesus Christ, the Son of Man."

Let us see how this will work as an argument. Believe in man—that is, believe in his possibilities, in his gifts, in his capacities, in his growth ; believe in the reality of man, believe in the real significance of that which he discloses. To believe in man means to believe in him as a growing, living thing. Now this is a serious belief, if you come to press it ; for it means that you must believe in man, not with the temper of a mere spectator looking on at a mass of men, as if they were a mere scientific class, a mere type, a generalised genus called Man, in the mass. Man cannot be known in that way at all. Every man has one peculiarity which singles him out from everything else in Nature, and this is his speciality, his significance, which makes you name him Man ; and to believe in man is to believe in that which is significant of his peculiarity, that which is his characteristic, which distinguishes him from everything else about him, so that you give him a separate name. And when you ask what that is, you have only one answer. Man is a person. Man is not to be known in the mass as a generalised class, as

science would survey him. Man is only known as man through that characteristic which we call his identity, his individuality—that which makes every single, separate man quite distinct to himself alone. That is the heart of the matter ; in that lies everything that makes him interesting ; in that alone is he himself. Therefore to believe in man is to believe in the personality of man—to believe that that is his essential characteristic, his root reality. He is never a mere specimen; but each is individualised, a separate centre of interest, a distinct identity, a spiritual being, living with a personal will. That is man himself, to which all else is accidental and subordinate ; and so any one who declares, “I believe in man,” means, “I propose to believe in his individuality ; and I cannot do that unless I am willing to enter it from inside, to see with that man’s eyes, to place myself at the core of his person, there where he is a drama to himself, there where is his soul, the personal will round which everything turns.” So you enter in—you look in. “I believe in man. What is this man? Let me get inside him. Let me know him in his individual character.” And when once you have done that with sympathy, with love, what a wonderful world it is that you find inside each man ! There you find a drama going on within each soul which is that soul’s own story, and no one else’s in all the wide world. A drama—that is the only word by which we can call it. And such a drama ! We watch there feelings colliding one with another ; and the will with the feelings ; and the joys, pains, and sorrows ; and all the mingling



experiences that come and go ; and all the moments that pass, each with its impulse and with its incentive ; and yet the person, the individuality, the man, pressing forward through it all and using all for his own purposes—growing, developing, displaying that which he is. Through each instant his character comes out—what he peculiarly, distinctly is, and what no one else in the world can be. He grows as a moral character, and his life is a drama in which his moral character is disclosed. He does not know, himself, what it is going to be—he could not tell beforehand ; but as each circumstance turns up and presses upon him and forces him to act and speak, out comes the word, out comes the deed, and he is revealed as the man who could alone have said that word or done that particular deed at that particular moment. We know him now—we know what he is ; and he knows himself. And so we watch him ; and he watches his own drama, his own character, coming out into the open, showing itself abroad. We call it a drama, not a growth, because as we watch ourselves or watch another it is only too clear that the man's own will plays a part in it, his own intention, his own purpose, his own watchfulness, his own reasoning, his own strength. These belong to the drama ; on these it depends how he will use the circumstances that come up before him. He is the agent ; he recognises his own responsibility for that which he becomes under the pressure of circumstances. He may be idle or he may be watchful, he may be reckless or he may be prudent, but it is himself that comes out, his own will



playing a part in the development of the character, so that we cannot tell, nor can he, what it will become, as we can in the growth of a flower or a plant. He himself is always alive in the action, always himself an agent in the drama; and this forms the intense interest of his life. Here is his real significance—that he grows, and not only that, but that he grows through himself, that he is one of the agents in that growth, taking part in his own growth, putting force into it by his own will. His character is built up out of the acts of will which he enacts in face of circumstances; so that he himself is engaged, according to his measure, in the action of creating that which he becomes. This is what constitutes the fascination of man—that he helps to build up his moral character himself. And here lie all the heights and depths of this passionate play that we are watching,—here are the great lights that play so high on the summit of his life; here lie the great pits of darkness that are there, the great shadows that fall. By his power to freely will what he shall become under the pressure of circumstance, he is as one hung between heaven and hell, whom we can watch as he makes his choice, and discloses that which he chooses to become. And still he moves between all these perilous possibilities, and still he is always disclosing either that which is fair and gracious and pure, or revealing in himself depths of wickedness which neither he nor any other had conceived possible. So the interest in man becomes intense and absorbing; and when anybody says, “I believe in man,” he means,

“I believe in that moral drama going on in each man’s soul; I believe that there lies the key of what man is; I believe that this is the fascination of his life. I cannot take my eyes off this royal progress, this spectacle for men and angels, as the man moves along, and there are decisions and crises; and still the drama grows more varied, more complete, more strange; and still the man discloses all the great spiritual powers that are his destiny, and to which he is susceptible.”

To believe in man is to believe in the reality of this drama. And here let us give our thanks to those great writers who assist us in our task of believing in that inner drama which makes the significance of man; because we know how, living in these vast cities of ours, the deadening weight of numbers almost compels us to think of men in masses, to drop out their separate individual value; and we should be crushed by the deadening multitude if it were not that great literary authors devote all their energies to keeping alive in us the influence of this significant drama which is going on in individual souls.

We owe our thanks, above all, to the novelists and the poets. (1) The novelists who have been so great in our particular generation have been those who have forced our attention upon the importance and the value and the special significance of individual character as it grows. The great novel breaks up all broad classifications of man, all scientific generalisations, and it asserts that all passions are necessarily individual in their interest, and that each soul has a

plot of its own, and a development of its own, and a little world of its own in which it moves, and a story of its own, and a goal of its own, and that it is the pivot of separate crises, and has a claim to fulfil itself and the right to achieve its own development. Each boy and girl that love one another in a novel love one another as if they and they only had ever loved in all the world, as if it was quite a new moment in the world's history that they should have found one another. The novel exists to assert: "Here is a brand-new story; it is a love story, but it is quite new for all that, because every soul has a new story of its own, and has a new love that has never been felt before; and such a story is well worth the telling. Come, and read, and forget all else. It is the old story, yet it can never grow old, for always it renews its youth, as it is reborn in each fresh particular soul. Nothing can make stale its infinite variety." This is how the novelists can help us, if they sustain our interest in the personal drama of each single life, and say, "Never believe in what you call masses; everybody has a distinct story, everybody is interesting, if you knew their story." (2) So, too, the great poets of our day, the great prophets, are the people who, in face of all the vast mechanical development of the age, have thundered out still their belief in man's individuality, have sustained our belief in man. Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, and above all Browning; for Robert Browning set himself to do this very thing of which we speak, and to assert that everywhere there is only one thing interesting in the world,

and that is the individuality of man. Wherever you find it, however common its circumstances, however coarse its environments, however commonplace it looks to you; yes, even if it be horribly evil; it appeals to you notwithstanding, because it is the expression of a man, a soul, a separate individual. In this lies its absorbing interest. It may be the basest murderer in the world; still you shall see that here is a man with a growth of his own and issues of his own; and he himself is playing his part by his own will in the midst of good or evil circumstances, working out his career, fascinating you and absorbing you, thrilling you simply with the fact that he gives you the story of a soul. Thus it is that the great poets, and the great novelists, have sustained our interest in the individual story of man, and said, "See here where man is himself; believe in man, believe in his individuality, believe in the reality of his personal life, believe in his moral character; that is where he is interesting, for that is where he is real."

And now, when we have got as far as this, there is a great misadventure; for the more interested we become in the plot of man's life—in watching its development, its personal growth—the more necessary it becomes that this plot should have a conclusion, that this drama should have a unity, should fulfil itself, should work itself out. This world of growing interests, so rich, so varied, so precious, that we find inside the personal soul, must end somewhere, must move towards some purpose; and it is just here that we are met by a most terrible breakdown; for we find

that the stage on which this drama is worked out is so terribly small, the time so deplorably brief, that hardly any story arrives at its conclusion at all here on earth. The play and counter-play of each individual life find no scope here in the allotted time permitted, in this contemptible sphere of existence, between the cradle and the grave. We see powers and capacities in a man which we know to be there, and yet they are always behind the scenes, and there is never an opportunity for them to come on the stage; they lie fallow, unused. And in our crowded metropolitan city this is surely the saddest sight that we see. All about us are the spiritual powers that await fulfilment; and yet in the press and storm of life, and the hurry and the work, there is no time and no place for the drama of the heart, for the development of the soul. Think of all the weary rows of tiny boxes in which men live here in London, and review them all, and think of the capacities and feelings that are there, and all choked and all thwarted, all occupied in getting their daily bread, with no time and no opportunity to grow, kept waiting behind the scenes!

And then there are those to whom opportunities do come of working out their drama, of developing their personal character—those who have had a little time to draw out this inner world of the soul; yet how broken, how tangled, the real issue! Do we call it a drama? It is hardly more than a bad rehearsal of the first act—just a suggestion of what a man might be and might do—just the tentative trial of his



powers by which he has learned what he could have done if he had not blundered : that is about what a man achieves. And then, if and when he has begun anything at all, it may in a moment be ruined by an accident, by a mistake ; this experiment in passion, in emotion, in resolution, is broken off short. If he could only begin again—if he could have a little more time—if he were not snared in a pitfall just as he was becoming so good, so gracious!—that is what we are always saying. We see such efforts spent on so little—such waste, such aimlessness, such blundering !

And then, above all, there is what we have spoken of—the strange accident death : death, that ignores the plot—death, that spoils the play just in the midst of its development, just as the interest intensifies, just as the individual begins to find his powers, and we can recognise that he is at last going to find what he had missed, and to prove and realise his true self ; *then* it is that death plucks him off the stage, hurries him off in the thick of the business ; he disappears, and is seen no more. All those threads so carefully woven are now so swiftly snapped.

Death plays havoc with our human drama. Death the thief, death the murderer—when is it the most cruel ? Is it when it snatches off the young life that is charged with infinite meaning, at the moment when all is just coming to flower ? A cold, a chill, strikes it ; it is all over, gone to nothing. Or is it yet more desperate when it comes to an old man, fair and honourable in life, with the stored-up experience



of an accumulated wisdom—when at last he has his gifts in hand, and is able to advise and judge and select and decide—when at last he has won out of his life the power to act, the power to think, the power to judge? And just as his gifts are at their ripest, just as he has won the prize, just when he is really prepared to give his services, tempered and disciplined and chastened by the experience of life, for the good of his fellow-men—just then he is swept away; death wrecks the work of years, and lays its honour in the dust. Such is death, carrying off the best, leaving the worst—death always working, as far as we see it, so blindly, so irrationally, so cruelly, so needlessly. This wonderful drama of the individual personal life into which we throw our hearts and our souls is thrown into helpless disorder by this ambush of death; and all human life—this personal human life, the life which makes man what he is—becomes wholly dislocated and wholly irrational, if death is the end.

Now at this point begins the crisis in men's lives, when they recognise for the first time the contrast between the gifts that they see in men and women and the brief imperfect opportunity which these have of using them. Such a recognition involves a critical recoil; and we are tempted to relinquish that primal belief in man with which we started. We are inclined to judge men, not by the splendour of their capacities, but by their contemptible and sterile exit. We cannot believe in the goodness and the fairness of gifts that terminate so deplorably. So flimsy, so contemptible,

a thing is this man! Why has he imagined that he is going to do great things? All he does has to die. It is but a deceit and a delusion that there is any value in his personal will. How can it be of value, when he has no control over it, when at any moment, by some miserable hazard, it is broken off short and goes down into the grave? How can we believe in man? That is the recoil—the recoil of the cynic, the recoil of bitterness, the disappointment at that which had looked so fair at the start and that ends so pitifully. We discount man, we belittle man, we scoff down all his hopes and aspirations that offer so much. This moral character of his—what is it worth, what can it count? Man with his honour is compared with the beasts that perish, which all go down one way; he cometh up as the grass, and is cut down as the flower, and the wind bloweth over it, and the place thereof knoweth it no more, and it is gone. Bitter cries of despair and disgust come all too eagerly to our lips.

Fill the can and fill the cup!  
 All the windy ways of men  
 Are but dust that rises up,  
 And is lightly laid again!

All go unto one place, all are but dust, and all turn to dust again. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!

That is the temptation; it is a temptation, you see, to relinquish your belief in man. You had belief in man, you thought he was going to do such things; you had thrown your heart into this drama, and you have given it up. And now the cry of Christ, the cry

of our religion, to you is, "This is the moment, the supreme moment, at which you are asked to cling tight and fast to that primal belief with which you start. Believe in man, in that which you saw to be so good, so interesting, so honourable, in man ; believe man's own report of himself ; believe that which his faculties, his conscience, his will, his love, his desire, declare ! They declare that they are valid and precious, that they are stored with treasures, that they are full of purpose, that they make for high goals. Well ! Accept their verdict ! Believe in what they declare about themselves. Believe in the judgment man passes on himself ; believe in the natural judgment of your own heart when it is sound ; rely upon it that it is impossible that man should have advanced so far as he has by the power of self-deception." Do you say that man has deceived himself by forming so high an estimate of himself and of his inner life, that he is the victim of self-deception, and that he has imagined it all ? Well, I answer that, if man can so deceive himself, then the fact that he can so deceive himself is by far the most interesting fact about him. He alone deceives himself in this world of nature. Who is this being that can invent a career for himself ? Who is this being that lives in the power of self-delusion, who can create a life, who can make a character, by force of imagination ? Surely this is the strangest sight on earth ! Surely this is the one sight upon which all your attention ought to be fixed—a man who can deceive himself so that self-deceit is the highest power in him ! If it be self-deceit,

turn and see how it is that man has the power to be the victim of his own self-delusions. And if by this road you find yourself tangled in a hopeless dilemma, then take the other road. Return to your belief in what man, in spite of circumstances and in the face of death, inwardly declares himself to be. Believe that the secret of all his interest lies in the development of his moral character, in the process of his personal life ; and then, so believing, you must go on to believe further—you must say what interpretation you are going to give to this drama which ends so strangely.

How will you interpret it? Who can help you to an interpretation? Well, turn first to the highest examples of men? You say you believe in men, in the goodness of men, in that which they show themselves capable of being ; turn then and ask what the best men think on this matter, what interpretation they give of their lives. What do they say about this death that ends the drama, and throws all into disorder? With one voice, if you turn to the highest and best men, they say that the drama is worth everything, and death counts for nothing. The drama, the personal drama, the character, is that sole thing which is of value in their lives ; and as for death, they refuse to regard it. There must be something after death, or their life has no meaning. But they have assumed that their life has a meaning. It claims it by its growth, it proves it by its judgment on itself ; there must be something towards which it aims, and death cannot rob it of that goal towards which it is set.

So all the best and all the highest have said either in words and in actual belief, or else said it by their lives. They did not all know what they believed ; they could not all profess it ; but, notwithstanding, they all lived a life which counted on there being no death—a life which went out beyond the horizon terminated by death. There is no instance of any man who has risen to any eminence or has shown any high character who has not so shaped his life that it might reach out beyond the bounds of earth ; who has not disregarded the fact that at any moment he might die and all would be over. He has lived a life in spite of death, in disregard of death ; he has counted on not dying. He has risked it all on the throw, whether he believed in that larger life or whether he did not. His life, if it were high, if it were honourable, has always been a stake laid down on the condition that life goes beyond the horizon of the earth, and that death cannot defeat it. No man who has cut down his view of life actually to the earth about him and to the horizon of the earth has found himself enabled to develop a strong and a high character. So all men of character, all men with any height and nobility in their character, have lived lives which cannot be explained by the conditions within which they actually lived. So they all have said in words or by their lives. And as we look them round, and as we review them, and as we ask them for their solution and for their interpretation, and as we turn to the best and highest, and yet find that they are confused in their interpretations, and



contradict one another, and have flaws here and there that make us a little distrust their judgment, and have blundered in a way which shows they are infirm; still, out of the crowd even of the best, out of the few who form the best of the best, there must rise the figure of One supreme, of One who stands out among the best who have ever been, with incorruptible goodness, with perfect purity of intention, with a strange simplicity about Him. Surely here at last is One whose instincts cannot be at fault; surely, if we believe in man, we believe in the goodness that is within man, we believe in virtue where we find it; and here is virtue—we must believe in it; and here is holiness—we must trust it! Surely here is One who cannot have been deceived! And as we look at Him as He stands out above the best, supreme among the few, so too we find Him to be sure in His judgments, to be calm and secure where others are perplexed. He is never at fault, and is distressed by no accident, and is perturbed by no disorder, but always has His eyes calmly fixed on some goal which He still sees, some aim which He still can pursue; He is always true to Himself, He is always ready to declare why He is there. What is this calmness, this security of judgment, in Him who stands out as the holiest and best of men? Does He know what He says that He knows? He seems to look through and pronounce upon these things. Is He deceiving Himself when He declares what He sees? If so, here is the holiest and best of men who has been most deceived. Here is a man who has carried character highest, and yet



He is the worst and darkest victim of self-deception. Surely to believe in man at all, to believe in his moral reality, makes it impossible to believe that One so sound, so strong, so pure, so righteous, should be the victim of self-delusion so profound. No: if we believe in man, if we believe in the goodness of man, we must believe in the goodness of Christ Jesus. If we believe He is good, He cannot be wholly self-deceived in the judgments He delivers. "Which of you," He says, "convinces Me of sin? Do you find anything wrong, any flaw, anything that can disturb or distort My judgment; and if you cannot, why do you not believe in Me?"

To believe in man is to be challenged at last to believe in this Man, the Son of Man, who stands out there as the supreme expression of what man is. Turn to Him and ask what is His interpretation of life. What does He declare?

He declares, first, that this life drama, this inner story of the soul, with which we began, which we felt to be the most real thing in man, and the only thing which was significant and precious, is indeed the one and only thing which makes man what he is; and He carries forward that life drama yet further, and heightens it and intensifies it and enriches it, so that since He has stood on the earth this drama of the personal will has become the one absorbing interest of the soul. Here, He says, is indeed the scene on which great issues are enacted; here is the great arena on which the battle is fought; and all heaven and all hell are watching you in this drama, which

you are right in thinking so fascinating and absorbing. So He asserts.

And then in face of death He declares that He is Lord over death, and that death is not the end of this life drama ; that it lasts beyond, and will see its conclusion ; that it will be found to have an issue ; that all this great growth and development of character moves on towards an end which God will bring to pass. And in order to carry conviction to our souls that this is true, He Himself suffers the whole drama of His own life to be shattered into pieces at the very start. He allows all His work which was growing to be broken before His eyes. He stands there in His youth, full of promise and full of hope, with everything before Him ; and down the whole thing falls in fragments, shattered into ruins, goes down to death and destruction. He stands there with this drama broken off short, before it has reached any purpose ; and still declares it is all safe, it is all held fast, it is all in the great purpose of God. He sees, He knows, He is sure ; His eyes have reached there ; all is held : the drama moves on to its conclusion ; the plot is not broken ; God will see to the close. So He stands, triumphant amid the utter wreck of His earthly life, to convince all those who find their lives in ruins that they too shall see the end, since He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

That is the challenge of Jesus Christ ; and I cannot but think it worth while to recall its form at a moment such as that in which we stand, when belief in Jesus Christ and in God is so terribly shaken.

We should go behind this alarming fact, and see in it the symptom of an inward wrong. And if we did this, we should detect the failure of man to believe in himself, which is sapping his capacity for all belief. Man's belief in his own significance, in his own destiny, has suffered eclipse. This is the secret source of his impotence. For if this belief in himself is weak, then it is natural enough that he should be unable to believe in God sending His Christ to come to the rescue of that belief in his own dignity and worth which he ought to have, but which he has lost.

1. There are many reasons, I think, why man should be losing belief in himself. Those great prophets of literature of whom we spoke, and who have sustained our belief in this personal drama of the soul, are now all dead or dying, and there seems to be no one to take their places. The Carlyles and the Ruskins and the Tennysons and the Brownings have gone ; and the people who now speak to us in our literature are smaller men who seem only to be able to make experiments in verse or prose ; they carry us but a very little way ; and none of them seem to have any grasp of life, none of them seem to have any particular message to give, and many of them are sad and morbid and give us no assistance at all. So it is that the sustaining and inspiring force which came to us through literature has been withdrawn during the last ten years.

2. And then there has been the great disillusion of science. Thirty years ago we all thought that science had a revelation to make. It seemed so

amazing, so immense, so infinitely hopeful; everything else might go by the board, but still there would be this wonderful power of natural science with positive results reading out real conclusions that we could trust; and there was a general sense of uplifted joy that at last there was an organ for real truth, which would show man what he was, and what his life was meant to be, how he should guide it, and what was its conclusion. And now we know that science will tell us nothing of the sort. It is not going to touch that inner life of which we have spoken. It will give us a hint here and there, but it has nothing directly to tell us of the personal life. And more and more we have learned its rigid limitations, and more and more we can see that it is no guide at all on these great issues, these momentous questions, on which the life drama turns. And science confesses it now, and knows it, and tells us, "I am agnostic—that is, I do not know. I am very sorry I do not know; I thought I should know, but I do not." And that has been a great disappointment; and I think the weariness of that disappointment is telling all round.

3. And then, of course, there has been the withdrawal of those primal assumptions about the value of life and the real meaning of life which we used to inherit from our fathers and which we never questioned. We believed in the moral law; we believed in the essence of spiritual life; we believed we were meant to be religious: all these things were taken for granted, and men might assume them in conversation

one with another as things-of-course, and the man would be considered an idiot who disputed them. But now we know that everything is in dispute, and that nothing can be assumed between man and man, and everything has to be proved. And yet we find that the deep assumptions of life, the real grounds upon which life rests, can never be proved—they are beyond all proof. They only verify themselves in action ; by being believed in, and by then discovering their proofs. You must have already had some experience in believing them in order to find their proofs. These great deep assumptions which sustain life have lost their original authority over us ; and so through the pitifulness of the withdrawal of all inspiration from literature, and through the disillusion of science, and through the loss of the great old assumptions upon which life was held to rest, men, and, above all, educated men, have recoiled into a great despair. There is a profound disbelief among the educated classes in there being any reality or significance in life at all ; and a general sense that we are but little things who creep and crawl, who are making a pretence to be very busy in a world and in a life which have very little meaning in them, and of which the end is death—vanity of vanities. And there is a special fear which is on my mind just now, lest man should also lose belief in himself by losing belief in that great social movement which is so much in our hearts. The educated classes have already felt the shock of disillusion ; but still the “ masses ” are stirred by the great movement of



social sympathy, social hope, which is quickening men's consciences to give them larger desires, and to encourage them to make richer demands on life, and to see a higher value in themselves and in others. A mighty impulse lifts man to look for a new day, a better day, that shall dawn on this earth with something of light and splendour upon it such as has not been before. Now this impulse witnesses to man's true belief in himself, in his destiny, in the purpose and the reality of life ; but it brings with it a great anxiety. For that task is a very big one, of bringing in this new day ; and the advance is very slow. There will be many a blunder made before it comes, and many a rebuff and defeat will have to be endured, and again and again man will feel, "Oh the great hope I had, and how little it has attained ! I dreamed of a new earth ; I dreamed of a happier place for men to live in ; and perhaps even yet, when I am dead and gone, my children's children may be there to see the first gleam of such a day come in ; but I shall never see it here !" And as that begins to dawn upon men, as long delays wear them out, as miserable defeats come and go, will they bear it ? They will never bear it, they will never bravely face it, if their outlook is bounded by death, if their faith is only a faith of earth, and if they look only for an earthly promise. If their thought be materialistic, or agnostic, without any higher faith in it at all, then they will never face their task, they will never endure the awful anxieties thrown upon them. It will be impossible to sustain high hopes for men who all



perish so fast, who die as flies die, who come to-day and are gone to-morrow, who go down into the pit and death gnaweth upon them. No: in such frailty is no sign of victory; human life appears only as something blinded, something futile, silly, without a purpose, without an aim. How can we work for such fleeting vanities? What can we hope for perishing humanity? Our ideals will never dawn, our hopes will never be realised! So men will wail out the old cry; and they will recoil, and there will be the bitter madness of disappointment, and the sickness of hope deferred, and all the pain of disillusion.

To work for man, to hope for man, we must believe in him; and we shall be unable to believe in him unless we can believe in something more than him—unless that belief in him with which we start, in which we set out, can be caught up just as it falls and faints, caught up by a stronger Hand, lifted up by an everlasting Will—unless we can hear the loving Voice which says, “You men may die, but I endure; I did die, but I am alive again; I am Alpha and Omega; I hold in My hand the keys of life and death; I will make all good; I will carry forward the work which you must drop; I am the pledge, I am the witness, I am the assurance, that victory yet will dawn; the day you have dreamed of will come—will come here on earth through Me, who am King of kings and Lord of lords. Nor will you be lost and vanished away into dust and ashes, for you will be alive in Me at that day, in My Body and in My kingdom.” That is the voice with

which Jesus Christ greets this hope of man for himself, which is now stirring us, amid its unavoidable delays, defeats, falls, and sufferings. That is the challenge that rings in our ears. You believe in man; you believe that a better day can dawn. Believe it: you are right. And, so believing, lift your eyes to Him, the One Man in whom you can retain this invincible belief in humanity. Men—poor, broken, failing men—they will always disappoint; they will always break your hearts. Yes, you will break your own heart, you will disappoint yourself. But the Man Christ Jesus, deathless, stainless, untainted by failure and untouched by wrong, will rally again and again all those fallen aspirations which men's sins have broken; He and He alone in His invincible power will rally them to the great cause of unconquerable Faith. Believe in man, believe in man's regeneration, believe in the kingdom of God which can yet come on earth; and in order to sustain that belief, to vitalise it and uphold it in dark days, believe in Jesus Christ, through whom alone it can come to pass. Amen.

HENRY SCOTT HOLLAND.

## VI.

### The Divinity of Christ.

THERE are few more famous lines in modern English literature than those in which Robert Browning, at the close of one of his poems,\* brings out the significance of the Incarnation. The poem itself is a letter written by one Syrian leech to another, describing, amongst other things, a meeting between himself and Lazarus, whom Christ, some years before, had raised from the dead. The writer professes to treat Lazarus as a man under some mania ; but he is, none the less, most profoundly impressed. The doctrine of "the Word made flesh" seems to him, at first, preposterous, something it is infamy even to repeat ; and yet it clings to him, and makes, in spite of him, a home in his thoughts ; and as his letter draws to a close he returns to it, and in a few master-strokes draws out a portion, at any rate, of its great, its unspeakable significance :—

The very God ! Think, Abib ; dost thou think ?  
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too—  
So, through the thunder comes a human voice  
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here !

\* "Epistle of Karshish," in *Men and Women*.

Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself !  
Thou hast no power, nor may'st conceive of Mine ;  
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,  
And thou must love Me who have died for thee !”  
The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

Such lines reveal to us, I say, something of the meaning and wonder which attach to the doctrine of the Incarnation—that doctrine which lies at the basis of our Christian faith, without which Christianity falls in ruins to the ground, and must be counted as the most pitiable of all human delusions, the most tragic and heart-breaking of all human mistakes. But the lines also show us how it is not only to a theologian's mind that the Incarnation is a subject of profound importance. They make us see how the conception of God becoming man, and dwelling in our midst, and bearing our sorrows, and sharing our trials, and dying our death, is no dry philosophical idea, barren of all importance, but one which is still full of living force, still able to stir the human spirit, and to claim the reverence and homage of the human mind. The Incarnation is indeed a dogma in the sense that it is a doctrinal formula claiming and exacting our acceptance and obedience ; but it is *not* a dogma in that evil sense which circumstances have thrown around the word—speculation authoritatively taught, but without any real value or bearing upon human life. On the contrary, it touches human life and renews it. It illuminates every cranny and corner of the world. It penetrates everywhere. It transfigures everything. Take it away, and shadow

and gloom fall where before there was the glory of light. So it is with all true and worthy dogmas. You can separate the bad and the good by the very simple rule that the good are the illumination and warmth and nourishment of the world, while the bad are without practical meaning or force or influence. There are some dogmas which we all feel to belong to this latter class—to be the figments of subtle brains, and not limbs of the living truth. They have, at times, surrounded the very doctrine of the Incarnation with which we have to deal. On the other hand, there are dogmas which every one would place in the higher category. Such dogmas as “There is a God,” or “God is love,” or “The soul is immortal” we all feel to lend existence a richness and worth which would be otherwise wanting. They are, by common consent, full of life, full of power. Belief in them transforms all our circumstances. I need not say into which class the doctrine of the Incarnation falls in the mind of the Christian. There are, too, minds which reject it, and which would yet assign it to the same category. On the other hand, there are those who not only repudiate it, but to whom it is a question non-vital, a side issue, a controversy off the beaten track of existence, a speculation without any real or practical bearing upon actual life. Here is one man, and he tells you that he believes it, and that it is to him an all-important truth, a pillar essential to the whole edifice of his faith. Here is another, who tells you that he does *not* believe it, but that he appreciates the character of the decision which he

has made. He is aware that, did he accept the doctrine, it would "make all things new" to him. But here is a third, who says, "Not only do I not believe it, but I do not feel the need of it. I lose nothing by my disbelief. My life is not in any way impoverished." How are we to answer him? What reply shall we make to him when he assures us that there is nothing within him which responds to the gospel of the Incarnation? Before what judge are we to take him? Where shall we find a court of appeal from his own heart? It is just here that such lines as those which I have quoted of Browning's enter in and help us. For if the doctrine comes home to the best and highest and most refined minds, to the spiritual imagination of the greatest hearts, may it not be the case that when it finds no acceptance the fault lies at the door, not of the doctrine, but of those who repudiate it? You cannot expect a cold, worldly, hard nature to realise the delicacy, the beauty, the persuasiveness, the refinement, of Christian truth. You cannot look to the cruel, the cynical, the brutal, the lustful, the self-seeking, for a response to the Christian message. The blame is not with the message, but with those who reject it. So, in the same way, the dogma of the Incarnation knocks for entrance into some soul. Is it necessarily, because the dogma is valueless, that the soul does not open? May it not be that the soul is itself unable to appreciate its opportunity, to know the time of its visitation? And when we hear men say, "Such and such teaching is mere dogma," it, as often as not,



means that their own spiritual faculties are immature and undeveloped, that it is their own religious crudity which is responsible for their verdict. In approaching the Incarnation we are approaching what seems to some among the dry bones of dogmatism; but, on the other side, there are these great master-spirits, these great leaders and teachers of thought, these trainers of faith and hope and imagination, to whom the doctrine has been as a stream of indescribable light poured from the throne of heaven upon all the perplexities and ignorances and tragedies of our mortal existence; and therefore we can, I think, see that if the question of the Incarnation is not a living and vital question to us, we have every reason to suppose that it *ought* to be so. And I set out with the great lines of a great poet because it seems to me that every example of poet or philosopher, who bears witness to the fulness or importance of any Scriptural doctrine, is valuable not only because all personal testimony is valuable, but because it helps to raise us up from the negation of stupidity or indifference or sordidness or guilt to the reverence of those who think most profoundly and feel most deeply. "Yes," these men say to us, "inquire and probe to the bottom. Disbelieve, if you think the proof against the doctrine. Be true to your own judgment. Do not blind or deceive yourselves. Only be sure that you understand what it is that you are handling. Approach these questions with awe and humility and wonder. If you determine to deny, recognise how much is involved in your denial."

Let us pass on to the doctrine of the Incarnation itself. It is a doctrine which has, at various times, been overloaded with metaphysical subtleties, overclouded with the speculative guesses of restlessness; but in its simple Scriptural outlines it is plain enough. God has been made man. The Divine Son, one in His Deity with the Father, has not only worn our nature as some veil or dress, but has deigned to altogether participate in it. "Have," says St. Paul, "this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."\* "The Word became flesh," says St. John, "and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth."† We can indeed understand how, in after-days, when that great truth was accepted as beyond dispute, as an axiom holding in the sphere of religion the same sort of place as evolution and the law of gravity now hold in science, philosophy would inquire into it, and seek to explain it, and desire to analyse and to split it up, and try to show how it all came about. It was the effort to explain the doctrine, to show what were its various component parts, and what were their relations to each other, which led to the discussions and contests as to the two natures, as to the interchange of their attributes

\* Phil. ii. 5, R.V.

† Johni. 14, R.V.

as to the unity of the will of Christ. We may think, in these practical days, that such controversies were useless and unedifying; but they were not unnatural. There were certain questions which, when men began speculating, were bound to arise. To some extent they had best have been put aside as beyond solution. To some extent it was necessary for the Church to deal with them. For when answers began to be framed, it was impossible for the Christian community to say "Aye" to, or to tolerate with tacit acquiescence or indifference, any guess which denied on the one side the true Deity or on the other the true manhood of Jesus Christ. If either of these were sacrificed, then the union of man with God went also, and redemption was still an unfulfilled hope. Perfect Deity and perfect humanity—these were the two constituent elements in the Incarnate Saviour, to which the Church was bound, at all costs, to be continuously and unflinchingly true. There were times when silence would have been disloyalty, when toleration would have been tantamount to treason.

I have this evening, in what remains of this lecture, to speak to you of Christ's Deity—or, to use the looser and vaguer word which is sometimes adopted, His Divinity—to say why I believe in it, and why I dare to commend it to the belief of others. Now the difficulty in arguing such a matter as this is that one never knows how much one may take for granted. If you discuss the matter with an old-fashioned Unitarian—such as would be

represented by Channing—then you have the whole of the New Testament allowed you as a court of appeal. The question becomes one of the exact meaning and force of texts. If, however, you take the newer school of Unitarianism—the school of which such a writer as Martineau would be the spokesman—then you have a more treacherous footing. For you find the historic trustworthiness of the Gospels largely and fearlessly impugned. You are told that Christ never said much of what He is represented as saying, that in later times His disciples coined His claims and passed them off as His own.\* And the influence of this new school has made itself felt, even among those who know nothing of critical questions, and who are completely ignorant of the literary or historic arguments for and against the truth of the Gospels. They feel only that there is unrest in the air. They are aware that many deny, and they are oppressed with a sense of not knowing exactly how much of the ground is insecure and how much of it is firm. I want, therefore, not to argue from isolated verses in the Gospels such as, “I and My Father are one,” or “Before Abraham was I am,” or “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,” but from the whole drift and flow of the Evangelists’ records. To what conclusion does their general testimony point? What is the plain suggestion of the picture as a whole, apart from any particular detail in it? May we not say that if anything of the Scriptural portrait is to be allowed

\* This change of ground is alluded to in the preface to (I think) the last edition of Canon Liddon’s Bampton Lectures.

to remain at all, that unless the process of excision is to be carried so far as to amount practically to the excision of the whole, four things will continue to stand out large and clear? It is difficult to doubt that, even if there be a host of minor errors in the Gospels, there are four characteristics attaching to their representation of the Christ which are true to life, which reflect with accuracy and fidelity the original. Let us look at each of these in turn.

In the first place, Christ's system centres in Himself. Let us pause to reflect on the true and full significance of this. What is the aim, the object, of every religious teacher worthy of the name? Is it not to bind men close to the God who made them, and to obliterate himself? "We preach not ourselves," says St. Paul, and he has spoken for all the true teachers and genuine reformers of every age. Each servant, each minister, each evangelist, each prophet of the Most High, preaches Him whom he serves, and not his own wisdom or name or power or greatness. He seeks nothing for himself, he claims nothing for himself; he is content to be a mere voice, to be the agent through whom the Divine commands are made known, the Divine will expressed. When Luther struck the fetters of Rome from the souls of men, was it that he proclaimed himself? When Wesley or Whitfield held large crowds spellbound, when they gathered the common people in thousands to the fields and hillsides to hear them, when their great words awoke a slumbering nation, was it that they made *themselves* the burden of their message,



that they held *themselves* up as the standard round which men and women, in all their moral and spiritual necessities, were to rally? What should we have said of them had they done so? Their names would long ago have been drowned in a sea of derision or contempt. But turn to Jesus Christ. What do we find to have been the substance of *His* message? It is Himself. To whom did He bid men come? To Himself. Take that invitation which is perhaps for some of us the most familiar and the most touching of all His sayings. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Have we ever reflected upon the vastness of the claim which is implied in these well-known words? Who is this that thus invites men to himself? Who is this that ventures to say, "I, even I, will give you rest"? Who is this that offers himself as the haven for the storm-tossed soul? How does any man dare to so exalt himself? How does any man dare to use language of such a kind? But Jesus Christ's language is all through of a similar nature. It is not here only that His words have this colour. It is not here only that He adopts this tone. It is His regular tone. The allegiance which He claims is throughout for Himself. The discipleship which He asks has Himself as its object. It is to Himself that loyalty and obedience and service are to



be offered. He insists upon self-surrender to Himself. There must be no sacrifice which a follower is unwilling to make. He places Himself beyond all, even the most sacred of, home ties. No duty to father or mother or husband or wife or child compares with the duty which the disciple owes to Him. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."\* "And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But He said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God. And another also said, I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."† Nay, further, He so far asserts Himself as to claim authority to over-ride the Mosaic Law. Remember it is the claim of a Jew. Remember what the Mosaic Law was in the eyes of a Jew. But here is One, "born of the seed of David," bred and nurtured and educated amidst Jewish traditions, accepting, and at times emphasising, His calling as a member of Israel's household, who assumes Divine authority even over the sacred Law of centuries. What had been good and sufficient before—the Law as it was pronounced by "them of old time"—is inadequate now that He is come. He is the final Revealer of the Divine will. It is not that, like some new Rabbi, he

\* Matt. x. 37.

† Luke ix. 59-62, R.V.

offers a better interpretation, a truer rendering, of the old Law. It is that He puts forward a *New Law*—a Law having its roots in Himself. And this New Law is to be paramount. His commandments are to take precedence. When His teaching and Judaism clash, Judaism is to yield. Moses and the Prophets fall away. He steps into their place. Or look at His training of His disciples. What is it in which He rears them? What is it that He seeks to cultivate in them? Is it not faith in Himself? He bids them place their whole reliance on Him, to give Him their whole heart, to live and die for Him, to give up all for Him. It is He who is to be the object of all their affections, the centre of their hopes, the recipient of their religious and spiritual enthusiasm. The attachment of followers to a chief is lawful only to a point. When attachment goes beyond that point it becomes idolatry. But Christ sought from His disciples an attachment which knew no limits, which was restrained by no boundaries. The fear of idolatry is not one which ever enters the disciples' minds; it is not a danger which their Master ever suggests to them. There is no check placed upon their love for Himself, upon their devotion to Himself. Their love and devotion cannot go too far, cannot trespass upon the duty that they owe to One in heaven. "Christ," says a modern writer, "was systematically training them to trust Him with the sort of trust which can be legitimately given to God alone."\*

\* Gore, Bampton Lectures, p. 13.

the Synoptic Gospels—to say nothing of the Fourth—and to deny it. But if there is this characteristic adhering to Christ's work, if we find it showing itself beyond question, in one form or another, in all His ministry and teaching, then we have before us what is of indisputable weight and significance. It is not a characteristic which can be pushed aside and ignored and left outside the range of our consideration. It must receive its due measure of recognition. It must be taken into adequate account.

Then, secondly, call to mind His claim to sinlessness. For that claim, definitely made on one occasion,\* is implied throughout His life. Christ put before men the ideal of absolute perfection. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Is it not an impressive fact that He never suggests that He Himself falls short of the standard? Search His personal history through. Search His teaching and discourses through, and nowhere do you detect one word of repentance, one syllable of self-reproach. He prays indeed, but His prayers are prayers for strength, and not confessions of sin. He bids *us* seek forgiveness for our trespasses: nowhere does He seek it Himself. Nowhere is there a hint of any sense of moral failure or moral weakness. Nowhere does He suggest that He falls below perfect holiness. The one exception that at first suggests itself, proves, on further investigation, to be no exception at all. We are told that a young ruler came and fell down at His feet and asked

\* John viii. 46.

Him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" "Why callest thou Me good?" was the reply. "None is good save One, even God." \* Does not Jesus, I may be asked, here repudiate the title "good" as one which cannot be justly used of any man, and cannot therefore be applied to Himself? But the words are capable of another interpretation. Christ may well have meant, "Think what the words suggest which you so lightly use. Why call Me good unless you are prepared to go beyond My humanity? Who among the sons of men dares claim or receive the praise of goodness? If indeed you so address Me, if you mean what you say, if you find in Me no flaw or fault or guilt, then consider to what such unstained innocence points. If I be good, a higher title than that of 'Master' is My due." Such an interpretation is at least as possible as the other; and if, of the two, this one fits in with all the rest of the Scriptural picture, while the other is out of keeping with it and jars upon it, surely that which harmonises with it is the one to be preferred. And the picture which the Evangelists paint for us is, as I have said, the picture of a character without any consciousness of sin. It is not the usual characteristic of the saint. You find, low down in the moral scale, the lack of any sufficient sense of moral guilt and moral short-coming. But you do not find it as you go higher. The better a man is, the acuter is his realisation of his faults. It is not by the hardened criminal, but by the delicate-minded, sensitive saint, that the shame and horror and

\* Mark x. 17, 18, R.V.

misery of wrong-doing are so keenly, so acutely, so bitterly felt. The one is proof against a sense of sin ; the other is burnt by it, as the tender skin is burnt by fire. You do not expect to hear the language of self-acquittal from those who are nearest the angelic level, from those who are purest and most truthful and most self-denying and most humble and most spiritual. Nay, it is in these that you find the deepest self-humiliation. Their appreciation of goodness, their interpretation of human duties, the loftiness of their ideals, the fact that their eyes are opened to the real meaning of holiness, lead them to feel their own unworthiness, to understand and recognise how great is their failure, how wide is the gulf between themselves and the Divine likeness. Listen to their prayers, and you find how full they are of confession, of contrition, of repentance. They know themselves to be, at the best, but "unprofitable servants." The cry of their inmost souls is for grace and pardon and healing. They class themselves with the guilty publican, and not with the self-righteous Pharisee: "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." And yet here, when you climb from the saint to Christ, you discern at once a startling change. One of the best of the saintly characteristics is gone, and its place is taken by its very opposite. Here you have one who not only dares to claim, in implicit words at one memorable moment, to know personally nothing of moral stain and defilement, but who claims it not less by His whole bearing, by His whole religious attitude. Look at Him even in the supreme crisis of His life.



Look at Him as He and death are brought face to face. Call up before you the death-beds of the noblest, the holiest, the most devout men and women you have ever known, of those of whom you feel that their lives were indeed lived "in heavenly places." They have met their end bravely, resolutely, fearlessly, perhaps heroically. There have been pious resignation, and calm trust, and firm faith, and unclouded hope. But has there not also been "a broken and a contrite heart"? Where has their confidence sprung? From their belief in the mercy and loving-kindness of God, in the infinitude of His compassion and goodwill. What was the word that most often rose to their lips as they looked back over their lives? Was it not the word "forgiveness"? But pass in thought to that awful scene at Calvary, to the centre one of the three crosses raised there, to the Sufferer who hangs on it. He has prayed for those that placed Him there, prayed that the sin of His destruction be not counted against them. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."\* But does He pray for forgiveness for Himself? The Evangelists record, in all, seven of His sayings during these last hours; but not one of these sayings is even a pale reflection of such a prayer. It may of

\* Luke xxiii. 34. The Revised Version has a marginal note that "some ancient authorities omit" these words. Westcott and Hort, in their edition of the text of the New Testament, go further. "We cannot doubt," they say, "that [the verse] comes from an extraneous source." But the question of its genuineness has no bearing whatever upon the argument of this portion of my address. It is not as if the verse were a prayer for His own forgiveness.



course be said that we cannot be sure that we have all the sayings. Very possibly we have not. But there is no escape from this: that the accounts of His death, so far as they go, tally completely and exactly with those of His life. Throughout His ministry He claims to be sinless. He claims to be sinless in this fearful climax of it. Not even now, in these the most solemn and searching moments of mortal existence, is there any confession of moral unworthiness and insufficiency.

The argument, you will observe, is not from what His Apostles or biographers or disciples believed Him to be, but from what He ventured to assert of Himself. Had I made it a question of the faith of others, there might have been counter-suggestions of over-enthusiasm, of the proverbial blindness of love, of lack of discernment and judgment, of want of perception and discrimination. But the stress falls upon *His own* judgment as to His life, upon *His own* verdict as to His character—so far as that judgment and verdict can be seen from the narratives of His ministry. And surely they can be very plainly seen. Only once indeed does He put them into words; but they are not the less discernible, not the less clear, from first to last. And from first to last that verdict and that judgment are the same. From first to last we are met by the same unfaltering challenge: “Which of you convinceth Me of sin”—which of you on earth or in heaven?”

Here, then, is a second feature in the Gospel portrait, one of profound importance, one which we must look

full in the face in framing our answer to the famous question, "What think ye of Christ?"

Let us pass to another characteristic—the third of the four. Christ declared Himself to be the future judge of the world. He does so, not once or twice, but repeatedly. It is a claim that runs all through the Gospels. We meet with it as early as the Sermon on the Mount: "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."\* We meet with it in the Parable of the Tares: "As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire."† We meet with it immediately after St. Peter's confession of Him at Cæsarea Philippi: "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds."‡ We meet with it in that mysterious discourse "as He sat on the Mount of Olives": "As the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. . . . And He shall send forth His angels with

\* Matt. vii. 22, 23, R.V.

† Matt. xiii. 40-42, R.V.

‡ Matt. xvi. 27, R.V.

a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”\* He it is who as master of the house returns in an unexpected hour and takes vengeance on “the evil servant.”† He it is who as the bridegroom closes the door on the unready virgins.‡ He it is who as a master of servants rewards the one who had earned five talents and punishes the one who had been “wicked and slothful”: “Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. . . . Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.”§ And one of the last of His discourses, delivered, so to speak, with the Cross full in view, is that in which He brings before us, as in a parable, the day of judgment, “when the Son of Man shall come in His glory . . . and before Him shall be gathered all the nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats.”|| It is, I say, a claim made repeatedly.¶ But pause to reflect what such a claim means. It is one

\* Matt. xxiv. 27, 31, R.V.

† Matt. xxiv. 42-51.

‡ Matt. xxv. 1 ff.

§ Matt. xxv. 23, 30, R.V.

|| Matt. xxv. 31, 32, R.V.

¶ The claim is also made in the clearest possible manner in John v. 22, 27; but I keep the argument, as far as possible, clear of the Fourth Gospel, owing to the serious difficulties which are felt by some—in my opinion without adequate justification—with regard to its authorship and historical trustworthiness.

which thought or imagination finds hard to measure. In front of Him are, He says, to be gathered all peoples. They will come from every clime, every continent, every age, every generation, every class. The earth will deliver up its prisoners. The sea will surrender its dead. "Before Him shall be gathered all the nations." Try to contemplate the millions upon millions who are, according to the Scriptural description, to be summoned to that supreme bar, and to be judged, not in the aggregate, but individually, one by one. Each will have had his separate temptations, his separate struggles, his separate failures, his separate victories. The measure of praise or blame will, in each case, be different. One will have had exceptional chances and opportunities. Another will have been kept back by exceptional difficulties and hindrances. For one there will be unforeseen allowances to be made. In the case of another there will be circumstances and surroundings which, so far from mitigating his guilt, only deepen and aggravate it. Think how intricate is even the simplest human character. Think how hard it is to undo the tangled skein of it, to unravel the threads which are so closely intertwined. Bear in mind how difficult, how impossible at times, it is to judge even one whom we know thoroughly well, whom we have every opportunity of watching, with whom we are brought into the most intimate, the most familiar, contact. How much, for example, depends on motives! You overlook much if the motive was good. You discount the worth of a deed, or ignore it altogether, if the motive

was bad. Indeed, there are some philosophers who say that the motive is everything, that the value of an action depends solely and exclusively upon the intention that prompted it, and not upon the external character of the action itself. Whether this is so or not, motive unquestionably is a very important factor in any question as to a person's culpability; and motives cannot sometimes be read or even guessed at. They lie hidden. They are covered up so as to be beyond scrutiny. Often enough the motive is mixed. There is an element of good in it; there is also in it an element which is unworthy, perhaps positively base. In such cases it becomes more than ever impossible for us to weigh and define the exact merit of an action, or to compare it with the exact merit of some other. This is so even with the actions of those whom we know best. But Christ shrinks not from asserting His capacity and authority to judge *all* men; He shrinks not from asserting that He has alike the personal moral perfection and the intimate knowledge of souls and the spiritual insight into the secret recesses of the human heart requisite for so awful an office. He declares that the vast, incalculable multitude of the world's inhabitants will be brought before Him, and that "He will judge each with a judgment" that shall be perfect and final. There is to be no appeal, no possibility of reversal: "He will reserve no cases as involving moral complex problems beyond His own power of decision."\* As He decides, so will the man's fate be. As He determines, so will

\* Liddon, Bampton Lectures, p. 176.



the destiny of each be. Can words exaggerate the tremendous character of the claim? Can we overstate all that is gathered up in it? Nay, can any words adequately describe it? Does not the human mind stand appalled before it? Even a Solomon—a Solomon in wisdom, but without his vices—would shrink from deciding the eternal lot of even the basest, most brutal criminal. He would feel that there might be circumstances which, were he aware of them, would modify his judgment, would abate the rigour of his sentence. Perhaps the offender inherited passions which, in the end, overcame him. Perhaps his youth was lived amidst haunts of vice which deprived him of all real chance of learning the lessons of goodness and truth and rectitude. Perhaps his fall came only after very real fights with fierce temptation. Perhaps there were hours of sorrow and remorse, of true desires for something better and purer, of sincere wishes to be free from the chains of debauchery and lust, from the dominion of sin and crime. Perhaps he had really endeavoured to recover lost ground, and it was only when he experienced, like Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables*, the vendetta of the law, that he gave himself altogether over to evil courses. Perhaps he never had extended to him the helping hand, which might have made just all the difference. Take some saint amongst us—some Christ-like man or woman—and place opposite some ruffian or scoundrel, some *habitué* of our gaols, some murderer doomed to the scaffold, and say to the saint, “Judge this sinner. Determine the fate of his soul. Decide whether he



is to be saved or damned." Do you think that the holiest amongst us would presume to make so terrible a decision? And yet Christ claims to be the judge of all the characters in the long history of the world. He will estimate them, in all their complexity, even where good and evil are most confused. Each man, each woman, each child, will come before Him. Each soul will stand in His presence, with its confused record of good and evil, of conflict and cowardice, of attainment and short-coming, of real struggles and half-efforts, of honourable ambitions and contemptible aims. Nay, it will be a question not only of outward actions, and of the motives underlying those actions, but also of hidden capacities.

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work" must sentence pass ;

but also on

All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the  
Man's amount.\*

But Christ says—not once, but again and again—that He will estimate that amount; that He will declare it sufficient or insufficient; that He will set the good off against the bad, the worthy against the unworthy; that He will compare and adjust, and will strike the balance with no faltering hand. He will part men, one from another, with an unfailing judgment. "He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." This

\* Browning, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

third feature in Christ's ministry is perhaps the most striking, the most suggestive, the most momentous of all.

The fourth may be treated more briefly. It is that Christ in His ordinary language puts Himself into a special relation to God on the one side, to man on the other. It is not only in the Fourth Gospel that Jesus claims to be the Divine Son in a special and peculiar meaning of the words. In the Synoptists also we find Him separating the Divine Fatherhood, as it stands towards Himself, from that Fatherhood in its connection with mankind at large. "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."\* But I desire to press, as I have said, not individual texts so much as the general portraiture. There is, however, one feature in the general portraiture which will strike a careful reader of the New Testament at once. Nowhere, in any Gospel, does Christ so associate Himself with the disciples as to speak to them of *our* heavenly Father? "After this manner therefore pray *ye*, *Our* Father." But He Himself calls Him "My Father." "I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."† "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven."‡ "To sit on My right hand, and on My left hand, is not Mine to

\* Matt. xi. 27, R.V.

† Matt. xviii. 10.

‡ Matt. xviii. 19.

give, but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of My Father." \* He draws a line of division, between Himself and His followers, at that very point where we should have looked for a close bond of union and fellowship. To us, to mankind at large, the thought of God is always one which recalls us to the recollection of our unity. In God we are all "one man." Whatever social distinctions may separate us, whatever the difference in our intellectual attainments, be we rich or poor, in honour or dishonour, in happiness or misery, we are all children of God. There at any rate we are on the same platform. There at any rate we share and share alike. But Jesus Christ will not accept this unity. He will not come into the presence of God hand in hand with His disciples. God, He meant them to feel, was His God in a different sense to that in which He was theirs. Can religious exclusiveness be pushed further? Even in the extremest Pharisaism there was nothing to compare with it. The Pharisees were, as their name implies, "the separated ones," but they never asserted a separation so wide as this which Jesus declares to exist between Himself and even the innermost circle of His followers. Or if we turn to His self-description in relation to humanity, we find there also what suggests a similar claim to isolation. He is according to His own expression "the Son of Man." It is *His own* title for Himself. Again and again He so speaks of Himself. An

\* Matt. xx. 23, R.V. In St. John Christ frequently uses the phrase "The Father," but never "Our Father."

illustration might be found on almost every page of the first three Gospels. The title is rather less frequent in St. John, but it is found there also.\* What does such a phrase convey? What was it intended to imply? It has been thought that the expression was Messianic, that Jesus in using it meant to claim the Messianic calling and dignity, that He intended His hearers to realise that He was the long-hoped-for, the long-delayed fulfilment of Israel's deepest and innermost hopes. But there are considerable difficulties in the way of such a supposition. There is no clear instance either in the Old Testament or in the Apocrypha of the *exact* phrase ever being applied to the Messiah, and "it is," if not "inconceivable," at any rate difficult to understand and account for, "that the Lord should have adopted a title which was popularly held to be synonymous with that of Messiah, while He carefully avoided the title of Messiah itself." † But if the title was not Messianic, what was its exact significance? It is sufficient for our purposes this evening to understand by it an assertion of Himself as the representative of humanity. He was, he meant, something beyond a common member of the human race. He gathered into Himself and completed and perfected all that in human existence is scattered and incomplete and imperfect. Here again, then, He will not join Him-

\* The numbers are: in St. Matthew, 30 times; in St. Mark, 13; in St. Luke, 25; in St. John, 12.—From Westcott's *St. John*.

† Westcott, *Gospel according to St. John*, p. 34, where the whole question is thoroughly gone into. On the other hand, Canon Liddon, in his Bampton Lectures, treats the expression as Messianic.

self with His disciples; He will not stand foot to foot with them. He does indeed accept a common basis of life with them, for He accepts their humanity; but they are to Him but the fragmentary manifestations of life, while He is the manifestation of it in its unbroken totality. As He has special and unique kinship with "the Father," so in His own eyes has He special and unique kinship with humanity. In both aspects He claimed to be alone. Is such a claim to be put aside as without meaning or importance? Is it not one which must be taken into the reckoning, which must receive its due weight, its full measure of remark?

Here, then, we have four leading characteristics of Jesus Christ's life and ministry—characteristics depending on no isolated texts, separate from all questions as to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, but none the less standing out in bold relief, challenging our verdict. And what is our verdict? Brethren, it must be one of two. You must either accept Christ as Divine, you must confess Him to be God Incarnate, or you must give up His moral character. It is not only that "without the mysterious Divine groundwork of the nature of Christ His moral qualities would be powerless"\*; it is that without that groundwork His leading qualities would cease to be moral at all. Men, as they rise in the moral scale, do not come any nearer to making, or being able to make, such claims as those to which Jesus Christ gave continuous and deliberate expression. Even one

\* Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 271.



who stood on the apex of human goodness would shrink from them not less, and perhaps more, than one who walked on the broad plain of moral commonplace. A mere man—even though he be a prophet or “more than a prophet”—cannot place himself in any such relation to any religious system as Christ did to Christianity, much less can he assert for himself a unique relation to the Almighty Father, without laying himself open to torrents of well-merited blame and indignation. A mere man cannot without the grossest immorality deck himself in the robes of the Eternal Judge. Such an act is more than presumption; it is rank blasphemy. It points to something beyond fanaticism: it points to spiritual and moral delirium. A mere man cannot claim sinlessness, or allow others to attribute sinlessness to him, except at the forfeit of all right to “respect.” Such a man would be a vain and empty-headed charlatan, a pretentious and shameless deceiver. It is now thirty years since the late Canon Liddon familiarised English thought with the axiom, “*Christus si non Deus non bonus*” (“Christ, if He be not God, ceases to be good”). Christ’s self-assertion either exalts Him to the Divine throne, or plunges Him into a depth of condemnation such as we need not stop to measure with exactness. It is an awful alternative; but throughout all the cloud of controversy which has gathered about Him we see, directly we look steadily and resolutely, that it *is* the alternative—and it is an alternative which modern discussion over the Gospels has really left untouched. Behind all these



discussions, these four characteristics of which I have spoken continue to be conspicuous ; you cannot get rid of them unless you get rid of the Gospels practically altogether, unless you are prepared to relegate the story of Christ to the same storehouse of myths as the legends about Odin or King Arthur. It is, indeed, an alternative from which men shrink, because they hesitate to sacrifice the moral beauty which they instinctively feel to belong to Jesus. But it is an alternative which is none the less fairly pressed upon them. We shudder when some one, like Mr. F. W. Newman,\* strips the life of Jesus of its sublimity, and depicts it as approaching, at any rate, that of a pretender and impostor. It horrifies us to hear the charge of vanity or insincerity or ostentation, or to hear Him placed in moral worth and excellence below numbers of His unhonoured disciples. But is there any logical halting-place between this condemnation and the admission of His Deity? Halting-places have doubtless been sought ; and men have said to themselves again and again that they have found one, and again and again have they been thankful to rest in it, like worn-out wayfarers whose feet bleed from the stones of controversy. "We cannot," they say to us, "accept all that you accept. The Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Miracles, the Divinity of Christ—these are outside our faith, these we are unable to believe in. But even when these are gone there still remains what we are able to be thankful for, and to find comfort in, and to draw

\* *Phases of Faith.*

inspiration from. There still remains the *character* of Jesus ; there still remain His personal holiness, His ethical ideals, His sublime life and death." Now with the Resurrection and the Miracles I am not in this address concerned. But looking at this position in its relation to the Incarnation and the Divinity of Christ, I venture to say that it is not one which argument can justify. It is really one of rather shallow sentiment. This talk of resting in the moral character of a purely human Christ is only the clap-trap of unorthodoxy. We *seem* indeed to have offered us a convenient compromise, one which appeals perhaps to our laziness, perhaps to our genuine exhaustion. But it is an impossible compromise. Accept it, and you lose not only the Divinity, but the moral worth as well. You are bound to say either that Christ was Divine, Divine in the uttermost sense of the word, or that His whole life moved on false lines—either that He was "very God," or that the moral glory, in which we delight to believe, crumbles away into nothingness. And if these are the two alternatives, if the argument can be sustained which leaves us with them and them alone before us, can we doubt as to our choice? Can we really give up what we have prized so dearly, even in the hours of doubt and bewilderment and uncertainty, in the hours when we have not known what to think, what to rely on, what to put our faith in—the character of that most wondrous, most pathetic figure, which rises so high above all others on the crowded stage of history?

Here and there a man has been found to make the sacrifice which logic demands. Here and there you find one to whom Jesus Christ is not even "an ensample of godly life." To most men, however, such a conclusion would be as a precipice from which they recoil in dismay. But argue from any view of Christ's person except that of His true and complete Divinity, and sooner or later you are dragged, by the remorseless force of the argument, to that precipice. Your only escape will be to take refuge in vague uncertainties and generalities, in a refusal to follow the footsteps of your own principles, to accept the conclusions which proceed from your own premises. But a position which can only be maintained so long as no inconvenient questions are pushed home cannot in the end content us. We must leave it and go either one way or the other—either to such a verdict as Mr. Newman's in *Phases of Faith*, or to the confession of the Church of Christ, "Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father."

I have no time left to show, in any detail, how this verdict has from the first been that of the Catholic Church. There were, indeed, early disciples who rejected Christ's Divinity—the sect of the Ebionites made Christ a mere man—but it is indisputable that they were always looked on as heretics, and their creed rejected as a violation of all tradition. The Church, as a whole, from the first worshipped Christ as God, prayed to Him as God, revered Him as one who in all literal truth had, in the infinity of His condescension, come from the supreme throne

to be the Saviour and guide and restorer of mankind. Again, I do not wish to insist upon special texts so much as upon the general tenor of the evidence, although special texts from an epistle of undoubted or defensible authenticity are conclusive testimony as to the mind and meaning and doctrine of the writer. But putting aside special texts for a moment, we cannot read either Acts or Epistles without seeing that there is Divine honour paid to Jesus Christ. The highest attributes are ascribed to Him. Grace comes from Him as well as from the Father. Salvation is through His name alone. He is the High Priest perfect and without sin. He is the Prince of Life, the Judge of quick and dead. He is from first to last the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. Are we to take all this as the effusion of sentiment, as expressions of devotion which is not too careful to draw the line? Consider that they are the words of strict and rigid Jewish monotheists. The Israelite was unspeakably jealous of anything that seemed to usurp Divine honour, of any trespass upon the solitariness of the Divine majesty and greatness. Can we suppose that any one brought up as St. Paul had been would have tolerated for a single instant the elevation of any human teacher to such a position as that which Jesus Christ occupies in all the Epistles of the New Testament, had he not been persuaded that He who was thus honoured and revered was one with that God who had revealed Himself in Law and Prophets? Let us, for the sake of clearness,

gather the argument round two texts, which shall be taken from what are, in all probability, not only the two earliest Epistles of St. Paul, but also the two earliest of all the New Testament writings. We shall, therefore, have the incidental advantage of being carried by them, as far as possible, to the primitive mind of the Church. The first of them is 1 Thess. iii. 11-13: "Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you: and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also do toward you; to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." You will notice that in the first clause we have the power to direct and guide and order the ways of men ascribed simultaneously to the Father and to Christ. In the next, however, there is no reference to the Father at all. The giver of spiritual gifts is Jesus Christ. He it is who is the source and fountain of moral and religious growth. "May Christ increase your love, that ye may be blameless before the Father." The second of the two passages is even more remarkable. It is 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father which loved us, and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish them in every good word and work." Here there is not only co-ordination between Father and Son, as conjointly the eternal spring of consolation and hope, as conjointly the irrefragable



strength of human hearts, but the Son is actually placed and mentioned first.\* Now are either of these passages possible except upon one supposition as to the writer's faith? Remember they come from the pen not only of a Jew, but of one who had been born and bred a Pharisee, from one schooled and versed in all the traditions and scruples and prohibitions of the Rabbinical schools. No doubt St. Paul, when he became a Christian, gave up many of the prejudices of Judaism. But we know exactly what he gave up; we know the precise extent to which he sacrificed his previous opinions. He approached nearer to true catholicity, but he did not approach one single step nearer idolatry. He remained as strict, as inflexible, a monotheist as before. How then are we to explain these and the many similar passages from his Epistles? There is only one explanation. Only one supposition reconciles them with monotheism. To St. Paul Christ was truly and unequivocally Divine. And so in the case of the Epistles which are from other pens than St. Paul's. We must read them remembering who wrote them, read them as coming from men who were both by nature and training quick to scent and stamp out blasphemy; and we have then to ask ourselves whether the position which they assign to Christ is reconcilable with any other belief than that He came forth from, and had returned within, the circle of true Deity?

And when we see the evidence and testimony of

\* A parallel instance of precedence being given to the name and thought of Christ is to be found in the familiar verse 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

the general stream of the Apostolic writings, we are prepared to give full weight to those special passages in which the Godhead of Christ is expressly stated. They will no longer seem to us fragments of testimony, weak because they come but rarely, but they will be the clear, precise utterance of a faith which is all along implied. They will be the certain proof that the suggestions of the Epistles generally have been accurately read by us; that we were right in supposing them—no less than the Gospels—to teach that Jesus was God manifested in human flesh. They catch up, as it were, into a brief summary what has all through been intended. They define the meaning of the whole.

There are two of these passages to which I will draw your more especial attention. The first of them I have quoted already, in an earlier part of this address. It is Phil. ii. 5-7: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." Now there has, no doubt, been a good deal of discussion as to the interpretation of these verses. Even the translation of them is, in one particular, not quite beyond question. But if we take them with their context, it seems clear that St. Paul is intending to illustrate the virtue of humility from the self-humiliation of his Lord. For this purpose he refers back to the pre-incarnate Son, who was, he says,

eternally "in the form of God"—who shared the essential attributes of God—but who took upon Himself the form of a bond-servant and died a malefactor's death. Such would seem to be the natural meaning of the verse. But even if we suppose the allusion in the first clause to be not to the pre-incarnate Son but to the incarnate Christ, on whose head rested all the attributes of Deity, but who for our sakes refrained from making any use of them; or even if we keep in the next clause the translation of the Authorised Version, and render, "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God,"—it remains impossible to escape the inference that the Apostle looked upon the Son as equal with the Father.\* Through all ambiguities, if there be any, his faith shines out bright and clear. And observe the natural manner in which this allusion to his faith is made. He does not introduce the eternal equality of Christ with the Father as an article of belief which was peculiar to himself and his immediate followers, or which was new, or which required any kind of justification. He introduces it as an admitted fact, as part of the well-known and universally acknowledged creed of all Christians. It is a postulate about which there is no dispute. It is already "current coin." It is coin the goodness of which is beyond all cavil. The other special passage is from the Epistle to the Hebrews. This Epistle is ascribed, by the heading

\* The whole question of this passage is fully discussed by Bishop Lightfoot in his commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians. The conclusion to which he comes can scarcely fail to commend itself to the mind of every impartial reader. *Vide* especially pp. 131, 132, 137.

attached to it in our Bibles, to St. Paul. But the heading, in that form, is not that of the earliest manuscripts, which make no statement as to its authorship. The Epistle puts forward no claim to be St. Paul's, and it is now almost beyond question that it is not his. Its date, however, can be fixed with a fair amount of certainty. It was written a little before A.D. 70, just when the final storm was about to break over Jerusalem, when the appalling end of the ferocious struggle between Roman and Jew was beginning to be in full sight. In Heb. i. 3 we read, "Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The allusion is, of course, to Christ, and in the first half of the verse unquestionably to the pre-incarnate Christ. He is put before us as the irradiation of the Father's splendour. He is the complete and absolute representation of the Divine nature. He is the eternal support of all created things. The mind of the writer, on the question of Christ's Divinity, needs no unveiling. It lies plain and open before the eyes even of the simplest. But here again I would point out how naturally the confession comes in. The ascription of Divine glory is made as one to which the general mind of the Church will readily consent. There is no suggestion that the writer is enforcing a truth which is unwelcome, that he is preaching a gospel unknown to, or unpalatable to his readers. These two great texts, then, speak

the judgment of the primitive Church. To the primitive believer, to teachers and to taught, to Apostles and to converts, Christ was not only their Saviour, their Shepherd, their Example, their Master, their Prophet, their Priest, their King—above and beyond all these He was “their Lord and their God.”

And if any of those listening to me should desire to push the matter further, to follow it down from the immediate time of the Apostles to the age which followed, they will find nothing which need cause them any reasonable perplexity or distress. “The Church,” says one of the greatest of ecclesiastical historians, “up to the middle of the second century deserves the title not merely of the witnessing Church, but particularly of the Church witnessing *for the true Godhead and the true manhood of Christ*. This is impressed upon us, whether we look at the Church’s writings, or its liturgic elements in public worship, or the principle of its arrangement of festivals, or the beginnings of Christian art and characteristic usages. Here the Churches of the East and the West are at one.”\* Difficulties have come up only when men have expected to find from the first that full and complete philosophical statement of doctrine which could only come with the lapse of time and the exercise of earnest thought, and the discipline of controversy and criticism. The history of the doctrine of the Person of Christ is throughout the history of the attempt by the Church’s mind to explain and adjust certain received facts. The Incarnation,

\* Dorner, *Person of Christ* (Eng. Trans.), i. 183.



for example, was a truth which, although accepted, needed to be appreciated and assimilated. Before this could be done with anything approaching fulness or adequacy, there were problems which the Church was bound to face, and as far as might be to solve. It was the pressure of these problems which gave rise to speculations sometimes brilliant and profound, sometimes altogether off the lines, sometimes ending in failure, sometimes leading to safe and lasting conclusions. You must read the Fathers of the second and third centuries remembering that you have in them not the victory but the struggle of Christian thought. You will not always find in them the full Nicene Creed. You will at times find the guesses and errors and short-comings which prepared the way for that Creed. But it is not the less true that that Creed is stable and trustworthy and consistent and acceptable; it is not the less true that it describes and interprets the Scriptural picture in the only way that that picture can be sufficiently interpreted and described; it is not the less true that it is the product of the Holy Spirit, who was given to the Church to be her teacher and inspirer, to lead her slowly and gradually, sometimes by the broad high-road, sometimes by strange and circuitous by-paths, into "all the truth."

These are some of the reasons, the leading reasons, why, as I said at the commencement of my address, I dare to commend to you the Church's belief in the Deity of Christ as one worthy of reasonable men. It comes down to us hallowed as the belief of

centuries. It comes to us endorsed by the many myriads who have tested it and found it true. It has been the belief not only of the ignorant and the unlettered, but of all that has been most learned and most refined in Western society in every age of the Christian Era. Generation after generation, it has been the golden gate through which scholars and philosophers, as well as peasants and children, have passed to the vision—even in the days of their mortal weakness—of the Father. It is the faith to which, come what may, the Church of Christ is finally and irrevocably pledged. May God establish and strengthen us all in it! May we all come to see in Him who died on the Cross the perfect and absolute revelation of the Most High God! May we all of us be brought to welcome the Gospel of the Incarnate Saviour as no exaggeration, no creation of our own fancy, no incredible story coming out of the mists and vapours of ancient times, but as the true light with which the Divine mercy blesses us, as the lantern which the Divine love offers us to guide our weary and hesitating feet! May God lead us all to the knowledge of His grace, to the realisation of His holiness! May He enable us to take upon our lips, not as repeating the language of routine, but as the honest judgment of our own hearts, the splendid ascription to Christ which is made in the famous Creed of which we have just been speaking: "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God"!

W. E. BOWEN.

## VII.

### The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ an Historic Fact.

THE subject with which we are concerned in the present address is the historic character of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Few subjects indeed can be compared with it for weighty importance and for practical value in the domain of Christian thought. It is the keystone of the whole arch. If the historic character of the Resurrection of Christ were taken from us, we should be deprived of that which in every age of Christendom has been the most distinctive pledge and the most inspiring proof of the Divine revelation in Christ Jesus.

We know that in the present day there are many who deny that this supreme source of Christian joy and comfort possesses any true claim to historicity. There are many who boldly allege that the story of the Resurrection *cannot* contain literal fact; that it *must* be a literary figment; that it was only the intense devotion of the disciples of Jesus which clothed in the picturesque guise of a wonderful narrative their conviction of His undying existence

in another world, and their vague confidence in the continuance with them of His spiritual presence and power. There are many who would thus reduce to the merest shadow the hope that year by year, for nineteen centuries, Easter Day has proclaimed to the world.

It has all, we are told, been a beautiful and deluding mirage. It has delighted and encouraged wayfarers in life's journey. But the world's day is waning. In a cooler, purer air the bright illusion vanishes. Man grows wiser; he learns with better philosophy to face the darkness amid the desert places, and to find confidence for the solitude of a grave from which Christ never rose by a literal resurrection.

If we plead that there must be some grain of truth in a narrative like that of the Resurrection, which has so nobly corresponded to the common hope of the human race, and so exactly fulfilled its highest aspirations, we are warned against our self-deception. The very fact that it has seemed so abundantly to satisfy the universal craving of mankind for some assurance of a future state, is used as an argument against its historic character. The narrative has lived and has been believed, because it has gratified men's selfish desires, and because it has afforded a nucleus around which their hopes of immortality might cluster. It was welcome, and therefore it survived.

If, again, men have grasped at the story of the Resurrection, because it seemed to throw light upon

the inequalities and sufferings of earthly life ; because it seemed to promise, on another stage and in a higher phase of existence, an explanation—for which we now vainly sigh—for all the countless woes of tragic bereavement, of blighted reason, of infant mortality, of wholesale hideous massacres done by famine, pestilence, and earthquake, that stun and appal and shock the sentiment that has been fed by Christian teaching,—we are told once more that its very aptness and hopefulness should warn us against accepting the literal truth of the story, and should rather make a fair-minded man predisposed to suspect its historic reality.

Such, then, are some of the doubts which are widely disseminated. Painful and distressing is the effect which they are wont to produce among those who never had occasion before to consider them possible, or who, having never thought or read for themselves, imagine at once that their own inability to give an answer exemplifies the general defenceless character of the Christian position. There arises a vague feeling of distrust ; a sense of danger to that which is the most priceless possession of the Christian faith ; and perhaps, too, an uneasy feeling that, while we readily dismiss from serious consideration the tales of the supernatural in mediæval legend, or in the early annals of other religions, we are clinging tenaciously to whatsoever in our own religion appears to us most full of hope and consolation.

Now there is no need to give way to false alarms ; there is no reason for panic ; there is no room for



discontent, save with our own unhappy ignorance, and with our own tendency to neglect the foundations of our faith. There is every reason to court a full inquiry into the historic character of the story of the Resurrection. It is only reasonable that an event, in virtue of which Christianity makes the greatest and most far-reaching claim upon all the peoples of the world, should be subjected to a thorough and complete and rigorous investigation.

But investigation is not denial ; inquiry does not necessarily bring renunciation ; criticism need not beget prejudice. Granted that many, who accept the narrative of the Resurrection as historical, accept it without inquiry ! But no fewer, in proportion, of those who reject it, reject it also without inquiry, without pausing to consider the evidence.

Now it need hardly be pointed out that we are not here concerned with those who are content with merely denying the Resurrection, with those who deny the existence of a personal God and take no interest in an event which to Christians has been the grand proof of a Divine revelation. Men who regard the supernatural as impossible, men who are determined to consider an event which transcends experience as, *ex hypothesi*, incapable of being proved by any amount of evidence, cannot be expected to accord to the narrative of the Resurrection anything better than a tolerant disregard. " If the evidence for it is strong, then so much the worse for the witnesses ; they must either be unveracious, or physically and mentally incapable of bearing trustworthy testimony."

Having first laid down as an axiom that the supernatural cannot occur, they have no difficulty next in asserting that the Resurrection did not occur. The only perplexity in which they find themselves involved, is how to account for the rise of the belief in the Resurrection of Christ, and how to explain away the various elements of the narrative in which that belief was embodied, as it appears in the earliest literature of the Church.

Dogmatism, it is to be remembered, is not an evil confined to any one camp ; it is not a besetting sin of the defenders of Christianity only. The fact that *à priori* assumptions have thus been employed, in order to dispose of the historical character of the Resurrection, should encourage us with a good heart to take up the task of examining the evidence upon which the belief is held.

Let us then ask ourselves the value of the grounds upon which we consider the Resurrection of Christ to have been a literal historic fact. Is the evidence of such a kind as to warrant this belief? Wholly apart from questions of doctrine or religious controversy, is our belief in the historic character of the Resurrection a reasonable one? Is it, when we take into consideration the remoteness of the time and the superstitious character of the ancients, a belief based upon reasonable and adequate testimony?

In all probability, it would not be very easy for any of us to state off-hand the grounds upon which we accepted the historic character of some famous event in ancient times. Suppose, for instance, we

were suddenly required to give our reasons for believing the story of Alexander's victories to be true, or for considering the death of Socrates, or the flight of Mahomet, or the career of Joan of Arc, to be historic facts ! We should find probably that we had hitherto been quite prepared to accept as historic fact whatever had been approved as such by chroniclers and historians. These matters had not concerned us very deeply ; we were ready to believe them upon the authority of those whom we were content to trust. But so soon as our interest has been excited, and the credibility of this or that event which somehow affects us has been challenged, we begin to inquire more narrowly into the evidence ; we refer to the most ancient records, to those, if possible, that claim to be contemporary with the occurrence of the events in question ; we begin to take into consideration the influence which they are said to have produced upon the people of the time, and the impression which they left upon the thought and literature of the world, or of the countries alleged to be immediately affected. We are also bound to consider whether any objections have been raised to their historical character, and whether those objections were well grounded, or were of an arbitrary, frivolous, and unreasonable nature.

Of course, if the authenticity of the writings in which the event was first described were impugned, a preliminary inquiry would be necessary, to determine as far as possible the credibility of the record. And if the event were recorded in various

authorities, preference would naturally be given to those whose literary origin was best known, or generally accepted.

In dealing with events which occurred at a very remote time, we should not expect to obtain the same amount of evidence that would be available for comparatively modern events. But we are able, in looking back to a distant period, to form a good judgment of the influence produced by a given event or personage upon subsequent generations; and we can compare the evidence for an event which is universally accepted as historical with the evidence for an event whose historicity has been doubted. Moreover, it is only fair to bear in mind that superstition is considered to have been more general in very ancient times than it is now, and that the occurrence of anything supernatural, if it makes any claim to be regarded as historically true, needs to be supported by evidence of strong and varied character.

(1) When we come to examine the evidence for the Resurrection of our Lord, we turn naturally to the evidence which is furnished by the writings of the New Testament. And here, first of all, without taking into consideration any critical question of date or authorship raised by those writings, we cannot fail to observe the position which is assigned in them to the subject of the Resurrection. In the narrative of the Gospels it occupies a most prominent place. It is an event of surpassing importance. It constitutes the climax of the Gospel story. The account of it and of the attendant circumstances

occupies a large section in each narrative (Matt. xxviii.; Mark xvi.; Luke xxiv.; John xx., xxi.). It is not treated as the supernatural embroidery of the main history, such as we find introducing a disturbing effect in the historical value of the Second Book of Maccabees. It constitutes in itself the backbone of the narrative. The narrative of the ministry, the parables, the miracles, the Passion, the Crucifixion of our Lord, lead up to this supreme event. And yet there is no appearance of exaggeration, there is no inflated language employed in the description of the Resurrection or of the subsequent manifestations. The style of the Gospel narrative is just as simple and unadorned in the account of the Resurrection as it is elsewhere. There is no straining after effect. To the writers it was apparently a simple fact on a level with the rest of the narrative. The readers of the narrative required the same sober language in the description of the crowning fact preached by the first messengers of the Gospel, as in the account given of far less important features in the life of Jesus.

Similarly, in the Epistles, the writers assume that their readers are well acquainted with the fact of the Resurrection, as constituting with the death of Christ the historic basis upon which the Christian system rested. They are evidently not under the impression that the fact of the Resurrection needed any special vindication. In the sermons and speeches of the Apostles, as recorded in the Acts, the historic character of the Resurrection is evidently employed



as the argument of defence for the early Christians, which their opponents dared not contradict, and could not overthrow (cf. Acts ii. 31, 32 ; iv. 10, 33 ; xvii. 18 ; xxiii. 6 ; xxv. 19).

The story of the Resurrection must evidently, then, be distinguished carefully, *e.g.*, from the narrative of the appearance of a heavenly messenger (Luke xxii. 43), or from that of the sound of a voice from heaven, confirming the words of Jesus (John xii. 28). These were subordinate events in the narrative. No appeal was ever made to them or to those like them, in order to proclaim the Divine character of the revelation in Jesus Christ. The preachers of Christ rested the weight of their appeal upon that which was, in their opinion, equally fundamental and incontrovertible.

(2) Turning next to the consideration of the evidence supplied by the New Testament writings, when subjected to a narrower criticism, we need to remind ourselves that the New Testament consists of many separate writings. The testimony therefore of the New Testament is not that of a single voice, but of many voices.

Now as time goes on, as fresh discoveries of early Christian literature furnish a wider field of comparison, and closer study and long experience tend to correct, or qualify, or uphold, the earlier generalisations of New Testament scholars and critics, we become more and more confirmed in the opinion that the great mass of the New Testament writings may, without hesitation, be ranked as first-century literature ; in

other words, that they spring from the first two generations of Christian believers.

Criticism seems satisfied that the composition of the Gospels belongs to the latter part of the first century. The claim that the Fourth Gospel is the writing of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" has not been overthrown. Even when admitting the doubts that have been felt as to its authorship, we may notice that very few would now be prepared to assign its composition to the third century. The result of recent minute research has been to bring the date of Johannine writing much nearer to that which has traditionally been ascribed to it.

The narratives of the Resurrection in the four Gospels differ, both in the general characteristics of their literary treatment, and in the various details of their description. There are certain discrepancies in the accounts which, while constituting a minor difficulty of exegesis, prove conclusively the independence of their witness. On the other hand, their general agreement, in the main outline of the narrative, indicates the existence of a well-known framework of Gospel, underlying the work of the four Evangelists, preceding the period of their composition, and presumably embodying the sum of Christian teaching that was employed by the Apostles and their followers in their earliest missions. The manifold testimony of the Gospels, therefore, may confidently be claimed as furnishing us with evidence (going back to the middle of the first century) as to the belief in the historic character of the narrative of the Resurrection.

This result is confirmed by what we find in St. Paul's writings. For, while we find numerous allusions to the Resurrection of Christ throughout all his Epistles, they are nowhere more explicit than in those very Epistles which are universally admitted to have been written by St. Paul—the Epistles to the Roman, the Corinthian, and the Galatian Churches. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, written, as is generally supposed, about the year 57 A.D., the Apostle recalls to the recollection of his readers in that Church the substance of the teaching which he had some years previously given them respecting numerous important topics, and among them the subject of the Resurrection. When, then, he enumerates the evidence for our Lord's rising from the dead (chap. xv.), he goes over the facts which had been reported to him, and which he apparently systematically delivered to the Churches: "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas; then to the Twelve; then He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then He appeared to James; then to all the Apostles; and last of all, as unto one born out of due time, He appeared to me also. . . . Whether then it be I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed" (I Cor. xv. 3-11).

Such had been the teaching of St. Paul when he

first preached to the Corinthians, about the years 51 to 53. Within little more than twenty years from the time of the Crucifixion, we thus have definite proof that St. Paul proclaimed as undoubted historical facts the Resurrection of Christ, and His appearances to the Apostles and to more than five hundred disciples, of whom the greater number were still living when he wrote.

In his other Epistles, written about the same time, St. Paul is almost equally explicit. In his Epistle to the Romans his opening words insist upon the fact that the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ has been "declared with power . . . by the resurrection of the dead" (i. 4). The Christian faith in God is in One "that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" (iv. 24). He encourages the Roman converts with the words, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (viii. 11). In his Epistle to the Galatians he begins with the statement of his own apostleship, as being "not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead" (i. 1).

It would be easy, if space permitted, to multiply references to the Resurrection in St. Paul's other Epistles. But it will be sufficient at this point to mention also the testimony of other writings, which, if their authorship has been called in question, are yet undoubtedly of distinct origin and belong to

the literature of the first century A.D. *E.g.* 1 Pet. i. 3 : "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Rev. i. 5 : "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-born from the dead." Heb. xiii. 20 : "Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep." Many similar statements could, if it were necessary, be adduced from other passages in the Epistles.

Nothing, then, can be more certain than (*a*) that, in less than twenty-five years from the Crucifixion, a knowledge of the Resurrection of Christ as an historical fact existed in the Churches of Jerusalem, Corinth, Rome, and Asia Minor, being based upon the testimony of the Apostles, and confirmed by appeal to living witnesses ; and (*b*) that it formed a principal feature in the allusions to the work of Jesus Christ to be found in the literature of widely differing character belonging to that century.

It is, as Paley a century ago rightly insisted, "completely certain that the Apostles of Christ and the first teachers of Christianity asserted the fact" of the Resurrection. Nor could language express the position of the first Christians more directly and concisely than that which is employed by St. Paul, when he says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9).



(3) Testimony to the same effect is furnished from a different quarter. The primitive worship and institutions of the Christian Church will speak to some minds in more convincing language than written words. The observance of "the first day of the week" by the earliest Christians commemorated the rising of Jesus from the dead. This was the Christians' sacred day, on which they assembled together for worship (Acts xx. 7); this, we may be almost certain, was "the Lord's day" of Rev. i. 10. This belief is recorded in one of the earliest non-Canonical Christian writings: "Wherefore also we keep the eighth day for rejoicing, in the which also Jesus rose from the dead" (*Ep. Barnab.*, cap. 15).

The first day of the week was neither the Sabbath of the Jews, which the first Christians and our Lord Himself had always religiously observed, nor the day of His crucifixion, which, if His witness had terminated with His death, might conceivably have become to Christians the most sacred day of the week. But it was a new day set apart by Christian usage from the very first. All primitive tradition associated its observance with the belief in the Lord's rising upon that day. Neither has any other satisfactory explanation of its observance been advanced.

The same may be said of the Christian festival of Easter, which commemorated the Resurrection of the Lord. The honour in which this day was held, and the sanctity assigned to it as the anniversary of this greatest event, led to disputes within the Church, early in the second century, respecting the right day

of its celebration. The most joyous of the Christian festivals commemorated, not the Jewish Passover, but "that first day of the week" after the Passover, when the Paschal Victim that was slain was believed to have been raised from the dead.

Once more, the two sacraments of the Christian Church were connected, even from the Apostles' times, with the commemoration of the Resurrection. The Holy Eucharist which showed "the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26) was a reminder also of the triumph over the grave. The rite of Christian baptism was a symbol of the raising of Christ from the dead "by the glory of the Father" (Rom. vi. 4).

(4) As we attempt to place before ourselves the testimony which is supplied by St. Paul and the early Church, we cannot, I think, escape the conclusion that, when they speak of the Resurrection of Christ, they speak of a physical rising of the crucified Jesus from the grave. We have not to do with a pictorial treatment of spiritual ideas, but with an actual and literal historic fact. The historic fact of the dying of Christ is coupled with the equally historic fact of the rising of Christ from the dead. The two are, as it were, co-ordinate literal events. As mentioned, for instance, by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 3 ff., they cannot be separated from one another; they cannot denote, the one a *physical* death, the other an *ideal* resurrection.

It has doubtless been objected that, as St. Paul reckons among the appearances of the Risen Lord the occurrence of a supernatural manifestation to himself on the road to Damascus, the whole series

of appearances may therefore have been merely subjective, or wanting in "objective reality." But, without going into the character of this manifestation to St. Paul, we may certainly infer from St. Paul's own account of the occurrence, that he himself was strongly impressed with its objective character. He is well aware, as we may gather from 2 Cor. xii. 1 ff., of the mystery which surrounded the nature of the glorified body of the Risen Lord. But it would appear that, while he was convinced of the objective character of the appearances to the Twelve and to the Five Hundred, to Cephas and to James, he could not resist the impression that the appearance which he had himself witnessed was equally a physical and objective one. The historic character of the other manifestations is thus not affected by the mention of the appearance vouchsafed to the Apostle on the road to Damascus. On the contrary, the conviction that he had "objectively" seen the Risen Lord is implied by his placing his own experience in the same category with the appearances for which the testimony was well known and generally accepted.

(5) Those who have supposed that the description of the Resurrection and of the ten or eleven recorded manifestations of the Risen Lord can be accounted for, on the supposition that the first Christians expressed in the form of the Resurrection narrative their deep conviction of their Lord's permanent *spiritual* existence, can hardly have faced the difficulties of the supposed case.

A group of Galilean fishermen and peasants, over-

whelmed with consternation and despondency on account of their Master's death as a malefactor, are, we are asked to believe, able, by a process of abstract speculation, to translate their vivid conception of His spiritual immortality into a series of lifelike scenes containing the description of the rising and reappearance of their Lord in different places, to different people, under different conditions! These scenes, according to such a view, would be allegorical; and we are invited to believe that this allegorical description could, in twenty years from the time of our Lord's death, have taken so strong a hold upon the imagination of the first Christians, that it was possible for the Apostles themselves to appeal to it as a record of actual facts, and apparently to be themselves convinced that their own allegory was literal history.

The Apostles were not impostors. No one whose opinion has been worth any consideration has ever called in question the honesty and integrity of the first preachers of the Gospel. And yet how could St. Paul have appealed to the testimony of nearly three hundred living witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus, if the story of the Resurrection had been only a speculation, and if the accounts of the Lord's varied manifestations had only presented different aspects of an abstract religious idea? Once more, is it likely that St. Paul, whose object in 1 Cor. xv. was to base the doctrine of the general resurrection upon the fact of the Resurrection of Christ, would have appealed to an event which he was *not* convinced was historically true; or, in support of it, would have

adduced an array of testimony on which he could not absolutely rely? If St. Paul, who had many foes, had thus referred in categorical terms to a literal Resurrection, to be proved by the evidence he adduced, and if all the time he meant a series of imaginary scenes allegorically descriptive of the state after death, he could hardly have escaped the charge of distorting facts and deluding the Church.

But there is no suggestion made of any wilful distortion of facts, nor of any fraudulent and intentional fiction. And if so, the only possible alternative to accepting the Resurrection as historic, is to assume the rapid formation of a series of fables by a credulous group of people prone to superstition, in consequence *either* of the hallucinations of a few ecstatic visionaries, *or* of the predisposition of the masses to expect this particular form of supernatural manifestation, the rising of the Christ from the dead.

(6) But, if we refer to the accounts in the Gospels (and these are either to be accepted as literal, or explained in some other way), there is no room for the theory of hallucinations. Excited feelings and eager enthusiasm will often carry away large numbers into extravagant action; and the same causes will produce in a few individuals a predisposition to hallucination, to declare that they see things which are not present or are non-existent, and therefore cannot be seen. But the same hallucination will not present itself to twelve people at the same time; still less to five hundred. Moreover, it is most expressly stated that in the case of the disciples there was no pre-



disposition whatsoever towards imagining the presence of a Risen Christ or expecting Him to reappear.

It is possible that an imagination of His presence might have developed itself in a few cases after some interval of time. But after the interval of only one day, there was no room for so great a revulsion of feeling from that of intense depression and bitter disappointment to that of joy and courage. With many of the disciples it is clear that their hope in His Messiahship had vanished when He died upon the cross (Luke xxiv. 21). The women of the company started out to embalm the corpse. On finding the tomb empty, they were startled and frightened. Mary Magdalene, to whose excited feelings a somewhat frivolous phase of scepticism has ventured to attribute the origin of the so-called Resurrection visions, had herself, according to the narrative, no expectation that He would rise from the dead. The empty tomb suggested to her the purloining of the body (John xx. 1, 2, 15). Though our Lord had predicted His rising again, the disciples never expected it to take place. They had not understood the meaning of our Lord's words (Mark ix. 9, 10; Luke xviii. 33, 34). Not even St. Peter and St. John were prepared to hear that the tomb was empty (John xx. 3-8). The announcement that He had risen was received with sad incredulity. The words of the women who first met Him and brought the news were received as "idle talk"; the Apostles "disbelieved them" (Luke xxiv. 11). Even after the appearance of our Lord to the ten Apostles St. Thomas was

not prepared to accept the statement of the others. Nothing would convince him but the evidence of his own senses of sight and touch (John xx. 25). The event was so unexpected, so amazing, so sudden, that many at first doubted. The early Christian account, preserved in Mark xvi. 14, reports that our Lord "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen."

We are sometimes told that the story might be explained if we attached the proper weight to the prevalent superstitions of the time, and to the popular predisposition to believe in the rising of a man from the dead. This, however, is an assertion which, although freely hazarded, is totally without foundation. The belief in the resurrection was maintained by the Pharisees; it was taught by their Rabbis, and was generally accepted by the devout Jews and by the common people. It was not, however, a belief universally accepted by the Jews; it was not accepted by the Sadducees—that is to say, by the whole party to which the high priest and the leaders of the Jewish aristocracy belonged (Acts iv. 1 ff.; xxiii. 8).

The prevalent belief in the Resurrection was a belief in the *general* rising of the dead *at the last day* (John xi. 24; 2 Macc. vii.). There was nothing in the Jewish teaching of the Resurrection, nor in the Jewish teaching respecting a Messiah, which would lead a devout Jew to construct an imaginary story of an individual's rising from the dead, or to fabricate an account of visions of his reappearance for a period

of forty days. There is nothing in the pre-Christian Messianic literature which would in any way suggest this development of the narrative of Jesus. If the whole story were a literary invention, it was a new and original one.

It is true that, when our Lord wrought great miracles, the common people thought it could only be explained on the supposition that one of the great prophets had risen from the dead ; while the guilty conscience of Herod ascribed the works of Jesus to the Forerunner whom he had put to death (Mark vi. 14 ; Luke ix. 19).

But it is one thing to account for wonderful phenomena by vague general talk about the reappearance of a dead saint ; it is quite a different thing to describe the reappearance of one who was dead, and to recount, with a minute reference to details respecting people and things, which could easily be put to the test, the manifestations of One who was alive again. For this there was no precedent in previous literature. The stories of Enoch and Elijah related to times too remote from the procuratorship of Pilate to supply the basis for a whole tissue of imaginary events, woven into a consecutive tradition during the ten or twenty years that followed the Crucifixion. Nor is there any resemblance between the stories of Enoch and Elijah and that of the death and resurrection of our Lord. The narrative of the Resurrection was unique. It had no parallel. You may ransack all pre-Christian Jewish literature, and not find anything to prepare men's minds for the announcement of such an event.

(7) No review of the subject would be complete without a reference to the joint evidence furnished (*a*) by the empty grave, and (*b*) by the change in the demeanour of the disciples. The grave had been sealed; a watch had been set over it. But on "the first day of the week" the stone had been rolled away, the body had disappeared. How was the empty grave to be accounted for? Our Lord's enemies spread the report that the disciples came by night and stole the body away while the guard slept (Matt. xxviii. 11-15). But, according to that explanation, how did the narratives of the Lord's appearances arise and take shape? And how can the unwillingness of the Apostles to believe that the tomb was empty, be understood, except on the impossible supposition of fraudulent imposture by the Apostles? How, again, on any such hypothesis, can the total change of attitude in the Apostles, from cowardice to courage, from craven flight to heroic self-sacrifice, be explained?

In modern times the suggestion has been made that our Lord only swooned away, and did not die upon the cross, but that He recovered in the cool air of the rock-hewn tomb. It might be enough to reply that His opponents were convinced of His death; that, in framing their own excuses, they testified to His death (Matt. xxviii. 13); and that, in appealing to Pilate for a guard, they were evidently assured He was no longer alive (Matt. xxvii. 63). It is certain, from the words of Felix (Acts xxv. 19), that in later days the enemies of the Christians were as absolutely

convinced of His death as were the Christians themselves. But even if, for argument's sake, the suggestion were for a moment conceded, are we anywhere nearer to an explanation of the narrative which tells of the stone's being rolled away, or of the appearances made to different people in various localities? Does it in the least explain how a man who had been tortured and scourged and ill-treated, nailed to a cross and suspended in torture for a day, and pierced deeply in the side with a spear, could in thirty-six hours have revived sufficiently, first, to disengage Himself from the clothes, in which His body was swathed, wound up with a glutinous "mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight" (John xix. 39); then, from within, to remove the great mass of stone which lay without the cave, so heavy that two or three women, on the outside, felt themselves unable to move it (Mark xvi. 3); and, finally, to transfer Himself from place to place with rapidity and ease? The whole supposition is too absurd to be taken into serious consideration. And even if it were otherwise, what, we may ask, according to this theory, became of the Lord after His reappearance? Where did He eventually die? How are the joy and courage of the Apostles to be explained, if, while proclaiming His Resurrection, they knew that He was ending His days in some hiding-place or fastness among the mountains? The whole theory is a gratuitous rewriting of the evidence, and utterly breaks down.

The reanimated courage of the Apostles, their



transfigured conduct, practically disposes of these and similar wild suppositions. They had been convinced that He died upon the cross. They had become convinced that He rose and was alive. That conviction filled them with joy and with a new inspiring belief in the Divine Father's mercy and love toward all mankind.

(8) We should probably be travelling beyond our limits, if we here considered the evidence supplied by the teaching of the Christian Church. But it must fairly be taken into account. The history of the Church dates from the Resurrection, to which from the first it testified. It was not abstract doctrine, but historic fact, that, according to the Apostles, constituted the foundation of the Christian Church. It was not our Lord's sayings, nor His miracles, but His rising from the dead, which was regarded from the earliest time as the keystone of the Gospel proclamation.

With this agreed the teaching both of the Cross and of the Ascension, and the Christian belief in the Second Coming of our Lord (Acts i. 11). With this agreed the belief in the future resurrection through Jesus Christ. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thess. v. 14).

As part of a Divine revelation to mankind, the Resurrection proclaimed the true calling of human nature. It was a "sign" (*σημεῖον*): it proclaimed a higher law of nature, which is the law of God, for the children of the human race. Christ has become to

us "the firstborn from the dead" (Col. i. 18). He is the "second Adam" (1 Cor. xv. 22, 45; Rom. v. 15).

Brief and disjointed as it has been, the investigation of the evidence shows conclusively the strength of the Christian belief. The facts which we have had under consideration can neither be understood on the supposition that the Lord remained in the grave, nor on the supposition that He did not die upon the cross.

The literary evidence is practically the evidence of contemporaries. The writers are various; their integrity of purpose is not called in question. The event to which they testify profoundly influenced opinion; it left an indelible mark upon customs and institutions; it formed the basis of the most spiritual and progressive religion in the world's history. Unintelligible when viewed by itself, its significance and its probability can only then be rightly estimated, when it is regarded as the crowning triumph of a unique life. The Resurrection of Jesus is the consummation of a life which claimed to be from heaven. He who rose from the dead foretold the manner of His death, and forewarned His disciples of His Resurrection. The evidence for the Resurrection is so strong that we must make our choice between its being historically true, or the most successful and stupendous imposture that has ever deluded the world. Yet no one who candidly studies the New Testament, or fairly investigates the history and teaching of the Church, will be prepared to associate

with its foundation, or with its Founder, the baseness and immorality of imposture.

The conclusion, to which we are brought by this brief rehearsal of the evidence, is that no believer in a loving and personal God need hesitate to assert his conviction, that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was a literal and historic fact.

H. E. RYLE.

## VIII.

### Sin.

THERE are two subjects which run side by side through Scripture and through history. They are the wrong-doing and suffering of man, and the Divine method whereby he may be lifted up into the true life for which he was originally constructed. These subjects are called in Biblical language Sin and the Atonement. They must be studied together in the light of Scripture and experience. The facts of Evil have to be faced, traced, and analysed before the need or nature of the Atonement can be appreciated and discussed with advantage. It is to the first of these that attention is now to be called.

I. *Biblical Names for Sin.*—The varied aspects of evil can be clearly gathered from the names by which it is designated in the Hebrew Old Testament.\* At least ten words are used to describe it. (i) There is the ordinary word translated *evil*, which stands for both physical and moral evil—in other words, for

\* A full account of these pictorial words is given in *Old Testament Synonyms* (Nisbet).

what we suffer, and for what we do. The first of these is always regarded in Scripture as inflicted by Divine permission, and according to the laws of creation ; the second is wrought against the Divine permission, and is opposed to law. (ii) There is the word usually translated *sin*, which literally means to *miss the mark*. A word of similar meaning is used in the Greek Testament for the same purpose. This gives an important view of wrong-doing as a failure to carry out the original intention of the Author of our being. (iii, iv) There are words which signify *wrong* or *distortion*. These point to the fact which the English language also illustrates—that when we do evil our nature has a moral twist, and is *wrung* out of its right or straight course. A wrong line is a crooked line. (v) There is a word which signifies *transgression*, *i.e.* the stepping over the boundary and going into forbidden ground. (vi, vii, viii, ix) There are words which signify *rebellion*, *unrest*, *wearisomeness*, and *vanity* or *emptiness*. (x) There is one other word, which stands for *guilt*, *i.e.* the effect produced by wrong-doing on the mind and heart of Him who is always represented in Scripture as the moral Governor of the world. In the Greek Testament the most notable words signify *failure*, *ungodliness*, *unrighteousness*, *lawlessness*, *mischievousness*, *discord*.

The meaning of these various words is illustrated at every turn in the Bible, through history, biography, proverb, and direct instruction. No book or collection of books sets forth so fully and with so much candour the dark side of life, national, personal, and racial ;



and if it were not for the stream of gracious intervention which runs through this dreary waste, the Bible would be the saddest book ever written.

II. *The Fall*.—But we must look beneath the surface to find the root of this detestable thing which we call Sin. Scripture gives us, not the origin of evil in the universe, but the history of wrong-doing in the human race. We turn to the third chapter of Genesis, the authority of which—in conjunction with the surrounding chapters—is taken for granted all through the Bible. Here we have a picture of our first parents in their original innocence, but possessed of a composite nature; children of the dust, and yet the offspring of God. A subtle being, in the form of a serpent, awakens in the woman's mind discontent, distrust, disobedience. At his suggestion she yields, breaks the law of her Creator, forsakes the path of righteousness (which is loyal love), and yields to the desires of her flesh and of her mind. Hence came death, moral and physical, the mind fatally acting on the body, at one of the most critical moments in history. Man having become a law-breaker is alienated from the Law-giver, flies from Him, hides from Him, neglects Him, rejects Him. This is the seed from which the whole crop of human failure sprang.

It is to be observed that Scripture settles the matter not theoretically but historically. We naturally at this late age of human history approach it from another point of view. We find ourselves burdened with a hereditary tendency to go wrong. We know

what is right, as Horace once said, and we approve of what is right; yet we weakly yield to what is wrong. Our nature is out of gear or out of balance. The animal part is disproportionately strong; the spiritual or God-like disproportionately weak. To do what is right, true, pure, unselfish, is uphill work to the generality of mankind; the contrary course is downhill and easy. This is what we call proneness to go wrong, or—in technical language—"original sin."

Some students of human nature are inclined to think that Good and Evil are co-eternal, and that Right and Wrong are as much part of our original structure as Spirit and Body are. But a careful analysis of human nature will testify that right is original, final, and eternal; and that wrong-doing means degeneracy. The witness of every enlightened conscience points strongly in this direction, and Scripture, which is conscience intensified and guaranteed, confirms this view; whilst Christ, who is conscience embodied and inspired, leaves us without doubt on the matter.

III. *Evolution and the Fall.*—Those who hold the doctrine of evolution either as a working hypothesis or as a proved law find it hard to account for the moral facts of human nature. They have to start with the belief that the first contemporary male and female specimens of the genus *homo* sprang from non-human—not to say "inhuman"—parents, who are called for convenience anthropoid apes. As specimens of the apes in question have never been discovered or

heard of, it is hard to say what their morality was; but as, on the theory, they were very nearly human in other respects, it may be supposed that their moral qualities were almost the same as those which our first parents possessed, and which by slow degrees developed and crystallised into those of the average man.

Another view, however, might be held by the evolutionist—namely, that what we call in theological language the Fall of Man was the recurrence to that anthropoid ape type of morality from which by a number of small advances man had extricated himself. According to this view, man's moral condition now is very much about the same as that of his supposed ape ancestors. He had lifted himself up above it, but had fallen back into it.

Neither of these views is in full accord with the Biblical narrative, though the latter might seem to be in some degree analogous with it. The Scriptural story, when we read beneath the surface and between the lines, points very clearly to an act of disobedience to the Highest, wrought at a suggestion from without, and entailing dire punishment on the erring individual and on the race. There is much truth in the old saying, "*Corruptio optimi pessima*" ("The higher the nature, the greater the fall"). All types in nature lead up to man; but he himself is too often the lowest of the low.

IV. *Various Aspects of Sin.*—Whatever view we take of the origin of human wrong-doing, its aspects

and manifestations are innumerable. In proportion as we neglect what is due to our Creator, we fail in our duty to our neighbour. The story of Cain and Abel speedily follows on the narrative of the Fall. Animalism, sensuality, and violence reigned almost supreme, though not without remarkable exceptions in the early days of human history. The earliest records of Babylon are apparently polytheistic; but polytheism is not far from idolatry, and the worship of idols leads to degradation in other directions (see Rom. i. 20-32).

If we substitute the word "Evolver" for "Creator" in the last paragraph, we shall come to the same conclusion. For God is the true Evolver. No evolution is really automatic. There is Power and Plan and Provision behind it. You cannot get anything out of an automatic machine which has not first been put into it; and the machine itself is the product of mind. No one who has yielded to the fascination of evolutionary doctrine is thereby debarred from the worship of God. One living and true Being, incorporeal, impartible, impassible,\* is at the back of the universe. In Him we live and move and have our being. We are His offspring. He can say of us as of Israel in old time, "I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against Me" (Isa. i. 2). As life is many-sided, so is rebellion, and so are the aspects of moral weakness and failure. Public life, business life, home life, civilisation, barbarism, riches, poverty, activity, quiescence—all are

\* See the first of our Thirty-nine Articles,

stained and stamped with failure. If the Divine Being is possessed of consciousness, thought, and sensitiveness to the ways of human beings—and we know that this must be so—with what feelings can He look down upon the children of men!

V. *Personal Responsibility*.—If failure is hereditary, the question rises whether we are to any extent responsible for our own personal short-comings. The answer is, Each man is responsible just so far as he is free and enlightened. I take it for granted that every one is conscious of a certain amount of light and of liberty, though he is painfully aware that he cannot understand everything, and that his tether is not a long one. It is not every one who realises his moral inability; but when he does find it out, it fills him with shame. It does seem shocking not to be able to do the things which we would. At such a time we are inclined to run into extremes and say that we are victims of necessity or creatures of impulse. Many a man comforts himself in doing wrong by saying that he is led by the strongest motive. This word “motive” has a good deal to answer for. What is a motive? and where is it? Is it something outside you which awakens an inclination, as an apple rouses a boy’s desire to possess and eat it? Or is it something within you which makes the desire uncontrollable? And after all, have we no means of controlling our desires? Has God left Himself altogether without witness in this respect? Is conscience a sham, and the will a fiction? Have we no power available for saying



*No* to our inclinations? Let history and experience answer. Moral weakness is one thing; moral inability is another. If it is true that I feel a motive, it is also true that I choose a course. Human language itself (as Aristotle said centuries ago) is so formed that it compels us to acknowledge our responsibility.

But responsibility is a matter of degree. This is asserted in many ways over and over again in Scripture, and it commends itself to our reason. We fail in our dealings with God and man partly through inherited weakness, partly through ignorance, partly through environment or surroundings, partly through self-formed habits, partly through voluntary actions. I am not responsible for my existence, nor for any of the tendencies which I brought with me into the world. A man cannot help having a desire to possess goods, to preserve life, to excel others, to resent injuries, to satisfy the sexual instinct; he may be ignorant (either through his own fault or through the fault of others) as to the nature and bearing of some of these desires; but he is to a large extent responsible for the satisfying them at wrong times, under wrong conditions, and on wrong objects. If he resists the temptation to yield, he is building up a strong character; if he lets himself be conquered, he is sowing the seed of further moral weakness and ruin. It is in this way that hunger leads to gluttony, sexuality to sensuality, a sense of possession to covetousness, and so on. Thus the inherited chain of tendency, instead of being broken, is riveted on the soul more firmly. The temporary show of

resistance is gradually given up. We yield, yet hate ourselves for yielding. At last we even give up this hatred. The heart is hardened ; the conscience dulled ; the sense of shame deadened ; the will, which might have been strengthened and trained for higher things, demoralised and destroyed.

VI. *The Tempter.*—There is another aspect of sin which the story of the Fall includes, which must not be overlooked. It brings on the scene that old serpent the Devil, whose existence is regarded by some with mockery, by others as a grave but unsolved problem. From one end of the Bible to the other we find that the human race is haunted and beset by this mischief-maker. He well earns his name of *Satan*, *i.e.* antagonist ; *Abaddon* or *Apollyon*, *i.e.* destroyer ; and *Diabolus*, *i.e.* accuser. Our Lord called him both a liar and a murderer, and says that “he abode not in the truth.” He is also called by our Lord “the prince of this world,” whilst St. Paul actually designates him as “the god of this age.”

The relation of the spirit-world to our own is very obscure. All material objects are conditioned by laws of space ; but perhaps the beings whom we call spirits are not subject to these laws. We cannot point to any spot in the heavens and say that God is there rather than here. He is not far from each one of us. It is hard to picture up consciousness apart from brain, or personality apart from nerve ; but in the spirit-world, on the border-land of which we dwell, thought and action can be carried out

without brain, nerve, or limb, and so of course without the other elements in the human fabric. And yet spiritual beings may have angelic organisations capable of being condensed and etherealised—capable also of assuming divers forms. One may take the form of a dove, another may appear in the guise of a serpent, and a third may present himself as a man. Whether Satan literally appeared to our first parents as a serpent matters little to us. At any rate he was there as *the Tempter*, and this rôle he has kept to ever since.

I am thankful that the story of the Fall tells us that the suggestion to do wrong came from without. This fact assures us that evil is not wholly self-generated in man. Our first parents were in a condition of unstable moral equilibrium; and it was the Enemy that caused the downfall. This opens a door of hope to the human race. For if evil comes from without, *i.e.* from the spirit-world, then a remedy may also come from that world. Moreover, man's original responsibility in the matter of sin is considerably reduced, though it is not altogether done away with.

Without further speculation on the origin of the Fall, it will be best to look to our own case. It is clear that a man is not responsible for being tempted. His responsibility begins when he harbours any suggestion of the Tempter, and it increases when he yields. Here the story of Eve is analogous with our every-day experience. Our mental processes are very much like hers. We are led by the senses

and by the desires, as she was. Sceptical suggestions slip into our mind, as into hers. The absence of a serpent in a visible form does not make much difference. The Evil One uses our natural instincts, our ambitions, our friends. Christ said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," not only to the Enemy of souls, but also to the most notable of the Apostles when his words were Satanic in their influence.

Many a man and woman says almost in Eve's words, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." But ought we to let the serpent beguile us? Have we not eyes? Have we not understanding? Ought we to let ourselves be drawn almost blindfold into temptation? Have we no resisting power? Or if we are incapable by ourselves of withstanding temptation, is there no source outside ourselves from which we may gather strength? These are grave questions. We evidently must not throw the whole responsibility of sin on Satan, even though the original suggestion may have come from him. Undoubtedly the proneness or predisposition to go wrong, which we have inherited from our ancestors, makes us fall a more easy prey to Satan than we should do otherwise. On the other hand, our eyes are opened to the wiles and snares of the Evil One; and the experience of the past gives us in this respect a salutary lesson which our first parents had not a chance of learning beforehand. We talk of irresistible temptations, but no temptation is really irresistible. There is a way of escape; and the business of life is to find it. The *theory* of self-

discipline or self-mastery is as old as the days of Greek philosophy. The *practice* requires help from the spirit-world. As Linnæus said—

Unless above himself he can lift up himself,  
How poor a thing is man !

This power of lifting ourselves above ourselves must come from One who is higher, purer, and nobler than man. It must come from One who is competent to undo the works of the Devil. In fact, we need SPIRITUAL INTERVENTION both to enable us to overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and also to incline us with pure hearts and minds to follow the Only God.

VII. *Sin Universal*.—It needs no Bible to tell us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Men fail because they have no ideal, or—if they have one—because they cannot live up to it. They fail at the beginning of life through proneness to go wrong, and at the end of life through death. History tells us that men failed in the past, and experience tells us that they fail in the present. What has civilisation done to prevent failure? What has legislation? What has philosophy? What has culture? The policeman, the gaoler, the soldier, even the bunch of keys, is a witness to universal failure. Conscience tells men that they have failed. The ignorance about God, the shrinking from contact with Him, the terrors awakened by the spirit-world, the expiatory rites intended to pacify the good and evil powers behind nature, the dread of



death and of that which is beyond—these are so many witnesses to the failure of the race.

The religions of the world have been failures. They are blind attempts to seek God. No religion is worthy of the name which does not begin at the other end. God must take the initiative. Give me a religion which sets forth God as seeking man. Give me a religion which will save the lost; for I am lost. Salvation is the criterion of true religion. A God who cannot save is no God. If there is no God who can save, life is blank despair. If the Author of the human race cares for the race, if He sees its condition, if He is what the deepest part of my nature demands that He should be, then there must be within the infinite stores of His goodness and wisdom and power *some* way of doing something to lift up both the race and the individual.

Where shall salvation be found? Philosophy says, "It is not in me." Education and legislation echo, "It is not in us. We can repress by force; we can instruct and make more learned; we can cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter; but we cannot overcome evil with good." The reformer says, "It is not in me." Buddha tried, Confucius tried, and other men of modern times have tried to purge society, to cleanse the state, and to kindle enthusiasm for what is good; but in vain. It is like trying to resuscitate a dead man. The remedy must be from on high—not from our equals, but from our Author. Through Him alone death can be swallowed up in life, failure in victory, selfishness in love.

R. B. GIRDLESTONE

## IX.

### Attonement.

THE doctrine of Sin or Failure, which has been discussed in the preceding paper, presupposes the existence of a Divine law, standard, or ideal, originally impressed on man's inner being, if not expressed in words from without. It is only reasonable that God should demand of His creatures a right use of the gifts and faculties which He bestows, and that human beings, possessing as they do special endowments, should be expected to live in conformity with the Divine tendencies breathed into them. To do so is to be in the right; and with righteousness will come harmony and happiness. The facts of history and experience, however, testify to the evil condition of man. The race has failed to live up to God's demands, or, in other words, to fulfil the law of its being. Man is a failure, physically, spiritually, socially; and the whole moral world is out of course. Each of us has gone astray like a lost sheep; self has taken the place of God; there is none that doeth good—no, not one. Each generation has left a legacy of failure to the next, and all human efforts

to struggle out of this lost condition have proved futile.

I. *Intervention in Behalf of the Lost.*—The Scriptures of the Old Testament freely acknowledge this lamentable state of things, but they illustrate and foreshadow something better. They sparkle with revelations of Divine grace ; they abound in definite promises ; they record frequent instances of gracious intervention in behalf of the helpless and the lost. Some persons object to the idea of intervention, as if it were improper or unnatural, and as if all things had remained in a state of monotony or dull iteration, or at best automatic advance, from “the beginning”—whatever that was. But, as a matter of fact, the more we study nature, the more deeply we shall be persuaded that both order and variation imply intervention. In this respect intervention may be regarded, even by the evolutionist, as a necessary complement and counterpart to his favourite theory. For whilst the doctrine of evolution seeks to formulate the physical aspects of variation in relation to orderly development, the other doctrine supplies both the plan and the working force which secure orderly succession of species in a certain direction. All that is unwitting in nature, all that is supposed to answer to a blind *conatus*, is from God. “He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out,” is what every new “kind” in creation might say of God, if it could speak.

If there is mind, plan, purpose, force (in other words, intervention), at the back of all which makes up

nature, there must be something answering to it at the back of the highest and most intelligent type of nature as we know it—that is to say, Man. Man is a link between creation and the Creator. Physically he is allied to the one, spiritually to the other. The failure of the human race to live up to its high end is (so far as we know) unique; and remedial intervention may be expected to be unique also. If there is a *vis medicatrix naturæ*, which every working man appreciates when he cuts his hand, it would be strange if God made no provision on a large scale for the alleviation of human sorrow and for the reconstruction of human character.

But away with theoretical discussions! The thing has been done. What the Old Testament foreshadows the New Testament records. “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

II. *The Person of Christ.*—The Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in Scripture as in a special and unique sense God’s Son, and as from eternity a sharer of the Divine nature—God of God. He is the *Logos* or expression of the Divine will; He is the Agent through whom all things were made; to Him belong all the things which the Father hath; whatever the Son did must be ascribed to the Father as the originator. Accordingly we read that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

The consistent Unitarian naturally rejects the Atonement because he rejects the Deity of Christ. He holds that God is essentially an isolated Being,

and that if He wanted a Son He must create one. The true Catholic and Scriptural faith is that loving relationship is of the essence of the Godhead, and that within the compass of Deity there exist eternally the loving Paternity which originates, and the loving Sonship which conforms to the originative Will and carries it out, and the loving Energy which quickens and inspires all creation—in other words, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Human words; but they express profound truth.

The Redeemer, whom by the force of Scripture and reason we are called upon to recognise as the Divine Son, came into this world in the fulness of time, and shared our human nature from its initial stage of conception and onwards, being born under special conditions, as our first parents must have been according to any theory. Having thus taken the manhood into the Godhead, He lived out this super-induced life in a way which no ordinary human mind can fathom or words describe. Whilst possessed of a double consciousness, because He was perfect God and perfect Man, His original nature was in some way kept in the background, though never really renounced, and so as Son of Man he brought light and salvation into the world.

III. *Christ's Teaching about Sin.*—Before contemplating the Lord's redemptive work, we had better listen to His words, and especially to what He said about the nature of that evil thing for which He came to provide a remedy.



First, He expounded the nature and bearing of God's law, and the present and future penalty on disobedience to it. Thus He intensified the sense of sin in men's hearts, and quickened the power of their conscience. Many a one must have gone from His presence to seek the Father who seeth in secret, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Secondly, He pointed out that the heart was the seat of sin; that the real root of evil is to be found, not in things, but in persons; and that it springs out of self-will and out of a corrupt inclination, whether inborn or inbred.

Thirdly, He spoke in no uncertain terms of Satan as the Evil One who had to be faced, fought against, and overcome.

Fourthly, He practically condemned sin by living a sinless life. He set an example of perfect holiness. His life shows what a true human life ought to be and can be when absolutely under the influence of the Holy Spirit, both in relation to God and to man.

Fifthly, He restated the grand doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. He enlarged on the sympathy of God with lost sinners, and dwelt on His readiness to help the helpless. He portrayed God as one who took pleasure in giving and in forgiving, and whose fatherly nature prompted Him to take the initiative in welcoming His erring children back to Himself.

IV. *Christ's Teaching about His Atoning Work.*—We must look in the next place at some special utterances of Christ which prepared the way for the thing which

He was about to do, and which illustrate the wonderful adjustment of means to ends in the Lord's atoning work, as in all other departments of God's operations. A study of them will serve to obviate many theoretical difficulties which we might at first feel in respect to this marvellous intervention in the affairs of man.

The following are the most notable passages bearing on the subject in the Gospels:—

“I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep” (John x. 11).

“The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45).

“My blood is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. xxvi. 28).

“I give My flesh for the life of the world” (John vi. 51).

“The Son of Man must be lifted up: that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John iii. 14, 15).

“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John xii. 24).

With these passages must be taken a series of predictive utterances, some private and some public, from Matthew xvi. onwards, indicating the things which were to happen to Him by the hands of sinful men, in accordance with the plan unfolded in the Old Testament.

These verses point to the Death of Christ as a voluntary and deliberate act of self-sacrifice. They tell us that His death was necessary in order that

certain results should be obtained. Even the mode of death, the being lifted up on the Cross, was necessary. Death is regarded throughout the Bible as the consequence and penalty of sin ; and in order that sin might be remitted death must be tasted by the Prince of Life. Blood signifies the life, and the shedding of blood means the giving up or taking away of life. Perhaps some teachers and hymn-writers have taken a too materialistic view of the word "blood" as it occurs in connection with our Lord's death. Others, including Bishop Westcott and Dr. Milligan, in correcting this error, have been in danger of throwing into the shade the great fact, that whilst the sacrifice of Christ was a living sacrifice, yet it was also essentially a giving up of His life. The Lord brought pardon and redemption and life, not by His living, but by His dying. This is plainly taught in the passages cited above. So says St. Paul twice over, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sin" (Eph. i. 7 ; Col. i. 14) ; and so St. John says, "The blood [*i.e.* the voluntary blood-shedding] of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). St. Peter also, who was once shocked at the idea of the Lord's laying down His life, understood it afterwards, and said, "Ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. i. 18, 19).

Whilst, however, the blood-shedding of Christ was voluntary, and so sacrificial, it was not wrought by Himself, but by the hands of sinful men. He was led

as a lamb to the slaughter. He did not shed His own blood, or take away His own life, or fasten Himself to the Cross. There is the passive side as well as the active to be considered.

Again, although it was necessary that the Lord should die, it was by no means needful that He should remain among the dead. The Lord was no martyr to His convictions, as John the Baptist and St. Stephen were. He tasted death. He compares the case again and again to that of Jonah, who was (typically) buried for three days and nights. He hardly ever referred to His coming death, except as a necessary and terrible incident in His mission, to be followed very shortly afterwards by His resurrection ; and this resurrection was not a recall to the old life of humiliation, which would have passed away for ever, but was an advance into a life of glorification. In respect of His risen condition He is the type and the first-fruits of His people's resurrection. Thus the death of Christ, and the act of self-sacrifice by which He incurred it, must be regarded as absolutely unique.

Once more, if we consult the various passages referred to, we shall find that the self-sacrifice of Christ was lovingly undertaken, because it was the Father's will, and because—being such—it was laid down in the Old Testament programme. All that was written had to be accomplished. Here a little and there a little, the Spirit of Christ that breathed in the Prophets caused them to give utterance to certain thoughts which find their one and only fulfilment in the Lord's crucifixion.

We must now look for a moment at the solemn event itself.

V. *Christ's Crucifixion*.—At last the Day came. The Paschal Feast was held, and a new rite was ordained to keep in everlasting remembrance the truth that the Lord's body was given and His blood shed for the benefit of mankind. Then followed the strange scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is evident that our Lord was facing something more terrible and hateful than ordinary death—something which His human nature shrank from and resented. But if it *must* be borne it *should* be borne, because in that case it was clearly the Father's will. Here lies the force of the sacrificial idea. Let us pass over the series of evil things done by the Jewish clergy and men of letters, the heads of Church or State, all of which were ingredients in the cup the Lord had to drink. And now we come to the Cross. This was the vital moment of intervention, when Sin was borne and Death tasted.

“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29).

“The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. liii. 6).

“Thus it must be” (Matt. xxvi. 54).

“Thy will be done” (Matt. xxvi. 42).

It is at this stage that the accounts of the Evangelists are most graphic, most detailed, most self-restrained. They just tell the tale and repress their own feelings. We get from their pages a strong



and vivid picture of the whole scene. We see the Saviour passive to the outward eye, but active in the truest sense, yielding to the meanness and brutality of Jew and Roman, yet watchful over the interests of His disciples and of His own mother, cheering the penitent thief with bright words of assurance, mentally surveying the Scriptural predictions till all were accomplished, bowed down under the burden of the world's sin till no words could express His condition but those of the 22nd Psalm, and at length committing His Spirit to His Father's hands in the act of Death.

VI. *Some Difficulties Considered.*—Before considering the meaning or interpretation of this sublime transaction, we must look for a moment at three difficulties which occur to many of us as we think the matter over. The first difficulty is owing to the comparative littleness of man. Was it worth God's while to give His only begotten Son to suffer death upon the Cross for such insignificant creatures? The world is a tiny speck amidst the universe of stars. What is man that so strange and great a thing should be done for him? One would think that the interests of sun, moon, and stars, and all their inhabitants, must be at stake before such events as the Incarnation and Crucifixion could be contemplated. Some such idea seems to have been in the minds of the sacred writers when they ask the question, "What is man?"

We cannot answer this difficulty fully. It may be

that man is really in a unique position, being on the border-land between the animal and the spirit-world, and that consequently it was essential to the Divine plan and order of creation as a whole that this staggering effort should be made. At any rate we rejoice in the fact that we have received this blessing from God. Though we are only children at present, and are unable to solve all the problems in nature and in grace, we cling to Him who endured the Cross, for He satisfies all our needs and turns our darkness into light.

Another difficulty must be mentioned. If God's nature and property is to forgive, why should He not do it straight off without the elaborate and agonising process which the Biblical doctrine of the Atonement involves? The objection is a purely theoretical one, and may best be answered by an appeal to facts. God's mind is expressed in His actions: some of these are direct; others are wrought through agencies which He dictates, orders, inspires, or overrules. This is made clear to us by the Scriptures, one of the uses of which is to enable us to understand the ways of God. Hence it is natural that forgiveness should express itself in action. Moreover, the Divine Being has many attributes, and occupies a complex position with regard to man. Accordingly, the publication of an edict of universal forgiveness for all sin may not be quite so simple an affair as we imagine. Besides, what would forgiveness be if it stood alone? Would the proclamation of a free and costless pardon be

equal in moral weight to the message from the Cross? Would it affect that moral and spiritual change in human dispositions which is brought about by the Crucifixion? At any rate we are sure that if the sacrifice could have been dispensed with it would not have been ordered. Human sin is evidently a more serious and terrible thing than we sometimes think.

A third objection is frequently expressed in such words as these: "The whole idea of propitiation is heathenish, or at best Jewish." It may be answered that even heathenism, in spite of all its darkness and distortions, may contain some rudimentary elements of truth. The case of the Jew, however, needs to be more fully looked at. Undoubtedly the doctrine of Redemption has a strongly Jewish aspect and colouring. Some passages in the New Testament lead us to believe that the particular death which Jesus died was specially adapted to the needs of Israel, as under the Law of Moses. Christ was made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law (Gal. iv. 4, 5). He redeemed men from the curse of the Mosaic Law, being made a curse for them when He was hanged on a tree (Gal. iii. 10, 13). His blood was shed for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the First Covenant (Heb. ix. 15).

It is vain to speculate as to what other way of redemption might have been carried out, if there had been no Israelites and no Mosaic Law, or if the Son of God had come abruptly on the human scene without any preparation being made for Him in history, type, and prophecy. We have to deal with facts.

Israel's institutions claim to be Divine, and they are to a large extent typical and anticipatory. This is the case with the whole doctrine of blood-shedding and sacrifice which is so often referred to in the New Testament. We find in the older Scriptures again and again that the blood represents the life; that blood-shedding means taking away life; that blood-presentation means the offering of life; that blood-sprinkling means the personal appropriation of the offered life. But all propitiatory offerings of the lower for the higher were necessarily imperfect. When we turn to the 40th Psalm, we find that the four most notable classes of offering in the Law—the burnt-offering, the meat-offering, the sin-offering, and the sacrificial feast—are put aside; they are all incomplete and unsatisfactory, being contrasts rather than images of the true offering. Then, reading the psalm in the light of the New Testament, we find that Christ takes their place and comes to do His Father's will (see Heb. x. 1-10). This Will He yielded to in the Garden and accomplished on the Cross. Thus we have passed from the Jewish shadow to the spiritual substance.

VII. *The Meaning of the Crucifixion.*—The work of Christ on the Cross may be regarded as a perfect example of self-sacrifice, and a complete manifestation of God's hatred of sin and love for the sinner. It is sometimes spoken of as if it were merely a supreme act of martyrdom, or as a wonderful deed of heroism intended to ennoble the mind and rouse the enthusiasm

of the race. But it would effect neither the one nor the other if it did not primarily accomplish some specific end. If it were a prodigal and gratuitous act, dictated by God as an object-lesson for the world, it would simply be shocking to the moral sense. What the broken lights of the Old Testament indicate beforehand must needs be accomplished. There was a moral necessity in the matter. It was fitting, becoming, due, in order that the purpose of God towards the race might be carried out. It was adapted to produce the result required; it was adjusted to the whole order of moral government. Moreover, it is capable of being tested by experience. On the Cross Christ became "our peace," not only breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, but reconciling both unto God (Eph. ii. 13-18). Sin in all its aspects was dealt with there. God's hostility to sin was exhibited in the bitterness of the cup which His Son had to drink. But in the drinking of it Christ became the medium of reconciliation, making it possible for God's fatherly Spirit to flow forth into our hearts. Christ crucified becomes the antitype of the blood-stained mercy-seat, and so the guarantee, the means, the security, of man's pardon and acceptance, and justifies God in forgiving him and receiving him to Himself for ever (see Rom. iii. 24-26). The passages here referred to, and others which may be read alongside of them, teach that the severance between God and man, caused by sin, is done away with primarily on God's part, and that He took the initiative, and that the



sacrifice of the Incarnate Son on the Cross may be regarded as a "deed" of forgiveness. Here was the first great step of reconciliation. All difficulty is removed so far as God is concerned. Then man's step has to be taken towards God. Here again Christ is the medium. Ambassadors for Christ beseech men to look at Him and realise the deed done for them. When they do so, this is faith; and if this faith is a real one, it carries with it repentance; and by these double doors they enter into peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 1, 2).

VIII. *Atonement Representative and Vicarious.*—Atonement or propitiation, according to the meaning and usage of the Hebrew term which stands for it, signifies shelter. It does not point to our work, but to God's. He is the shelterer. It is something done *for* us, that something else may be done *in* us and *by* us (see Rom. viii. 3, 4). The atoning medium is Christ, the Son of God; and what He did and bore is regarded in Scripture both as representative and as vicarious. Four Greek prepositions are used in the New Testament to illustrate the effect of Christ's death:—

(i) *Διά*, because of, *e.g.* in Rom. iv. 25 He was "delivered up *because of* our offences," *i.e.* because we had offended.

(ii) *Περί*, for, concerning, or in respect to, *e.g.* in

Rom. viii. 3, "God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and *for* sin," *i.e.* as a sin-offering.

(iii) Ὑπέρ, in behalf of, *e.g.* 2 Cor. v. 15, "One died *in behalf of* all," *i.e.* with a view of saving all from death.

(iv) Ἀντί, instead of, *e.g.* Matt. xx. 28, "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom *instead of* many."

In one passage (1 Tim. ii. 6) we find that ὑπέρ and ἀντί are combined, *viz.* in the expression, "A ransom [literally, a *vicarious* ransom] *for* all."

There are also Hebrew prepositions in the Old Testament which, though not so numerous, fairly illustrate these distinctions.\*

It is quite clear that Christ's sacrifice infinitely exceeded all the old types and shadows, in that it was (*a*) voluntary and deliberate, (*b*) wrought by the higher for the lower, and (*c*) with a full consciousness of what was needed and aimed at by the Father who planned it; so that the essence of it was deliberate submission to an accursed death, in loving conformity with the Supreme Mind, with the object of restoring a lost race.

The idea of representation, with which we English are so familiar, runs through Scripture. The king represented the people; so did the priest; so did the elders; so did the sacrifices. David, as champion, was the nation's representative. The kinsman who redeemed the oppressed represented his relative, and so had the right to redeem.

\* See *Old Testament Synonyms* (Nisbet).

The idea of substitution was also stamped upon the Israelitish system, and is still common enough amongst ourselves. It may take the form of vicarious service or of vicarious suffering. In its simplest form it marks natural succession, as when a king reigns in the stead of his father. But one man may act instead of another in many ways, *e.g.* in military service, in the payment of debts, and in the undertaking of responsibility. One man may offer to do what another is unequal or unworthy or unwilling to do. Thus the one is shielded from toil or from penalty by the action of another.

Though substitution or vicarious action means acting or suffering both in the interests of another and instead of him, it does not necessarily imply that the action or suffering is *identical* with what the other party would have gone through if no one had intervened; but it must at least be *equivalent*, and so satisfactory in the eye of the law or of morality.

Thus a shepherd watches over his sheep, defends them, beats off wolves and robbers, risks his life in doing so, but only lays it down if this extreme sacrifice is absolutely necessary.

A man plunges into the water to save another from drowning. He succeeds. But he does not necessarily or intentionally drown himself in the other's stead. He substitutes his skilled service for another's vain struggles, and thus saves the lost.

Is it the case that Christ did and suffered exactly what we must otherwise have done or suffered? It is not so put in Scripture. He became the Son of Man

as well as the Son of God that He might take His position as our representative. He deliberately submitted as our substitute to a certain course which culminated in death, and that the death of the Cross. He thus carried out the Divine plan, and justified God in dealing with us in a way from which He was otherwise debarred. Sin was laid on Him that it might not be imputed to us. The failure of the race was laid on Him who knew not what failure was. He made Himself responsible for us, and bore the consequences of sin in their most extreme form (see 2 Cor. v. 14-21). This is the teaching of Scripture on Christ's substitution, and it is so set forth by such writers as Archbishop Magee (the elder), Dr. Dale, and others.

The strong and varied expressions in the New Testament are so worded as to be adapted to many minds, but they are not all equally intelligible and acceptable to every one of us. Probably, as we see more of our own defective nature and of the hateful-ness of sin in God's sight, we shall more fully value the very strongest of them.

Perhaps we may put the case of the Lord's sin-bearing thus:—

The things which sinful men did against Christ, when they insulted, wounded, and crucified Him, were taken and borne by Him as representing all sin done against God. In this sense they were representative. The men who inflicted them were also regarded by Him as representing all nations. He submitted to all that was thus laid upon Him deliberately and willingly;

He bore it in a sacrificial sense, through the eternal Spirit (Heb. ix. 14); and thus by one act, course, or process of obedience, He overcame, undid, destroyed, the evil which had come about through the devices of the Evil One and through the fall of our first parents.

IX. *Christ's Atoning Work Objective and Subjective.*  
—We have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ has overcome evil with good, and has undone the works of the Devil by the sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross. This He did in the interests of the whole world, and in accordance with the wise counsel of the eternal Father. But the question is sometimes asked whether the Atonement is objective or subjective. If it were only subjective, it could only affect those human beings who hear of it. But if it is also objective, then it must be intended to produce some effect on the relations between God and man generally. The wording of Scripture inclines us to believe that it is both. It is a revelation both of the hatefulness of sin and of the depth of the Divine love and pity. Sin was positively dealt with by being endured in its extreme form. God is now faithful and just to forgive sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is not that man has appeased God, but that God in Christ has made sin forgivable. The blood-shedding of Christ has ratified the New Covenant or Dispensation. So far we are compelled to say that the Atonement is an objective fact affecting the Divine course, independent of the faith of those who should take it in. It was accomplished before any one



believed in it. It was objective before it could become subjective.

Still it *is* subjective. Whilst the death of Christ broke down the barrier between God and man which sin had set up, and made it possible for God's grace to flow freely, it also constitutes the strongest appeal to man's heart and conscience. Practically it may be said that in forgiving the debt God imposes a new obligation on the forgiven one, and this obligation we gladly accept if we really believe in Christ. And so the redeeming love of God becomes the spring of a reconciled and consecrated life.

The Christian having realised the sinfulness of his own nature, and having joyfully accepted the message of Divine mercy through Christ, enlists as a soldier under the banner of the Crucified One; fights manfully against sin, the world, and the Devil; becomes a new man—a man of faith and hope and love; walks by the power of the Holy Spirit in the footsteps of his Master; and looks forward to the fulfilment of the grand promise of the Lord's second coming. His indifference, enmity, and alienation have melted away under the sunny influence of the Gospel. By faith he appropriates the grace that is in Christ, and feasts upon the heavenly food, whether in private meditation or in sacramental participation. To him to live is Christ. "Christ *in* us" springs out of "Christ *for* us."

There is nothing to boast of in all this. It is simply the work of the Spirit of Christ in our hearts, enabling us to die to sin and live to righteousness.

We recur to the original type and idea of manhood which was embodied in Christ, sharing His feelings, aims, sympathies, sufferings, and (hereafter) His resurrection.

This is the working philosophy of the Atonement. It *does* work. The enemy is conquered. The lower is subordinated to the higher. The seeds of Gospel truth bring forth life and love and victory over self. The marks of sin are not yet obliterated, nor the tendency to sin eradicated; but if we are really Christ's, the Spirit's conquering force has penetrated our being. Daily we put off the old Adam and put on the new. And when the great end comes, we shall ascribe the victory, not to our own poor efforts, but to the atoning blood of the Lamb.

R. B. GIRDLESTONE.

## X.

### Temptation.

PERHAPS I ought to apologise in choosing, as a subject for a lecture, such an old and well-worn theme, that commonplace of sermons, more suited to a preacher than a lecturer—*temptation*. This is no question of the day, as we generally account such questions—no subject of political interest or burning controversy. And yet I do not feel inclined to apologise ; I do not regret having chosen such a subject. I feel that in the deepest and truest sense temptation is a subject of this day and every day ; and that if by God's help I could help any of you to have a truer estimate of what it means, and how it should be understood, resisted, and brought into life, I should be doing a solid piece of work, and adding something to the great cause of God, which is being contested in the conflict which is ceaselessly going on between right and wrong.

Now, I suppose that every one in this congregation has some views of his own on this subject of temptation. It is a subject which, if in the least we mean what we say, every Christian man must often be

thinking about ; for every time he says the Lord's Prayer, he says to God, "Lead us not into temptation." Do not put me in a position in which I shall be tried, do not drive me by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ; I feel my weakness, and I would avoid the encounter.

And yet temptation is that rough borderland between right and wrong from which Satan snatches so many of his victims, who are simply frightened into his clutches, and, like lookers-on in a street brawl, suffer themselves to be swept away as accomplices, when in reality they had only been indifferent spectators.

I shall hope, therefore, if I can, to show you that temptation is no unexplored land, no unmeaning commonplace of religious language, but that it is a factor of a very important kind in the formation of character ; and that as, in the delicate and beautiful process of china ornamentation such as you see carried to perfection in the Midland counties, the most delicate manipulation of form and the most exquisite beauty of colour are of no use without the firing, in which sometimes the labour of days and the product of exquisite skill are ruined by the severity of the process, from which emerges the finished beauty of other works of art—so temptation has a definite part to play, as I said, in the formation of character.

And at this stage I should like to be allowed to make four statements : (1) Temptation is by no means unmixed evil ; (2) there is no such thing as irresistible temptation ; (3) temptation is never out of God's hands, and God Himself is bound by

law and binds Himself by promise ; and (4) every temptation as it comes brings its own way of escape.

No, my friends, there is no fatalism in Christianity, no blind irresistible compulsion. Strange to say, those dark hosts of evil, as they scour across the plain, own and must obey the signal of recall, when uttered by the great Commander. Dash and leap and foam as they will in frantic violence of shattered crest, until the very rock quivers at the onslaught, the waves must own the great command, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly, but still Christianity knows no dualism : He that dwelleth on high is mightier.

Temptation, therefore, is clearly not the simple thing which it appears to be ; it is a mystery—a mystery which can be explained and has been explained, and a mystery in which greater strength comes from wider knowledge. We remember our own King Edward III., in the pages of history, looking down from the windmill on the hills round Abbeville, where the Black Prince, fighting below, seemed engulfed by the enemy, and in imminent danger of destruction. We hear him refusing to send any succour to his aid which might withdraw from him the honour of a well-contested victory. His practised eye knew the difference between danger and disaster, and saw in the fierce onslaught an occasion of glory rather than a crisis of despair. It no doubt makes all the difference to feel that we have God at our back, that any temptation, however overwhelming, is accurately measured and calculated



by Him, the faithful God, who will not suffer us to be overpressed, and not only knows the way of escape, but also the issue of glory and victory.

And first of all let us grasp the fact that temptation is part of the regular machinery of discipline which must go on in the world. We shall see presently that temptation and sin are utterly distinct things, which must on no account be confused—that, in the words of an old writer, “it belongs to angels not to feel temptation at all, it belongs to devils to feel temptation and to sin from very wickedness, it belongs to men to feel it and to conquer.” Temptation is *the occasion* out of which are made good or bad actions. Temptation is the order into action, in which bravery or cowardice is developed out of the same material. It is the opportunity to be won or lost; it is the testing which issues in the formation of character; and as such it is impossible to avoid it. Monastic legend tells us of the monk who was so often driven by irritation into violent anger with his fellow-monks that he determined to flee their society and become a hermit; but while thus living quite alone, with only himself to please, he one day dropped his pitcher which he was conveying from the fountain, and burst out into angry exclamations against himself. He could flee his companions, but after all he could not flee himself. Many a father who has known some of the fierce temptations which await his boy at school has wondered whether he could not best avoid them altogether by keeping him at home. Many

are the searchings of heart with which a careful parent sends his child into the wild waves of temptation which riot through the life of this great city. Many a man has shrunk within himself as horrible temptations have come upon him, and he has wondered whether, after all, even his religious professions were not a hollow sham, when vile thoughts, blasphemous thoughts, thoughts almost of murder, and craving for dishonest gain, coursed up and down the chambers of his heart—when evil has knocked at the door, and he has had a terrible impulse to rise up and unbar the gate, which a careful training and long discipline had locked, in order to admit sin. The very presence of the suggestion seemed like an acknowledgment by an evil companion of a familiar house where once he was always sure of a welcome and a refuge for a guilty secret. The bold advent of evil desire seemed like a recognition from an outside quarter of mischief which had made itself visible through cloaks of hypocrisy and invited in evil as a guest. No, it is hard to learn; but if we would have peace, we must learn that temptation is common to man, that every one must expect it and be prepared for it, and that if the immaculate Lamb of God, who could not sin, was tempted, no one, however guarded, can hope to escape. We must lay firm hold of this, so that we be not carried away by the cunning of Satan. The world is a place of discipline, and we are disciplined by temptation. But also, in view of one of the most perplexing problems of life, it is necessary that we should keep

our understanding clear on this subject. Walk, my friends, this evening down any of the streets you like in the East of this city, and see the children swarming in the road; follow some of them up into the houses where they congregate, without decent accommodation many of them, or chance of refinement or moral culture, born in sin, amidst sinful surroundings, swaddled in vice, and nurtured in infamy. And we are told—and we feel that what we are told is right—that there should at least be an equality of opportunity for every man. Equality of opportunity! What opportunity have they except for a life of vice, to which everything has systematically and carefully led them? Looking at these drinking in wickedness with their mothers' milk, can we say that these temptations are no more than they can bear, and that for them too there is a way of escape, and at least an opportunity equal to that of their more fortunate brethren, brought up in comfort, and sheltered, in early years at all events, from the knowledge of sin?

Certainly, dear friends, it would be terrible to think that in the eyes of Almighty God there were human beings condemned by no fault of their own, but only for lack of opportunity. He Himself, our gracious Lord, has spoken that word of mercy which tells of publicans and harlots going into heaven, as if the conditions of blessing which once actually existed at Capernaum would be reckoned to them in the eyes of Omniscience, who knew that they would have received the opportunity if they had it. We should not neces-

sarily be giving the gutter child its opportunity if we could have taken it from the degradation of the streets and put it in Belgrave Square and sent it to Eton. Solemn as is the responsibility resting upon us all to improve these conditions, and enlarge the opportunities for good in those who are so sadly deficient in them, still in God's sight each one of these souls has its opportunity, each one is tested with temptation no greater than he can bear. To each God is faithful, and to each there is a way of escape. Look at some waste patch in London, where the houses have been pulled down, and the bricks lie in heaps, and piles of refuse are littered about, and man does all he can to add to the squalor and dreariness of the scene. See how quickly God weaves over it all, where men will let Him, the kindly verdure of springing grass and various kinds of flowering plants. We should not have thought that the men in Cæsar's household had an equality of opportunity with other men in the days of St. Paul ; and yet they produced their saints. An inspired epistle which we read continually in the Church has to do with a runaway slave, whom tradition has elevated to be a bishop. From time to time those who know best would be able to tell us of deeds of heroism, self-devotion, and love coming from the outcasts of society—a capacity for deep feeling and tender sympathy, the deeper and the tenderer as coming from those who know the weight of a temptation so great as almost to crush out hope, and a way of escape so small that it seemed hardly visible. No ; God does not allow His omnipotence to be curtailed

by environment, nor His faithfulness to be limited by our want of love. There is temptation for every one ; it is common to man ; but it is controlled, regulated, nicely adjusted, and in each case the way of escape lies open to those who have faith to see it, and it lies through the temptation.

What, then, are the sources of temptation? Do we sufficiently know its origin? Can we accurately gauge its intensity? We should do wrong if, in trying to investigate a subject like this, we were to narrow down our idea of temptation to incitement to evil, coming from an evil quarter. Whatever temptation may mean in our ordinary parlance, evil so soon passes under the guiding and controlling hand of God that, like poisons used to heal, in the pharmacopœia of the skilful physician, temptation to evil becomes speedily a provocation to good. No ; if we are to understand temptation at all, we must widen our outlook.

There are more sources than one of temptation, and the first is a source which we are apt to overlook, and so to lose its significance ; it is none other than God Almighty Himself.

In more than one place God reveals Himself as tempting men. God tempted Abraham by the order to slay his only son. God tempted David to number the people by permitting Satan to suggest it to him. It is a common phenomenon of daily life, if we only knew where to look for it, in which God may be seen tempting men, in His goodness, to goodness, for their good. A temptation which may issue in



evil, if improperly welcomed and impatiently borne, is yet designed to issue in greater strength and fuller development, if honestly and faithfully received—like the charges of gunpowder which test the enduring power of the gun to the uttermost, but are designed to prove its usefulness for the rough purposes of warfare. Joseph and Daniel are tried respectively with the same temptations as those which tried David and St. Peter, but they emerge through degradation and the prison and the fear of death to a greater eminence than they enjoyed before. I need not point out to you that temptations which come from God are no easy things which any one can bear. All that is ordinarily said about temptation applies to them. Listen to the Apostle St. Paul crying out to God to remove the thorn in the flesh, the minister of Satan sent to buffet him: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

See men and women around us snapping under the sharp discipline of God. Here one has plunged into some dissolute habit or some criminal carelessness, and his friends say, "Ah, poor man! he has had great trials lately." He has failed, that is, under the discipline of God. Or we hear of some one who even casts back into the face of God that life which God has given him, because in his despair he has found the burden of life intolerable, and has not been able to see a purpose in life, a gleam of sunshine in the darkness of his cave, and he has died a miserable

suicide. Here, again, is one who has failed utterly, who has allowed himself to be crushed under the weight of the heavy hand with which God has sought to fashion and develop his life. Yet, could they but have seen it, with the trial, coming out of it, there was the way of escape, there was the special grace enabling them to bear it, the special virtue to be developed out of it.

It has been so all through the history of human experience. The sorrows of the world's sin have brought out the Church. The sufferings of the human frame have developed the healing art. Trouble has brought the unexpected store of sympathy. The depth of despair has brought closer the vision of God. Down in the deep pit of misery we have caught a view of the stars even at midday. "Woe unto you that have lost patience [the power of bearing]! and what will ye do when the Lord shall visit you?"

But the most characteristic source of temptation is of course the devil. I believe some affect to believe at the present day that there is no such person. Certainly I am unable to see how any believer in the words and actions of our blessed Lord can have any doubt as to his existence and power. And I would say further, that no one who has in the least struggled to obtain mastery over himself and reach the higher walks of Christianity can doubt for one moment that he has to contend with a person of astounding cunning and power, not an impalpable and impersonal principle of evil. Certainly it is one

of the devil's cleverest devices to persuade people that he does not exist, and he is never more clever than when he is "shamming dead." And we must remember at the outset that it belongs to the jugglery of the accusing angel, known as the devil or slanderer, to try and confuse in our minds attack and defeat, temptation and sin. It is one thing to be tempted, another thing to sin. Before any sin can be set up, three processes must be gone through. First there is the suggestion of evil. Eve receives the invitation to taste of the forbidden fruit; Pilate is importuned to condemn Christ. Here *per se* there is no sin, unless this suggestion has been wilfully and deliberately invited by running into temptation. Then there comes the delight, the acquiescence in the suggestion. Eve sees that the tree is good for food; Pilate sees the danger of a rupture with Tiberius. And here sinfulness is commencing, until at last the will consents. Eve wills to eat; Pilate wills to condemn; and sin is formed, according to the strong statement of St. James, pregnant with death. Therefore here once more let us welcome this blessed truth, that every temptation, if we do not wilfully bring it on ourselves, is a temptation to good as well as to evil. It is an occasion, an engagement with the enemy, out of which emerge equally the hero and the coward.

Now, as time presses, let us study some of the regions in which Satan's temptations come upon us. We may be sure that we shall find them in the example of the temptation of our blessed Lord,

which was no doubt Satan's masterpiece, the model on which he founds many more of his attacks. And note first that he attacks Him in the region of the appetite. Here he nearly always begins, and has seldom to go any further. He hangs about schools and nurseries and young life, and tries to enslave the Christian soul, while yet a child, to his service.

The appetite—this is the point where Satan is riding rough-shod over the lives of hundreds and thousands of human beings. I have seen the agony of an awakened soul again and again trying to throw off the vile slavery of a youthful sin riveted by Satan. Think, dear friends, of the terrible condition of our streets, the coarse animalism of our villages. Is this what our men and women were meant to be? Is this lovely? Is this noble? Is this life? When are we going to take up the battle vigorously and in earnest against the slave-trade of lust which Satan binds upon this nation through the temptation of appetite? Impurity is the open sore of the world.

Listen to the hideous sophistry with which he propagates his deadly snares. "It is, after all, human nature," he says, with a pretended tenderness and cynical contempt for our weakness; "you cannot avoid it. As soon as appetite wakes up it must be satisfied. If it were not meant to be satisfied, it would not have been implanted." Here, if I mistake not, are two very subtle and dangerous arguments, which I should like briefly to touch upon.

First, as regards nature. There is no term more cruelly abused than this. "It is not nature blindly to

follow appetite. In the lower animal instinct and passion are the same thing. And whatever he does, he obeys a fated impulsion which governs him and keeps him in the sphere where God has placed him. It is not so with man; gifted, it is true, with the instinct of passion, inasmuch as bound to a body and subject thereby to the yoke of things sensible, he raises himself up to God by the light of reason; and in this faculty, whereby he can look out so far and so high, he has a point of support against the claims of servitude." No; nature in man is not a blind following of the passions. Man is not regulated by instinct, like one of the lower animals. He has not the check which there is in instinct. Man ages ago elected to manage himself, to know good and evil from without; and having made this choice, if he would be natural, a man must regulate his passion by reason; if not, the result is not a natural state, but a complete upset of all nature, eventually ending in disintegration and death, as may be seen in any drunkard or sensualist. To follow nature for a man is to exercise self-control, to be guided by reason as a lower animal is guided by instinct.

As to the second plea—that an appetite given was meant to be satisfied. This is difficult to discuss. It is easier to see the fallacy than to explain it, especially in such a subject. I would only say that the appetites appear to have been given to us as a means to an end. Directly these appetites are followed as ends in themselves or apart from their designed ends they are wrong. Every one



shudders with horror at the description of the Roman emperors eating for eating's sake, and making themselves sick that they might eat again. So with other appetites. There is only one legitimate satisfaction of them, which is safeguarded by the law of marriage. To act in any other way is as degrading and horrible, even more so than the instance mentioned above. An appetite unsatisfied does not diminish from the completeness of life. An appetite held in check and reserved for its proper purpose leaves a man stronger and more fast in his manhood. It is an appetite dissipated and ruined until it overmasters the will which overthrows the balance and enslaves the man. No; at least we will resist this accursed sophistry; on any showing grace is stronger than nature, reason than instinct, and man is higher than a brute.

Much need also is there that here we should resist the *propaganda* of evil which under the alluring name of art or literature goes on all around us. Let us take as our motto in this the glorious words of St. Paul: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, 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."

Besides the temptation through the appetite, we know that Satan also approaches through what we call the soul—*i.e.* the inner principle of life. He tampers with the policy, the aim, the motive of life,

by means of a view from a high mountain. Surely no one can resist a beautiful world like this! All this idea of the cross and self-denial is wrong. This is not such a bad world after all, if men knew how to manipulate it. A view! What a deceiving thing it is as one looks out upon it, so mellowed by distance, so rounded off, so suggestive! The view of a vast plain, with its towns and villages—how miasma and blight and bog and stunted growth only lend so much beauty of dancing mist or striking shape or brilliant colour! The towns and villages merely fall into the lines of the perspective, and the hideous sights and sounds of woe are all swallowed up in the blurring chasm of distance. A view! The young man entering on life stands at his doorstep, and sees rolling before him the carriages of the wealthy, and is altogether upset by the view of riches, and enters on his work a discontented man with a false aim; or he gazes at the life of successful business firmly rooted and grounded on the earth, with its houses and its resources and its power over the world, and he too is tempted to fall down and worship Satan and say, "Give me this power."

We must remember that besides appetite, known as the temptation of the flesh, we have to deal with a subtle danger known as "the world," a sort of influence, a mist which gathers with great rapidity and dense volume out of life, confusing its direction and perverting its objective. It is an influence which mounts up from humanity, gathered thick

over history, passed upwards in dense volume from the careless lives of men, rolling in heavy vapour over creatures that appeal to the appetite, so thick that it would seem as if some only lived to eat and drink and be comfortable. It smooths out the distances in religion and obliterates the objects of faith. And this produces one never-altering result in body, soul, or spirit: softness, easiness, comfort—no stern, unflinching morality, no ascetic rules. The world-religion, the world-morality, the world-ideals, we know what they mean—so that no one can let himself go, so to speak, in the world. The most valuable, the most healthy surroundings, as they appear may suddenly develop the world-mist, which confuses and stupefies our very books, society, science, religion itself, and religious influences. While we get good out of the world for all sorts of purposes, at the same time we have to be always on our guard against this tarnishing mist. Even while we are taking in food for the machinery of life, the world with its feasting and luxury may swoop down and injure our integrity. We must be vigorous and watchful even here with fasting and abstinence, so unhealthy is the world. While we satisfy our sense of beauty in art or music, again we are conscious that we cannot let ourselves go. While we carry out the end of life to which God has called us, once more we dare not let ourselves go. It is a dangerous and unhealthy atmosphere to which Satan tempts us absolutely to commit ourselves; and like the famous Italian

grotto, it strikes with its mephitic vapour all that moves close to the surface, while it spares those who keep themselves above it. Ah, my friends, never close, I beseech you, with this offer of success which Satan offers you! He is asking us to add up the sum-total of our life, while leaving out the top line. He is asking us to part with our eternal inheritance at the price of the gratification of a few years. He is asking us to sell our birthright for a mess of pottage.

There is but little time in which to consider Satan's third method of attack, through the region of the spirit, on the pinnacle of the Temple. Of the many forms of spiritual temptation, I will only pause to instance one: "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down." It is a very subtle temptation to dictate to God how He ought to treat us. Stairs and walking down are much too simple things for God to care for. The Son of God has a right to expect upholding angels and visible intervention; nothing between him and God. It sounds well, but it is really the very highest presumption. It is the claim for exceptional treatment, which is the very essence of satisfied self-complacency. It has been said, "Men have a greater quarrel with God's condescension than with all His other attributes. Men would be Christians without the Sacraments, Christians without a Church, Christians without the Incarnation, Christians without a Revelation." Perhaps this self-complacent presumption has reached its climax in what is triumphantly preached as undenominational religion, in

which, in face of the most precise and definite command, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," we have decided that first this ingredient and then that is indifferent, and wonder at the impotency of a watery residuum to check the growth of juvenile immorality.

Temptation to good comes from God. Temptation to evil comes from Satan. There still remains another source still—there is a temptation which comes from within. There are at least two conditions we know for the spread of disease—an infected air, and an enfeebled constitution. And so in the sin-infected air around us our weak nature is a distinct trial to us. True that at Baptism original sin was washed away, true that God has given us a new nature, but still there remains the weakness—"poor human nature" we call it; and when this fails beneath the assault, where is the means of escape? Its very refinement exposes us to danger. The intellectual faculties which sweep the past and drink in the present and draw down the future; imagination, memory, thought, all exquisitely sensitive, all liable to warp and pollution; the soul with its invincible ambition, the body with its untamable appetites—poor human nature! When the storm falls upon it, how can it bear up? When the assault comes, how can it endure? When the tide of passion rises, how can it escape being overwhelmed? Where is the



escape? It is no hideous passion in Abraham, but his tenderest love of his only son, the vision of a desolate home and a broken heart. How can he obey God, and rise up and slay his son? Daniel, after all, is but human; his whole life had been a struggle against overwhelming odds. How can he submit to degradation and loss and a cruel death? God asks too much; it is more than human nature can bear! Is David deserted of God? Does no sweet impulse sweep across his soul? Does no memory of past victory, no sweet refrain of inspired psalm, no lingering cadence of beauty, no vision of holy love, intervene between him and the tide of passion? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is there even a time when all good seems to drain out of the soul, and leave it bare and lifeless at the mercy of hideous temptations, which trickle into every channel forsaken by the stream of grace, until the waters come in even unto the soul?

Poor human nature!—never too much temptation—God always faithful! A way of escape through the temptation! *Where?* Surely here the way of escape is in drawing on the reserve of strength stored in the soul. Do we not know how a doctor will say, when shock after shock of insidious complications of disease have shaken the sick man's strength to the very foundations, "His splendid constitution saved him"? Does not St. Paul tell his much-loved Timothy, "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands"? Is there not, or should there not be, a reserve of strength within the souls of us all? Holy Baptism is not a picturesque rite,

performed when we were unconscious and unconsenting infants, which has no relation to our stronger and maturer life ; there still exists in all of us who have not quenched it or driven it out a reserve of baptismal grace, an ultimate propensity to good, and a capability of it which years of wilful sin have not been able to eradicate. Confirmation was no mere taking upon ourselves of our baptismal vows, as is sometimes said with strange ignorance of its real meaning ; every Christian is responsible for his moral action as soon as he knows right from wrong, and every child who says his catechism takes his promises on himself then and there. No ; Confirmation was an access of strength coming to us through the Holy Spirit. And it stays there still, welcomed into our souls with all the ardour of youthful enthusiasm, a store of strength, a spiritual reserve in time of need. It is not in vain that we have so often approached the Altar, so often prayed, so often received Absolution, so often heard the Word of God. Look at the perfect man, our Lord Jesus Christ, undergoing the same fierce temptations that assail us, and see Him as it were simply drawing on the supply of His perfect boyhood. With all the strength of the Godhead at His disposal, He laid Satan low with a few texts out of Holy Scripture, such as any Jew might have learnt in his boyhood, or worn in his phylacteries, or bound as a frontlet between his eyes.

In our spiritual gifts we shall always find a reserve of strength, so that even the memory of past grace is a way of escape.

Some may wearily ask with St. Paul that the trial may be taken clean away. God will not promise us this. He promises us powers of endurance and ways of escape. The discipline of character is no easy thing, so that God can effect it without giving us pain. Our salvation, it may be, depends on the sharp sting of temptation. God has a grace of character, a charm of spiritual beauty, which can only be carved and cut out of us by the sharp chisel of suffering which He knows how to inflict. The father of the faithful, the preserver of the life of his brethren, the prophet who sees visions of God, the apostle who aspires to drink His cup and receive His baptism—these are no creations of nature, but of grace. They are made, not born. And grace means discipline, and discipline means suffering. Satan, with his cruel and relentless persecution, is in God's hands the means of forming a character which, without this assault, would have failed in its perfection and have lacked the completion of its discipline. Human nature, so delicate and so tender—we would not part with one of its exquisite susceptibilities—we would not crush it in Stoic contempt, nor mutilate its tenderness, nor suffer it to run riot, in utter indifference to its power to hinder or to help. There somewhere in heaven sits at the right hand of God, dignified for ever by the Incarnation, "poor human nature," superior to all temptation, insensible to all suffering, elevated by union with the Godhead, speaking to us of the privilege which awaits those who can offer their bodies living sacrifices to God, and can glorify God

in their bodies as well as in their spirits, which are God's.

We cannot despise temptation, but we will not be crushed down by it: never too much—never in itself wholly bad—always with its own way of escape. And, dear friends, let us remember this—that as Jesus Christ met temptation with the full force of His Godhead, without any guilty connivance or any treacherous desire or secret consent, as an external discipline and an affront from an enemy outside Himself, so the more we become like Jesus Christ, if we may never despise temptation, at least we shall not be cast down by it; to us, too, it will be external, the hard material of stern discipline, which we receive with submission and resist with confidence.

W. C. E. NEWBOLT.

## XI.

### The Punishment of Sin.

THERE is an hiatus, doubtless, between this lecture and the one which immediately precedes it. Inasmuch as temptation and sin are two distinct things, it would have been more methodical to have treated definitely and scientifically the subject of sin in itself before going on to treat of its punishment. And yet, in the limited time which we have at our disposal, it will perhaps be found that after all sin is best described in its effects ; and that, as in the case of some instrument of destruction, a gun or an explosive compound, the ordinary man will have a better idea of its power by contemplating the shattered target and long range than he would gain by a mere discussion of its mechanism or analysis of its composition ; so after all, in considering the effect of sin, which invariably follows it in the way of punishment, we shall in reality gain as true, perhaps a truer, insight into its nature than if we had deliberately discussed its origin, its rationale, and its nature.

Are we in the least aware of, does the ordinary



man of the world in the smallest degree realise, the tremendous woe and suffering which is directly attributable to sin? The shadow of crime is darkly marked on every civilised community. A prison is the most ordinary outward sign of its existence. Social faults, faults against society, faults which disfigure society, from the uneven or improper division of the means of life, are obvious and sinister. But how many of us stop to trace up the presence of sin, what it is, and what it means, in suffering, horror, and despair, in punishment in the present, in punishment still more dreadful threatened in the future? Listen to the great roar of London, as it rolls up from the docks and the shipping in the East, and hangs over the crowded alleys, and sways and swells round the church steeples, and rattles across from the ceaseless clatter and hum of the streets, here and there a cry dashed up into the air like spray, but underneath one mighty inarticulate roar, as the human machine goes about its work, its worship, its pleasure, and its profit. Ah, dear friends! if we could analyse in some way that mighty voice, we should hear a shrill, sharp wail of agony. Yes, hear it in the boisterous laugh from the painted lips; hear it in the thick utterance of the swinish drunkard; hear it in the wearied tramp of the prisoner tied to the treadmill of pleasure; hear it in the groan of the poor patient in the hospital, the suffering of the little child apparently only born to suffer, in the agonised terror at the approach of death. Sin reigns, armed with a cruel lash, here in London, there in the country,

where all looks so peaceful and innocent. Trace pain, disappointment, anxiety, up far enough, and there sits sin—the terror, the puzzle, the perplexity, the despair of the world.

And if these are the ordinary phenomena which greet any one who is alive to things as they are, this common experience is strangely corroborated by that which professes to be the Word of God. Sin is the pivot on which the whole Bible history turns. The Fall and its consequence, the Atonement, are there represented as the key to the right understanding of all history and all experience. If we look at the statements of Holy Scripture in detail, this fact stands out with equal clearness. Over the Old Testament might be written this text: "Our God is a consuming fire." Punishment, catastrophe, doom, speedy and awful, break out in deluge, plague, exterminating war, and dread expiation. The whole system of Mosaic sacrifice is eloquent of the exhaustion of wrath against sin; while at the same time the impotence of man by himself to shake off guilt is emphasised by the fact, that under the Jewish Law no sacrifice availed for the pardon of wilful sin. All this complicated system was simply available for what we call venial sins, or sins of infirmity. If we come on to the New Testament, the utterances of our Lord Himself are no less terrible. He speaks of a punishment on sin which is "everlasting"; of soul and body being destroyed in hell; of outer darkness, with weeping and gnashing of teeth; of the possibility of a man losing his own soul; of

an undying worm and an undying fire; of Judas the Apostle being in such a desperate state that it were good for him never to have been born; of a resurrection of damnation as well as a resurrection of life; of an eternal sin; of a sin for which no forgiveness is possible. The impression our blessed Lord strove to leave, however much we may dispute about the meaning of words, was surely this—that sin was of such a deadly nature, that if persisted in and not forgiven, it would be punished for ever in a future state with punishments only inadequately to be described in human language.

Is this an over-statement? Is sin a theological nightmare. Was the Fall, if there were a fall, after all a fall upwards? Putting aside the quotations from Bible histories and of Bible words, do the ordinary facts around us bear witness to anything else than misfortune, imprudence, the ordinary effects of progress? Is not the world like a great glacier in the higher Alps, which, as it pushes its way, leaves on either side of it a moraine of unfortunates and failures? Dear friends, I feel confident that an impartial view of the facts forces us to say "No." If the Bible had never reached our hands, an impartial investigator of life would have arrived at the same conclusion, as indeed moralists have done again and again—that there is something wrong with man, that he cannot be left to himself, that the world is full of trouble, and that punishment follows on misdoing.

To narrow this down, I am going to ask you to

consider the punishment which follows sin under certain wide divisions or aspects, that we may the better see how important it is for ourselves and the community at large that we should labour for its suppression or its control.

I. I would ask you, therefore, to consider, first, the loss which is brought about in the world by sin. Professor Ruskin says somewhere, "I do not so much wonder at what people suffer; I often wonder at what they lose." Is there any one of us, dear friends, here to-night who is quite what he might have been? Somewhere in the archives of heaven there is the plan of what we were meant to be. Is it anything resembling what we are? What is the history of that bodily defect, that mental obliquity, that spiritual dulness? Perhaps some tendency we deplore, some weakness which warps our character, may be traced back far into the regions of heredity; and were it not for Holy Baptism, which deals with this, would paralyse our efforts. Look at that young man. A few years ago we remember him strong and vigorous and healthy; it was a pleasure to see him so strong in his vitality, so full of healthy life and enjoyment. And look at him now—the white face, the shrunken limbs, the shaking hands, the listless eye. His fond relations say it is the air of London or too close attention to business which has stamped him with the marks of premature age, and has robbed the bloom from his cheeks and the strength from his limbs. It is nothing of the kind. It is sin—sin which has promised him pleasure, and he has only

found bitterness and decay. Look at another! At the moment all Europe is in suspense at the development of some political complication. The fate of nations is hanging in the scale. Armenians are trembling on the brink of a blood-stained grave. See, he has bought a newspaper; he is scanning it with eager gaze. He cannot wait to get home; he is reading it in the streets. What for? What is he looking at? What is he devouring? He is anxiously endeavouring to ascertain who was the winner in some trumpery race; to see whether he has won a few shillings from a friend who he knows can ill afford to lose them, or whether he has lost an amount which he has no means of paying, and which may perhaps entail the perpetration of a dishonourable action, in order that he may pay what is ironically called a debt of honour. I ask you, is there no loss here? Is there not a sad and tragical loss? Is this all the interest that he has got in life? Is this the food for a mind which was made to know God and the true and the beautiful and the good? Is it nothing to a man that he has so lost his sense of beauty that he can put up with a vulgar picture or a tasteless song? Is it nothing to a man that he has so lost his eager hold on life that he can idle away his time in doing nothing, and waste money on his appetites and energy in working out his own ruin? The old poets have told us of Hercules laying aside his lion's skin and club while he plies the distaff of the queen to whom he was so foolishly attached, while she strikes him with her sandals and chides him



for his uncouth spinning. There is many a hero of God who has thus lost his manhood and disgraced his own honour as he has bowed to the slavery of sin.

The losses of sin! It is a terrible subject, which goes far deeper than we have gone at present. You see a blind man gazing with vacant stare at the glorious beauty of the landscape, and you say, "Poor man! What he has lost!" You see one impassive and unmoved at the sound of splendid music, where the notes ebb and flow in waves of melody about his ears—one who can hear no voice of birds, no voice of man, in the mystery of deafness; and again you say, "Poor man! What he has lost!" But there is a loss of which these are but faint shadows: the loss of God out of life, which begins, it may be, with a deprivation, and is a disquieting pang, which, if it is not arrested, becomes death—which, if persisted in, becomes utter and complete separation from God. There are some sins which more than others have this awful power of eating out the faculties of the soul, until the power of receiving good is gone—the power of loving good things—when sin can settle down without arousing a sense of shame, and beauty appeals to a blurred vision, and love to a dead heart, and honour to a soul which can longer even appreciate it. My friends, if, seeing what you do, you have ever pitied the blind—if, hearing what you do, you have ever pitied the deaf—pity the sinner more for his empty life, for that blank where we see glory, for that dull void where we hear glorious strains. Oh yes, let us pity ourselves: for who has not suffered loss? Listen

to the great dramatist as he opens out the wail of lost innocence—the wail which is going up from thousands this very night :—

Where can I go? where can I go?  
Everywhere woe! woe! woe!

Into my chamber brightly  
Came the early sun's good-morrow;  
On my restless bed unsightly  
I sate up in my sorrow.  
Never was grief like Thine:  
Look down, look down on mine!

II. The punishment of loss which accompanies sin is obvious whenever we pause to think. Let us now consider another punishment which plays a large part in all systems of morality, and is directly dealt with by Christianity. I mean the enfeebling of the will under the tyranny of evil habit, which amounts to a cruel captivity. It is one of the most pathetic things in the world to study the really beautiful systems of ancient morality, in which the moral goodness they sought to attain was of necessity placed on a pedestal as an inaccessible prize of unattainable beauty. The problem which defied, and must of necessity defy, all merely human systems was this: What was to be done to strengthen the will? "*Vide meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor*" ("I see the better and approve, I follow the worse"). We should make a great mistake if we believed all sinners to be wilful sinners, and to sin from sheer malignity. There are hundreds and thousands who are victims to their sin who are yet dying to be free from its

loathsome captivity,—hundreds of drunkards who would be temperate to-morrow if they could ; hundreds now victims to their lusts who would be pure to-morrow if they could ; hundreds who would give up betting and gambling and swearing if they could. There is a terrible force within called habit, which meets the captive struggling to be free as he starts forth with good resolution, determined to turn over a new leaf and be his own master. Habit meets him and bars the way. Habit says to him, “ So you have determined to alter your ways, but you have not asked my consent, and I forbid it. For years you have followed my guidance and obeyed my call. When you were a child, and experience first spoke to you, it was yours to accept or refuse. You accepted, and again you accepted. I am habit ; you have grown under my power ; you are shaped by my direction : I refuse to let you go.” Habit is a strong power which has to be reckoned with, and the chains of habit are a cruel bondage. Habit is one of the strongest moral forces in the world. Look at that slender twig, so supple and so slight, shooting up erect into the air ; let it be bent ever so little, day by day, in one direction, and gradually it will assume the permanent twist which is the angle of its growth. Look at the trees with their crested heads violently turned back, when the winds off the sea have permanently bent them in one direction. Habit is a force which every sinner has to reckon with, and which he does not always find it easy to dismiss. It is an awful thing when a man feels he cannot stop ;

there is no feeling so helpless as that of being run away with. The will utters a feeble voice, and the passions only mock. Habit winds its coils tighter and tighter round him like a python, and he feels his life contracting in its cruel folds. It was only one or two acts of dishonesty, but he must go on ; it was only once or twice that he stayed away from church, but he must go on ; it was only one or two acts of intemperance, but he must go on. There he goes, swimming with the tide ; the hard struggle against the stream has given way to delicious motion, unretarded by opposition. But already the roar of the cataract is in his ears ; the smooth, cruel current hurls him on. He will turn and get back. Alas ! he cannot. He is in the grip of habit ; he is swept on in the agony of an impotent struggle. Unless God intervenes, he perishes with his freedom maimed. He goes into the other world as one who has tried and failed to save himself.

Is God, then, not omnipotent ? Is there a power which can defy Him—which, when He has called, can interpose a barrier ? No. God is omnipotent, but man is not. It is here that Christianity asserts its pre-eminent power. All the efforts of what is known as grace are directed to strengthen the will in man. Man is not to be saved from himself, in spite of himself, but by God, with his own consent and co-operation. And it is here that so many make a fatal mistake in dealing with sin. They think the escape from it to be a matter of resolution. Perhaps a little recreation in the midst of too hard

conditions, purer air, better surroundings, fresh scenes, a resolution, a pledge—all these may be excellent things in their way, but not enough. Habit still binds as a fetter when the air is purer and the surroundings cleaner. Habit has an evil knack of tearing up the most carefully written pledge. It is habit that must be dealt with. It is not merely a matter of turning over a new leaf and beginning again. There must be the definite repentance for the past, the reckoning with God. Habit is, then, largely dependent on supernatural help, riveted by the devil, and kept in its place by carefully adjusted temptation. And habit must be eradicated by grace. God must be invited in—Christ, the deliverer.

And so the great preliminary to the release from habit must be a readjustment of the soul's relations with Christ. All those years of bondage cannot be as if they had never been. All the wilful acquiescence in sin has not left the soul so untouched by its influence that it can be thrown off by an impulse and banished by a wish. There must be the definite unwinding of the past by a true and earnest repentance, which, carefully and deliberately, at whatever pain, untwists each link of the ponderous chain, with a sorrow which mourns the indignity of the wasted life, with a particular and careful confession of each wrong act, and with a definite purpose of amendment. Then the voice of Christ can speak with authority, which can cast away the fetters of habit and start the sinner free. "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." If once we can hear that



message of forgiveness, the captive is free, and the journey back to righteousness and peace, however long and however difficult, has at least the assurance of success. Henceforth, should he trip and fall, it is but a single sin, which may be remedied and repaired. The chain of habit, woven out of its long series of wilful acts, is broken by the grace and power of God.

This is a freedom which every one should aim at. It is a perilous thing when the will gives its order and is not obeyed. It may be in little things, but obedience in little things is the test of discipline, and prepares the way for victory at a great crisis. If we will to do anything great or small within our own lives, our will must be obeyed. We cannot keep the will as a magistrate to read the Riot Act when things have proceeded to extremities. It is a perilous thing if there should be any one part of our composite being which is a kind of Alsatia, where the king's writ has no chance of being executed. Our composite life is too precious a thing that we should allow, as it were, some stray squatter to enclose large parts over which we have no control, and which minister nothing to the efficiency and well-being of our life. If we allow any habit to get out of control and out of reach of the orders of the imperial will, we are setting up a source of weakness which will do us an evil turn. The fairy story of the princess who was kept in prison by an interminable series of cobwebs which exhausted her patience to break through is but a parable of

the soul which has allowed itself to be confined by the tyranny of habits which it has proved too weak to break down. There are some habits which the religion of Jesus Christ alone has the power to overcome ; there are some tyrannies which His grace alone can dissolve. And if we ask those who have given themselves up to His grace and love, they will tell us that the promised emancipation has all come true. The angel faces which cheered the dawn of innocence are coming back again. The wages of sin are no longer being paid ; the chains of habit are being broken away. Christ the consoler is also Christ the deliverer. The snare is broken, and we are delivered.

III. A third punishment which awaits sin is sharp and keen sorrow, which is its inevitable accompaniment. Perhaps this is one of the things that we are most slow to grasp—that sin, all sin, I had almost said every mistake, is in the eternal law of God's working linked with its own punishment, which certainly follows. We Christians have brought ourselves to believe that a little sin adds a certain picturesqueness to life, like the decay and the crumbling stones of a mouldering ruin ; that a little acquaintance with the world and its wickedness adds as it were an adulteration which makes our character more suited to the atmosphere in which we have to live ; that God is so merciful that it will almost add a zest to our joy in forgiveness if we bring some real sins underneath the power of His forgiveness. Yes, but every sin is punished, even in the forgiven sinner. Every sin

leaves its mark and very often its weakness on life. A man is never just the same as if he had never sinned. I would give two instances—one out of Holy Scripture, and one out of ordinary experience. Look at David, what a breakdown it was—he the man after God's own heart, he whose heart had been swept by the breath of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to every ripple of the Divine breath. How the critic sneers at him! How the sceptic mocks at him! Adultery, murder, treachery, deceit! There could hardly be a worse breakdown. And yet how easily God seems to forgive! "The Lord also hath put away thy sin," said Nathan. Compare it with the long penances of later times, it seems almost inadequate. Yes, but my point is, that David, although forgiven, was never the same man afterwards. His punishment lasted to the end of his life. "The sword shall never depart from thy house" was literally true. Death, rebellion, family trouble, political disorder. Trace the punishment, if you will, only in one direction—in the growing insolence of Joab, the captain of his host. The contemptuous disregard of all David's wishes was an outward, visible sign of a shattered dignity which had vanished with his successful sin. The other example is from ordinary life. The most common and the most obviously disgusting form of sin, here in England at all events, is drunkenness. There is no sin which apparently makes a man so swinish and degraded, no sin which is the father of so many other even worse sins, than drunkenness. Now let us suppose a case of a drunkard who

in spite of warning, has followed this vice up to the age of forty. Something he has read, or the grace of God within, appeals to him. He is converted; he is pardoned; God puts away his sin; he never becomes intoxicated again. But does he recover his lost health? Are there not seeds of disease, sometimes more and sometimes less, which are the direct results of his sin, which God does not remove? In his case also it is true the sword never departs from his house. And I have taken only one out of the sheaf of arrows of suffering with which God smites the sinner. If you have ever witnessed it, dear friends, you will not forget it—the agony of shame which sometimes accompanies true repentance. If ever you have seen it, you will never forget it—the agony of hopeless remorse, when the sense of sin, of evil done, of evil the consequences of which have slipped out of control, haunts and scourges the soul into an agony of despairing pain. It has been spoken of in this way, “The human sense of guilt, that awful guardian of our personal identity”; or again, “What would not humanity, age after age, have given to be free from remorse? Yet remorse still stares us in the face, overshadowing our hearts with sadness, and driving its countless victims into madness, suicide, despair, and awful forebodings of the after-world. Men would have exorcised it if they could; but they cannot. And remorse is only a darker name for man’s conviction of his own freewill.” Whenever a man wills to sin, whether he is pardoned or not, he sets in motion a cause which must end in some sort of punishment. The sufferings which sin

inflicts on the sensitive conscience of the servant of God may well make us pause. Punishment goes hand in hand with sin all down the course of life. It is a game of chance, from which no one ever yet has been known to rise up the winner.

IV. And I cannot stop here. God who knows the education which we need has never hesitated to incite us on the one hand by the presence of the joys of heaven, on the other hand to frighten us from evil by the terrors of a future hell. I know that people are rebelling against this now, and claim to be treated as they claim to treat their children—without compulsion. But I cannot read, even if it be true that crime so called is diminishing, that virtue and morality are on the increase. I am afraid that just the contrary is nearer to the truth. Sins are being perpetrated now under an advanced and a refined civilisation of which a pagan would be ashamed. I very much doubt whether mankind can be educated without rewards and punishments as an inducement and a corrective. You cannot educate children without it: the rod expelled from school is brought back in the prison. And we, after all, are children, and God knows best how to treat us. And He has never for one moment shrunk from revealing the sinner's hell. But is this compatible with God's love? What right has God to create a being who He knows will meet with such a dreadful fate? I would answer in some forcible words uttered by a great French preacher, which are well worthy



of our attention: "To say that God has no right to create a being who might misuse His gifts is to say that the wicked are able to destroy God by hindering the exercise of one of His essential attributes. . . . God has not created isolated individuals, or even worlds: He has created one unique world, in which all beings are linked together by relations of mutual dependence and service; and not one of these can be withdrawn without entailing the suffering of all the others. In the human race especially each man contains a posterity in himself whose term is not assignable, and which makes of its generation one united assemblage in which no single member can lose his place without drawing after him the multitude of his descendants. To suppress a single man is to suppress a race; to suppress a wicked man is to suppress a people of just men who may spring from him. For good and evil are entwined together in the changeable course of mankind: a virtuous son succeeds to a bad father, and the ancestor, too, often contemplates in his distant progeny crimes which were to him unknown. Now the glance of God perceiving at once all the succession of life, all the regeneration of good in evil and of evil in good, no destiny appeared solitary to Him; so that in cutting it off from the anticipated book of life He would but cut off a course unworthy to be continued. In His sight Adam, a sinner, included the whole posterity of the saints. To refuse being to him because of his crime, even had that crime never obtained pardon, would have been

to destroy in him all the merits of the human race. . . . I know God ; I love Him ; I hope in Him ; I bless Him in life and death. Why should the fault of one of my ancestors, eternally foreseen by Divine goodness, have intercepted my birth? . . . Why should I have been condemned to nothingness because one of my forefathers abused his existence? . . . God had not to choose between creating or not creating a wicked man, but between creating or not creating generations of good and evil together." We may well leave it to Almighty God to defend His own honour ; and in reality we are no more capable of arraiging the love and tenderness of God than a child the compassion of a surgeon whom he only knows as one who puts him to cruel pain.

But people, I know, cry out against eternity of punishment as in itself repugnant and terrible. We have the Universalists, who tell us that all will be saved at the last ; the believers in conditional immortality, who tell us that immortality is conditional only on goodness, and that the wicked will be destroyed as unworthy of life, not eternally punished ; while others maintain that sin will be ultimately eradicated, and that punishment will of necessity go with it. But, for all that, the penalty of past sin will linger on in the form of an eternal punishment, just as a man may survive an accident, and yet be doomed to pass a so far maimed existence. However this may be, the language used by Christ was evidently language which was meant to convey a sense of the

terrible punishment which awaits sin in the other world. If He could say of Judas, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born," we feel that no light and passing punishment could ever have drawn forth those strong words.

But as it is, if we look at the problem of sin and its punishment as it meets us in this world, if all that we have been saying to-night is in the least true, the punishment of sin here—here in this world—needs explanation, just as much as the punishment of sin which we are led to expect in the next. We have seen that the punishment of sin in this world is everlasting in the sense that it goes on to the very end of the chapter. A repented sin is sometimes punished to the end of life. It is not so inconceivable, therefore, that the punishment of an unrepented sin may last for ever. Again, if we shrink from the severity of punishment, as we conceive it, in the next world, can we say that the punishment inflicted on sin here is mild or even commensurate with the offence as we ordinarily regard human offences? We see sin and its punishment lingering on to generations of innocent children. We see an overmastering temptation, a trifling deflection, a mistake even, most terribly punished. We note the exquisite torture which awaits sins of the flesh, sins of intemperance—the torture of mind and body—and we feel that, if we are to begin to apologise for God, we must begin here—here in this world.

Depend upon it, we shall act wisely if we leave such defence alone, and turn ourselves rather to the

thought that, whatever Christ meant to convey, He certainly meant to convey this—that the punishment of sin is certain, lasting, and terrible. Let us anxiously ask ourselves whether we are preparing for ourselves that terrible loss which, as St. Paul tells us, may even overtake the saved, if they build a flimsy superstructure on the one foundation, Jesus Christ, as they see all that is not holy, all that is not true, destroyed, and they themselves saved, yet so as by fire. Let us take our stand on Calvary, and there weigh the exceeding malice of sin by the extremity of pain endured by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as He hangs upon the tree ; and let us pour out our hearts before Him in the words of the great missionary who, if any one, loved God for His own sake, and was able to follow the guidance of His eye without being held in by bit and bridle of fear and threat :—

My God, I love Thee,—not because  
I hope for heaven thereby,  
Nor yet because who love Thee not  
Are lost eternally.

Thou, O my Jesus, Thou didst me  
Upon the cross embrace ;  
For me didst bear the nails and spear,  
And manifold disgrace,

And griefs and torments numberless,  
And sweat of agony ;  
Yea, death itself,—and all for one  
Who was Thine enemy.

Then why, O blessèd Jesu Christ,  
Should I not love Thee well ?  
Not for the sake of winning heaven,  
Nor of escaping hell ;

Not from the hope of gaining aught,  
Not seeking a reward ;  
But as Thyself hast lovèd me,  
O ever-loving Lord.

So would I love Thee, dearest Lord,  
And in Thy praise will sing,  
Solely because Thou art my God,  
And my most loving King.

W. C. E. NEWBOLT.



## XII.

### The Preparation in History for Christ.

IT is, my friends, the word of the Apostle, that when "the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son." It follows that there was a certain fitness about the time of His coming; and if we can more clearly discern that fitness, it will be one part of His manifold witness to Himself. But further, it is implied that His coming was the end of a course which led up to Him—a course which we may call the preparation for Him; and in this sense I think I may rightly say that the teaching about Christ was evolutionary before evolution. He comes into the world as we have learned to see all living things come into the world, with a process of development behind them. But while in this, if we concede it as true, there is a witness borne to Him, yet at the same time it may suggest a new difficulty to our minds; and that difficulty is just this: if He came at the end of a process, so does the fruit upon the tree, and so too springs the butterfly from the chrysalis. In a word, the preparation, men may think, may have evolved Christ. If so, our task

this evening is to see whether, in the first place, we can, so far as it is allowed to man to trace the ways of God in history, find a marked, real, unmistakable preparation for Christ up to the moment when He came ; and then whether, in the second place, these historical processes which led up to His appearance look as if they could have produced Him.

I. Now, if we ask for the preparation for Christ, we shall of course begin with the fact that Christianity is, as St. Paul said, "of the Jews"—came from the Jews. But though it sprang there, it spread at once through a world which was especially Roman in character ; and had that world not also in some way been prepared, any perfectness of Jewish preparation would not have availed. And thus, you see, we have two quarters in which to test our question : Was there a preparation in Israel ? Was there a preparation in the world at large ?

Parenthetically let me say that if we find this to have been so in that Western world of which we are heirs, then I think modern history and the world to-day show us that we have done enough. For we can see, even more than those who went before us, how much that complex of lands which surround the Mediterranean Sea east and west and north, include all lands to which, so far as we yet know, God has given the destinies of this earth. If, then, we find in this region what we want, this will, provisionally at least, be sufficient for us. Probably not until much later times will men be able to see how those purposes of God which worked through the other

ances of the farther East were to be woven in with the whole.

I say, then, that there are two quarters in which we shall look for the preparation. But there is a difference between the two. It was, it seems, God's will to make a special preparation for the coming of His Son; and the simplest way of showing that to you is just to point to the Old Testament. The Old Testament has been largely compared and contrasted with ancient books of other religions. On such a subject as that you and I have largely to guide ourselves by the opinions of the wise and learned; and I think I may fairly say that the more the Old Testament has been studied, and the more all that is similar in it to any books elsewhere has been traced out, the more has the uniqueness of that sacred library stood out. But beside the judgment of the wise and learned, I think we may appeal to the results. What a marvellous thing it is that that book, that collection of the songs and the histories and the laws and the wisdom of the little people of the Jews, is to-day travelling all over the world, in almost countless languages, everywhere part of the permanent Bible! The place of the Old Testament in our Bible gives, if you reflect upon it, a double witness: it witnesses generally that God made in history preparation for Christ, and more particularly that in Israel that preparation took a form of special character and intensity.

Now, what kind of preparation are we to look for? I think we may rightly look for it in outward and in inward form. By outward form, I mean such things

as the position and condition of the places where He was Himself known, and where His Gospel was first to be preached. If we take that Mediterranean world of which I have spoken, but with rather a narrower sense than that in which I then alluded to it—take it in regard to the lands immediately surrounding the Mediterranean—I do not think we can fail to see how very remarkable was the moment and the epoch at which Christ came. Let us fix our minds on two regions—the first Palestine, and the second that which includes the two peninsulas where sprang respectively the Greek and the Roman civilisations. Now with regard to Palestine we have recently received a great book. *The Geography of the Holy Land*, by Professor George Adam Smith, has brought out afresh what Dean Stanley had shown before—how extraordinarily unique was the land of Palestine, how central, how strangely isolated from other lands, and yet so placed as, when the time came, readily to come into touch with them and be the way of passage from one to another. But if we look across to Greece and Italy, then, I think, the power of geography comes out even more strongly. Look at them, sheltered from the north, which was ever the quarter of danger, by ranges of mountains which kept back their enemies and gave time for civilisation to grow; thrust forth into the sea, of which nations are apt to be afraid unless it woos them, as it did in this case, by penetrating amongst the land in many creeks and gulfs; of temperate and charming climate, in which human life could easily grow, and

yet not be too much enervated and softened, because of the blended influences of mountain and sea,—such was Greece; such, in some respects, was Italy too. And as at times in our own lives the finger of God seems to lay upon us a touch of which we are almost conscious, so I do not think that any one can read ancient history with a reverent and thoughtful mind without seeing that there was something wonderful, something perhaps to which in our own history the defeat of the Great Armada was perhaps parallel, in the repulse of the Persian power, when, humanly speaking, if it had come twenty years earlier, it would have overwhelmed Greece, and in the breakdown of Hannibal's genius, when, humanly speaking again, Rome seemed to have succumbed to it. Thus these two civilisations were wonderfully preserved. They ran into one another, and in the time of Christ there was what we may call the Græco-Roman world. And if we look at that world—the Græco-Roman world—surrounding the Mediterranean, we see the contrast of its then condition with what went before and what came after. Before, it had been broken into a multitude of petty states, with their interests, their politics, perhaps in a degree their dialects and their institutions, all separated from one another. There had been little or no inter-communication except between the nearest neighbours, and that accompanied by jealousy. Nor has there been at any later time a similar unity of organisation, a similar facility of communication, binding together so many centres of civilised life. It was but a few years since



Pompey's suppression of the pirates had made the Mediterranean to be that highway for commerce and travel which the Acts so vividly show it to have been in St. Paul's time. There was now one government, the government of the Empire, over all these lands. There were developed methods of communication—the wonderful Roman roads running down Italy, across the north of Greece, and into Asia Minor. There were no custom-houses and barriers between the different parts of the Empire; there was a common language, or rather two common languages of Greece and Rome, and both were more or less current over the whole.

And so if we compare that region with what it had been, or with what it was for a thousand years after, or even up to the present time—for think of what it is now, how divided and separated!—we shall see how there was, as it were, in history a stage cleared for the appearance of Him who is confessedly its central figure, and a machinery organised for diffusing the tidings and knowledge of Him. That had largely been the work of Rome. Rome had done chiefly, though not entirely, the external work. Hers was the work of power. She is to this day our type of a great organising empire. But if we look for an inward preparation, our thoughts must be drawn at once to Greece; for Rome inherited from Greece all that was most intellectual and cultivated in her own civilisation. To-day, if you go to Rome, you will find the sculptures of the Vatican are largely marble copies of lost Greek originals. It was given to Greece

to be the leaven of progress and movement in the world's history, to be the brain of the ancient world. If I was asked to say in a word what the character of Greek civilisation had been, I think I should say it was man's great experiment at his own perfection, under the three great heads which appeal to us when we think of humanity at its best—liberty, beauty, and wisdom. As to liberty, Milton has taught us that there are two voices which speak for liberty—the voices of the mountains and of the sea ; and Greece had ever both those voices ringing in her ears. And Greek political life, as time went on, was founded, as you remember, upon the great war of liberty—the war of liberation against the impending and materially overwhelming Persian power. The race was one, I suppose—for, after all, we must not make too much of circumstances and environment—the race was one which had from the first upon it a stamp of distinction, and, as sign or part of this, a kind of conscious dignity and self-reliance. Hence liberty in the state and liberty for the individual became more and more the Greek ideal ; and the language of liberty is largely Greek to this day. And then beauty, especially the beauty of the human form—it seems that in this Greece reached a summit. Strange as it may seem, I think artists will tell you that, whilst we may have found out many things, many subtle intricacies, many varied aspects for art to trace, yet for ideal perfection of life and form Greece did what has never else been done. So perfect was that beauty in their own eyes that we cannot wonder that they were tempted to

make gods in their own likeness. So much were their thoughts cast in the mould of beauty, that when we pass across to their moral language we find that still it is as the beauty of the inward life that they treat it. The word for virtue in Greek is the same word that is used to express the excellence and perfection of any instrument or of any art, and the word which we commonly translate "the good" might also be translated "the beautiful." In their wisdom too the Greeks made man, according to the famous sentence, "the measure of all things"; and so far they were on the right track, since, rightly probed, man's own instincts give him the keys of the spiritual knowledge which God meant him to have. Working on these lines, the Greek attained a wonderful height of noble thought. Plato's Idea of Good, invisible and above this world, of which all good things in this world partake, and which lends to them their reality and dignity and value; Aristotle's doctrine that in contemplation of that which is highest and best man attains to his true and perfect happiness,—these are speculations as high as the human spirit, unaided by special revelation of God, and special guidance of the Spirit, has ever reached. Yet, let us observe it well, this experiment of self-perfection ended in failure. St. Paul has taught us, in a tremendous passage at the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, how beauty was degraded by lust in men who were blind to God. The Greek historian Thucydides has traced for us the process, which was not complete in his time, of liberty breaking down through faction and selfishness. Philosophy, high as it

had attained, could not secure itself at that height ; it sank down into a critical questioning that made it devour its own offspring ; and that question of Pilate to the Lord, " What is truth ? " is representative of all the later stages of Greek philosophy, which, though they differ more or less in name and form, are all alike philosophically sceptical. And yet, though these things failed, and their leaf turned sere and dry, yet they remain a deathless possession to the world—a witness of man's true glory and of his ability to attain to it—a standard for all time, won from his own study of himself, by which to try anything that claims to appeal to him and to bring him what he needs. Does it satisfy these upward aspirations and make good these imperfect attainments? You know that saying of St. Paul that the Gospel of Christ was " to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." How apposite that latter word is : " Unto the Greeks "—with their self-reliance, their love of having things clear and perfect, their great confidence in man's own searching and understanding faculties—" foolishness." And you will remember how he completes it : " Unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." That saying carries us on to the other side of our subject—it carries us over to the Jews.

Here again, as in the former case, look first at the outward position, and think how extraordinary was that of the Jews at the time when Christ came. The Roman historian Mommsen, describing the empire of Julius Cæsar, said that it contained three elements :

the Romans, the Greeks, and the Jews. Strange that that little race, despised and disliked, with little or nothing left of national independence, still counts, in the judgment of the modern historian, for the third factor in the greatest power that the ancient world had ever seen—that empire of iron which was to tread down all that came before it! You ask me where were the Jews at that time? Where were they not? The salient feature in their position was that they were everywhere, scattered all over the world, named by the significant name of the “Dispersion.” Read the Acts, and trace how, at point after point, as St. Paul follows the lines of maritime commerce or the lines of the Roman roads, he finds a colony of Jews, with the congregation of its synagogue fringed, as it were, by “worshippers” and friendly Gentiles half converted, and largely influenced, by its teaching and worship. The nation has been pulverised and driven forth all over the world, but it has not lost itself amongst the nations—“not one least grain has fallen to the ground.” It is still a unity, or an entity, as distinct as when it was grouped together on its mountain land of Palestine. It has still in Jerusalem a centre and a point of attachment to which it looks with a devotion unparalleled in any other race, because blent of the double strength of patriotism and faith; it is in the Roman world, and yet not of that world. It was a strange position, but stranger still was the character of the people so placed. Who does not know something of the extraordinary and persistent distinctiveness of the Jew? That national distinctiveness,



which is still amongst us in the modern world, was then at least intimately connected with their religion. An almost idolatrous reverence, carried out into the most elaborate detail, for a stern and imperious Law, served as a hard, strong husk to preserve the kernel of a profound and spiritual faith. What, then, is the importance of this Jewish position? Here again, as in the case of Greece, I think we can clearly trace what the Bishop of Ripon has called "the ministry of great races." The ministry of the Jewish race was plainly, I think, speaking merely as an historical observer, to carry forth over the world the essentials and foundations of a true world-religion,—a faith in God, compared to which all other faiths were pretty and vanishing fancies or else faltering and failing aspirations; a faith in eternal Goodness or Holiness; yes, and a faith in man, as a being in relation to God, the object of His law, made for His obedience, watched over by His care, a spiritual being in the image of Himself. But along with this great faith they carried a conviction, characteristic and unique, that in what God had done for them as a nation He was at work upon something that yet looked for accomplishment. They are distinctively the people of hope. Their hope had got abroad and made itself felt in some vague presentiment. The Roman Suetonius tells us that at that time there had somehow got abroad a rumour in the Eastern lands that some great ruler would arise.

Now you will notice, perhaps, how likely were

these two things—this potential world-religion, and this intense national hope—to clash with one another, so that you will readily understand how the Jews were at one and the same time the most cosmopolitan and the most exclusive of peoples. But now how did this people come to this strange outward position and to this wonderful inward character? We look for the answer, and we find first that they are a people at the end of their history; they have lived through the earlier stages of their childhood, have seen the strength of middle life and the decline of age; they have learned the lessons of these past phases; their national time of glory under Solomon, and in a degree under succeeding monarchs, is long past—they are now a province (or a sub-province under Syria) of the great Roman Empire. But before this and much earlier they had been, by a great catastrophe, really annihilated as a nation. When Nebuchadnezzar carried away the last of the two kingdoms into which Israel was divided, their history as a nation was, according to all precedent and analogy, at an end. But strangely enough there had followed a resurrection; they had risen again (cf. Ezekiel xxxvii.). Such a destruction ordinarily meant ruin: for them it meant ruin, followed by restoration. It meant, in the forming of a nation's character, all that happens to an individual when he passes through one of those great crises in which he appears to be in face of death, when he "has the answer of death in himself," when all seems lost, and then to his amazed and

grateful sight there dawns a day of hope. Again, such a destruction of national life meant ordinarily the destruction of religion. "Where are the gods of Sepharvaim?" That was the characteristic taunt of the Assyrian invader. He meant that he had swept the nations, and, with them, the gods of the nations, into his own net. But in the one case of Israel their religion was neither destroyed nor absorbed by the conqueror. On the contrary it revived, more spiritual, more intense, more glowing, than it had ever been before the catastrophe. Do we ask why? The answer is plain. Because here in Israel there was that strange phenomenon, the sound of a Divine voice. "The word of the Lord came unto me saying——" So speaks prophet after prophet, and we must take them at their word. They did not feel that they were speaking only what they had themselves to say, their own best reflections, or wisest warnings and consolations; but they delivered something which came to them to be spoken. And so the power of their prophecy laid hold of what was happening in history, and turned the stumbling-block of destruction into a witness to the God above; they indicated in all the worst that was happening to the people fresh proof of the awful righteousness of God, and of His avenging justice upon their national sins; yet they promised that there should be a future for Israel. Hence it was that, when the nation revived, the influence of that spiritual power which had saved it from death was dominant within it; and the second Israel, after captivity, was a state of entirely peculiar character,

a religious state, almost a Church. Its authority, as you remember, was that of priests and doctors of the Law ; its principles had been deepened and annealed as by a fire in the *débâcle* of their captivity—the principles of unswerving obedience to Divine law, and of unfaltering confidence in a divinely given hope.

Now consider what we have reached. We have found a nation altogether transfigured ; we have found the elements of a Church—that is, of a spiritual society—and we find these just at the time when the forces which created the Dispersion, breaking the old national boundaries, are sending forth what had been pent within them broadcast over the world. Surely there arises in us a conviction of a Divine purpose for Israel, in which all nations were to have a benefit, which should be accomplished in a glory for Israel, and in a vindication of the Divine righteousness, towards which a hand was, as it were, ever pointing on. And then, also, we see the character disciplined to recognise the truths of victory through suffering, of conquest by patience, of the possession of the earth by the meek—which we are apt to think of, and in a sense rightly to think of, as especially evangelic truths, because in Christ they come to a perfect fulfilment. Here then, as in the case of the Greek, we have, I put it to you, a most striking human result, a result of human development, suited in an extraordinary degree to fashion a fit situation and surroundings for Christ and for His Gospel. And surely, above and beyond anything that we find on the Gentile side, there is the mysterious presence of

something more than human. What can we call it but Divine, the power of God working through Nature and through Man?

II. But we are met now by the second of our two questions. If I have at all helped you to see how both the outward and inner life of Judaism were extraordinarily shaped to lead up to Christ, and to give effect to what He brought, then the question, as I warned you at the beginning, may come: Is Christianity the bloom of Judaism? The answer to that, my friends, is, I think, the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Or, if you like, it is to be seen in that to which the Crucifixion is largely owing, I mean the Pharisaism which was indeed the characteristic result and culmination of Jewish life in the time of Christ. While we see how the preparation positively led up to Christ, we must see also how another part of its result was the failure of man's own best efforts. I tried to show you that in the case of the Greek the experiment of self-perfection was a failure; but in the case of the Jews another experiment, the experiment of self-righteousness, of self-perfection through perfect obedience to Divine law, was tried, and also failed. On the one hand the Stoic, on the other the Pharisee. These represent the efforts of man's spirit to gather itself up in the consciousness of sufficient wisdom, or in the consciousness of righteous compliance. The experiment goes a long way to demonstrate the utter failure of both methods. Certainly history shows no plainer or profounder lesson. The more we study the religious history of mankind, nay, the



more we come back to our own hearts and lives, and see what it is that men really need to know, the more shall we understand that this lesson of the failure of man's own efforts—if we can go on to supplement it by the conviction that there is something better than man's effort to lead him on—is of all lessons the most necessary and the most wholesome. The lesson is written across both preparations. The Græco-Roman preparation is brilliant and majestic, adorned with noble discernment, with marvellous power; but yet, just when we should say that the progress had grown complete, and run through its stages, there comes a ghastly corruption. It has lost all the seeds of liberty; it has no conviction of truth; it is even beginning to lose all political power, for all power has been drawn from the provinces and centred in Rome; and even the heart, which had gathered all to itself, begins in its turn to show signs of weakness. And then on the other side, the great Hebrew history has ended in this obscure and squalid and despised Jew, with some mystery yet of spiritual truth about him. These two, side by side, have each their own expectation. But how unlike in result! The Roman expects that the empire will be eternal, and the Greek mind within the Roman world is for ever looking for some new thing, "seeking after wisdom," but in its own narrow way, by the experiments, tried so often and so often failing, of merely intellectual speculation. On the Jewish side there is the expectation of the permanence of the Law, which they regarded, because it was Divine, as eternal; and

along with it the hope of some kingdom which should give glory to Israel, which should be ushered in by a sign from heaven of a palpable and material kind, which should take the shape of a conquering monarchy before which the nations should bow down, and which should make the sons of the Gentiles ministers to the triumphant Jews. And these two, side by side, have lasted long enough to show what they could both do; they have been in full contact with each other long enough to defeat any suggestion which might be made to us, that though Christ is not the result of the Gentile world, nor the result of the Jewish world, He is the result of the wedlock and blending between the two. No; this too had been tried, and had had no small results. The preface to St. John's Gospel, with its deep Hebrew faith influenced by Greek knowledge and borrowing language from Greek thought, is one witness which you will at once recall. The presence in the synagogues of the fringe of inquirers, of searchers after truth, of convinced believers (like Cornelius the centurion) in a God of righteousness, were the work of that contact of Jew and Gentile in the Roman world. These results were valuable building material, but they were neither a Gospel nor a Christ. Both sides of the world, with all that they had, were palpably dying and failing. They both needed something of life to enter into them, to organise what of itself has no motive power, to make a new beginning, to build up, as life does so wonderfully build up, the material which is found to hand.

They want a touch from God. And then at that moment comes something wholly unlike what either expected ;—there comes a lowly One who is made high ; there comes One who, declaring Himself as come from God to reveal God, calls Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life—the Way which perfects all that the Jew had sought in the Law, the Truth which satisfies all that the Greek had aimed at in his philosophy, but also that which was neither Jew nor Greek : the Life. There comes a Divine Saviour—a mustard-seed, “smallest of all seeds,” the mustard-seed which becomes the great tree, and fills with its branches the whole earth. And in Him the Jews who were Jews indeed, the best of the nation, find their spiritual representative, recognise their King, and see the fulfilment, beyond all their hopes, of the glory of their prophecies. On the other side the Greeks—witness, for example, Justin Martyr, who had himself begun with Greek philosophy—find in Christ their true philosophy, open their eyes to a light which to their own feeling (and we must take from them their testimony, for it is a testimony of experience), illuminates all their minds and consciences with joy and light : “Christ, the wisdom of God ; Christ, the power of God.” Then, when He has come, there pass but a very few years, and by a judgment which is typical to all time of the judgment of God upon the guilty and upon the apostate, and amid terrors which appal the world, Jerusalem falls. Then, too, after the lapse of a somewhat longer time (three or four centuries), because that

was the time needed for the leaven to work in the lump, for the tree to spread out its branches, for the mustard-seed to grow in the world in spite of every kind of persecution—then the Roman Empire breaks up and passes away like a shadow, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever.

My friends, the word of Jesus, who is called Himself the Word, is alive and germinant to-day amongst us. One of the newest phases of thought, of which the words and suggestions are continually in our ears, and the conviction of which is possibly in the minds of some of you, Socialism I mean, is full of the influence of Christ. I count over the things which seem to me to be true and hopeful and inspiring in it, and I find not one of them which does not come from my Master. Only I would say, if we have learned other lessons from what I have so imperfectly put before you this evening; if we have seen any witness that there was indeed "a fulness of time" when Christ came; if we have been able to discern any evidence of preparation; if, with a certain awe upon us of daring to trace His course whose "footsteps are not known," we still must recognise the working of the hand of Providence so shaping the world that His work might come about and might prevail,—then let us also accept this result, that the lesson which God thought most needful to teach His people was, that let them try their best in unconsciousness of Him, as the Greek did in the experiment of his self-reliance, or let them try their best in consciousness of Him, as the Jew did in his

experiment of perfect obedience to righteous law, yet without something more from Him they must fail; and that that Thing, without which there was for them, and is for us, no human perfection, is the Divine Life in man, of which Christ is the Mediator and Source; that "when we are," as a race, "weak," then, if only we look up with faith and hope and love, "we are strong," for His strength, upon the page of history as well as upon the page of individual life, is "made perfect in weakness."

EDW. ROFFEN.



### XIII.

## Christ in History.

I. **I**T used at one time to be a subject of discussion among historians to determine the point, at which Ancient history ceased and Modern history began. It has been more recently contended by high authority that there is no such division at all, and that the history of humanity is one continuous and unbroken development, in which, strictly speaking, nothing is new and nothing is old. But while, of course, this more recent view is clearly right in teaching that the past always lives in the present—that, for example, Greek art and philosophy, Roman law, Jewish religion, are all still living elements in our composite Christian civilisation—yet the older students were also right, in declaring that there was a real distinction between the ancient and the modern; and they indicated what was the true meeting-point, when they dated events, and counted centuries, as before and after Christ. For the life of Jesus of Nazareth is, beyond all doubt, and without assumption of any theories as to its meaning, the great critical epoch in the history of the world. In it and through

it, to use well-known words, "old things passed away ; all things became new."

It is true that all great lives are in some sense epoch-making lives. We may, indeed, trace in history movements of thought and aspiration, which thrill through the whole frame of human society, when great changes are at hand. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the few great men—great in idea, great in action, great in will—are the pivots, on which the whole revolution turns. "The hour comes" in that general preparation of society ; but "the man" must also come, to give definiteness and life to what otherwise would be vague and dormant—to be, in fact, the spark which kindles the wide-spreading spiritual fire.

But by universal confession the place of Christ in history is one absolutely unique. The well-known words of Napoleon, one of the greatest of the world's great men, at St. Helena are the broad, simple recognition of an undoubted truth. "I think," he said, "that I understand something of human nature ; and I tell you . . . none is like Jesus Christ. . . . Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years He makes a demand beyond all others difficult to satisfy. . . . He demands unconditionally, and His demand is granted. . . . Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. All these are men ; I am a man. Jesus Christ is more than man."\*

You will see from these words how irresistible was the inference, drawn by the union of keen-sighted

\* See the whole quotation in Liddon's Bampton Lectures, Lect. iii., pp. 150, 151, in Tenth Edition.

genius with strong practical common sense in the speaker, from the fact itself. Christian faith, at any rate, gives an intelligible account of this unique and transcendent power of a Galilean peasant over the history of the world. For it sees in the Incarnation the introduction into humanity of a new principle of spiritual life, supernatural in comparison with the natural developments of life, of which yet, in the true sense of the word, it forms the consummation, "ordained before the foundation of the world." It crowns, while it transcends, the wonderful order, in which the advent of life into the inanimate world, and the advent into the animate world of the spiritual nature of humanity, are the two great steps—steps of which our science testifies the reality and the significance, while it fails utterly to trace the cause. On that theory this unique power of Christ in history is no strange thing; it follows from the very nature of the case. But, if that idea be set aside, I know not what the wisdom of the world can put in its place. The choice, as has been often said, is between miracle and moral impossibility.

But it is with the fact itself that I am now chiefly concerned. What were the effects—worldwide effects—which, however we may account for them, we can trace as absolutely and significantly real?

II. The first was undoubtedly this—that the proclamation of the Christ, when it was first made to the world, brought into harmony the three great elements of the ancient civilisation, and inspired them all with one higher life.

I say the proclamation of the Christ, not merely of Christianity. For nothing is clearer to those who read the New Testament, than the error of supposing, as some have supposed, that the proclamation of Christianity was of a great system of abstract truth, as a Divine philosophy, or of a great scheme for the regeneration of society, as a Divine Republic. No doubt it included both these in its results. But its essence was the proclamation, not merely of a teaching, but of a Divine Teacher ; not merely of a new kingdom, but of a Divine King ; not merely of a regenerate society, but of a Saviour and a new Head of humanity.

What were these three elements of civilisation, as represented in the great Roman Empire, into which the Lord Jesus Christ was born on earth ?

There was the strong intellectual force of the growth in knowledge both of truth and of beauty, in culture and education, in the search into the laws of nature and humanity, and the inquiry into the First Cause of being. It was represented especially in the philosophy and art of Greece—then, as in other ages, the teacher of the world.

There was the great moral force of law, of order, of justice, of sovereignty, embodied in the conception of the Roman Empire, as an empire of the whole civilised world, and the enforcer of peace among nations.

There was the spiritual aspiration after a religion—a communion, that is, of the soul with a Supreme Being, and a King, perhaps a Father, of all men. It showed itself in the West, dissatisfied with the worship of many gods, local, national, legendary, and seeking through

mysteries, and even enchantments, some one true living God. It had its clearer expression in the great religions of the East—Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian. But its central life, at once mystic and yet living and practical, was in the grand worship of the One God in the religion of Israel. The sublime passage in Deuteronomy (vi. 4, 5)—“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”—was a message welcomed by serious and earnest thought in all nations.

But these three great forces, each in its way universal, had their weakness in this—that they had little or no union and harmony with each other. Thus the higher philosophy and morality held themselves altogether separate from religion, drawing nothing from it, having no bearing or influence upon it. There are well-known words of Cicero, as a philosopher, in which he says, “The gods may give riches and prosperity; but who ever thanked the gods for being a good man?” (he might have added, “a wise man”). “For that each must thank himself.” There was a remarkable significance in the desperate attempt to give religious force to Empire by treating the Emperor as a god; but in view of the human frailty and wickedness of the men thus deified, it became merely grotesque and horrible.

Now, it is simply a fact that the proclamation of Christ brought all these forces together in Him in a perfect harmony, and brought out also—what the religions of the world had sought vainly to supply—



a belief in a salvation which should overcome the power of evil, crossing, as it did, all these lines of effort after wisdom, after righteousness, after God. When St. Paul declared that He was made to us—not that He gave to us, but that He was made to us—“wisdom, righteousness, sanctification,” and, in all these, “redemption” (1 Cor. i. 30)—he simply expressed what was historically the first effect of Christ in history. It was the union in one of the intellectual, the moral, the spiritual forces, which rule and exalt humanity. It was a union, not for that time only, but for all time. Since it was embodied in a Divine Person, who could be infinitely believed in and revered and loved, it appealed to all classes and races and characters, to the few and to the many, to the leaders of humanity and to the rank and file of its great army. It has been often said that the knowledge of Christ created a new moral ideal for humanity. It is the truth, but not the whole truth. The Christian ideal is one which brings together the intellectual, the moral, and the spiritual in harmony; and it is, moreover, an ideal which—account for it how you will—has manifested a unique power of realising itself in various degrees in myriads of human lives in all generations. It has been in the world, not merely an ideal, but a life.

III. But let us see next how, working by the combination of these forces, the power of Christ has actually moulded human history.

The answer can be given only in the barest generality. To unfold it in detail would be to survey every portion of that history, and even then it would be

impossible to give any exhaustive estimate of its effects. But if we look for the most prominent effects, we must, I think, define them as, first, the creation of the Church ; next, the conquest of the world. Speaking roughly, we may say that the first came from the acknowledgment of Him as the Son of God ; the second from the reverence to Him as the true Son of Man

The creation of a Church—it was the formation of a worldwide society, not bound together by the natural ties of race or locality, which are to the individual involuntary, but professing to be a Communion of Saints—a society, that is, of men, who believed themselves to have been freely and individually drawn to Christ Himself, and by that spiritual contact to have entered on a new life of communion with God. From that unity with God in Him came their unity with one another—its motto being simply this, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Its faith was in the Word of Christ as the “Word of eternal life.” The Sacraments, which marked the beginning and the perfection of membership in it, were declared to be the putting on Christ, and the partaking of His Body and Blood. Its creation of character was of that which we call “saintliness”—almost unknown to the pagan civilisation which it supplanted—realised in thousands of those who call themselves Christians. It has held in its hand, as its own guide for its witness of the world, a Book which is, in its history and its spiritual power, transcendently superior to all other books, whether masterpieces of human

genius or sacred books of other religions, and which in all its parts is, directly or indirectly, the manifestation of the Christ, with all that prepared for it, and all that was derived from it. Through that Book, speaking in all the languages of men, the thought and morality of the world have historically been moulded, its literature has been coloured, its religious life transfigured. I am not saying whether this faith was or was not absolutely true—whether Holy Scripture is or is not the inspired “Word of God”—whether the Church is or is not really the “Body of Christ” through the power of the Holy Ghost. I am speaking only of the great historical fact of its formation, and of the strong vital belief on which that formation rested. That formation was the first visible manifestation of Christ in history.

See how that manifestation developed itself.

It began in a little knot of Jewish disciples. The seed sown in all the ministry of the life of Jesus of Nazareth yielded but a “number of names of about a hundred and twenty,” easily contained in one large upper room at Jerusalem. But how rapidly it grew! Even of the Jews it drew in its thousands, simply by the proclamation of the Christ, against all the opposition of the world—now of Sadducean worldliness, now of Pharisaic fanaticism. Then spreading to the Hellenists—the Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion—it came into contact with the outer world. Through that contact it gained power to root itself everywhere in Gentile soil—in Asia, in Macedonia and Greece, in Rome itself. First scorned, then persecuted, and

dreaded as a power hostile to human society, it advanced continually. By the end of the first century it was probably known almost everywhere throughout the Roman Empire. For two centuries it had to sustain a twofold conflict—a conflict with the now awakened hostility of that empire, most intense in the rulers who cared most for its welfare—a conflict also with all the scepticism and philosophy of heathen thought. But it so advanced that one of its great advocates (Tertullian) in the second century declared, “We are but of yesterday; yet we are everywhere in your empire—nay, more, the Cross of Christ has gone farther than the eagles of Rome.”

At last the long struggle came to an end. The conversion of Constantine was the beginning of the conversion of the Roman Empire—through a period of some struggle still against old paganism, revived and spiritualised, but of far severer struggle in the Church itself, against heresies, rationalising and so impairing or destroying the mystery of the Christ, and against moral corruptions which worldly success had brought in. Finally, Christianity emerged as the religion of the civilised world; and the society of the Church, by its nature Catholic, aspired to cover its whole area, and even to spread beyond it.

Then came a troublous time. The Christianity of the East, enfeebled by fierce internal controversies, and by the corrupting influence of imperial power and luxury, was overborne, mutilated, subjugated by the ascendancy of Mohammedan power; yet even so holds its ground, and survives still with a

marvellous tenacity of life after centuries of oppression and persecution.

The leadership in Church life passed to the West. There, indeed, for a time the old Roman civilisation was overwhelmed by the invasion of what were called the "barbarian races." But after a dark period of suffering and bloodshed, those very races were drawn into the Church of Christ, fused with the old Roman peoples, civilised and Christianised at once, to animate with new blood both the State and the Church, and so to become the ancestors of the dominant European civilisation. From that time onwards Christianity through the Church has been the chief moulding and inspiring power in the growth of national life—not least in our own country—and so in the formation of a Christendom. It has had its times of torpor and apparent deadness; it has felt the perversions of error and the degradation of superstition. But, unlike other forces in human society, it has always had its seasons of revival, its movements of reformation, throwing off all that corrupted and enfeebled it.

Gradually, moreover, as European ascendancy prevailed, the Church has continually extended itself to other countries and other races. Look only at the growth of our own branch of that Church, in all the daughter-Churches of the English-speaking race, in the new Churches springing up, alike amidst the old decaying civilisations and religions of Asia, and in the barbaric tribes of Africa and Polynesia. In spite of hindrances of strife and division, in spite of the



coldness in faith and the follies and sins of professing Christians, still age after age it does advance with irresistible progress. Far yet from the hoped-for Catholicity, it is nevertheless the great advancing spiritual society of the world. What, again, is the natural inference from this unique power I do not stop to inquire. It is sufficient for me to point to the marvellous fact—to this first manifestation of Christ in history, through the formation of the one great international society of the Catholic Church. There it is unquestionably the central home of the religious life of humanity. Other religions have their power—those religions especially which, like Judaism and Mohammedanism, draw their life from the revelation now perfected in Christianity—and I doubt not that through the good in them God reveals Himself and blesses humanity. But no one, I suppose, doubts that, if there is to be a vital religion for man in the future, that religion must be Christianity, and no other.

IV. But I spoke, not only of the creation of the Church, but of the conquest of the world, as the second great effect of Christ in history, which we may perhaps distinguish from the other, although in fact it is inseparately bound up with it. For indeed the complete conquest of the world would be the world-wide extension of the Church.

But by the conquest of the world I mean the power exercised by Christ in history, not only over the religious life, but over what men call the secular life of humanity, telling upon human society as a whole—

even beyond the pale of the visible Church—even over those who within that pale do not really live a Christian life in faith and worship. It is a power necessarily less direct and more imperfect. But nevertheless it is a real, and moreover a deep and far-reaching, power, although hard to define from the very fact of its pervading influence and its manifold development. There are, as has been strikingly shown, *Gesta Christi*, outside the pale of the Church and the scope of a conscious faith.

But if this pervading influence is to be defined, I should be inclined to describe it mainly as the source of a new reverence for humanity as such. The Christ of history is acknowledged as the true Son of Man—that is, as the ideal man, the perfection of humanity—not as exalted above common life, but as mingling with that common life, even in its humblest occupations, even in its simplest joys and sorrows. A great thinker of the last generation, not himself by profession a Christian—John Stuart Mill—went so far as to declare that, on all moral questions of life at any rate, our best guide was always to inquire what on such questions Jesus of Nazareth would have us think and say and do. Hence the knowledge of Christ must beget a reverence for humanity as such, because a belief that in it is the image of God; and this, moreover, in spite of the frailty, the error, and the sin which deface humanity. For the story of the Cross is at once the confession of their terrible reality and the promise of their defeat. So Christianity is in a true sense “a religion of humanity”—the only one which

is engrafted, as a fruit-bearing power, upon the old stock of the religion of a living God.

There is, then, in Christian civilisation a reverence for humanity—the humanity in ourselves and the humanity in others.

The reverence for the humanity in ourselves, as having in it something sacred, something even Divine, takes, I think, two main forms, which are deeply impressed on Christian civilisation.

First, the love of purity. By purity I understand the supremacy of the spirit within us over the appetites and lusts of the body and over the affections and passions of the soul—a supremacy which needs to be strengthened by resolute self-discipline of the will, but which is in itself man's true nature, his greatest glory and his greatest joy. It is not too much to say that Christianity, when it first appeared, simply re-created the idea of purity, in an age deeply tinged with Asiatic voluptuousness, with Greek recklessness, with the coarseness, almost the brutality, of Roman vice. For its strength was in the indignant inquiry, "Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid!" and the conviction that one who lives in Christ must "purify himself, even as He is pure."

That purity for the mass of men was, under God's natural law, the purity of marriage, as the consecration of pure earthly love, as the creator in the home of the best and dearest moral relations, of husband and wife, of parents and children. How absolutely the maintenance of the sacredness of marriage has

rested on the faith in Christ—how constantly it is undermined, when that faith is dimmed or set aside,—all this is matter of simple experience. How could it be otherwise, when in that faith marriage is made the type of the great mystery of the Incarnation, and so of the relation of Christ Himself to humanity?

For those who have no vocation for marriage, or cannot venture on its responsibilities, or deliberately put it aside, that they may be free for the higher works of life, the Christian purity is the purity of chastity. For men and for women alike its warning is, "Flee youthful lusts; keep thyself pure." Against false science, against self-beguiling lust, against base and unjust worldly practice, it declares that such purity is possible, is right, is glory and happiness. There have been times in the history of the Church, when its sacredness has even been exaggerated—as though it were infinitely above that other purity of marriage—as though it were the necessary rule for all who take up the special ministry of the Church. But the sense of this exaggeration does not for a moment prevent our acknowledgment that, for those who are called to it, the communion with Christ gives it victorious power over lust. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

How imperfectly, alas! that voice is heard in communities professedly Christian, we confess with bitter shame—shame at the condition of our London streets—shame at the base and corrupting tone of much of our popular literature. But the fact remains, that the one influence which, beyond all others,

stems the dark torrent of sensual evil, strengthens the innocent, rescues the fallen, is the power of Christ in the hearts and lives of His true followers.

But the reverence for the humanity in ourselves takes another form, less obvious perhaps, but very real, in the assertion of freedom, and with it of individual responsibility. You know how much there is to overbear freedom—the tyranny of force, the tyranny of custom, the tyranny of public opinion. Slavery of one kind or another is an abuse all but primeval in humanity. You may know, again, how much tendency there is to deny the reality of freedom, because it is mysterious,—now in the name of the science of physical law—now in the worship of society as a whole, in which the individual is but as a grain of sand—now in the name of religion itself, as in the unmitigated fatalism of Islam, or the mitigated but virtual fatalism of some forms of Christianity. But the very knowledge of the true Son of Man scatters to the winds all these dark fancies of an iron necessity, in face of which free-will is but a delusion ; and it nerves men to stand up for their liberty against all these forms of tyranny. “We must obey God,” was the Apostolic declaration, “rather than man.” “I fear God,” it was said ; “I have no other fear.” “I love God,” would be the more Christ-like utterance, “and I know no power over me, which can overbear that love.”

It is in this consciousness of a communion with God in Christ—in which, to use well-known words, we are “conscious of but two existences, God and



our own soul"—that the essential life of Christian freedom consists. It has been noted that in the New Testament there is but one passage (1 Cor. xvi. 13) in which the manliness, which is the assertion of strong individuality, so highly prized in the thought and practice of the world, is even touched upon. But it has also been noted (as, for example, by Mr. Lecky) that in Christendom that manliness has developed itself, in the unconquerable endurance of the martyr, in the self-contained life of the ascetic, in the almost fantastic bravery of chivalry, to an extent which ante-Christian days never knew. For men could defy the world simply through knowledge of Him, who came freely to do the will of God, and who for that joy "endured the cross and despised the shame."

I know, indeed, that there have been times when Christianity has betrayed its trust, by allying itself with tyranny over life, and by wielding a cruel despotism over thought. But that these things are treason against its true idea, and that they mar, but cannot destroy, its essential freedom, is obvious to all who think. For the sense of freedom lies at the core of all reverence for humanity; and the Christian service, as a service of love, is "perfect freedom."

But even more obvious than this reverence for humanity in ourselves is the creation by Christianity—that is, by Christ Himself known and loved—of reverence for the humanity in others; and this, moreover, a reverence glowing with the spirit of charity in

the largest sense—the glad self-sacrifice, that is, for the sake of others, especially the helpless and the weak.

There are, as we see every day, two balancing forces in the growth of human society. There is, on the one hand, the instinct of self-preservation, self-interest, self-assertion, which is the development in us of that “struggle for existence” and “survival of the strongest,” which we trace in the animal creation. There is, on the other hand, the spirit of what we significantly call “humanity,” because, though it has its rudimentary forms in the lower animals, it comes to perfection in man.\* It is the spirit of self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice of the strong for the weak, of the good for the evil. It has been rightly shown that the increasing superiority of this latter force is the true social evolution, the victory of true civilisation over barbarism. It has been shown also that the inspiring force of this social evolution is religion.† But when men speak nowadays of religion, they practically mean Christianity. For it is Christ in history who has made the brotherhood of humanity, not a theory or an aspiration, but a true though imperfect reality under the Fatherhood of God.

Out of this sense of brotherhood has naturally grown in all Christian civilisation that enthusiasm of care for the welfare of humanity—its material, its intellectual, its social, above all its moral and

\* See a striking investigation of this development of the self-sacrifice of the individual for the life of the race, from instinct in the animal creation to moral consciousness in man, in Professor Henry Drummond's *Ascent of Man*.

† See Kidd's *Social Evolution*.

spiritual welfare—which is true charity. Human society, for its own preservation, must maintain some laws of righteousness, and even foster some sense of public duty. But the power of Christ has for its peculiar glory the enthusiasm of love—the commandment “old from the beginning, but new” in Christ and those who are His—which goes beyond the strict letter of righteousness, and gives life and glow to the rigid sense of duty. It has become a commonplace to remark that the word which signifies “love” in the general sense, as distinct from passion and personal friendship, is found only in the New Testament Greek, because the thing signified is the creation of Christianity. That love impresses itself to some extent even on the action of a Christian society through law; even against this public opinion cries out, if it is too hard and cold and ungracious. But it is in voluntary works of good of all sorts and kinds, that it finds its freest, its most exuberant development; and it is just in these, let me remark, that the inspiring force of religious faith, and of its aspiration for likeness to Christ Himself, is most obviously the dominant power. It has often been remarked that, if you walk through the ruins of old pagan civilisation, you will find traces of national and civic magnificence, of private or public pleasure and luxury. But what you will not find are traces of those institutions of beneficence, which are natural and universal in a Christian civilisation.

But this enthusiastic care for humanity, while it regards society as a whole, and while it should

strive earnestly to secure in it all the conditions of happiness and goodness, yet catches its special inspiration from Christ Himself, in tenderness to its individual members. That tenderness has two striking developments. There is, first, the especial Christ-like tenderness to the humbler and weaker members of the whole body, striving to protect and save them in the fierce battle of life. To the poor and the suffering that tenderness is so conspicuous and so strong, that it has almost limited to this phase of its exercise the sacred name of Charity. How notably, again, though after long struggle and many failures and shortcomings, has Christianity—largely by the leadership of English Christians—destroyed in the main that slavery which was a recognised institution in all ancient civilisation! How earnestly does Christian influence seek to protect and exalt the subject-races of the world, brought into contact, often collision, with its dominant races, through commerce, settlement, dominion! Less effectually, I fear, but yet honestly and not altogether in vain, does it strive to stay or to mitigate the horrors of war, which is simply the dominance of force, to make strong nations recognise the rights of the weak, and through arbitration substitute right for might. Nay, that care for the weak and helpless extends beyond humanity itself to the lower animal creation, and rightly makes cruelty to them, even for the supposed interests of mankind, not only a sin before God, but a crime before human law.

And yet I do not know whether there is not something more striking and more distinctly traceable to the likeness to Christ in the tenderness shown even to the evil, the traitors and enemies to society itself. Through that influence humanity extends even to the criminal; the infliction of torture and excessive severity is forbidden in Christian countries; the very idea of punishment has refused to be content with inflicting vengeance and inspiring wholesome terror, without trying to work for the reformation of the criminal and his restoration to society. Through that influence, even more distinctly, countless agencies of rescue have sprung up for the wretched victims and instruments of the sensual vices—as, for example, of drunkenness and impurity—utterly refusing to despair of the humanity, defaced and polluted, but still sacred, in them. There may be cases in which the tenderness may seem to run to excess. But even so it is but an exaggerated imitation of Him, who was decried as “the friend of publicans and sinners.” In spite of inevitable failures, of bitter disappointments, it perseveres in the spirit of Christ; and it labours not in vain. It counts by hundreds the victims of a demoniacal possession of evil, whom it brings to the feet of the Master, clothed once more in true humanity and after long madness in their right mind. I remember hearing an honest and outspoken leader of non-Christian thought tell from his own experience that the rescuers of men and women in the slums of our crowded cities from degradation of body and soul were not the students, the scientists, the philosophers, but the



parsons and the Scripture-readers, the Sisters and the Bible-women. It was no wonder; for these last had One who went before them, and who cried, "Follow Me."

V. These, my brethren, are some of the most obvious and undoubted aspects of the influence of Christ on history—the Christ, be it remembered, of the New Testament and the Creeds, Son of God and Son of Man—not the Jesus of Nazareth of some modern theories, simply the greatest and best of men, and yet, we are forced to add, One whom on that theory we are puzzled to understand, because He and His Apostles undoubtedly claimed for Him that He was and is infinitely more.

It is indeed—and, as the world grows older, we feel it more and more—a sore trial to our faith, that even now that Divine influence for good is so greatly resisted by the forces of evil, and—what is worse—so sorely marred by the follies and sins of those who accept it, and seek to spread it to others. But while there should be a Divine discontent with the world as it is, and with ourselves as we are, which must stir us to work more energetically and pray more earnestly, yet it should not blind us to the unique and transcendent reality of even this imperfect power. If the New Testament is to be trusted, our Lord Himself foresaw, and, so to speak, provided for, this imperfection. The prophecy of the future, both from His own lips and those of His Apostles, foreshadowed a continual and ever-growing conflict of the powers of good and evil—to be ended only, as Advent reminds

us, by a Second Coming, which is to us miraculous, a new departure in the dispensation of God.

But whatever we may think and expect as to the future, there the influence stands, unique and unapproachable, in the past and in the present. To our age it should have a special significance. For in all lines of thought what is called the historical method is dominant; we judge of the nature and the truth of things by study, not of what they profess to be and ought to be, but of what they are and what through the ages they have gradually grown to be.

I am fully aware that this study looks upon Jesus Christ, as it were, from without. Perhaps St. Paul would have called it a mere "knowledge of Him after the flesh."\* If we would not merely know about Him, but know Himself, it must be by the Spirit from within, trying by our own experience whether He is a Light in the darkness of our ignorance, a Saviour from the power of our sin, a Giver of strength and nobleness and purity to our life. But just as, when He was upon earth, those who saw His miracles were drawn to Him, to listen to His word, to know Him in His life, so now the study of the wonderful work of Christ in history, both in the Church and in the world, should at least prepare us to try whether we cannot know Him with that inner knowledge of which I have spoken. With Nicodemus we shall say at once, "No man could do the wonders in history which He has wrought, unless God were with Him."† But gradually, as we look more closely into the matter

\* 2 Cor. v. 16.

† John iii. 2.

we shall pass through the order of the Apostolic confessions in St. John's Gospel.\* We see, first, with St. Andrew, that there is in Him a universal royalty, such as was prophesied of the Messiah ; we see, next, how, through all the perplexities and mysteries of this world, men have found, with St. Peter, that He "has the words of eternal life." But we cannot stop, when we have gone so far as this ; for we see clearly what are the transcendent claims implied in this assertion of Himself as the King and the Light of the world ; and, unless with the Jews we cast stones at Him as a blasphemer, we must cry out with St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God !"

ALFRED BARRY.

\* John i. 41 ; vi. 68, 69 ; xx. 28

#### XIV.

### Nature and Miracle.

N EARLY a century and a half ago David Hume enunciated a principle which expresses in a very concise form the difficulty which many, before and after his days, have felt on the subject of miracles. It amounts, in effect, to this—that it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false. The defect in the former of the two clauses did not escape the acute perception of his well-known opponent Archdeacon Paley. To a certain extent it begs the question, unless it be expressed with a limitation, *viz.* that it is contrary to our own experience, and to that of those persons with whom we are more or less acquainted. The latter clause, however, makes a statement which is corroborated by every-day experience. But though the two canons are not of equal value, we must admit that the possibility of mistake, the danger of deception, the liability to misrepresentation, are so great that we are justified in regarding all narratives of miraculous events with a certain amount of

scepticism, though we cannot imitate the airy self-confidence of a well-known modern authoress in her oracular pronouncement, "Miracles do not happen."

But it is always important to ask ourselves at the outset the meaning of any term which we are employing, and in no case is this more necessary than with the word "miracle." What does it mean? According to Dr. Johnson, the primary sense of the word is "a wonder, something above human power," to which is added, as a secondary and theological sense, "performed in attestation of some truth." In the Greek Testament three words are used which would be covered by this one term—namely, Prodigy, Sign, and Power.\* Of these the first may or may not be an attestation of truth; the second may be in itself a thing unimportant, which only becomes significant as an attestation of truth; while the third refers rather to the force of which the miracle is the result, but on the whole perhaps most nearly among the three represents that word in its usual sense.

To say that a thing contrary to our experience cannot happen would be an absurdity, for such an assertion would be sure to place us before long in the dilemma of having to choose between abandoning it or refusing to accept the evidence of our senses. But some will probably say: "It is not so much the novelty of the phenomenon which makes us suspicious as its opportuneness. You ask us to believe that, in order to obtain acceptance of certain

\* *Viz.* Τέρας, Σημεῖον, Δυνάμις.



statements or to support certain claims, the laws of nature were violated. We find ourselves accordingly in this difficulty: If these laws of nature required to be so often amended, what becomes of the attributes which you insist on ascribing to their Author?" The objection is specious, but it is partly due to and strongly favoured by a misconception which we find it very difficult to eliminate from our minds. Our conceptions are only obtained, or at any rate formulated, by means of our senses. Hence, as the latter are limited by the finite, the conceptions formed by means of them must be similarly restricted. Becoming to ourselves a natural standard of reference, we extend this to our ideas of God. Thus our conceptions of Him cannot fail to be anthropomorphic. For long the world had no other choice than between the vagueness of pantheism and the clear but misleading definiteness of anthropomorphism. Hence the latter still tinges theology, especially its more popular forms, to an extent that is seldom realised. Under its sway we find ourselves falling constantly, it may be inevitably; and yet we are compelled to admit that, unless we consent to employ its symbols as vehicles for thought, we have great difficulty in making any progress.

The idea, then, that a miracle involves an interference with the order of nature is founded upon an inadequate and misleading conception, which exists in the minds of very many people. They regard the Almighty as standing to nature in this world

(to speak of nothing beyond it) in the relation of a head engineer, who has devised and designed machinery which, as a general rule, works admirably. But now and then cases occur where, as the juncture is unusual, this machinery would prove inefficient. He must therefore intervene, with the result that the ordinary laws of nature are set aside ; something supernatural occurs—in other words, a miracle. Now all these words, “intervene,” “laws of nature,” “supernatural,” “miracle,” convenient as they may be as symbols for every-day use, are nevertheless, as we hope to show, very apt to be misleading. Thus the difficulty in which we are entangled is to a certain extent of our own creating.

We have already seen that the scepticism aroused by a miraculous story is mainly, if not wholly, due to its theological associations—in other words, our suspicions are aroused by its connection with revelation. It is therefore necessary that at the outset we should have our minds quite clear on one point—namely, whether we believe that a revelation (using the word in its ordinary sense) is a thing so antecedently improbable, not to say impossible, that we do not believe it ever has occurred or can occur. If this be so, there is an end of the whole matter, and we must leave it with the remark that in such cases, since our conceptions of God are founded only on human experience, they must be either merely negative or so extremely limited as to be of no real value. If, however, we believe a revelation to be possible, then, since it is

certainly a thing contrary to ordinary experience, not explicable by known laws or in accordance with them, we have conceded the possibility of a miracle. Hence the latter term, when applied to the natural order, does not really predicate more than the operation of a force in it analogous to, if not identical with, that which in the moral or spiritual order results in revelation.

There are, however, some persons who, though so far theists as to grant that revelation in one form or another is possible, and may be admitted to have occurred, still object to miracles as upsetting all our ideas of law and introducing an arbitrary disturbing force into the cosmos. Let us then look a little further into this objection. In the first place we venture to remark that to use the term "arbitrary" is to beg the question; and in the second we entirely demur to the propriety of the epithet "disturbing," unless it be applicable to everything which has only few precedents. There may be discontinuity in a series of phenomena in nature, though the cause to which it is due is acting continuously. I will quote two instances. They may be termed hackneyed, but that does not make them the less appropriate. Water remains a fluid, and is reduced in volume till it reaches a temperature of  $32^{\circ}$  F.; then it suddenly becomes solid, and expands very considerably. Such a phenomenon is perfectly familiar to people who live in a climate like our own; but how would it seem to careful though untravelled observers inhabiting a tropical island in the Pacific Ocean? Again, if, after

placing a grain of blasting powder on the iron plate at the top of a stove, we light the fire, for a time nothing happens ; then, as the temperature rises, first a pale blue flame becomes visible, and at last the grain disappears with an explosion. This to the above-named observer might look like the magician's art ; it would have seemed so both to Saxon and to Norman, when they fought for mastery in England. But it may be said, "These are no wonders ; they are matters of common, every-day experience : every lad is perfectly familiar with them." Yes, "every lad" in certain countries, but not even now in every part of the world. For the present I concede that these cases are not completely analogous to a miracle, but I quote them to show that the objection "contrary to experience" cannot be pressed to an extremity unless we are convinced that our experience, or at any rate that of the human race, at the present time, may be safely accepted as the ultimate measure of all knowledge—or, in other words, that the development of the human intellect has now attained its utmost possible limit. This would be an assumption on which, if it were adopted, I should like to hear the remarks of posterity. Few, however, I imagine, will venture to take up that position. The experience of the last quarter of a century alone should be enough to warn us against adopting it, whether consciously or unconsciously ; for if so many and such unexpected discoveries have been made in that limited period, the years which are to come may be reasonably expected to be not less fruitful.

Some persons, however, may raise the following objection: A miracle presents to us a phenomenon which is either unaccountable or contrary to expectation; it is as though (to recur to the examples already quoted) water should contract instead of expand in the act of freezing or become solid at (say)  $40^{\circ}$  F., or as though the grain of powder should explode at blood heat—in other words, it is as if the same causes did not always lead to the same consequences. Undoubtedly, if the same causes were not followed by the same results, we must cease to talk of “law” in nature. We may accept the connection of cause and consequence as an axiom, but in proceeding to apply it to the question of the credibility of miracles we must be careful not to make a tacit assumption, as is very commonly done, that the causes are identical in reality because they are so in appearance. The progress of science during the last quarter of a century has given us some useful warnings against over-hasty assumptions about the completeness of our knowledge. Among others, the following statements, significant in regard to the matter before us, have been verified:—

(1) That the presence of a constituent in any material, provided it be in small quantities and either not expected or not hitherto known, may be very easily overlooked. (2) That the presence of minute quantities of extraneous matter may very conspicuously modify the properties of the substance in which they occur. (3) That in the results thus produced inexplicable anomalies may be sometimes



observed. (4) That we have still very much to learn in regard even to things supposed to be quite ordinary and familiar.

I will mention a few instances to illustrate the meaning and point the moral of the statements :—

(a) Till about a couple of years ago the composition of atmospheric air was supposed to be completely known. Yet it was then ascertained\* that a very small quantity of at least one other constituent was, so far as we know, invariably present. This constituent in itself is rather anomalous, for it is distinguished by a singular inertness, which has earned it the name of *argon*. What it is doing in the atmosphere, what is its function, no man knows. But it would be rash to assert that because we deem it inert it is therefore useless.

(b) That the addition of a small quantity of a foreign substance sometimes intensifies a process which has already commenced. Molten iron at the ordinary temperature of the furnace employed for its fusion is still somewhat pasty or viscid. But if a little aluminium be added, only to the extent of one two-thousandth part of the weight of the iron, the mixture quickly becomes almost as fluid as water.

(c) All students of metallic alloys are now well aware that the admixture of small quantities of one substance may greatly affect the properties of another. This fact was demonstrated by an experiment

\* By Lord Rayleigh and Professor W. Ramsay. The discovery was announced in 1895. The identification of helium as a terrestrial constituent was a similar case.

performed during a lecture, given by Professor Roberts-Austen, at a meeting of the British Association in 1886. He melted in a crucible a considerable quantity of gold, and then removing a portion cast it into a small bar—perhaps three inches long, and about a third of an inch broad and thick. This he bent with pincers into a horseshoe shape, and showed it to possess the usual properties of gold. The remaining contents of the crucible were then cast into another bar of not less than double the dimensions.\* To the bystanders this appeared, like the other, to be also pure gold; but the lecturer broke it into two pieces with a smart blow from a hammer. Of course the two masses were not identical. Something had destroyed the malleability of the gold, and that “something” could have been detected by chemical analysis, though the operation would have required care. This is what had happened: The lecturer, after removing the first portion of gold from the crucible, had secretly dropped into it a pellet of lead, amounting in weight to one-thousandth part of the remaining metal. This minute quantity was enough to change gold from a very malleable to a rather brittle metal.

(*d*) These introductions of foreign substances sometimes produce results apparently anomalous or even contradictory. Manganese, as is well known, affects the properties of steel, but the result depends upon the relative proportions of the two metals. Manganese

\* These statements of sizes are given from memory, but I believe them to be fairly accurate, for I was sitting on the platform near to the lecturer.

up to about 2.75 per cent. toughens the steel; but when that amount is exceeded, the alloy becomes gradually more brittle, the maximum effect being obtained when the manganese is from 4 to 5 per cent.; but afterwards, when it varies from 7 to 20 per cent., the alloy is again strengthened and toughened. I think that if any practical metallurgist or even scientific chemist fifty years ago had heard this stated as a fact, he would have received it in a very sceptical spirit.

(e) I will quote but one other example, also a result of Professor Roberts-Austen's remarkable investigations as a scientific metallurgist. Students of physics have been for long familiar with the phenomenon of diffusion in gases and fluids, but to speak of it in solids would have seemed a contradiction in terms. Yet he has shown that if a plate of gold be placed (under very moderate temperatures and pressures) beneath a piece of lead, the surface of the two being carefully prepared, so as to secure a perfect contact, an appreciable quantity of the gold, at the end of less than a month, will be found disseminated in the lead.\*

One other discovery, also very recent, but belonging to another branch of science, reads us similar lessons. I refer to the Röntgen or X rays, which during the

\* It would be easy to multiply instances of like nature to the above, but these may suffice to warn us against over-confidence in the extent of our knowledge, and against over-hasty conclusions that circumstances which appear to be identical are always so in reality.

See, for an account of this and other remarkable experiments, Professor W. C. Roberts-Austen "On the Diffusion of Metals," *Phil. Trans.*, vol. clxxxvii. (1896), p. 383; and for the effects of alloys, Reports of the British Association, 1889, p. 723, and 1890, p. 18.

last two years have fascinated students of physics and have excited the wonder of the public. Before then it would have seemed romancing to talk of photographing the skeleton within a living body, the coins inside a leather purse, the scissors in a workbox, and the like—to predict, in short, that, of two substances equally opaque to ordinary light, one would be diaphanous to these rays. Nor is that all. Suppose that after a limited number of experiments the results had led to the inference, as probably they would have done half a century ago, that these rays could pass through compounds of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen, but were arrested by metals and a number of other bases. Would it not then have seemed rather miraculous to find aluminium transparent, while calcium was opaque? Yet such is the case. These rays evidently are not identical with ordinary light; they are vibrations no doubt, but of what kind we do not at present know, except that they differ not only from such light, but also from heat and electricity. Ultimately we shall know, or at any rate shall extend the range of our present knowledge—to what extent, however, the future must determine. I refer to these Röntgen rays, and to those other forms of light—if we may so call them—which have been even more recently discovered, in order to show that our knowledge of inorganic nature is not yet complete, and that there may still be forces in its order which, though hitherto they have escaped the notice of scientific investigators, bring about results so startling that not long ago they would have seemed miraculous. For

it must be remembered that these and perhaps other modes of energy (for so I presume we may designate them) must operate, must be producing effects, in the world, whether we are conscious of them or not ; so that a knowledge wider and deeper than ours may have at its command resources of which we in our ignorance have never dreamed.

But the above-named instances, it may be objected, refer only to the inorganic side of nature's order, while the organic more often is the sphere of the miraculous. But in the latter, as it seems to me, we are daily confronted by so many mysteries, by so many things, which we cannot explain or understand, that *à priori* difficulties, on the ground of apparent departure from law, or of consequences for which no adequate cause can be assigned, seem really to be diminished rather than increased. For instance, to some persons miracles of healing, the restoration of life to the dead, appear so incredible as hardly to deserve serious consideration. I grant that under certain circumstances, which for the moment I pass over, they would not. But are we so certain that we know what life is, that we perfectly understand its relation to the organism, and still more that of the will to the body, that we can venture to lay down the law as to what is possible or impossible, or refuse to listen to anything which does not square with our preconceived opinions ?

The subject would require for adequate discussion more space and more technical knowledge than is at my command ; but I may call attention to a few



phenomena which are, I believe, generally accepted as true, and which seem to indicate the need of caution in forming our conclusions.

I will mention first one of which most adults have had some experience—the effect of anxiety or sorrow upon the health. I know perfectly well—probably many others do—that to receive bad news will produce certain physical effects, on which it is needless to dwell ; digestion, sleep, nervous power, all suffer. But this cannot be the result of a process merely physical. One can understand that to receive a blow on certain parts of the body may impede the digestion of food ; but how can this effect be produced by glancing at certain marks on paper, or by the impact of certain sound-waves on the drum of the ear? It must be something more than the shape of the characters or the rhythm of the waves ; for you might convey the news either to eye or ear in any one of half-a-dozen languages, and the result would be the same. Something within my body—the totality of my organism, if you like so to call it—lays hold of this information, and in consequence of it proceeds to throw the machine out of gear. This, I am aware, is an unphilosophical way of stating the matter. It would be easy to drape the facts with a metaphysical and medical terminology ; but should we be any nearer to understanding or explaining them? To give a name to a phenomenon is not to ascertain its cause, though many seem so to think—an illusion which, I fear, is occasionally prevalent even among scientific men.

But the consequences of what is called “ shock,” both

to the health of the organism and even to life itself, are well known to every student of medicine. Its effects are not restricted to wounds, falls, or bodily injuries ; but anything which causes extreme anxiety or fright, especially if sudden, produces a marked effect on the vital functions ; the circulation of the blood is diminished : the action of the heart is enfeebled, until it may altogether cease, and death ensue, though no lesion or physical injury can be detected. The physician might be able to affirm that the man had "died of fright," but the autopsy would not tell him why this had proved fatal.

The phenomena of hysteria are also important, for they show that illnesses may exist in which, if there be any organic change, it is the result rather than the cause of the patient's condition. The phenomena of this singular malady are too multitudinous for description here, but may be found in text-books of medicine. Suffice it to say that they produce sometimes local insensibility to pain, sometimes exceptional sensitiveness to it, sometimes sufferings which have no assignable cause. These may resemble the effects of some organic mischief : now it may be disease of a joint, now of the vertebræ, now of the stomach, or of other important organs. But they have no cause that can be discovered ; in a sense they are imaginary, for the observer finds that they are increased by inquiry and sympathy, and are apt to cease suddenly when the patient's attention is diverted to some object which causes forgetfulness of self. Yet, unless checked, the results on health, even on life, may become most

serious, and the perversion of the mind or will (if these be regarded as distinct) leads to important organic changes. Even in cases of insanity sometimes no adequate cause can be discovered; certain bodily functions may be affected and become irregular, but without any reason to suppose that this disturbance produces the deranged mental condition.

The phenomena of hypnotism may be placed in the same category. With this no doubt, whether it be called hypnotism or mesmerism or animal magnetism, much fraud and imposture unfortunately has been associated. Nevertheless, we may venture to say that a number of remarkable and inexplicable facts have been substantiated. By a mechanical contrivance, or at the will apparently of the operator if a fit subject for experiment be found, a state or sleep can be induced, which produces insensibility to pain, sometimes as completely as chloroform or a similar anæsthetic. Besides this the mental balance may be overthrown or consciousness only partially lost, so that the patient will imitate every action of the operator, will accept his suggestions, will believe his statements, though their falseness may be patent, and will obey his orders automatically, though previously they would have seemed absurd or wrong. He becomes, as it were, the mere slave of the other—to the extent sometimes, that for long after the operation, through what is called hypnotic suggestion, he will cease to desire something in which he once delighted, or will do that which would have been repulsive to his true self.

The evidence of the senses may mislead us more often than we suppose. They are the only witnesses at our command, and we must make the best of them; but they are neither infallible nor absolutely trustworthy. Even a sane man, if a little over-wrought, may be the victim of an hallucination. A dog may seem to lie on the philosopher's hearth-rug, a man to sit by the student's table, spectral forms may ride by our side or may accompany us on our walks, and yet we may be otherwise unconscious of any derangement of health, and may be in all other respects perfectly sane. The majority of ghost stories no doubt are false; but some are probably true—at least in a certain sense of the word. The man or woman was convinced that he or she saw something, but it was a subjective impression, not an objective vision.\*

One other matter must be briefly mentioned, as having some bearing on this question—the phenomena which commonly are collectively denominated "spiritualism." These also have been so often associated with imposture, in so many cases are the results of clever trickery on the part of so-called mediums, and of considerable credulity on the part of observers, that one almost hesitates to mention the subject, so difficult is it to disentangle truth from falsehood, and

\* It is a significant fact, as bearing on this matter, that when a ghost appears it is always clothed, generally as in life. But are we to believe that inanimate objects have doubles? It is possible, of course, that a something or somebody is near the person who sees the ghost, which produces impressions thus translated by the nerves and brain into bodily form and apparent vision; but that is a question which we have no means of determining.

to know how far the witnesses of alleged phenomena can be trusted.\* But making every allowance for this, and avoiding as far as possible placing any confidence in experiments with professional mediums, there seems to be a residuum—though it may be a small one, comparatively speaking—of well-established phenomena which are difficult to explain by the laws and forces with which we are at present acquainted; in other words, there seem to be powers, whether we ascribe them to the will or to anything else, which produce unaccountable influences upon material objects, and more particularly upon living organisms. In this connection we may remember, for it is not without significance, that at least one present-day school of philosophy (and that by no means Christian) holds “will” to be the sole ultimate reality, and regards the material cosmos as called into being and only existing through it.

These facts—the barest summary of what must suffice, for to enter into details would too much enlarge the present essay—indicate how greatly the health and organic structure of any person may be affected by his own imagination or by the will of another. Cases of so-called faith-healing have really occurred; there have been pilgrims who have been cured by visits to sacred places, or by the touch of relics and amulets. Granted that often there has been much exaggeration, and perhaps not seldom something

\* In some cases, when their good faith is beyond question, the circumstances lead one to suspect that they may have been under hypnotic influence.



worse ; granted that La Salette may commemorate an imposture, Lourdes and Paray-le-Monial cases of hysteria,—the faith of the pilgrims, misplaced though it has been, has made them whole. If then we find that in our daily experience there are forces which we cannot as yet accurately define, and influences which we are unable to explain ; if there are occasionally departures from the normal and occurrences of the abnormal, or (in popular language) from the realm of the natural into that of the supernatural,\*—the *à priori* incredibility of so-called miracles as violations of the laws of nature, which to some minds is almost axiomatic, seems to me to disappear, and the whole question to resolve itself into one of evidence.

“But,” it may be said, “does not this make it difficult, if not impossible, to refuse credence to a host of wild stories of witchcraft and demonology, to commit us to the acceptance of numerous ecclesiastical miracles, no better, and sometimes even less edifying, than fairy tales ?” No more, I think, than the belief that some banknotes are genuine would compel us to accept every forgery. Indeed the presentation of the spurious is to some extent evidence for the existence of a real. In every case the evidence for a miracle must be strictly scrutinised ; and in doing this, not only must the testimony for the event itself be carefully weighed, but also its whole environment (if the term may be used) : the characters of the agents, active and

\* Or, as I should prefer to say, the supranatural ; for the other term seems (by popular use) to exclude over-much the idea of law and to imply arbitrariness.

passive, and of the witnesses ; its opportuneness or significance ; in short, its place, relative and actual, in history. In other words, we are always justified in regarding the account of a miracle with scepticism (using that word in its strict sense), and this should be the greater the more it approaches to a merely thaumaturgic act. I may prefer natural explanations for many so-called miracles, such as the blood-spots on the coffer containing presumed relics, notwithstanding "the calm and objective narrative of Eginhard" ;\* I may decline to believe others, such as the use of a sunbeam for a cloak-peg, or even cases of levitation, whether of mediæval saint or of modern medium ; and yet I may think it credible that at certain crises in this world's history, when a great forward step in its education was made, the energy or the power which is at the back of the cosmos, and has called it into being and alone sustains it—the God of the theist—does act with more than usual intensity, by ways and in accordance with laws of which commonly we have not any experience. So far from finding any *à priori* incredibility in a miracle under circumstances like these, I should rather expect it, because they are not those of every-day experience, because force or energy is operating with more than wonted intensity or to an exceptional degree. If I admit the possibility of a revelation, I admit by implication that of a miracle, for the former is not a matter of ordinary experience, and implies the action

\* The words of the late Professor Huxley. For a fuller account of this case see a sermon by the author in *Old Truths in Modern Lights*, p. 218.

of the Divine Spirit on the material organism. The wise policy, as it seems to me, in view of our rapidly widening horizon in science, and our extremely imperfect knowledge of the causes to which even ordinary phenomena are due, is to set no arbitrary limits to the region of possibilities, and, while we maintain a somewhat sceptical attitude in regard to alleged miracles, not to refuse credence when the evidence appears satisfactory, and especially when the occasion seems to afford a *dignus vindice nodus*.

T. G. BONNEY.

## The Kingdom of Heaven.

THE Church of Christ, in its ideal sense, is the aggregate of all true believers, past, present, and to come, united in Him, their Head. In its original sense it is the *ἐκκλησία*, the whole number of those who are truly "called out"; in its strict meaning it refers to persons rather than to ideas or things.

In its historical sense the Church of Christ is the Holy Catholic Church on earth, embracing not only true but also imperfect and insincere adherents, and holy generally in its aims and purposes. Of the Holy Catholic Church on earth different definitions would be given, and with these it is not to the purpose here to be concerned. It is sufficient in the present connection to have a clear notion of the fact that the ideal Church has an earthly manifestation, containing all its professed adherents who are alive, and that, although God knows who are its true members, the true and untrue are to a large extent indistinguishable to their contemporaries.

The Kingdom of Heaven is rather the system or

*régime*, the circle of ideas and principles, which Christ came to reveal and establish for the guidance and regulation of His Church. Sometimes the Church and the Kingdom may seem almost identical; but the language about the Kingdom, taken strictly, generally refers to such ideas, principles, truths; the language about the Church usually to the collection of persons.

This will be seen by examining one of the characteristic passages about the Kingdom, St. Luke xvii. 20, 21:—

“And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, ‘The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.’”

There are two different renderings of the last expression. One has the authority of St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and others, and is given both in the old Authorised English Version and the Revised. It is to the effect that the Kingdom is in the hearts and minds of its subjects, a spiritual principle. The other has the authority of some great modern scholars, Beza, Grotius, Wolf, Bengel, and Meyer, and runs, “The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” They are decided in this opinion by the fact that our Lord was speaking to the Pharisees, in whose hearts nothing certainly found less place than the ideal Kingdom which He was preaching. This second translation, which is perhaps more in



accordance with the original usage of the Greek, would mean, "Men will not be able to point definitely to the Kingdom of God, and to say, 'Here it is,' or, 'There it is.' The Kingdom comes silently and unobserved; so silently, so unobserved, that it is founded, and growing, and bearing fruit already, right in the very midst of you, and yet you neither see it, nor know it, nor are influenced by its presence."

Whether we follow the translation of St. Chrysostom or that of Beza, it does not much matter. The point is that the Kingdom comes unnoticed, that it cannot be recognised or observed by mere outward tokens. It cannot be seen with the eye, or grasped with the hand, or measured by a map, or tested by a book of statistics. It is spiritual: "My Kingdom is not of this world"; not one founded and conditioned in present material circumstances. It does not depend on earthly sanctions, precautions, or arrangements. It is a spiritual institution, capable of embracing all the human intelligences which it influences, the only Head of which is God. In another place our Lord follows the same idea by describing the Kingdom of Heaven as leaven, or yeast, hid in three measures of meal, working secretly and unobserved till the whole was leavened. Or again, it is as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. Man cannot measure or limit it; it is the work of the Divine Spirit Himself, which is as the wind blowing where

it listeth, unseen, untracked, unfettered, but felt in its results.

This was the first great message of our Lord: "From that time," from the beginning of His ministry, after the Temptation, "Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" It had been foretold by His forerunner, the famous preacher of righteousness, in the wilderness, in the same words: "Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It was to be the burden of the preaching of His first twelve disciples: "As ye go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" A new state, a new condition, was to be proclaimed and established among men. The old, formal, external theocracy, with its kings, its hierarchy, its material sacrifices, its oracles and its prophets, had become obsolete in God's purpose, and was done away. The spiritual reality which it had foreshadowed had at last arrived. A new glad principle was revealed which should profoundly affect every individual soul that should receive it. God was to be realised as King, in a truer and deeper sense than ever before. Christ, His Divine Son, was the visible expression of His sovereignty. All who accepted His message were to be a holy nation, a special people, a royal priesthood. They were to have new truths in their hearts, they were to move in a new circle of ideas, the most important of all their relations was that which was brought about by the new *régime*.

The first effect of this revelation was to bring men

straight back in front of the reality of the unseen God, and to remind them of their personal, individual relation to His Being.\* He is no abstract idea, but in a most true and overwhelmingly important sense "Our Father." He in whom we live and move and have our existence, in whom all things consist, the awful, omnipresent Creator, Ruler and Upholder of all things, the Self-existent, the Unlimited, the Beginning and the End, is actually, truly, effectively, "Our Father," knowing all the things we have need of before we ask Him, numbering actually all the hairs of our head, and not even allowing a sparrow to fall to the ground without His knowledge. His cognisance of things is equally real in every minutest spot of His unending universe, and He is as much present with every individual as He is in the noblest sun in the most glorious part of the heavens. He is revealed to us as the perfection of everything: Love, Light, Knowledge, Truth, Power, Beauty, Goodness, Justice, Mercy. He concentrates in Himself everything that is of any worth at all; or rather everything that is of value derives its value from His omnipresent nature. From Him alone comes every good and perfect gift. Man was created in His image, whether the act of creation was instantaneous or progressive. Man's true destiny was to be like the Divine Spirit that produced him. It was the intention of the Creator that man should be, in his small degree, perfect as He is perfect. Fallen low as man is, it is

\* In this connection I venture to recommend the remarkable chapters in *Ecce Homo* on the Kingdom of God.

still possible to restore or revive his likeness to his Father in heaven, if he will only realise the actuality of the Kingdom of Heaven, if only his feeble, blind, and erring will can be prevailed on to co-operate with the Divine. The more nearly the soul can be brought into direct relation with the Divine Source of all happiness, so much the better will be its condition.

The Kingdom of Heaven had a share in our Lord's teaching quite disproportionate to the casual references which we make to it now. It was to proclaim the joyous message of the new Kingdom on earth that He came. "He went throughout every city and village proclaiming the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God." Unless we realise this truth, we cannot be very genuine Christians. And we do not realise it enough. In our own eyes we are still mainly and chiefly Englishmen, Scotsmen, Irish, Americans, Frenchmen, Germans; men of business, with our own share, larger or smaller, in the national life; men, it may be, with some religious principles and religious duties, which we sometimes endeavour, with more or less success, to acknowledge and fulfil. But when we have effectively joined Christ heart and soul, then this order is reversed. We have become in a predominant and absorbing sense subjects of the Kingdom of God. That is our first and primary interest. We are citizens of a state which exists in its pure condition in heaven, which is brought down to earth for the redemption of mankind, and which is complete in heaven again. Our earthly allegiances, loyalties, ties, and relationships are important, and

must be recognised ; but compared with this new dignity and obedience they retire quietly and silently into a less conspicuous place. The one great wish of the sincere Christian's heart is that God's Kingdom of perfectness and blissfulness may be realised ever more completely and truly, until it overspreads the whole earth. "Thy Kingdom come."

We have always to remember that this ideal was the true vision of the future which Christ saw and proclaimed. There was to be a Kingdom of Righteousness on earth, formed by individual union with God through Himself, not interfering with the states and kingdoms of the world, nor superseding them, but permeating and transforming them through their members. He was Himself to be the eternal King, the expression to men of the one Divine Being, and drawing all men to Himself by the perfection of His love in the redemption of the world. His subjects would at first be few, mean, and poor. They would not be able to understand Him thoroughly ; they would but be able to witness to the facts of His life and teaching, to secure them as the priceless heritage of mankind for ever, and to repeat His message. But gradually the Kingdom would extend. Men of goodwill would be attracted by the revelation of perfection and beauty which they would find in Christ's life and character, would repent of the contrast which their own lives presented, and would believe and obey. It has been finely said that "we want a test which shall admit all who have it in them to be good, whether their good qualities be trained



or no. Such a test is found in FAITH. He who, when goodness is impressively put before him, exhibits an instinctive loyalty to it, starts forward to take its side, trusts himself to it, such a man has faith, and the root of the matter is in such a man. . . . He may be rude in thought and character, but he will unconsciously gravitate towards what is right. Other virtues can scarcely thrive without a fine natural organisation, and a happy training. But the most neglected and ungifted of men may make a beginning with *faith*. Other virtues want civilisation, a certain amount of knowledge, a few books ; but in half-brutal countenances faith will light up a glimmer of nobleness. The savage, who can do little else, can wonder, and worship, and enthusiastically obey. He who cannot know what is right can know that somebody else knows, he who has no law may yet have a master, he who is incapable of justice may be capable of fidelity, he who understands little may yet have his sins forgiven because he loves much.\* He can hold on to the reconciling love of Christ, and be healed as the Hebrew in the wilderness.

That is man's first step in relation to the Kingdom of Heaven : recognition of the Divine Perfection in Christ, and the desire to be loyal to His Person ; in a word, *Faith*.

The next step is Repentance. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent : for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" We know well that the natural man loves not the things of God.

\* *Ecce Homo.*

Even men of goodwill, in their natural state, find pleasure in sin, self-indulgence, pomps, vanities, follies, ambitions, deceits, and corruptions. From all this he who would be a citizen of the Kingdom must turn away with dislike and humiliation. He has to be changed; and Christ the King, through the Divine Omnipresent Spirit, not only shows him what he is to be like, and what to avoid, but gives him the actual power of renovation. His Kingdom is pre-eminently a Kingdom of Grace.

It is because the change on truly entering the Kingdom is so great that it is described as a New Birth. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are expressions for the same great truth.) He cannot gaily profess allegiance to Christ and remain as he was before. He has to be renewed in the spirit of his mind, to have a new heart, new affections, an altered will, a love of what is good, a hatred of what is evil. That can only be by the human will consenting to the Divine Spirit, co-operating with it, submitting to it, being daily led by its power.

Such a genuine faith, such a true change, will be followed by Obedience as necessarily as the sun is followed by light. That is another successive characteristic of citizenship in the Kingdom. And there are two great primary tests of obedience. One is the formal act of entering the Society (the Church), which results from the introduction of the Kingdom of Heaven among men, and of profession of allegiance,

by submitting to the symbolical act of cleansing in water. That may be either done for the postulant by the faith of his parents and the congregation when he is yet an unconscious child, or it may be (as in the case of direct converts) at his own request when he is a convinced Christian. In either case the act must be accompanied by faith. Without such a definite symbol and act there could be no definite entrance. Without such a sealing of the covenant between God and man on the part of man there would be, as far as we can see, no confirmation of the promise, no pledge of adoption, no guarantee of the new birth. And the other test of obedience is the solemn memorial partaking of the emblematic Bread and Wine, in the pleading of the great Sacrifice of Calvary; hallowed elements, which the Lord of Life chose as the pledges of His grace, tokens of His Divine love, reminders of His awful mediatorial act, by which He took away the guilt of the world, and reconciled man to God, channels of His grace in response to the earnestness of faith. These are the two principal tests of obedience in Time and Space, in the Society that is the expression of the Kingdom, without which loyalty, allegiance, and reality could not be maintained.

The laws, or rather principles, of the Kingdom are many; as many as the different points in the example, character, and teaching of Christ the King. Among them are the following:—

1. The law of *Liberty*: “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” There is a liberty of the mind which tyrants cannot touch; and human

institutions, so far as they are enlightened by the truths of the Kingdom of Heaven, will endeavour to secure this liberty in their smallest details.

2. The law of *Equality*: "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ." There was the first idea of the cure of differences of human conditions: the voluntary self-restraint from insisting on social advantages. But the citizens of the Kingdom have not sufficiently as yet laid this to heart.

3. The law of *Fraternity*: "All ye are brethren." The old idea of privileged races, tribes, classes, individuals, is entirely swept away. The ideal is universal brotherhood among the sons of God.

4. The golden rule of *Loving our Neighbour as Ourselves*: "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." Selfishness, the motive on which the world is calculated to act, is abolished. There is an enlightened, ideal self-love, else existence would be impossible; but it must regard everybody else with whom it is brought in contact with at least equal interest: in many things, where selfishness would otherwise display itself, the interest must be even greater.

5. The law of *Conquering Opponents by Kindness and Affection*: "I say unto you, 'Love your enemies.'" This is a still more sublime ideal; a lesson harder to learn and to practise, and even more penetrating in its effects on the life of the world.

6. The law of *constant, energetic, absorbingly active Philanthropy*: "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again"; "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard."

The King's own example was one of ceaseless, unwearied beneficence: "He went about doing good." Life is too short to do all the good to which each knightly citizen is called: "The night cometh, when no man can work."

7. The law of *Progress*: "When ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do';" "I count not myself to have apprehended"; "I press toward the mark of the prize of my high calling"; "Be ye perfect"; "Provoking one another unto love, and unto good works." Contentment with our own performance in anything which we are called on to do is impossible; there is always something to be done better, higher, truer, more exemplary.

8. The law of *Unselfishness*: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (treat himself as absorbed in Christ), "and take up his cross daily" (as if he too were ready to die on Calvary), "and follow Me." The only true happiness is when each seeks the other's good; the only true welfare for mankind is when all are thinking of the advantage of the rest rather than their own.

9. The law of *the Highest Good of our Neighbour and of Humanity*: "Let all things be done to edifying"; "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." In accordance with this law the Christian is not merely content to do what is permissible, but must always aim, in small things as well as in great, in doing what is best.



10. The law of *Forgiveness*: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." This is the condition attached by His Divine Will to His pardon of us: we must show our sincerity by forgiving others, or being ready to be reconciled to them if they will permit it. It is a law which puts an end to feuds, wars, and every form of vindictiveness. Those who bear malice in their hearts are so far disloyal members of the Kingdom, if members at all.

11. The law of *Indignation*: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee . . . shouldest thou not also have forgiven?" The true Christian can have no sympathy with wrong-doing, or with wrong-doers as such. A healthy moral indignation against every form of evil is an essential characteristic of the service of the Kingdom.

12. The law of *Purity*: "If thy right eye cause thee to stumble, if thy right hand, pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it from thee." Purity must not be merely a matter of decorum; it must penetrate the whole being, and rule the heart and thought.

13. The law of *Truthfulness*: "Let your communication be 'Yea, yea.'" This strikes at the root of all duplicity, subterfuge, chicanery, concealment, deception, and intrigue. The atmosphere of the Kingdom of Heaven is that of the Palace of Truth. The language of its citizens needs not to be met with suspicion and watchfulness. They mean what they say, and say what they mean.

14. The law of *Sincerity*: "Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth." The only aim of the citizen of the Kingdom in all his doings will be the glory of God and the good of man. All personal advantage and advancement will be rigorously discarded. His aim will be one, simple and straight. From the mixed motives of the world he will continuously struggle to be free.

15. The law of *Prayer*: "Ask, and ye shall receive." The ordinary blessings of life the Almighty Being showers alike on the good and the evil, the loyal and the unthankful. To the gift of all His higher and better blessings He has necessarily annexed the conditions of desire and receptivity on the part of the recipient. Those who wish for growth and progress in spiritual life and in daily happiness must believe that God exists, that He is omnipotent, that He has the love of a Father for His children, and that he can and will bestow the greatest blessings on those who have the faith, sincerity, and earnestness to ask for the boon.

16. The law of *Contentment*: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." As long as the Christian has the true grip on the real meaning of life, and the glory of the future, and the inestimable dignity of fellowship with the Father and the Son, riches and poverty are to him indifferent. As long as he does his duty in humble dependence on the Ruler of all things, he is sure to have enough of the necessaries and comforts of life. Worldly distinctions,

honours, and emoluments may be used to a good purpose, but to many they are merely snares, which keep them from realising the spiritual glories and delights of the ideal Kingdom of Heaven.

17. The law of *Uncensoriousness* : " Judge not, that ye be not judged." This is a parallel to the law of Forgiveness ; the Almighty requires a condition of our own hearts corresponding to the blessing which we desire from Him. We cannot see the innermost heart, or discriminate the mixture of motives, or weigh the influence of antecedent circumstances. We are not permitted to judge and to censure. Where wrong-doing is flagrant and obvious, we are called to repudiate it with earnestness and sincerity ; but the habit of mind which delights in perpetually passing others under review, and criticising their actions and sayings, and depreciating their motives, is a blind and blundering usurpation of the prerogative of the Almighty, and is alien to the temper of the Kingdom.

18. The law of *Earnestness* : " The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm " ; " Enter ye in by the strait gate . . . for few there be that find it." No loitering, half-hearted movement towards God and His realm will be effective ; the world will be too strong for the undecided. Decision is needed, and purpose, and struggle, and zeal. The King Himself was held by His earthly relatives to be beside Himself.

All these, and a multitude of other principles and characteristics, the true citizen of the Kingdom will find reproduced in himself, if he surrenders himself

consciously and without reserve to the guidance of the Spirit of God.

How different are its excellent qualities, the objects of admiration and culture, from those of the world ! Blessed are they who feel themselves spiritually needy. Blessed are they who mourn for their sins and imperfections, and are not content with themselves as they are. Blessed are the gentle, reasonable, and good-tempered in disposition and demeanour. Blessed are they who are so eager for righteousness, for the godly, just, and sober life, that they feel positive hunger and thirst for its realisation. Blessed are the merciful in act, judgment, and sympathy. Blessed are they who are not merely correct and undefiled in language, but in thought and heart. Blessed are they who do their utmost to keep peace amongst persons, families, communities, churches, and nations. Blessed are they to whom personal rectitude, loyalty to God, and goodness of life are so real and predominant that they will rather submit to persecution and death than deflect from the Divine standard. The fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness, Temperance. These are the characteristics which the citizen of the Kingdom must expect to find growing in himself, if he is sincere in his allegiance.

And the subjects of the thoughts and conversation of God's people are not far to seek. The things that are true : such are the facts of Revelation and the glories of Science. The things that are venerable : such are the teachings of History. The things that

are pure: the study of the Ideal in every phase of life. The things that are lovely: the meditations of devotion, the elevation of Human Character, the triumphs of genuine, lofty, and divinely inspired Art in all its branches. The things that are of good report: the heroic in Conduct and Example. And to sum up: all that is Virtuous, all that is Praiseworthy, all that enkindles the Sympathy of noble minds.

There is one condition of entering the Kingdom (in the true sense of the phrase) which is too often neglected. The men of the City of God cannot be haughty, domineering, wilful, masterful: they are to exhibit the simplicity, docility, and humility of little children. When the King was asked, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" He answered, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter therein. . . . Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." "Suffer the little children," He said on another occasion, "to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Happy the citizen who from his baptism is enabled to grow into the simple summary of Christian duty: to love his neighbour as himself; to do to all men as he would they should do to him; to love, honour, and succour his father and mother; to obey the sovereign power and all in lawful authority; to submit to all due governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters; to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters; to hurt nobody by word or deed;



to be true and just in all his dealing; to bear no malice nor hatred in his heart; to keep his hands from all dishonesty, and his tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering; to keep his body in temperance and chastity; not to covet nor desire other men's goods; but to learn and labour truly to get his own living, and to do his duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call him! Happy he who, if through some moral neglect or misfortune he has failed to grow up a true and genuine Christian, is reminded of his baptismal allegiance by some merciful interposition of the Holy Spirit, becomes sincerely changed, and turns to God as a little child!

Our Lord occasionally described the Kingdom of Heaven as containing, like the Church which is its aspect as an aggregation of adherents, both real and counterfeit members. It is like the field which had both tares and wheat. It is like the net which held both bad and good fish. Here, as I said, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Church seem nearly identical. But the distinction must still be remembered that in His general employment of the phrase He indicates rather the principles and truths which He came to reveal and establish, while the Church is a word which etymologically indicates the aggregate of individuals. Our Lord rarely uses the word Church; but after His ascension "the Body called out" came into more frequent employment, as the Church, already founded, became formed and ordered. From the Kingdom of Heaven in its ideal sense all wilful evil-doers necessarily exclude themselves. "Know ye not," says

St. Paul to some make-believe official Christians, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God." And to the Galatians, adding to that list the vices of hatred, strife, rivalry, wrath, party spirit, divisions, bigotries, envyings, he says with solemn iteration, "Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." And our Lord, using the phrase in the same ideal and exclusive sense, gave the additional warning that it was with great difficulty that a rich man, trusting in his wealth and in all the material comfort, contentment, self-satisfaction, enjoyment, and power that it brought him, should enter into that ideal nationality; yes, it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man, relying on his possessions, to become a citizen of the heavenly state. It is not a material asset. "Flesh and blood," said St. Paul, "cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven."

Such is the account of the Kingdom of Heaven given in the New Testament, as founded and revealed on earth in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many things more might be said about it. It necessitated, as we have seen, a Society of living men, the Church, authority over which was first entrusted to St. Peter on behalf of the other Apostles as their spokesman, afterwards to the disciples at large and generally,

and then again to the eleven Apostles. No society of men could exist without rules and ministerial provisions. Happy would it have been for the Christian Church if it could always have lived by the same rule, and been of the same mind in its organisation. Into the vast questions connected with the idea of the Christian Church I am precluded by the limits of the subject from entering on the present occasion. No such difficulties, happily, attend the conception of the Kingdom of Heaven, as the ideal set of moral and religious principles and truths revealed by Christ, to be realised on earth by His Church: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, 'Lo here!' or, 'Lo there!' for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you."

It is the continual prayer of the Church that she may realise and cultivate the truths and ideals of the Kingdom of God. She prays that the Divine Majesty "would inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord; and that all they that do confess His Holy Name may agree in the truth of His Holy Word, and live in unity and godly love." And again she utters her supplications for "the good estate of the Catholic Church; that it may be so guided and governed by God's good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."

How far the Church has been enabled to see the

results of her prayer, it would be interesting, if there were space, to inquire. To speak generally, "The effects of the manifestation of Jesus," it has been well said, "far transcend all merely human capacity and power. The history of Christianity, with its countless fruits of a higher and purer life of truth and love than was ever known before, or is known now, outside of its influence, is a continuous commentary on the life of Christ" (a continuous demonstration of the vitality and effectiveness of the Kingdom of Heaven), "and testifies on every page to the inspiration of His holy example. His power is felt on every Lord's Day from a thousand thousand pulpits, in the palaces of kings and the huts of beggars, in universities and colleges, in every school where the Sermon on the Mount is read; in prisons, in almshouses, in orphan asylums, as well as in happy homes; in learned works and simple tracts in endless succession.

"And there is no sign that His power is waning. His kingdom is more widely spread than ever before, and has the fairest prospect of final triumph in all the earth. Napoleon at St. Helena is reported to have been struck with the reflection that millions are now ready to die for the crucified Nazarene, who founded a spiritual empire by love, while no one would die for Alexander, or Cæsar, or himself, who founded temporal empires by force. He saw in this contrast a convincing argument for the Divinity of Christ, saying, 'I know men, and I tell you Christ was not a man. Everything about Christ astonishes me. His spirit overwhelms and confounds me. There is no

comparison between Him and any other being. He stands single and alone.' And Goethe, another commanding genius, of very different character, but equally above suspicion of partiality for religion, looking in the last years of his life over the vast field of history, was constrained to confess that 'if ever the Divine appeared on earth, it was in the Person of Christ'; and that 'the human mind, how far it may advance in every other department, will never transcend the height and moral culture of Christianity as it shines and glows in the Gospels.'

"Truly Jesus Christ" (the Revealer and Founder of the Kingdom of Heaven), "the Christ of history, the risen Christ, the Divine-human Christ, is the most real, the most certain, the most blessed of all facts. And this fact is an ever-present and growing power which pervades the Church and conquers the world, and is its own best evidence, as the sun shining in the heavens. This fact is the only solution of the terrible mystery of sin and death, the only inspiration to a holy life of love to God and man, the only guide to happiness and peace. Systems of human wisdom will come and go, earthly kingdoms and empires will rise and fall, but for all time to come Christ will remain 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'"\*

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

\* Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*.



## XVI.

### Heaven.

WHAT is Heaven?

That is the question which the human heart, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has asked unceasingly. It is a question to which the Catholic Church can give a partial, though as yet necessarily an incomplete, answer. But it is manifest that for her answer the Church must depend upon the revelation of her Divine Founder Himself. For Heaven lies beyond the range of human intuitions or speculations or discoveries. "No man hath seen God at any time"; and no man hath seen Heaven. Something indeed—some faint evidence of immortality—it is possible to infer from the nature of the human soul, as Plato has done in the dialogue called *Phædo*, or Wordsworth in his famous *Ode*, though the latter is perhaps more justly regarded as a plea for the Divine affinity than for the immortality of the soul; but the character or conditions of the heavenly state, its relation to the present life, its compensatory power, its eternity, its spirituality—all this, and much beside, if it is known at all, can be known only by

the personal attestation of Jesus Christ. For His first followers, the authors of the New Testament, even those who, as St. Paul and St. John, enjoyed unique spiritual experiences, derived their apprehension of the heavenly state from or through Him.

Of the fact of Heaven Natural Religion can perhaps afford some evidence ; but Revealed Religion alone can exhibit its character.

In thinking of Heaven, then, we turn to the words of Jesus Christ.

And here it is important to remark that Jesus Christ, when He spoke of Heaven, was careful to use such language as is figurative or suggestive or analogical. He could not indeed have spoken otherwise. It is impossible in human words to give an exact account of a superhuman or supernatural existence. Yet human words must be employed, or none at all. There is on earth no celestial language. He who speaks to men, though He be Divine, must avail Himself of such means as will convey to His audience, not a perfect or precise idea of His meaning, but the best idea which the audience is capable of apprehending. And while it is true that an idea, if so conceived, will be inadequate, and may easily be misrepresented and misunderstood, there exists no other way of conveying at all to men an idea of things transcending human experience. But because this difficulty exists, and can never cease to exist, it is an error to press the details of parabolical language into a formal theological system, an error to suppose that each noun or adjective in a

passage relating to the unseen world must represent a precise spiritual verity. In no aspect of Divine teaching is caution so necessary to an interpreter, and in none, alas! has it been so frequently forgotten, as in the revelation concerning the invisible world.

The interpretation of Holy Scripture demands a rational and a sympathetic spirit. It demands a sense of perspective, a sense of proportion—I might add, a sense of poetry. The literalism which treats all things as true and equally true, all things as spiritually valuable and of equal value, which applies the same method to Genesis and to the Books of the Kings and to Isaiah, to the Gospels, to the Epistles of St. Paul, and to the Apocalypse, is so short-sighted and narrow-minded that it must be untrue. Whatever words of our Lord relate to Heaven need to be accepted under the limiting condition that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,” the things of Heaven; and that the revelation of them is not literal, but spiritual. For who will imagine that such phrases as “paradise,” or “Abraham’s bosom,” or the “many mansions,” or the “right hand” and the “left” of the Lord in His glory, are other than metaphorical expressions? Or, to go beyond our Lord’s own words, who will imagine that St. Paul’s “third heaven”—an expression borrowed from the Jewish theology—is to be taken as mathematically correct, or that the “harps” and “vials full of odours” of St. John’s vision are to be taken as so many matters of fact? Nay, if the literal exegesis of inspired poetry is to have its way, the

dimensions and proportions of the New Jerusalem are accurately given in the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse: "The city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits." Who does not see that the perfect cube is not a literal but a typical figure? It is a sign, not of mensuration, but of perfection.

It must be admitted that the exegetical method which is here advocated does not diminish the difficulty of interpreting Holy Scripture. But on the other hand there is reason to fear that theologians, in the natural desire of arriving at precise and specific truth, have often exceeded the warrant of Holy Scripture itself. Theology has been definite where inspiration has been vague. Fortunately the theologians have not agreed among themselves. It is not improbable that those of them who have been most logical, as Calvin and Jonathan Edwards, have wandered the farthest from the Gospel of Divine Love; for logic, though it is an admirable instrument in its application to human things, seems to lose both its acuteness and its utility when it touches such things as are in their nature superhuman and Divine. For myself, I cannot hope—I do not desire—to formulate any plan of the heavenly life. I humbly trust in such light as Christ Himself sheds upon the great and solemn mystery. For while it is true that our Lord's

words respecting Heaven must be regarded as adumbrations of an inexpressible and inconceivable reality, it is not impossible to draw certain inferences from His teaching, and still more from His life.

Thus He taught beyond doubt the existence of Heaven. Heaven was an axiom of His revelation. He did not prove it; He took it for granted. It was essential to His Gospel. He could not have been what He was or have taught as He did except upon the hypothesis of a life surviving and transcending the limitations within which human life is passed upon the earth; and that transcendent life is the life of Heaven. To Him, as to all who in the Christian ages have learnt the secret of the Gospel, the life of earth is the shadow, the life of Heaven is the substance: the one is phenomenal and transient; the other is real, enduring, absolute, true. Jesus Christ attested this life by His doctrine, but He attested it yet more forcibly by His character. For it is the prerogative of sanctity to create a belief in the spiritual or heavenly life. The soul or conscience of man repudiates the thought that it is with the good at the last as with the evil, and that death is the end of all. It claims instinctively the vindication of the Divine mercy and power in the spacious periods of eternity. The contemporaries and companions of Jesus Christ, when they penetrated to the truth of His personality, could not believe that His purpose would prove frustrate, or that His Divine life would cease after a few years, or that He would not ascend to His Father. And where He was, there might they



hope to be. They believed in Heaven because they believed in Him.

Jesus Christ, then, taught the reality of Heaven. But not only so ; in His teaching He spoke of it with complete knowledge, with complete certainty. He professed and claimed to know all about Heaven. And this knowledge was His because of the unique relation in which He stood to His Father in Heaven. As being the Son of God, as having descended to earth from God, He could, if He would, afford to mankind a full revelation of the celestial city wherein God dwelt. "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."\* This is the substance of His revelation. It was because He knew what man could not know, because He stood to God in a relation in which no man had stood or could stand, that He came to declare the truth of Divine things, and among them of Heaven. Certainty is the note of all His teaching. He never offered an opinion ; whatever He said He said as a fact. And the same assurance as He displayed in regard to moral and spiritual laws, to the nature of God and the nature of man, He displayed in speaking of Heaven. He was as familiar with Heaven as any human being may be with the streets and edifices of the town of which he is a citizen ; and He knew it so well because it was His home. Whether it was His will or not to reveal the character of Heaven, He declared explicitly that it was within His power to reveal it. "In My

\* John i. 18.

Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." \* Here as elsewhere Jesus Christ taught with authority.

It is remarkable, then, that, while asserting His complete and absolute knowledge of the heavenly life, our Lord should have observed in all His teaching so great a reticence and reserve in speaking of Heaven. Heaven was clearly one of the subjects upon which it was impossible for Him to tell as a man to men all that He knew. He refused to let Heaven and heavenly things appear, except within due limits, in the scope of His revelation. His reserve touching the unseen world was followed by the inheritors of His Gospel ; it is seen conspicuously in the narrative of the death and resurrection of Lazarus as contained in the Fourth Gospel. There is a manifest intention not to exaggerate the awfulness of the invisible world. It may be said of Jesus Christ that, while He laid a powerful emphasis upon the reality and significance of that world, He intended and desired it to be a hope, a solace, a motive to holiness in its effect upon mankind ; it was not His purpose that the revelation of that world, by its vivid intensity, should exercise a blinding or paralysing influence upon human action. And the experience of history has shown, as in parts of Europe about the year 1000 A.D., that, when the anticipation of this world's end as imminent has been overstrained, it has impoverished and impaired human energy. But the will of God is that we should prepare

\* John xiv. 2.

ourselves in this life for the next, not that we should sacrifice this life and its interests and endeavours, as though they were practically worthless.

Among the lessons of Christ's teaching upon Heaven, there are two which seem to stand out in relief. He taught that the enjoyment of the heavenly life depended upon character and conduct in this life. He taught too that the access to the heavenly life lay in the method and revelation of His own Gospel.

It is not in man to merit Heaven. Man cannot claim God's highest boon. He possesses no desert in relation to His Maker. Sin still clings about human nature ; it cannot be shaken off. We are all suppliants for Divine mercy ; and if we win Heaven, we shall owe our felicity to the atoning blood of the Saviour. But the work done in this world, the character formed here, the cultivation of the spiritual faculty, are the conditions by which man is in his measure fitted for Heaven and qualified to enjoy the intuitions and devotions of the heavenly life.

The doctrine of the Sheol or Hades as an intermediate state between the present life and the life of perfect bliss lies apart from the subject of this paper. For whether the transition from earth to Heaven be for human spirits an immediate or a purgatorial process, Heaven, as understood in the Christian Church, is undoubtedly the home of redeemed, sanctified, and perfected spirits. And Holy Scripture explicitly declares that there is such a home, and that a man's conduct in this life is profoundly influential upon his happiness hereafter.

But bearing in mind what has been said—*viz.* that the language of our Lord and of His inspired Apostles respecting Heaven is necessarily figurative or suggestive, as it relates to a life of which man possesses no experience—we may proceed to consider both negatively and positively what may be not unjustly conceived to be the life of Heaven.

Our Lord spoke of Heaven in the language of earth. He could not have spoken otherwise so as to be understood at all ; but His language lies open to misconception. It is necessary to put aside some earthly ideas which have obscured the heavenly vision.

Thus the idea of *place* is not in itself proper to Heaven. It was natural that man should think and speak of Heaven as a place ; not less natural that he should think and speak of it as a place above his head. The contrast between the heaven above and the earth beneath was made inevitable by the circumstances of life. Man looks upwards in admiration, downwards in contempt. Hell, then, was locally situated beneath his feet, as was Heaven in his conception over his head. But such a theory is a natural association of ideas ; it is not a scientific statement. Just as the region of the dawn was in pagan creeds taken for the abode of happiness, and the region of the night for that of misery, so it was natural that human imagination, soaring upwards, should fancy itself to approach the Throne of God in Heaven, and that, as it penetrated downwards, it

should fancy itself to descend to the region of the spirits sunk in endless nether gloom. Thus the Psalmist cries, "If I climb up into Heaven, Thou art there : if I go down to Hell, Thou art there also." \* But no philosophical mind will mistake this imagery for sober scientific truth.

Similarly the idea of *time* is not proper to Heaven. Time is a condition of material existence ; it is not a condition of immaterial existence. In the life of spirits, as in the life of Him who is Spirit, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. It is true that Jesus Christ in speaking of Heaven habitually used the language of time as well as of place, and His use of this language was a necessity, as He could not speak to men of life except in such terms as were associated with life ; but none the less His language is a concession to human infirmity, and it would be no less wrong to conceive of Heaven as an everlasting period than to conceive of it as a supernal region. Ageless time (if it may be so called) is Heaven's period. Even in this life within human experience there are moments when the soul transcends, or seems to transcend, temporal limitations. Similarly—but in far greater degree—the rapture of the saints, the ecstasy of redeemed and sanctified spirits, is exempt from the conditions of time. Heaven is not a place or a period, but a state ; it is spiritual existence in its pure and perfect form. As our Lord Himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee

\* Ps. cxxxix. 8.



the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."\*

Is it possible to understand that existence?

It is necessary to look a little at the nature of man. For there is no doubt that the being which survives, and survives eternally, in Heaven is essentially the same being as existed upon earth. The continuity—the identity—remains. In what, then, does the identity consist? According to the invariable teaching of the New Testament, it is the soul or  $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$  of man which is immortal. But the soul is only a part of human nature, or, to speak exactly, it includes two parts of the composite human nature. For if human nature consists, as it does, of body, mind, and spirit (the mind including the affection as well as the intellect), then the soul is the sum of the mind and spirit, or, in other words, of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties of man.

The soul, then, is the seat of personality or identity; and it is the soul which is immortal and enters Heaven. But if we know what it is that is immortal, we may hope to know what it is that the immortal being is capable of being or doing. The intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties of man continue eternally. And Heaven is the perfected state or activity of these faculties. It is right to guard or limit the conception of Heaven, as has been seen, by negative principles. But no merely negative conception of Heaven can be just. To regard it simply as a state of immunity from sin and sorrow

\* John xvii. 3.

and suffering is to mistake its character altogether. That in Heaven the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest is true enough. But Heaven is none the less a state of constant activity. It is gravely misconceived, if it is represented as a cessation of work, a state of indolence or perpetual psalm-singing. The reward of fidelity in few things is not inactivity, but the opportunity of showing fidelity in many things. He who has ruled a few cities faithfully will become a ruler over many cities. The only legitimate Scriptural conception of Heaven is that in it the intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties operate as on earth, only more vividly and intensely, and without such drawbacks as are incidental to the circumstances of human life.

But the life of Heaven is clearly distinguished from the earthly life. Thus the human intellect is on earth subject to infirmity. It is often the victim of error or defeat or weariness. Man is impotent to learn the truth that he longs to know. He cannot hope to comprehend an Infinite Providence. The sense of impenetrable mystery hangs over him and gives him pain. Even his belief in God he holds with fear and trembling; it is not an absolute certainty to him, but the best of probabilities. He knows only how little he knows or can ever know so long as he lives. He is like a child playing on the shore of the ocean of truth. And this limitation of human knowledge is consequent, as the facts clearly show, upon the material character of human life. But let the materialism be done

away, let the spirit of man be no more cloyed and darkened by flesh, and the full light from Heaven will flow in. It may be reasonably surmised that the soul in its celestial state will be permitted to realise the magnificence of the Divine providential purpose reaching from eternity to eternity, and to dwell upon it with rapturous devotion. There will be an end of doubt, of difficulty, of denial. The book sealed with seven seals will be unloosed. It shall be the "Lamb as it had been slain" who shall unloose it. Then shall the secret of God be known. Then shall His qualities of power and love be recognised and harmonised. The Incarnation will be clearly seen as the central fact of Providence. Faith will merge in sight. Hope will issue in adoration. In the stately language of the Apocalyptic vision the song shall be sung, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."\*

Again, as on earth the intellectual faculty of man is subject to error, so is his moral faculty to sin. This is too plain a fact to be gainsaid. Man is a creature of passions and emotions; but there is no passion or emotion that is not potentially, and often practically, sinful. The lust of the flesh, as Holy Scripture calls it, in its varied manifestations tends towards sin. The more eager are human desires, the more they approximate to sin. Sin as a pall

\* Rev. v. 9.

spreads over human life. It is thrown into greater relief by the virtuous affections which it so often resists and defeats. To desire goodness and to fail of it perpetually, to be what we would not be and to hate ourselves for being so, to be ever on the verge of a victory that is never won—such is the weary indefeasible lot of man. In what striking words does St. Paul describe it! “The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”\*

But let it be supposed that the passions and emotions are intensified and at the same time emancipated from the taint of sin, that love is perfectly pure and ambition selfless and duty a joy that never fails: is not this essentially the life of Heaven? The nature of man, as has been said, is partly emotional. But his emotions are not understood in their dignity and beauty so long as they are compromised by temptation. It is at the gate of Heaven, where the emotions are at once quickened and sanctified, that it will be given to man to realise what his true nature is.

But the same reasoning applies to the spiritual as to the intellectual or the moral faculty of man. It is the spiritual faculty whereby we know God. God is Spirit, and we approach Him spiritually or not at

\* Rom. vii. 19, 22, 23.

all. But on earth the spiritual vision is obscured by the flesh. It is only at rare moments that we rise, as it were, into the presence of God. St. Paul so rose when he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter"; but such rapture was even in his experience unique. For the most part we catch but faint and far-off glimpses of Divine things. Between God and man a veil still hangs. As we enter the heavenly city that veil will be rent in twain. We shall see Him face to face. The spiritual faculty of man will find its consummation in the unclouded vision, the incessant adoration, of the Almighty.

Thus worship will be not the sole but the supreme activity of the redeemed in Paradise. It is worship which overshadows all other energies in the Divine Apocalypse. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."\* For when knowledge is perfected and emotion purified, there is nothing that can hinder the soul from its absolute self-consecration at the feet of the Most High.

It were easy, but needless, to amplify this theme. It is enough that Heaven should be felt to be the perfectness—the perfect state and perfect exercise—of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties, which are embarrassed and darkened on earth by frailty and sin.

May it be said here that theology, and Protestant theology more than any other, has tended to make

\* Rev. iv. 8.



too much of death? Death is not the end of life, but an event in life. The death of saints is an emancipation from limiting conditions. It is a progress, an exaltation. It is the entrance into a new sublime existence. Under whatever form and by whatever means, it is the sole avenue by which man passes, or can pass, into the immediate presence of the Creator. But as he was in the years of his mortal life, so he is, except for his deliverance from the flesh, after the event of death.

Human life, then, is a discipline for Heaven. Man, if he shall inherit heaven, must be prepared for it; and the preparation must begin on earth.

This view of Heaven is, or ought to be, profoundly influential upon the conduct of life. For if the soul passes from the earthly life into the heavenly, taking with it the faculties possessed and developed on earth, then how vital, how paramount, is the duty of cultivating these faculties in the earthly life! We shall not enter upon immortality as paupers or novices, but as invested with all the attainments and the virtues which we have acquired, however painfully, upon earth. There can be no sure justification for the belief that by any process of sudden conversion the lot of one who has taken no pains with himself in this life, who has formed no habit of industry, or humility, or devotion, or purity, will in the next life be immediately equalised with the lot of one who has spent his earthly life in prayer and penitence and patient well-doing,

As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye.

The dignity of life rests upon the assurance that human actions are not limited in their effect to the mere threescore and ten years of mortality ; but that dignity becomes more solemn and profound, if it be realised that the formation of character upon earth is the seed-plot of an eternal destiny. There is no more moralising or inspiring sentiment than that every sin or shame of earth must meet its due penalty in the eternal world, and conversely that every duty done upon earth, every victory over self, every sacrifice endured, every cup of cold water given for Christ's sake to His little ones, will not lose its recognition and its recompense when He shall have established the Kingdom.

This paper has been occupied with the nature of the heavenly life ; it has not touched upon the law of salvation. Let it be said again, however, lest I chance to be misunderstood, that, though man may and must fit himself for Heaven by the discipline of his tastes, affections, dispositions, and activities, he cannot hope to merit Heaven by anything that he can do ; he must rest his hope upon the efficacy of that which has been done for him by One who is greater than himself, even upon the atoning sacrifice of the Saviour.

But the considerations advanced in this paper suggest a solution of a problem that has occurred to many an anxious, yearning heart in the presence of death. It is asked if they who have known and loved upon earth will regain such mutual knowledge in eternity.

Can it be doubted that this knowledge will be theirs?

Continuity, it has been said, is by death not broken; identity remains; personality survives the grave. As the poet of the *In Memoriam* says expressively—

Eternal form shall still divide  
The eternal soul from all beside.

And if it be so, then it may be permitted to hope—nay, indeed, to believe intensely—that in Heaven we shall enjoy the society of those who have been nearest to us and dearest upon earth. We shall know them, and they us. We shall live with them in full and free communion. We shall meditate with them upon the Divine Almighty goodness. We shall participate in their joy, their gratitude, their adoration. Only the saddest of all earthly fears—the fear of separation—will be wanting. The intimacy of souls will not be darkened by the overshadowing sense that it cannot endure for more than a brief space. There will be no more parting for ever.

This, or something like this, the celestial state may be reverently conceived to be. This is the answer of the Church to the question, What is Heaven?

J. E. C. WELLDON.







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