

BV 4637 .H8
Hutton, John Alexander, 18
-1947.
The fear of things

✓
"Preachers of To-day"

THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
EDITED BY J. STUART HOLDEN, M.A.

THE FEAR OF THINGS

JOHN A. HUTTON, M.A.

“PREACHERS OF TO-DAY”

EDITED BY

REV. J. STUART HOLDEN, M.A.,

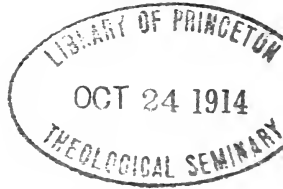
VICAR OF ST. PAUL'S, PORTMAN SQUARE, W.

Each Volume Cloth Gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

- CHRIST AND EVERYDAY LIFE. [Ready.
By Rev. W. E. CHADWICK, D.D., B.Sc.
- THE FEAR OF THINGS. ”
By Rev. JOHN A. HUTTON, M.A.
- THE EXCHANGED CROWNS. ”
By Rev. A. ROWLAND, D.D.
- HERE AND HEREAFTER. [Shortly.
By Rev. J. E. WATTS-DITCHFIELD.
- THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH. [Jan. 1911.
By Rev. R. C. JOYNT, M.A.
- JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION. [Feb. 1911.
By Rev. Canon F. B. MACNUTT, M.A.
- THE CALL OF JESUS. [Shortly.
By Rev. CHARLES BROWN.
- THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT. [Shortly.
By Rev. J. M. E. ROSS, M.A.

Other Volumes in this Library will be announced from time to time, full particulars may be obtained from the Publisher.

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT.



THE FEAR OF THINGS

BY THE REV.

✓
JOHN A. HUTTON, M.A.

AUTHOR OF

"THE AUTHORITY AND PERSON OF OUR LORD"

"GUIDANCE FROM ROBERT BROWNING IN MATTERS OF FAITH"

"PILGRIMS IN THE REGION OF FAITH" ETC.

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT
62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
NEW YORK: GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

MCMXI

“What, if all be error!—
If the halo irised round my head were,
Love, thine arms?”

R. BROWNING.

“If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars.”

A. H. CLOUGH.

“Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God;
believe also in Me. . . . If it were not so, I
would have told you.”

THE WORD OF THE LORD.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
AN INTRODUCTION: ON THE NATURE OF EVIDENCE	I
"The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."—DEUT. xxxiii. 27.	
THE FEAR OF THE THRESHOLD	II
"While He thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud."—ST. LUKE ix. 34.	
THE PRACTICE OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD	24
"Have faith in God."—ST. MARK xi. 22.	
FAITH, AN ACTIVITY OF THE SOUL	35
"The work of faith."—I THESS. i. 3.	
OUR SHELTER IN GOD	45
"The shadow of the Almighty."—PS. xci. 1.	
FAITH, THE REINFORCEMENT OF AN INSTINCT	56
"And the mirage shall become a lake."—ISA. xxxv. 7.	
THE REPROACH OF PAST DAYS: HOW WE CAN MEET IT	67
"And when King David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. . . . Then said Abishai, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the	

	PAGE
King? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the King said, Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who then shall say, Wherefore hast thou done so? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust."—2 SAM. xvi. 5-13.	
HOW GOD ALWAYS PROVIDES A WAY OF ESCAPE	81
"‘There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.’"—1 COR. x. 13.	
THE CHARITY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT	94
"‘And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life.’"—REV. xx. 12.	
OUR LORD'S SERENE OUTLOOK	106
"‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.’"—ST. JOHN xiii. 32.	
THE OPENNESS OF JESUS TOWARDS THOSE WHO NEED HIM	116
"‘And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.’"—ST. MATT. viii. 5-13.	
THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE EMBARRASMENTS OF OUR LIFE	124
"‘And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had	

CONTENTS

xi

	PAGE
appeared unto him twice. . . . And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite. . . . And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah. . . . And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, . . . even he lifted up his hand against the king."— I KINGS xi. 9, 14, 23, 26.	
HOW CHRIST MEANS MORE AND MORE	139
"And He made as though He would have gone further." —ST. LUKE xxiv. 28.	
A PASSING SHADOW ON THE SOUL OF JESUS	149
"Howbeit, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"—ST. LUKE xviii. 8.	
THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE PLEDGE OF GOD'S HONOUR	157
"God . . . who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit." —2 COR. i. 22.	
WEARINESS IN WELL-DOING	172
"And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."—GAL. vi. 9.	
THE HOUR WHEN WORDS FAIL	186
"Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." —ST. JOHN xiii. 7.	
HOW WE HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE	195
"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, <i>he knoweth not how</i> . The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come." —ST. MARK iv. 26-29, R.V.	

THE FEAR OF THINGS

I

AN INTRODUCTION ON THE NATURE OF EVIDENCE

“The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”—DEUT. xxxiii. 27.

WE have a proverb to the effect that “seeing is believing.” What we usually mean when we quote it, is, that the only sure proof that a thing is there is that you see it. And obviously, there is an order of things in which there could be no better test than the test of our eyes. Suppose, for example, that for some reason or other I am sitting in suspense waiting for some news which is going to have a momentous influence upon my entire life. Let it be a case where, if I get a letter, it means that all is well; but if I get no letter it means that the very worst has happened. In every life there are moments of the kind. Now, suppose I have sent a friend to find out for me once for all whether that letter has come. Presently I see him

making towards me, and, knowing my anxiety, he waves a letter in his hand. And my heart sinks into a peace, which is almost painful; it is so great. I *see* the letter, and I believe that my happiness has come. There, indeed, seeing is believing.

And yet it would be an easy thing to show that even in that case the true order was not, first *seeing* and then *believing*, but rather first believing and then seeing, and that it was this complete act of believing and seeing which became the sure ground of my happiness.

I had first of all to believe in the trustworthiness of the man whom I had sent to find out the truth for me. I had to believe in him before the seeing of the letter in his hand could bear the happy interpretation which I put upon it. He might have been a bad man. He might have laid a scheme to hurt me. Knowing my position, and how anxiously I was awaiting news, he might have planned to deceive me. The letter which he waved in his hand might only be a part of his game to lift my poor heart up to the clouds only to let it dash itself next moment on the ground. It might have been no letter at all: it might only have been an envelope. It might have contained nothing, or only an empty sheet of paper, or a sheet bearing some angry words of his own.

You see how earlier than the mere seeing was

the believing ; how, before the mere seeing of the letter in his hand could have its blessed significance for me, I had first of all to believe in him who carried it, to believe that he would do me no wrong, that he would never lift up my heart on wings of hope, only to see me next moment writhing in despair. You see how it was my faith in the man who carried the letter which gave the letter its meaning for me. And I am sure you see this further, that if I really believed in the man, if I really believed that he knew all that was passing in my heart and respected it, there was no need for him even so much as to show me the letter. Certainly there was no need for him to show me the letter before I could be happy. If I really believed in him, it would have been enough for me if he had simply rushed towards me, and, grasping my hand, had said, "Thank God." Nay, I could have gone on even less evidence than that. I should have known by the very manner of his approach to me whether it was going to be life or death to my spirit. I should have known from his very haste that all was well ; as I should have known by his slow and heavy approach that in his great sorrow for me he was already breaking the news and giving me time to recover from the first shock of the disaster. You see how, in every case, all that I needed first was absolute belief in the

man, and how, having that, I could do with very little in the way of signs or corroborations or proofs. The less I trusted the man, the more proofs and signs should I require. I should have to see the very letter ; I should have to read it ; I should have to look up now and then into the man's face to see that he was not deceiving me ; I should have to consider whether the letter bore evidences from its style, from its language, of having come from the very person ; and even then, unless at some stage I simply made up my mind to believe, to trust myself to such evidence as I had, I should still be in doubt, still in distress, as to whether it was indeed from the hand of the very person, and whether the words meant the very meaning that I was putting upon them.

Whereas if my attitude be, not this, of suspicion, and restless doubt, if my attitude be one of confidence, then it will be enough for me if the man in whom I have put my trust, who knows all that I have been enduring, and knows how much the moment means for me—it will be enough, I say, if he simply grasps my hand and says, "Let us give thanks to God." Nay, less than that will serve me ; I shall conclude everything from even the smallest sign—the light of his eyes as he comes near me, or the very manner of his coming when he is still far away. Only later on—only after we

have talked together, and prayed together, and it may even be wept together—only then shall I take up the letter—if I have not forgotten all about it—and read it over with an overflowing heart.

I seem to see this moment that Jesus Christ is that Friend who brings to the soul of man—distressed and in suspense by reasons of various kinds of darkness—(who brings to the soul of man) that communication from the Unseen, that proof of God for which the soul of man was aching, for which, if it should ever sink into total darkness, it will ache and cry out again.

And now, if you have grasped the meaning of that illustration and accepted the principle of it, you have hold of a matter which really decides everything in any ultimate inquiry about this life of ours. The true order everywhere is not “seeing is believing,” but “believing is seeing.” In every level of things, other than the merely physical, this is the order, not, we believe because we see, but we see because we believe. Indeed, even in the things of the external world—trees, houses, the faces of men—we see only because we believe. Even in ordinary seeing, there is first of all the exercise of a certain form of faith: we must first believe in the testimony of our bodily organs, and that we are not colour-blind—as we may very well be—or suffering from some hallucination. But

leaving all that, there is no manner of doubt that this is the law in all matters of higher observation, and of that highest observation which our Lord called—the seeing of God.

Two men take a walk into the country. One sees this and that—because this and that interests him. Indeed there we have started another line of remark, which, I believe, will be found to hold true to every length and depth—we see in this life of ours just that which interests us: and in the final issue only that man sees God whose heart and flesh are crying out for the vision of Him. But, to continue: two men take a walk into the country. The one sees certain things, the other sees certain other things,—it may be a different class of things entirely. One sees long tracts of land which he thinks might well be reclaimed—he sees that because he is thinking every day as every good man should be thinking of any means whereby to ease the pressure of modern problems. He sees, according to his predominant interest. The other, it may be, stands still at a point where the road, after rising for some miles, begins to fall, for there, far away in the western sky, he sees a church-spire standing erect in the ebbing light of the world. And to him it is as sure a word from God as ever was heard by any prophet of the canon. Seeing that spire there, feeling the coming night

with the glory of the sun behind, it is to him the sword of the Lord drawn from its scabbard, the unquenchable faith of the human race in spite of all fading light, the great hope and protest of man, with the energy of God at the back of it against the insinuation of a merely natural doom. Standing thus gazing into the west, gazing on that dying day, with that memorial of the Son of God in the forefront of it, his soul overflows with the ancient faith, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

The sum of all this is, that what one *sees* in this life of ours depends upon what one *is*. "I have searched the heavens with my telescope," said a scientific man, "and I see no God." It was a foolish thing to say. Indeed he must have known it was a foolish thing to say. Great souls have seen God through a telescope. Great souls have seen God even without a telescope. Great souls have seen God, looking upwards even with the naked eye. "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that Thou visitest him"? But the fact is, the meaning of the things seen at the other end of a telescope depends upon the man who is looking; and whether we see God in this mighty world depends, when

all is said, upon certain secrets of our own soul.

It follows from all this, that there is no final proof "that the Eternal God is our Refuge, and underneath the Everlasting Arms"; that there is no proof of God such as will coerce the assent of one who is reluctant to believe or determined not to believe. Faith is assent, not to things evident, such as that snow is white or that iron is hard, for that is knowledge; it is assent, not to things that can be demonstrated, as that the three angles of a triangle together equal two right angles, for that is science; it is assent, not to things which we infer from a process of reasoning, for that is opinion; it is assent to an interpretation of life, to a particular insight into and understanding of ourselves and this world which is offered to us on the testimony of those who have already believed.

The very nature of belief implies that it is not a natural act but a spiritual act. When I say "I believe," I convey the idea at the same time that I am very well aware of certain difficulties from the side of the world and of experience. Men speak of the difficulties in the way of believing in God. But that is precisely why we believe—I mean because of the difficulties. Belief is the great thing it is because it is not the natural

reading of events and circumstances. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.

There is one thing which I have to say further.

There is a sense in which it is perfectly true that you will never find the ten thousand reasons which there are for believing in God the Father, until you do believe, until you *will* to believe, until you take up your life as seeing God, Who is invisible. To say, I shall stand apart from the Christian view of the world, I shall not believe until my reason is convinced and, indeed, coerced, is precisely as though a man should say, I shall never go into the water until I have learned to swim.

There is a sense in which, in the first place, it is a moral duty to believe. But, once *believe*, and the evidence begins to crowd in. Once believe in God for moral and spiritual reasons, and immediately the evidences gather. "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is." Try it. Try the Christian view. Apply it. Work at it. Let it have its way with you, and see if the world does not begin to take on a new and wonderful order. And there is nothing unmanly in taking up the faith-view even before one is intellectually convinced. For to believe in God is, to say no more, to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis. But once again try it. See how it fits you. See how it fits life. Try the faith of Christ on the hard things, the other-

wise baffling things, of life. Try it on your own experience. Let it deal with your most private sorrows, defeats, hopes. And if it fits *you*, do not be afraid to wear it. Is not that the best way to know whether a garment will fit you or not? It is a pedantic and toilsome way, first to measure your arm, and then to measure the sleeve; and then your own height, and the length of it, and so forth. Far better to try on the garment. You will feel in a moment whether it fits you or not. And if here and there there may be a kind of fulness in the garment which at this present moment you could have spared, still do not cast it aside. You do not know all that lies before you. You may yet praise God for that very thing in the garment of your soul's faith for which just now you have no need.

“To believe is to have the mind at Rest in an idea.”

“To believe in God is to have the mind at Rest in the idea of God, *i.e.*, in God.”

THE FEAR OF THE THRESHOLD

“While He thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them : and they feared as they entered into the cloud.”—ST. LUKE ix. 34.

WE can well believe that this was a very precious story to the first disciples of Jesus, and to those who first read the gospel. We are apt to forget that, generally speaking, for the first three hundred years of our era, every one who publicly followed Christ carried his life in his hand. For three hundred years it was no light thing to profess that holy Name which we to-day may use so lightly. For the greater part of those three hundred years a Christian might suddenly be arrested, dragged before a prejudiced tribunal, sentenced to torture, to personal outrage, or to death by the wild beasts in the arena. For three hundred years, with slight intervals, Christ still hung upon the Cross, Christ was still buffeted and spat upon, He still bled, He still cried in the agony of death, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me”—in the body of His faithful people.

Let us not forget that : I wish that all who deal with the New Testament would keep it continually before them. These Gospels were written not as the average modern book is written. These Gospels and Epistles were written for the succour and the peace of people who, meanwhile, stood every moment face to face with death for the sake of their faith. The Gospels and Epistles, passing in fragments, in portions, in sayings, remembered by some one who had heard them read and repeated to others who had not been so fortunate ; the Gospels and Epistles, passing in and out, here and there, secretly transmitted, jealously guarded, and acted upon as the veritable word of the exalted Saviour Whom they were so soon to meet, though it might be on the other side of a river of blood—these Gospels and Epistles, in their first intention and in their first result, were more like Nelson's signal on the eve of Trafalgar—summoning men to make the supreme sacrifice, to hold life cheap for the sake of their own chosen loyalty.

Many an eye, dimmed with tears, first read the words which we to-day may read so carelessly or may even neglect to read. Many a heart, just on the edge of despair, would rise as it were from the dead at the gentle appeal of some word of Jesus. Think how they must have felt, liable as they were at any moment to an outrageous death, to

read on some tattered page which had passed through a thousand fervent hands, "Let not your heart be troubled"! How it must have been the very voice of Christ and His welcome on the other side of death to recall from Gospel and Epistle such words as: "In the world ye shall have tribulations. But be of good courage. *I* have overcome the world"; or, "These things I have told you before they come to pass, that when they are come to pass ye may believe"; or such a verse as, "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the hidden manna." It was on the strength of God, let loose upon them by the recollection of such words, that the Christianity of the first three centuries bore the hatred and cruelty of the world. The anvil of their faith broke the hammer of the world's wrath. In the peace of some remembered words from their holy books

"They met the tyrant's brandished steel,
The lion's gory mane;
Then bowed their necks the death to feel.
Who follows in their train?"

And would not this be a precious story which described to those hard-pressed people how once upon a time, when Jesus and His disciples were on the top of the mountain, and everything peaceful and happy round about them, when they were all so very happy that they could have wished never

to be anywhere else—and indeed St. Peter said so at the time—how just then a cloud overshadowed them? And how the disciples feared as they entered into the cloud—feared as the cloud came rushing towards them. But how, while they were in the midst of the cloud, they heard the comforting voice of God! And how, when the cloud passed, they saw nothing but the dear face of their Master, Whom they thought they had lost in the darkness, but Who was there, oh yes, there beside them all the time, and now more dear than ever for the terror that had passed!

“They feared as they entered into the cloud.” It is to those words in particular that I now wish to bring your minds. Even as I repeat them you feel, I am sure, the kind of mood which I wish to describe. And I wish to describe it so that when it comes to ourselves we may deal wisely with it. “They feared as they entered into the cloud.” I am thinking then of the fear, the misgiving, the suspense, the anxiety which oppresses us when we are on the eve of something strange or unusual. I am not thinking of the agitations which may come upon us when we are in the midst of difficult things. I am thinking of the natural shrinking, the doubt and hesitation with which we enter upon a new field of human experience. I am thinking of the fear of the

threshold—the fear of what may be lying in wait for us just on the other side of some door through which, nevertheless, we must pass.

Such a fear—the fear of the threshold—is a natural and, within limits, a proper human feeling. There may be those who have little or no experience of it. But I cannot say whether or not these are the really fortunate people in this world. It is true that those who are free from sensitiveness escape many a wound and many a disaster. They avoid many of the keenest human sufferings. But we must never forget that they miss likewise the most exquisite and blessed experiences. And from the point of view of spiritual attainment, and even, so far as one can see, of ultimate destiny, they must always take the lower place. There is a law of compensation in these matters, and sensitive souls have their secrets. Their very capacity for fear is a capacity for God. Their faculty for fear is, as it were, an eager hand stretched out in the darkness—a hand which God may grasp.

Whether or not we acknowledge it to one another, we have all of us, as we stand on the threshold of new experiences and new responsibilities, a feeling which is really a feeling of fear. At such a moment we are conscious that we are not living our usual life. We have come upon a

deeper level of ourselves. In the case of good and religious people there is the wish at such a time to put away everything foolish from ourselves. We want to find a basis for our life somewhere nearer the centre, so that were the experience on which we are entering to confirm our worst fears, we should yet have something to stand upon.

This impalpable sense of danger which in all kinds of ways all kinds of people feel as they stand on the edge of hard things, far from being a sign of weakness or of guilt, is most probably a wise precaution which God has planted in our nature. It may be the recollection in the depths of our being of innumerable perils and escapes from peril all through our long career in this world. It may therefore be a natural and human safeguard to which we are to pay respect. In any case, in all normal souls it is *there*; and it demands the consideration which is due to every principle of our nature, to every faculty which survives within us, coming down from far-off days.

This fear of the threshold is not always associated with our own immediate concerns. In the case of Christian people, it is probably more frequently concerned with the good, with the happiness and peace, of others.

Christian people are people whose greatest cares are not for themselves.

It is not that they have no care for themselves. That *was* their first care; but if they are truly Christian, they have *thought out* their own personal matter, and have once and for all surrendered their deep and best interests to whatever may be the will of God. But having thus disposed of themselves, true Christians are the only people in the world who are free to care for others. And it is in connection with others that they taste at times what I have called the fear of the threshold.

Let me illustrate this point. Good people in our own day may very well regard with some anxiety the general appearance of our modern life. I care not under what aspect you view it, good and serious people have abundant ground for uneasiness, as they forecast the future and try to imagine what is likely to happen if things, as they are, go on, as is their way, to become the seeds of the things that shall be. We shall differ probably in the field which we shall select as ground for our misgiving. One may have his heart burdened by the appearance of international rivalries. He sees the nations of the world yielding almost without protest to feelings of jealousy and mutual distrust. He sees no sign of slackening in the race for wealth. He sees an increase of the spirit of cynicism, a frank acceptance of the brutal doctrine of force. He sees all that, and the subject

is always with us to-day ; he sees it all as a dark cloud, a cloud charged with lightning—and he fears as he enters into that cloud.

Another's anxiety has other ground. He is afraid for the soul in man in these hurrying days. He is afraid lest man may lose his tenderness, his culture even, the finer and hard-won qualities of the spirit ; it may be through the restless pursuit of wealth, through the withering animosities of society ; or, in the case of others, through the intolerable conditions of mean poverty to which they are reduced. For, in the case of tens of thousands of people in modern states and cities, the question to-day has come to be not whether Christianity is true, but whether Christianity is possible ; possible as a daily habit of mind, as a daily ethic for people placed as they are, who, it would seem, must live as they have to live. In any case, for many a tender and religious soul that is the great cloud looming up in the sky, with, it may be, a hurricane behind it—a cloud of conflict between interests, between those who have and those who have not, between too great wealth and too bitter poverty,—a cloud which may burst, because of the hardness of men's hearts, or a cloud which may pass away out to sea—as God grant it may—through the coming into the hearts of rich and poor, high and low, fortunate and miserable, a new enthusiasm

for sacrifice, a new shrinking from merely material goods. That is the cloud which many a tender eye sees coming, and, as they enter into it, they are afraid.

Then, there are those whose great fear to-day is that liberty may have gone too far—liberty of action, yes, and also liberty of thought. When this fear is instructed and honourable, it is that liberty may have lost in the thoughts of men its note of responsibility, and so may have sunk into a scramble of self-assertion and licence. Many a tender soul sees, or thinks he sees, the whole world preparing to make life a kind of carnival. The authority of the Bible, they say, has gone. The authority of the Church has gone. The authority of the State, the right of the State to exact obedience, that is going. Ideas which minister to man's pride are encouraged. Ideas which rebuke his lower desires in the name of his higher nature are lost in a general disapproval. That is the cloud which seems to be hurrying over us, causing many to fear.

Now, it will not do to dismiss these fears as idle. It will not do to say that these are the lamentations of dreamy idealists who are disappointed; though, even so, they would be worthy of consideration. It is no sign of faith to say at every stage, and face to face with every general spirit, that all is well—

and to quote Browning on the point. It is true that God's in His heaven. And it is true that all is well with the world—ultimately. But it is just because God's in His heaven, and because things are bound ultimately to be according to God, that good men do well to fear.

And yet we must take care that our fears do not harden into doubt or anger or despair. The honourable use of fear is to arouse us to our duty. The first thing that fear does for a good man is to lead him to examine himself,—is to lead him to see whether God and he are still on the old terms. When the mercury falls, when the sea begins to rise, when all the signs point to a storm, the wise captain sees that the vital things are secure and that his ship is made tight for its trial. So God sends us these fears, not, on the one hand, that we may deride them, and not, on the other hand, that we may simply become ill-tempered prophets, causing people to lose heart. God sends these fears upon His own people, who always see what is coming long before it comes, in order that they may separate themselves in spirit from the courses which are leading to evil, and in order that they may, by their fidelities of speech and of silence and of behaviour, and by their hidden and unceasing intercessions, do what in them lies to avert the storm and to work the ship.

Let me close on general principles. "They feared as they entered into the cloud." You might divide the things which cause us to fear into three classes. Certainly there are three elementary causes for fear in the human breast; and every mood of fear which we experience is related to one or other of those three.

First, there is our fear of nature. Second, there is our fear of man or society. Third, there is our fear of God—which in the case of many takes the form of fear of what lies beyond this world.

Nature, Society, God: these are man's irreducible circumstances. It is out of these he fashions the garment of his immortal spirit.

What is the fear of nature? As I am thinking of it just now, it is the awful fear that we may, after all, be inhabitants of a blind and senseless world. This is a fear to which the learning of our time has vastly contributed. It is the fear which lies behind all the poetry of Tennyson. It is the feeling that we dwell in a Universe too huge to care for us. Astronomy, geology, biology—what are these to many in our day except just what the poet called them?—

"Greek-endings, each a little tinkling bell,
That signifies some faith's about to die."

And what is the fear of society, or the fear of man? Why, it is the fear—which I am sure not one of us is free from—of going down in the fierce and cruel striving of our time. I would call it the fear of poverty, of failure. And this not necessarily poverty for ourselves. That, we are not so greatly afraid of. But poverty for our children it may be, or for ourselves, indeed, if we are alone in the world, and are not very strong, or very learned, or very resourceful.

And as for the fear of God—I mean just the fear of God: the fear of our Moral Judge. The fear of what awaits us in that undiscovered bourne from which no traveller has returned. We have lived. We have done what we have done. We are what we have made ourselves. But—

“How will the thing strike you and me
In the house not made with hands?”

Nature, Society, God: these are the clouds which, now one and now the other, roll up towards us and overwhelm us. Thank God, in the face of them, one by one and all together, we have Jesus Christ. We can meet them by His side. We can meet them in His faith. Happy are we if, when such clouds darken our sky, we, like the disciples, can hear in the darkness a comforting voice, and can feel in some blessed peace of the soul, that we

are not separated from the Saviour of the world. And blessed are we if, when all earth-born clouds are cleared away, we find ourselves both now and hereafter beholding the unveiled face of Christ.

III
THE PRACTICE OF CONFIDENCE
IN GOD

“Have faith in God.”—ST. MARK xi. 22.

FABER begins one of his religious papers with the abrupt demand: “What has God done that His creatures do not trust Him?” He means to say that the natural and proper thing for man is to “have faith in God.” Why then, he asks, has faith the poor place it has in the lives of so many of us? Whenever we get away from the routine of our daily life, when we take a look at the stars, so to speak, we begin to feel that the one thing we need and must have is faith in God—in One, Who is in all, and the all, and over all. We live every day in the midst of forces which are beyond our control for ever. We go in and out and do our business in a world which, from any point of view, is mysterious; in a world which, without faith, would crush and annihilate our spirit by its very immensity and silence. This earth which, meanwhile, is our home, is but one world amongst millions—a frail barque on the sea of infinite space. Compared with the whole creation, this earth of

ours is a very little thing. Yet it was our birth-place, and it will be our grave! What need there is then for faith! To trust ourselves to Him is surely our only natural and proper life! For His own purposes God has placed us where we are. He knows how many hearts have felt the mystery in things. He knows how human existence has raised its hard questions in human hearts, and these hearts the very hearts of His own elect. But if He has spoken to us—and we believe He has spoken to us—why should we hesitate to obey the instinct of our nature, the guidance of our need, and put our trust in Him? We have each taken our passage in the great voyage; or, rather, we had no choice in the matter. When first we awoke to life we were already out upon the deep. And now we and all things are out on the vast waters, for ever sailing, sailing. That is our condition. But why should we be afraid, who believe that it is only our condition, *i.e.*, that it is the particular set of circumstances which was appointed for us by the Author of our being? “He hath made us and not we ourselves”: and it is an unquenched faith of the human soul, it is the faith which saves from madness beings such as we are who can think and feel, it is an unquenched faith that He Who made us what we are knew what He was doing, that He did not give us what He has given us—reason,

imagination, faith, hope, and love—in order at the last to dash us from our hard-won place and to cover us in a sea of forgetfulness for ever.

Once upon a time, when the human heart had lost its faith, when those on board the ship of life had grown afraid of their awful surroundings, when the great sea of eternity troubled the hearts of men and depressed their natural energy, God sent into our midst *One* to save the human family from despair. He came on board the faltering ship. He made the passage with us for some days; and He did not leave us until He had brought the ship to its true bearings, and had left instructions for the rest of the voyage. In a word, Jesus Christ came into this world to help men to believe in God, and to live in the confidence and strength and final peace of such a faith.

I wish then, at this present time, to consider two things.

Man's need of faith in God, and Christ's fitness and authority for urging such a faith upon us all.

Man's need of faith. The condition of mankind in general before Christ came, was just the condition of heart and mind in which any one would be to-day were he to look out upon the human scene and in upon himself without any faith in God. The world had reached that

stage in its history when, if the human soul had not been taken hold of and reinforced, it would have lost its ambition and given way to despair—and to the sins of despair. The world had reached that very point in its history to which every thinking person comes sooner or later. Here is where it is, and how we reach it.

It is the natural instinct of a child to believe. The ideas of God and of heaven are very real to children. They believe naturally and unconsciously: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." And so, when Jesus wished to show men what faith was, and especially to show the Pharisees that their sourness and suspicion were not faith, He took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot *see* the Kingdom of God." Jesus said, to have faith is to have the unquestioning outlook, the final carelessness of children. But of course we cannot remain in the natural state of children. The growing child passes on, and the shadows of experience begin to fall upon him. He meets the world. There he learns that he cannot get many things he wants. He sees that things have not been arranged with the sole purpose of pleasing him. He meets opposition and the overthrow of many of his plans. He begins to feel that life is a complicated business

which, if it is to be explained at all, must be explained on some level deeper than the surface. He has lost the sweet feeling of his childhood that life is a small and manageable matter, and that things happen always, just as they ought to happen in a beautiful story. Soon he mixes with life, and looks upon it with the eyes and with the knowledge of a man. The thought may come to him that this world is not *altogether* in the hands of God. Certainly there is good in the world; but there is also evil. There are good people and good institutions; but there are also bad people and bad institutions.

Part of the world is apparently in the hands of God; but part of it undoubtedly is in other hands. There is a good spirit and there is an evil spirit.

And then the question arises, Which of these two seems to be gaining the victory? Which is destined to triumph? What reason is there for thinking that good is really stronger than evil? Does there not seem to be more badness than goodness in the world? Do not bad people seem to get on? Why, if God is there, does He not strike them to the earth with a blow?

And so, on and on, the problems of human life begin to make their assaults upon the repose of his childhood. In a word, "the golden bowl is broken." Now it is at this stage in our life that

we stand in need of some one who, by his word, by his authority, can give our soul a push over the line, adding that something to us which in delicate moments of personal choice makes all the difference between believing and denying, between having a soft heart about this life of ours and having a hard heart. This is the stage of our life when we must have the faith of our childhood defended and reinforced, the faith, namely, that this is God's world, and that we are here not simply to pass the time, but to fight for a Cause and to keep a Flag from trailing in the mire.

Now, we read that Jesus Christ came in the fulness of the times. He came, as we say, in time, at the very moment. He came just in time to catch the soul of man at that perilous point in its history.

I am not sure that men and women—certainly the finest men and woman—would have been content to keep up the struggle against the evils of the world and of their own hearts, all reinforced by the terrible silence of God and the disorders of society, if something had not happened about the time of Christ such as actually did happen. For what was the situation into which Christ came and to which He put an end? A profound melancholy had settled down upon the spirits of all serious people. The others simply went on, with their

eyes upon the ground, with the dumb fortitude of beasts. Nothing seemed worth living for. The highest teaching of the time declared that life was a useless burden. Some were even beginning to ask themselves and to ask one another whether they needed to endure the miserable doom of life, whether they needed to go on and on through a dreary desert of days only to die by the way and be covered in the sand. And so men began to lay violent hands upon themselves; and those who did so, mark you, were the wise and the rich and the good. As for the others, as for the aged, the sick, the dying, as for the orphans, the defeated, the broken in spirit, as for all the unrecorded ones who, nevertheless, had their own sore and their own grief,—what must have been their view of this life of ours? what heart can they have had to endure their mean, monotonous days?

Such was the condition of the world when Jesus came. It is the condition of the world still wherever He is not. The human soul lay dying, dying of weariness, dying of an inner distaste for life, dying for want of any holy idea of itself, dying for want of air, that is to say, for want of God:—when Jesus met it on its way, even as He met the bier on which lay the body of the widow's son of Nain, and whispered, "Have faith in God," and the dead arose.

I cannot at this time trace to all its sources that weariness of spirit, that moral impotence which from time to time falls upon the spirit of man. We do know, however, that sin, personal moral failure, has always this effect—it deepens and seems to confirm the natural darkness of this world. We know that sin lays us open to melancholy and despair. We know that any one who has been giving way under temptations begins to lose his sureness, and may even turn and rend himself. We know how a life of sin, a life of constant acquiescence in the seductions of the world, a life without protest, without any fine recovery of itself in God,—we know how such a life, itself a victim to its surroundings, begins to see all life as being in its own condition, without order, without moral meaning, without God.

But even apart from that tendency towards dulness and misery and death, which is one of the proper consequences of living against God or without God, even apart from that, the human soul had begun to fail, had begun to fall back, had begun to give up the fight before the face of life—when the Lord Jesus came upon the scene. And those facts of life, of nature, of history, of personal experience, those facts which wore down the spirit of man two thousand years ago, are still there, are still before us, and soon or late will wear down our

strength, our energy, our zest for the severe and happy way of life unless we, in our day, drink anew of that spiritual Rock which has followed us, which Rock is Christ.

And now, let me ask, as I do in reverence, what authority Jesus claims for urging upon men His faith in God. It might be enough to say that Jesus Christ being Who He is, is in this matter, as in all matters, not to be questioned but simply to be obeyed. And yet it was never our Lord's way to thrust His authority upon us. He rather *persuades* us to put our trust in Him. Before any one has the right or the power to bid us "have faith in God," that one must have *two* qualifications. For one thing, he must know God, and for another thing, he must have gone through the very darkness which he is asking us to meet in faith. Any one who would urge us to believe in God must himself know God, and must himself have suffered. But surely these are conditions which Jesus our Saviour abundantly fulfils. He has surely won the right to speak to us about God. He has made trial of God. He has gone before us through life and death. He bids men believe in God, and He speaks not from the throne but from the Cross. Not from any easy place far removed from our sorrow did Jesus bid us have faith in God; but from beneath His own great burden, in

His days of loneliness and of suffering, from the Garden where His soul was heavy with a sorrow so great that none of us is good enough to feel all the loneliness of it. It is from no place of easy experience that Jesus bids you put your trust in His Father, but from the Cross whereon He had just cried with a loud voice: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

This, rightly considered, is our blessed Lord's authority, this is His crown,—His experience, His solitude, His suffering for the true faith in God. He tasted the last poignancy of possible sorrow, He trod the loneliest passages of human grief, and at every stage He found God near. It is this God in Whom we are to put our trust. It is not in God, as we might with difficulty see glimpses of His nature in the physical world or in history, that we are to put our trust. It is in the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are to believe in that Eternal Spirit who was loyal to Jesus Christ in His human career. We are to believe in that Father of Peace who supported and filled the soul of Jesus while He lived our life on earth; that Father of Peace who brought Jesus Christ up from the dead through the blood of an everlasting Covenant.

Have faith in God. Yes; faith is a call. It is an appeal, not an argument or a conclusion. It is

an appeal which Jesus Christ has won the right to make by reason of His victory of faith—an appeal to us, in the great alternatives between good and evil, between believing and losing heart, between patience and despair, between seeking God and denying God,—an appeal to us to take our stand in this world with Him.

IV

FAITH, AN ACTIVITY OF THE SOUL

“The work of faith.”—I THESS. i. 13.

OF the three phrases which the Apostle uses in this verse—“The work of faith, the labour of love, the patience of hope”—the one which is most difficult to understand with exactness is certainly the first, “The work of faith.”

“The labour of love,”—that comes home to us all at once. We know that love at its purest has within itself the quality of pain. Love is, indeed, an election to suffering. A pure love lays us open to a thousand assaults of suspense and fear. In every great love there have been hours of pain. Love is not really possible except in sensitive souls, and a sensitive soul is just a soul which can feel even the least thing terribly. There is a cross at the heart of love.

The other phrase—“the patience of hope”—if somewhat more obscure, also comes home to us at once as something which we ourselves know to be true. We only need to consider for a moment to see that patience is the very heart of hope. To

be living by a great hope is for any one of us to be living in the midst of fears. To be living in this world on some private hope is like carrying some precious vessel across a crowded street. Anything may happen. A strong hope introduces us at once to a new world of misgivings and possible disasters. If we had no hopes in this world, we should have no fears. If we had no expectations, we should have no disappointments. But because we hope, we suffer, that is, we live. Like love, like any spiritual call, like any word of God, hope brings not peace, but a sword.

In the same way—so the Apostle must mean—work is the very soul of faith, the very atmosphere in which faith lives. We know that where *love* is, there is that inner condition of longing and suspense and prayer—a true travail of the soul. We know, too, that where hope is, there will always be need of patience, the soul steadying itself under the shock of many a disappointment. In the same way—so the Apostle assumes—faith puts its own kind of strain upon the soul; faith too involves us in a kind of life of its own. He who would have his lamp of faith burn brightly, must see to it that he lives in an atmosphere of *work*. He must see to it that he purge his soul of all indolence and heaviness; that he gird up the loins of his mind; that he respond to all his surroundings, acting and

reacting, maintaining a certain alertness and watchfulness, accepting and rejecting according to a kind of spiritual taste or standard within himself. In short, faith also puts the soul upon a certain strain; and as the strain of love has for its note, labour, and as the strain of hope has for its note, patience, so the strain of faith has for its note, *work*.

Now, at the very outset, this is not the opinion about faith which you will find amongst outsiders, amongst those who are opposed to Christianity or are indifferent to it. In their view, faith is a form of human weakness or insincerity. It is the sign, not of alertness and energy and daring on the part of a man; but either of ignorance, as not knowing the world, or of simple indolence and cowardice. In fact, faith is often alluded to by people outside the church as though it were the sign of some want of thoroughness, some defect either in the region of the intelligence or of the will. They speak disparagingly of faith as being an easy and convenient thing—an attitude which men fall into when they have lost the mental vigour of their youth; or when, having fallen into some moral distress, they become panic-stricken, and “cry unto the Lord.”

Now the point of this text is that here St. Paul says something about *faith* which is the very

opposite of all that. He says it is not the easy and convenient thing—to believe; but the hard and inconvenient thing. It is not easy either to begin to believe or to go on believing, with our eyes open, in this world. The easy thing, the thing which requires no thinking, no examination of one's spirit, the easy thing is *not* to believe. For, to say no more, to believe means to insist that this world belongs to a holy God and must go God's way, whereas not to believe means to decide that the world belongs to nobody, and that it may—as the phrase is—go to the devil.

Yes: the easy thing certainly is, not to believe. The easy thing is, to go by the senses, to go by the first appearance of things. Since the unseen world is not as plain as a stone wall, the easy thing is to deny that there is any unseen world. The hard thing surely, the thing which implies a certain personal distinction and peculiarity, is to see God, and to hear in the midst of this world's din the whisper of His inviolable will. Faith is surely harder than sight, and bears witness to a finer and more delicate perception. It is easier to build a fence than to write a poem. It is easier to paint a wall than to paint a picture. It is easier to be engaged in the business of the world—its eating and drinking and its pleasures—than to feel the power and summons of that other world of which

the best souls are aware. It is easier to see nothing than to see God. Fifty men, a thousand men, can walk over the fields in the evening, for one who, as he walks, can feel what Wordsworth felt when he wrote the lines on Tintern Abbey. And which of them was right? The fifty men who saw nothing, or Wordsworth who saw God; the fifty men who felt nothing, or Wordsworth who "felt the Presence which disturbs us with the joy of elevated things, the sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky, and in the mind of man"?

It is surely easier to see than to believe. Well that, it seems to me, is the idea underlying the words—"the work of faith."

And the idea is that *faith* lives within an atmosphere of work, of spiritual liveliness, and daring.

—The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." That is to say, he who has faith has within himself as his own personal secret the proof and the pledge of things not seen. It is by his faith that he perceives the unseen world and takes hold on God. It is therefore the work of faith to keep clear and free from

all obstacles and hindrances and distorting mediums, the passage between one's soul and God.

Now one thing which that involves is, that a man must deal strictly with himself. He must take charge of his own personal integrity and honour. For let us never forget that one can believe only what he is meanwhile living for. Anything else is not faith. It is at best superstition ; it is an attempt to outwit God by a manoeuvre. Let us say it again : a man can really believe only what he is meanwhile living for. We believe in the unseen only as we live for the unseen. We believe in the soul and in God only as we reverence the soul—the divine capacity in ourselves and in others. Let any one live frankly for this world, and what is the penalty ? Many things doubtless, but this for certain : that person loses all happy sense of God. The unseen becomes simply nothing to him—unless indeed a place of threatening. None of us can give his whole strength to things seen, and retain a happy confidence in things unseen. We cannot go on forgetting God in the real purposes of our life, and at the same time see God—except by flashes of lightning.

Now it is the work of faith, by personal strictness, by private and sincere dealings with God, by prayers and regular confessions of ourselves in the presence of our Saviour—it is the work of

faith to keep clear within us the vision of God. It is a work this which is altogether private, peculiar to each one. It is laid upon every one of us to be faithful to the things of his spirit. Each of us has his own besetting sin. Each of us has his own history, his own reason for looking upon himself in a particular way. It is the lonely calling of each one of us that we fall not out of contact with God.

For example, each one must pay heed to the warning voices which are known only to himself, the voices which warn him of the dangers—for him—of certain ways of living. Each one must observe what things disturb his conscience, and make him feel that he cannot look up to God with comfort.

When men wish to test the air in some disused shaft or well, they let down a light. So long as the light burns brightly, the air is fresh and safe for man to breathe. But if the light begins to smoke, or if the light goes out, *that* means that it has come into the atmosphere and region of death for man. This is the very idea underlying a great saying of Paul's that "the peace of God shall guard our heart and mind."

It is laid upon each one of us, and it ought to be a happy responsibility—it is our work of faith, to take up the obscure tasks within ourselves which we know must be attended to if we are to live on

happy terms with Jesus Christ our Lord. We must see to it that the Holy Spirit has His way with us. We must work along with the Holy Spirit, we must work *out* (as we read elsewhere)—we must work *out*, work out in real actions within ourselves and in the world also, what the Holy Ghost is working into us. If we refuse this work of faith, if we disregard and put aside these private instructions of the Holy Spirit—why, then, we are like children who have disobeyed a mother whom all the time they love—we are unhappy even in our disobedience, and we shall never be happy again until, like children too, we fling ourselves in sorrow and confession upon that loving One Whom indeed we love, although for one miserable hour we disobeyed Him.

This life of ours is always taking us into places where we must choose between what is good and what is bad or less good; between the plain voice of Christ within us and something else which we know He disapproves.

This battle between alternatives goes on, not only in the open things of our behaviour where men see us and know how we have chosen. Down in the secret places, where the real stuff of our eternal destiny is being stored up, there it is going on: and by our private decisions we are rising or we are going down, we are confirming our souls in

their faith and obedience, or we are, in real truth, rejecting God. Within each one of us the great forces are engaged; on one side the power of the world in its various disguises, and on the other side the mild entreaty of the Son of God. And just because the case stands thus, and just because it all happens in a region where no one can help us, faith lays upon each of us a real, it may even be a stern, work. It is because the case stands thus that the spiritual life is properly described as a "fight." It is called indeed a "good fight." That is to say, it is not a fight that any one would wish to refuse, or to run away from. It is, on the contrary, that particular kind of fight which makes men and women of us. Still it is a fight, although it is a good fight, and it is to the faithful fighters that all the promises of God are made. And what is the fight about? Just this,—to decide whether we shall obey the higher or the lower voice in things; whether we shall go up or go down; whether we shall consecrate ourselves or shall indulge ourselves; whether we who have named the name of Christ shall indeed depart from all iniquity; whether in the issues which meet us every day indeed, but meet us quite unmistakably now and then, we shall be true to what we believe to be Christ's will, or shall be false; whether we shall endure or shall let go; whether, in a word, we shall each day so

brace our wills to their proper attitude that at any moment of our life we may be able to lift up our face without spot to Him Who is never far away from us, and in our last hour, in our mortal weakness, may fall without fear upon His breast.

V

OUR SHELTER IN GOD

“The shadow of the Almighty.”—Ps. xci. 1.

THE surest proof that man needs a shadow is that he has never been able to live his life in this world without one. Never has he been able, certainly never for long, to meet alone and unsheltered the forces in the midst of which he lives, and his own misgivings about himself. In order to endure the mystery of things with some measure of confidence and self-possession, man has always needed to stand beneath something and from the shelter of it to look out. He has discovered that he is strong enough or hopeful enough or patient enough for life only when he has access to some shadow and retreat. He has needed to feel secure from the terror of his surroundings before he could behave like a man.

See how, in every age, men have formed themselves into tribes and states. That was man seeking a shelter, an enclosure for himself against the vastness and loneliness of his position. He

could not endure life by himself; he needed the distraction and support of others like himself. He needed to feel the shelter of society before he could go out and in and be at home.

In that very word—home—you have another proof of man's profound instinct to seek a shade. What is the deep thing we look for in our homes? What is the complete idea of a home? Is it not that a home is a place of shelter, of retreat, a place where we recover ourselves? Is it not that a home supplies that element of shadow which is a necessity for beings such as we are and situated as we are? At home we come upon such strength as we have. In the world we may be misunderstood, we may be doubted, we may fail; but at home we are believed in, at home the reins of care may be allowed to slip out of our hand, and our mind permitted to rest itself. There, in our home, we see things more truly, more quietly, for we see them from behind our defences. There we can in imagination face the worst and feel that it is not the very worst that could befall us; for the very worst would be to lose this retreat, this shaded place, to lose the love of others which has raised for us in this world a home.

And what is the true and deep idea of the Church of God if it be not this, that the Church is the place of shelter for these souls of ours which, as

we know, in every great hour and emergency, are capable of God, capable of eternity, capable of a high destiny, and liable therefore to miss all these? What is the Church of God but the true home for such a being as man is, a being capable of an infinite peace, capable also of an infinite distress, a being who may be greatly moved by impalpable things, by thoughts, by memories, by fears, with an eternity behind him and an eternity in front.

Or, conceived more gently, the Church is, in God's idea, a home where we recover from the fatigue of effort, when we take a new hold of high purposes from which our hand had slackened; a place of compensations, a place from which we see our life more truly, for we see more than itself. Here, in this house, we may feel something, some one, even God, in the form and manner of Jesus Christ, coming between us and the things which would dishearten us and work despair. Here we may sit under a shadow, under the shadow of thought and faith. Here we may come under the rebuke and deliverance of high and unworldly considerations; here may receive the emancipation which comes the moment we adopt the spiritual view and seek not our own will but the will of God. To seek the face of God in worship is the instinct of the soul which has become aware of itself and of its surroundings. Life and death are

the great preachers. It is they who ring the church bells. That instinct for God, that instinct for the shadow, will never pass away. (It may only become perverted and debased. The foundation—which is man's need for God, for guidance, for cleansing, for support, and that again is but God's search for man, God's overtures to man—the foundation standeth sure.¹

It is the will of God that we should all live under this shadow. Feeling as we all of us learn soon or late, that this life has many disquieting circumstances, and that we ourselves are weak and apt to stumble, we ought to obey the instinct of our fear and put ourselves in the hands of God. These are perplexing things in the general human lot, and these soon or late come home to ourselves one by one; but if it be true that "there is nothing to prevent us from opening our solitude to God," then what are these perplexing things but voices that invite us to cast anchor in the heart of God?

Just as this world of ours has no light in itself, but derives what light it has from elsewhere, so the world of human experience, the world which comes to each of us through our reason and our emotions, and our moral history—that world in which we

¹ "Whatever temple science may build there will always need to be hard by a Gothic chapel for wounded souls."—Paulsen's *Ethics*.

encounter so much mystery and pain, has no light in itself, no final justification in itself, but only in God. It is only in Christ that we become reconciled to life, as it seems to us to be.

And is it not the same lesson which we should learn from the behaviour of these wills of ours, our wills which are so weak, so unfaithful to their own best inspirations? Are we not being taught by the very subtilty and moodiness of our heart and will that we are not complete in ourselves; that we need to have a Rock on which to plant that unstable yet momentous region of our life; that we are not ourselves until we have committed ourselves to Him Who once in history maintained from the cradle to the Cross a consecrated and holy will?

We cannot doubt that it is possible here, in the midst of our life, to come into that condition which the Psalmist describes as "abiding under the shadow of the Almighty." We cannot deny that which has been an experience. A spiritual experience is an historical fact, and has the same claim to be respected as any other fact. At this moment you will get more people to bear witness to the fundamental fact of the Christian life—that the soul may come into fellowship with God—than to any other fact you could name.

Yes; there is something in life you do not know so long as this is strange to you.

Let no one boast that the shadow of God has never fallen upon him. We do not make it a boast that music has no power over us, or art or poetry. We do not boast that the natural world, with its sunrises and its sunsets, its oceans and its stars, has no power to move us, to "disturb us with the joy of elevated things." No; if this be true of us, we suspect that it is a defect of character or endowment. Why should any one boast or be satisfied that he does not feel and does not care to feel the secret pressure of God upon his inward life?

Here then, I say, is a kind of life possible to us, for others have enjoyed it. I mean life lived within the shadow of the Almighty. It is not confined to the sacred light of old cathedrals; nor does it accompany the solitary only who withdraws from the common ways of mankind. It may be ours as we go about our work in the world. Like any strong love, or deep faith, or blessed hope which throbs and flutters in our private heart, this too may hold up our life from within, making hard things easy, and causing the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Indeed the shadow of the Almighty is for those who need it most. It is God's Presence and Grace with the toilers above all others, with those who have set themselves some high task and who,

in a contradicting world, have their hours of defeat and weariness. With this secret power of self-recovery in God they may be "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

Now, it is one thing to be touched by the shadow of the Almighty, another to abide within that shadow. One has not lived long or has lived only on the surface who has never for a moment been *touched* by the shadow of God. It may have fallen upon you in one or other of several experiences. It may have come to you in some reverse of fortune, in some change in your prospects. Or it may have come to you in some bodily illness or the threatening of some illness. Or it may have come to you as so much with regard to the Unseen world comes to us all in the great silence of a bereavement. But there is probably not one of adult years who has not had one experience at least which has touched him to the quick and has brought him for the time being face to face with God. And yet, if we are strict with ourselves, we shall have to confess that as the trouble eased the high seriousness which it brought began to pass away, so that probably not one of us has worked out into our life and character the holy intentions which we proposed to ourselves on a certain day when our

heart was sore. We have lost from ourselves a certain dignity, a certain superiority to the world which was ours in days that we can still recall, when some suspense was keeping our heart open, when in some precious concern of our life we were depending utterly upon God for something.

That is what I mean when I say that it is one thing to be touched by the shadow of the Almighty and another thing *to abide* in that same shadow. For to be touched—that is the work of God, the work of life upon us; whereas *to abide* requires the consent of our will. (In order to abide it needs that the whole man, who knows that in the personal crisis God was singling him out, shall live henceforth by the wisdom and calling of that hour. It needs that he shall depart from all the iniquity which the light of that holy hour revealed to him.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has a very solemn thing to say about people “who have tasted the good gift of God, and felt the powers of the world to come,” and who meanwhile “have fallen away.” He seems to say that it is a very serious matter for one to be touched by the shadow of the Almighty and then not to abide under that shadow. He seems to say that something has happened within such a one which may never be able to be put right again; something

like what happens to a bow-string when you stretch it beyond a certain point—it never works properly afterwards.

I close where I began. Human life, the things we meet here in this world and the things we discover within ourselves—human life is wonderfully contrived to show us our need of a shaded place and home for these souls of ours, which are at once so weak and poor, and yet are capable of such miseries and agitations of hope and fear. God has so made us and has so placed us that we need to lean somewhere. That is one aspect of all His dealings with us. Life is one of the great arms of God with which He would gather us to His breast. And the other aspect of all His dealings with us is His revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ as that very Refuge which the stress of our life demands, as that very shadow for which every heart is looking. In Jesus Christ, God offers to every human soul another Soul in which to refresh and recover itself. The soul of Jesus Christ, the heart and mind, the faith and experience of Jesus Christ, *that* for you and me is the shadow of the great God. That soul may be a home for each of us. What coolness, what quietness, what a delicate wind from the hills of God steals over us when by the mystery of faith and prayer we draw near to the soul of Jesus. What a rebuke to all that is

evil within us! What a scattering of all unholy embers! How our backslidings are stayed and turned back again under that mild reproach! And how sure we become of God, and of the invincible quality of the pure and the good and the true, when we look up from our faithful labours and find His secret benediction.

There He stands in the highway of human history; there He stands for ever in the midst of men's thoughts—the strong Son of God, the unperplexed Son of Man. He bears as His credentials, as His proof and qualification, His true humanity, and with it His uninterrupted divinity. There He stands, the one Mediator between God and man, the one Interpreter of the mystery of God to man, the one Interpreter of the mystery of man to God. There He stands. And our very need of such a one to support these ineffectual and halting lives of ours, and to urge us on our way, is just the echo within us of His own understanding voice, “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Let us accept for ourselves the great Christian faith. Let us behave like Peter who, beginning to sink, cried, “Lord, save me”; and a strong hand held him up. For, after all is said, we do know ourselves, and know how greatly we who are on

the sea of life need to be sustained. Let us not, for mere silly pride, or for some affectation of reason, refuse the holiest prompting of our nature. Let us not allow ourselves to sink with such a hand near by, and within hail of the Saviour of men.

VI

FAITH

THE REINFORCEMENT OF AN INSTINCT

“And the mirage shall become a lake.”—ISA. xxxv. 7.
(R.V., margin.)

“AND the mirage shall become a lake.”
Such, without doubt, is the true rendering of the prophet’s words; and once you have had it brought to your mind, you will never be satisfied with any other. “The mirage shall become a lake.” The thing which has often risen before us on our way, inviting us, quickening us, promising some longed-for blessing, only to fail us when we put out our hand to take it—the “mirage”—the star in our night, the dear rainbow on our vexed sky—“the mirage” will become a lake—it will all come true. It will not always be a mirage. One day, even when, it may be, we are almost fearing that once again it is going to be a mirage, a mist in the desert, an illusion of our too anxious heart—one day it will be no mirage, but a blessed lake of cold water. One day the dream of the faithful soul shall come true.

It would be fair to say that this one verse, thus

translated and thus interpreted, gives the entire burden of those prophecies within the Book of Isaiah which were spoken to the captives in Babylon. It was Isaiah's great and difficult task to rekindle the sluggish and dying soul of his captive countrymen. The way back to Jerusalem was open, but they would not set out upon it. God had done His part; the people would not do theirs.

Perhaps the people were sincere in making difficulties; perhaps they were only trying to find reasons for their own indolence. However that may be, a great portion of this entire book is occupied with nothing else than the prophet's answers to the faint-hearted reasons which they offered for not going back to Zion and taking up again the mighty tradition of faith.

"The roads are infested with wild beasts," said they. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon," pleaded the prophet.

"Why should we go back to Jerusalem?" they complained. "Is it not in ruins, a dwelling-place now for foxes, its once proud walls now level with the earth?" To which Isaiah answered with the voice and moral beauty of God, "Thy walls are continually before me."

"But even so," they continued, "let us suppose that God rebuild the walls of Zion, who are we

now that we should go back? We are but a handful of people, a handful, too, of broken people. How could we occupy a great city? Where are the youths and maidens? Where are the little children?" To which the prophet answered, "As I live, saith the Lord, . . . the children which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other shall yet say in thine ears: The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then thou shalt say in thine heart: Who hath begotten me these, seeing I had lost my children and was desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone! These, where were they?"

"Yes," they still objected, "that might all come to pass did God still love us; but are there not signs—here, in our captivity, in our circumstances—that He has cast us off, that He is done with us?" To which the prophet answered with the patience of God, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."

"Nevertheless, granting all that, there is the desert, with its weary length, with its intolerable glare, our minds teased and outraged by the delusive mirage, which but deepens our misery, for it awakens hopes only at the later stage to

mock us for entertaining them." To which the prophet answers in our text: "The mirage shall become a lake."

These words, expressing as they do the mind of God upon a definite situation in human history, mean for us that there will be no final contradiction between man's holiest hopes and the event which ultimately awaits us all. That the dream of faith is too good not to be true. That the best is simply that which shall be. That in building, however magnificently, on our intuitions from God, we shall not be put to confusion in the end of the days. That indeed the Lord may tarry, but come He will.

Such is the broad and deep spirit of the text. But, in addition, it discloses some rich secrets of life by the way. For example, the word "mirage" itself cannot fail to bring up before our minds, what is such a part of every life. I mean; we have all had hopes which in a sense were not fulfilled, dreams which did not come true, visions which have not been realised. There is a true sense in which, I shall not say we have been deceived, but we have been led on by prospects which have proved unsubstantial, like mirage to travellers in the desert. The text speaks of that part, of that element of our life: and I should like to speak of it.

The best sermon I know on this text, the best and most philosophic interpretation of it, I find in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—culminating as it does in the spacious words: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth . . . And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

That Epistle was written to help the first believers in Christ over their early disappointments. There is no doubt whatever that the first disciples expected an immediate return of the Lord in glory. Recall their glowing appeals to one another, their urgent summons to the world. “The Lord is near,” “the trumpet shall sound”—not at the end of things, but to-morrow when we awake, or to-night whilst we sleep! Now days passed and Christ did not return in such wise as they hoped. One here and there, it would seem, did ask, as we in weak hours still ask, “Where are the signs of His coming; for all things remain as they were from the foundation of the world?” Christ did not return in such wise

as they had hoped. But did He not return? Has He not returned? Is He not now and for ever here amongst us, leading many sons to glory? "Has not the mirage become a lake?"

And so that New Testament writer set himself to expound the glorious thesis, that the mirage which we see on the way to God is always a lake, that every hope comes to be fulfilled—only on a deeper level, that Christ, Who has not come back, has yet come back, and is always coming, and will come.

At the outset, and upon the whole matter, he says something which is so good, so large and satisfying, that nothing better has ever been said upon the subject. He says, "Now faith *is* the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen:" which, if we take it back into Isaiah's promise, would make that promise read—the mirage which we encounter on the way to God *is itself* the lake: the very hope is itself a fulfilment. It recedes indeed; but meanwhile it has called us on, and it is our own fault if it has not given us something permanent from the side of God. In faith itself, that is, you have already the beautiful thing, the stirring, enlivening thing, the very quality which makes *the good* in anything you hope for.

The one feature common to all the heroes and

heroines of faith is that they obeyed the summons of the mirage, which they found on their way to God. They took it for reality, and it proved to be reality of a kind higher and rarer than they had been capable of—until they had arrived so far. They did their deed, they said their say, for the sake of something which in no case was realised in their lifetime. Nay, strictly speaking, it was never for the sake of *something* which might happen that they did what they did ; it was—as it always is—for the sake of *somebody*, by the indubitable persuasion of the heart. They committed themselves to one thing and another—because of something they dimly perceived and already embraced, in all, and through all, and over all. Like Watts' figure (Hope), one string may snap at a touch, and another, and another ; but she never doubts the event of it all. When she comes to the *last* string, it will hold ; and the music will be the sweeter for the suspense by the way. Now that is the sign and spirit of faithful living—it is to be content with some holy hope which never indeed is fulfilled in the actual physical sense, yet is always on the way of being fulfilled, and meanwhile is saving our soul, keeping it alive unto God.

I think you will find that really good people are not disheartened by the failure of their hopes.

They know that God, when He removes something from before their face, often hides it in their heart: that He always gives more than He takes away—only it is different. No; they are for the most part outsiders who complain and are puzzled by the Providence of God. Those who are faithful to the vision have a lamp for the stretches of darkness which intervene.

You have a proof that the mirage is already the lake, or may be turned into a lake by any of us, a proof that the proper interest of the soul is not in things, in attainments, in fulfilments; but always in the region of the unrealised, in hopes and faiths and dreams. How often we hear it said, that nothing is ever so good as it promised to be, that the anticipation was better than the reality! I believe there is always something flat, something wanting, something less than the highest about everything which we attain to or possess. At that moment our soul, which until then was all eagerness, every door and window open, suddenly and quite consciously to us, becomes narrower and poorer. The heavenly bird within us folds its wings, and in one moment—the moment of attainment, of possession—we are back on the ground. And the explanation of all that is, that the “mirage” is already the “lake,” that *faith* is the substance of things hoped for. We

are so made by God that we are not to be satisfied by what we may get, or what we may eat, as though we were cattle, but only in the region of the unseen and eternal.

The world is educated, is stirred, is saved by its hopes in God, hopes which are fulfilled never in the letter, but always in the spirit.

What then are we to make of this law of our life, that we follow hopes which in some particular always turn out to be illusions (not delusions)—the hoped-for thing either not taking place at all, or the experience of it disappointing us. We may say at once that for faith the explanation must be that the great *event* for which the soul is being trained is too rich, too good to happen now.

Of course other interpretations are given; for the fact of the illusiveness of life has in some way or other come home to every one.

Love, in the hour of its glorious dawning, kindles hopes and promises fulfilments which are all true indeed; but these in turn introduce us to the serious business of life. All the gateways into life are decked with garlands, and music comes with an overwhelming beauty from within, and we enter gladly, as to the blast of trumpets—only to find ourselves committed for ever to severer things. But that is not to say that life is deceiving us, that God is deceiving us. It is only

say that life is seeking to make us men and women; that God has provided some better thing for us—something better than to be merely happy, namely, that we shall acquire in this life the spirit of duty, and find our need of Himself.

The fact then is, that life leads us on by hopes which, speaking narrowly and literally, are not fulfilled. It is a mirage which rises before us as we go. Are we then being deceived? No; we are being invited, we are being promoted, refined in the texture and desire of our souls. "We are being made meet to be partakers of our inheritance with the saints in light."

It is only the presence of God and loyalty to God which makes of every mirage a lake of satisfying water.

These are the two interpretations—ultimately there are two only. There is the interpretation of disbelief, of pessimism, with its cynical and degrading speech, such as, that nature offers us a bait that she may catch us with the iron hook beneath, and land us on a bank of dull duties and endless responsibilities. And there is the interpretation of *faith*, in a word, of *Christ*: that life is an education of the soul, an opportunity for the promoting of instincts and capacities within us, which this world did not give and cannot satisfy. As out of the physical, the mental and emotional life emerges,

so out of these again, with their half-fulfilments, half-defeats, their glimpses of an eventual glory, and the contradictions meanwhile by the way—out of these the soul may build for herself a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

Now faith, in one view of it, is our personal choice of interpretations ; it is our vote between two alternatives. Faith is the resolution to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis. Both hypotheses, it may well enough be, are tenable—in the light of a narrow reason ; but one only can be true.

And if it should even be that on the narrow plane of the pure reason, the two interpretations of life's illusiveness—that of denial and that of faith—were equally valid, it would still be our duty to commit ourselves without fear of ultimate confusion to that view which makes the better men of us. The cynicism surely is self-condemned as a doctrine for life which can reveal only depth under depth of delusion, ending in tragedy for all who feel. And that faith surely has the manifest seal of final truth, which meanwhile makes true men of us, and revealing height upon height of God's everlasting purpose, lifts up our eyes to the hills.

VII

THE REPROACH OF PAST DAYS

HOW WE CAN MEET IT

“And when King David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera : he came forth, and cursed still as he came. . . . Then said Abishai, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the King? let me go over, I pray thee, and cut off his head. And the King said, Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who then shall say, Wherefore hast thou done so? Let him alone, and let him curse ; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill’s side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.”—2 SAM. xvi. 5-13 ; also xix. 15.

WHEN this thing overtook David—this cursing and abuse by Shimei the Benjamite—David was already in troubles enough. Indeed he was at the moment in such distress that there was no room left in his heart for more. Shimei’s cursing was almost a relief to him ; it took him for a moment out of himself. Shimei’s cursing was just the echo of David’s own miserable mind. Shimei was only saying to David what David was saying to himself. And so, the words which made

Abishai and the others indignant only made David more humble and quiet, because he perceived a kind of wild justice in them; just as, if we have tender and religious souls, we can often understand why certain things happen to us about which outsiders know nothing whatever. For Shimei's cursing was only the gathering up into words of all David's circumstances at the moment. The words were no harder than his misfortunes; they were no bitterer than his own self-accusing heart. Shimei cursing David that day was to David as the voice of God. And so, when Abishai said, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the King? let me go over and cut off his head," David answered, "Let him alone, let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him."

To understand why David received the cursing of Shimei in such a spirit, why he looked upon it as more a blessing than a cursing, we must have the circumstances before us. We have said that David was in great trouble. Having sown the wind, he was beginning to reap the whirlwind. For that nameless deed—the great sin of his life—he was beginning to suffer that retribution which never really fails. The cloud which not long since was the size of a man's hand—a thing, that is, which David himself thought he could cover with his hand—now stretched across the sky, darkening the whole world. With awful fidelity the words of Nathan

the prophet were being fulfilled. The home which David had soiled was now a place of strife and sin. Neither life nor honour was safe in it. Read the story for yourselves, the story of the breaking up of David's home, and think meanwhile of David sitting in the midst of the ruins lonely, with no spirit left in him because he knew that he was the cause of it all. He had lost all command over his children because he had lost their respect. He could not condemn them without condemning himself. This is one of the sad consequences of having ourselves sinned in some particular way: we cannot henceforth condemn that sin in another. When we are on the point of condemning it with all our strength, a shadow falls upon us, a recollection of something which we thought was dead, and we are dumb. Our indignation faints away.

“Thus conscience does make cowards of us all ;
 And thus the native hue of resolution
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought ;
 And enterprises of great pith and moment ;
 With this regard, their currents turn awry,
 And lose the name of action.”

So it was with David. We can see in every chapter that his sin has unmanned him, that it has taken the firmness, the decision out of him. We can see that he has no longer any hold upon his children, that he has not even the power to be indignant

against their sins. Thus did the troubles increase about him, and David, with that exaggeration of honesty which is at once the pain and the glory of saints, felt that he was responsible for them all. At last Absalom headed an open rebellion against him, and David called his servants together and fled from Jerusalem. We seem to see the broken-hearted man. He did not give way to anger. He did not invoke a curse upon his unnatural son. He understood—everything, by the light of his own personal history. It was not man, it was not Absalom nor Ahithophel, it was Almighty God that was troubling him. It was not simply misfortune that had come to him: it was truth that was coming to him. It was his sin coming back upon him. "He was bearing the indignation of the Lord, because he had sinned against Him." It was not accident, it was no senseless turn of the wheel of fortune. No; to David there was a holier interpretation—it was God working with him in the depths of his being, God wrestling with him in the dark. That is why you never hear an angry complaint against his lot; he knows that he has fallen not into the hands of men but into the house of God. Look at the picture of him as he journeyed over the hills of Benjamin seeking safety: "And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he

went barefoot." That is not the picture of a man flying for dear life. It is not the picture of a man disheartened about his worldly affairs. It is the picture of one who has some sorer trouble than the world sees, a trouble between himself and God. It is the picture of a pilgrim doing penance as he journeys to some holy place.

It was there, among the hills of Benjamin, and it was to David in an hour when his sins lay heavy upon him, and his heart was soft in the hands of God, that this strange thing happened—strange except to David, who understood it all.

As the fugitives were defiling through a pass a man appeared upon the hillside and overlooked them. His name was Shimei, and he was a member of the fallen house of Saul. He came running towards them, and cursed as he came. And he cast stones at David, and cursed him, crying, "Come out, thou man of blood, thou son of Belial. The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul. Thou art taken in thy mischief." Thus Shimei cursed and raved. But the fugitives hastened on, making no reply. And Shimei ran along the hillside, cursing as he ran, and casting stones. It was then that Abishai, of the followers of David, asked leave to go over and kill the man, and it was to him that David made

answer, "No, no, let him alone, let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction and will requite me good for his cursing this day." So David went on, and Shimei ran alongside of him, cursing, and throwing stones and dust at him.

That is the story. It is the story of how once upon a time a man bore without complaining the reproach of one of his fellows; how once upon a time one who had once done something very wrong and had repented, encountered another man who cast up the old story in his teeth; and then, how the penitent man took no offence but rather confessed that it was good for him, and that it brought him very near to God, to have that old unhappy memory recalled. It is the story of one bearing mutely the reproach of his own past, the story of one who, like our blessed Lord, "when He was reviled, reviled not again, but committed Himself to Him Who judgeth righteously."

Seldom do we think of the reproach and scoffing of men in the way that David thought of them here,—as a means of grace, as an opportunity for humbling ourselves anew before God. We seldom think of reproach and scoffing as giving us a chance for a new refinement and consecration of our whole life. Those who

reproach us, those whose behaviour towards us seems to ourselves to convey a reproach, may succeed in doing for us what every other way of God's working may fail to do: they may make us humble, tender-hearted, delivering us from that confidence in ourselves which separates us so awfully from God. They may make us gentle and serious when, with regard to spiritual things, we were becoming coarse and confident and careless. They may revive by some painful memory some truth about ourselves which we should have been the poorer to have forgotten: "Let them alone, let them curse; it may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction and will requite me good for their cursing this day." It is hard for the natural man in each of us to bear reproach with meekness. Easier far it is to retort angrily and defend ourselves. And yet, without doubt, the more excellent way, the way that brings a new beauty to the soul, is to bear the bitter thing with patience, trying to see in it some message from God. It is not a good sign when a man's first thought, on hearing some hard or unkind judgment of himself, is to defend himself and turn warmly upon his detractor. It is the sign of a far better state when our first thought is as David's was: "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David."

When a man's reproach against himself is more severe than the reproach of the world, then the reproach of the world will not be hard to bear. Ay, sometimes even when the hard thing that men say about us is not quite true, when we could refute it in a moment if we cared to, yet often it is good to bear it and let it pass. Had David cared, he could have answered Shimei. For it was not because of his behaviour to the house of Saul that David was now an exile. Shimei was wrong there; nevertheless David let him think he was right. David said to himself, "The man is wrong, and yet his words are true enough. They are truer than he knows. It is for wrong done that I am suffering. I am, as he says, a man of blood." And the face of Uriah the Hittite, who had been slain in the front of the battle, looked into David's soul, and David found it an easy thing to forgive this man for cursing him and casting stones. For a man must not mind standing ill with the world if it helps him to stand well with God.

Many an one has made shipwreck of his life because he had not learned what we are to do with ourselves when the great waves of reproach begin to roll over our soul. Many an one has hung back from beginning to be the good man that God was urging him to be because he was afraid of his past life rising up to mock him and laugh at him. And

many an one who had set out upon the Christian life has been interrupted and put off his centre, and has actually fled back into darkness, because some one reminded him or appeared to be reminding him of old days—even as Moses fled into Midian when a man one day cast into his teeth that he had seen him kill an Egyptian. *I believe that just here—where we are dealing with the question, What is a man to do who now means to be a better man but has old things cast up to him and brought home to him?—I believe that just here we are at the very centre of the gospel of the grace of God.* Is there forgiveness for man? Is there freedom? Is a man something more, something better than his own history, something different from anything he has ever been? May the reproach of the world be at once true and false? *True* as far as it goes, and therefore *false* because it does not go far enough. That is the great spiritual problem which Christianity came into the world to solve; that is the great spiritual cloud which Christ came into the world to scatter and chase from the sky.

But it is not the reproach of the world, and it is not the reproach of any Shimei casting old things in our teeth,—it is not *that* which is the hardest to bear; it is not *that* which has the greatest power to disable us and put us to confusion. After all, Shimei is either right or wrong in what he says.

If he is wrong, well, that is the end of it, and it is a real joy now and then to suffer wrongfully. If he is right, still he is not quite right, for he does not know the great things of our soul—our shame, our repentance, our faith. And besides, anything that he may say against us or about us is not so severe and thorough as the things we say against ourselves. No; it is not the reproach of the world which should be either our sorrow or our shame; for our hope and confidence is in God, Who alone knows us altogether. No; the most unhappy hour for our soul is that in which we *reproach ourselves*. An hour of that kind comes—I doubt not—to all of us now and then: when we lose heart over ourselves; when we almost cease to believe in ourselves. Things put in an appearance again which we thought we were done with for ever. We catch ourselves indulging thoughts, or taking part in things, or even speaking in a tone of voice which we supposed was past for ever—from which indeed at one time we were quite delivered. We seem to ourselves to have no real part in Christ at all. Our soul is a place of disorder. We have no convictions, we have only moods, impulses, reactions. We ask ourselves whether we ever really repented, whether we ever gave ourselves without reserve to Christ.

At this the sun buries itself in clouds, and our

life falls back into its old misery. We conclude that we must have been too late in turning to God. That the wrong things, the bad things, the things that oppose God in the human heart, must have had too long a hold of us. At this stage also we may lend an ear to certain rumours from the scientific knowledge of our day—such as that we all are what we are, and that there is no use in trying to be different. That we may make a splendid effort to rise above ourselves, and may appear for a time to have succeeded; but that it is only for a time; that soon the chain tightens, or our enthusiasm spends itself, and we are pulled down from behind, from beneath, back to our old place, which is our true place.

Brethren, that is the only really terrible voice which can assail the soul—that voice which insinuates that the worst about you is the truth about you; that you are what you have been; that you belong to the place which you came from. Moments come to every one of us when that is the only voice we hear. I think it is never without some private guilt on our own part that such moments do come to us. They get their opportunity from some personal failure of our own, some moral slackness or actual sin—which we have not instantly cried out against—to God. For our soul is one, and we cannot lose God in some particular without

losing Him for the time being altogether. It is only when God is before us that He is also behind us. It is only when we are faithful to Him in these present days that He stands as our "Rear-Ward" between us and the things that are past.

But if such an hour of darkness should ever come upon any of you, when you lose your confidence in your own spiritual life, and are full of reproach and bitterness and a kind of contempt for yourself, there is a way of dealing with such an hour so that it may bring a great blessing to your soul. For one thing, do not set about excusing yourself. Do not say that your spiritual gloom is merely a fit of low spirits. That you are merely tired, run-down, and in need of a change. That may all be true, but it is not for you to say these things. You must not blunt the edge of the instruments of God.

It is not a bad thing to lose confidence in yourself if it leads you to go over once more the whole blessed experience of giving your heart to Christ. It is not a bad thing to feel the ground beneath you giving way if it leads you to find the rock for your feet in the unmerited forgiveness of God. It is not a bad thing to listen again to the evidence that can be brought against you, to feel how slender and ridiculous a claim you could make

upon God—if all that leads you to realise the awful goodness of God in giving you still a place.

It is not a bad thing to see for one hour the subtilty of your own heart, its waywardness, its unreliableness, its restlessness and disorder (that there is nothing substantially good in you if Christ should leave your heart to itself)—it is not a bad thing to realise all that if, as the result of it all, we lay hold on Christ literally for our very life. It is not a bad thing to meet the world's reproach, to hear Shimei cursing us and casting up old unhappy things—to hear our own heart turning against us, our memory pouring its black waves over us—it is not a bad thing to hear all that on the *other* side, on the dark side, on the desperate side, if in answer to it all we can say out of our alarmed but believing soul, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."

In conclusion. A Christian doctrine is in every case the answer to some profound and elementary cry, the echo in God (as we believe) that has reached man after his heart and flesh have cried out in some awful loneliness. The doctrine of justification by faith is the answer from God to that cry of the soul, in which a man tries to escape from the bitterness of his own thoughts and from the reproach of his past.

For that great doctrine is simply the intellectual

statement and defence of that holy intuition or revelation which breaks upon elect souls in the last push of their own spiritual distress (St. Paul, Luther, Bunyan),—that they are not simply what they have been, not even what they seem to themselves to be; that they are, what they are to the loving insight and patience and holy intercession of the eternal Christ of God.

That is the sense of certain words which I used a moment ago. And that is the blessed confidence which, by the charity of God's holy love, we are permitted to hold out to our own distressed soul. We are permitted, certainly in those hours when remorse and repentance have run along our veins like a flame, making our heart and flesh cry out—we are permitted to say, that a man does not belong to his past but his future; that not the worst but the best about a man is the truth about him; that a man's destiny is the outcome of his protests rather than of his performances; that, in a word, we belong *not* to the place in the spiritual world from which we came, but to the place which, by the grace of Christ, we are making for.

VIII

HOW GOD ALWAYS PROVIDES A WAY OF ESCAPE

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”—1 COR. x. 13.

WE know that these Epistles to the Corinthians were written by St. Paul in answer to letters which the Church in Corinth, or members of it, had addressed to him. They had submitted various matters to him who was their father in Christ, matters dealing with their newly adopted faith—the practice of it in the case of individuals, or the public administration of it, its doctrine and sacraments—and in these two epistles we have St. Paul’s answers.

This circumstance explains a certain abruptness and unconnectedness in the Corinthian letters, the rapid change from one subject to another, the most notable example being the sudden drop, as we at first feel, from the great assertion of the Resurrection in the fifteenth chapter to the subject which is introduced in the sixteenth by the

words: "Now concerning the collection." The fact is, the Apostle, who had to find time for such an amazing amount of work, is hastening through a series of questions, of difficulties which had been proposed to him, and he is dealing with them just as they meet his eye or occur to his memory.

What question was it, I wonder, what difficulty, that led him to put into writing those wise and gracious words: "There hath no temptation taken you, etc."? What kind of difficulty was that an answer to? Separating this verse from its context, and considering it apart, we should say that here St. Paul is dealing with a confession which had been made to him. And if so, a confession of what? Simply this, we should say: that some one in Corinth was finding it a very hard thing to live there as Christ would have us all live. Some one, or the Church on behalf of some one, had written to St. Paul telling him how difficult he was finding it to keep his feet, in that miry clay. That he was not making progress as a Christian. That he did not seem to be getting any better, but rather worse, for he was always getting the older, and every separate failure was adding to his general despair. Appetites, passions, and the subtle call of lower things, which, as he honestly believed, he had repudiated once for all when he joined the Church, were now putting in an appearance again, degrading

him in his own eyes, making him feel insecure, and, worst of all, leading him to ask himself whether he was even now to any thorough depth a disciple of Christ—whether he was really a whit better than the heathen round about him who made no profession and no pretence. It may, I say, have been a case of that kind and more than one which St. Paul had before him when he wrote the words which I am taking as a text. He is trying to help a man who is honestly distressed about his own poor achievements in the way of character, a man who feels himself visited and invited by imaginations and purposes so rebellious, that he wonders whether he is in any solid sense a good man at all, or whether his religion, his piety, all the goodness he ever displays, is not simply a kind of veneer, a kind of outside decency and good manners—in no sense the candid expression of his true and inmost life.

This certainly is a state of mind which at various stages, and with varying degrees of intensity and darkness, visits and tempts every one who has received in his spirit the effectual call of God. It is a condition of which we all, I believe, have had experience and may still have: when we feel that we are little better than we ever were, that we are still liable to the intrusion of evil spirits, of ways of looking at life of such a kind that if we were to

yield to them we should be disgraced even in our own eyes. And when this mood visits us, we are in real fear that one day the world, with its fashions and compromises and intricacies will wear down our inner protest, will eat through our defences, and roll over us like an implacable sea.

And now observe how the Apostle deals with a case of this kind—which is so often our own case. Particularly do I want you to feel, along with me, his sympathy, yet his firmness; his deep religiousness commending such a man to God, yet his strong good sense, telling the man that, to use a phrase, meanwhile he need not stand to be shot at.

At the outset he assures this one who has confided in him, that the temptations which he is lamenting are common to all, that he is not alone in enduring these private ignominies, and not alone in having such feelings about himself in consequence. Now that was a great service. It is a great service to one who, for his own reasons, is troubled about himself, to be assured that he is not alone, that he is not the only one who has ever felt that terrible sense of being nothing in particular and everything by turns, that, so far, "no temptation hath taken him but such as is common to man." I say it is a great service when a wave of this kind comes over you, to know that you are not alone. But, I hasten to say, it is a service, and makes for

your good only when the same conclusion is drawn from the fact that you are not alone, as St. Paul draws here. Let me explain.

It may be a very bad thing, a very whisper of the Evil One, to tell one who is troubled about himself, about his own moral failures, that nearly everybody is in the same position, that nobody is really good, that we are only human, meaning that we are less than human, that therefore we are not to expect very much of ourselves. I know of no more insidious snare, or one which so often succeeds with us, as the suggestion when, for some reason, we are profoundly disappointed in ourselves, and disheartened and angry with ourselves—the suggestion that we are making a mountain of a molehill, that everybody beneath the surface is alike—alike in having such feelings and alike in being unfaithful to them. In fact there are two ways of saying what St. Paul says here, as indeed there are always two ways, two tones, in which to say anything which is delicately true about the human soul; and of the two ways one is gloriously right, and the other is from the pit. “There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man:” you may say that as St. Paul says it here, in order to help a man *up* you may let him have that from you, as you would throw a line to a drowning man,—to save him from the black waters of despair.

But you may say the same words in a totally different tone, and with the object of producing a totally different consequence. You may say it in order to help a man *down*, in order to put him off his own seriousness; with the view of reconciling him to a poor and unworthy life, a life against which, all the time, the Holy Ghost within the man is protesting and crying out.

When St. Paul said, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man," he did *not* mean that it is quite hopeless for any one to erect himself above himself, that we never can be anything but a poor set from the moral point of view. He did *not* mean that because temptation is universal, therefore we should submit to it, and take no course for our safety; that because it is universal, therefore it is not serious. He means the very contradiction of all that. He means to say that temptation is such a very human thing, so native to man, so subtle, that there is no help for any one of us with regard to it, except in God.

There is comfort, nay, there is an appeal also to our sense of honour in this idea that when *we* are enduring a temptation, when we are standing up to some proposed degradation, we are not alone. Far from being alone, we are fighting there and then, in our heart, the great battle of the human race. We are striking our blow, we are doing the

one becoming thing, in that battle of the Lord which human history is.

But he is a traitor to the cause of man, which is the Cause of God, he is exposing his own essential low-mindedness, who tries to turn the edge of his own moral uneasiness by saying to himself: "Why, we are all alike"—(which is not true), and then blowing out his light and going to sleep, thus committing himself to a lower life than his higher nature was proposing to him, so that if God abandons such a man, as such a man has abandoned himself, he will not stand with the faithful ones in the Great Day of the Lord.

And now I am able to state quietly and in a short space the ideas which, in addition, seem to me to lie within this verse. Only remember that here we have the Servant of the Lord Jesus trying to help some one who was vexed at himself, and disheartened because he seemed never to be getting out of the embarrassment of temptation, who seemed to himself to be always threatened, always ready to fall, and who in consequence is depressed, not knowing what to do with himself.

After assuring him—in the sense I have given—that this condition is not peculiar to him, the Apostle continues: "God is faithful." In saying that, St. Paul said everything. What God asks us to do He will enable us to do. Whatever I feel to be

a demand in the region of my spirit, I feel at that very moment to be a power in the region of my spirit. God is faithful. He always accompanies His Word to us with power. Why, our ordinary language on this matter bears witness to what really goes on at such a moment. When a suggestion comes to us to do something; when the idea of it crosses our mind, we speak of it as an *impulse*. We say he had an *impulse* to do such and such a thing. We speak of "acting upon the impulse of the moment." That is to say we confess then that an idea, when it comes to us, is something more than an idea—it is a force, at the moment we are aware of something pushing us from behind. In order not to obey, we have actually to resist. So is it with regard to those purest impulses towards good which in all manner of ways come to us all. At the moment we feel that all we need to do is to yield ourselves up to a Power which there and then is offering to bear us on. "God is faithful."

The Apostle continues and concludes: "He will with the temptation also make a way to escape." Now, the idea of "escaping," the word itself, has an air of cowardice about it, which, we may be sure, does not belong to it in this place. St. Paul was no coward: the man described in the eleventh chapter of 2 Corinthians could have been

no coward. Still, there are those with a morbid and pedantic subservience to mere words, who will be ready to resent as a spiritual or religious counsel anything of the nature of "escaping" or running away. "No, no!" these will say, "no moral teaching can claim to be final or to have divine authority which recommends people when beset by temptations to run away, to escape. It can be no real victory over evil to run away from it."

"Brethren, let us not be righteous over-much!" St. Paul, indeed, uses no grandiloquent speech as to what a man should do when he finds himself beset by temptations. He does not in this place recommend a man to draw his sword, and plant his right foot forward, and clench his teeth, and do many another strenuous and showy thing which looks so well in a picture and sounds so well when addressed to a great audience; but which is all, as a matter of fact, futile in those hot, and terrible, and lonely hours when we are sorely tempted to do wrong. No; St. Paul tell us here that when we are tempted, the first and only thing to do is to get away from the spot, to run in fact for our life. This is one of those simple and obvious things which never occurs to any of us until a genius arises to say it—when you are hard pressed by evil, move on, get away, escape. That may sound tame. It

may sound less than the highest; but it is the very highest. Nay, it is the only truth and fact of the matter. There are situations in life, dark turnings in the moral world, sheer precipices where we must not trust ourselves, where the only sensible and religious course is to get away.

In passing through the "Inferno," Dante's spiritual guide would not allow him to stand still for a moment.

Brethren, we cannot afford to make experiments with ourselves. There are mysterious things within us all, subterranean things—thank God for the most part they are locked down,—but any one who ponders these things, who hangs about giving them a chance, is really tampering with the lock.

We often tempt ourselves by hanging about a place of temptation. We often tempt ourselves by simply allowing an evil mood to lie unrebuked about our mind. We often fail, we often outrage our own private ideal, and break some private vow, not because we were urged to it in some invincible way, but simply as the result of a kind of *inertia* in ourselves. We had the means, the opportunity, and in a joyless and unwilling way, we did again what we had promised ourselves not to do—just as people often eat more than is good for them, not that they want to, or that they like it, but simply

because it is there. They do something, and even while they are doing it they hate themselves for doing it.

St. Paul could have said no wiser or profounder thing than this, that the only victory over a temptation is, not to argue with it, not even to wrestle with it, but simply to get away from it.

We must not go about the world tempting ourselves. We must not go about with our eyes everywhere, on the look out for moral encounters and risks—any more than if we were passing through some primeval forest, we should put our head into every hole and corner on the chance of waking up some lion or tiger or snake which we were afraid had not observed us.

On the contrary, should a lion or tiger encounter us, we must not be ashamed to give thanks to God if in that blinding moment we can climb a tree. We are here in this world, so far as these slumbering things are concerned, to let bygones be bygones ; we must not awaken the elementary and abysmal temptations, but must hasten on in God's clear daylight towards the highest point we see.

In conclusion, the only way of escape from temptation is to have our hearts well set on something else. An empty heart, an idle, restless, frivolous heart, invites the evil spirits—as our Lord indeed once explicitly taught men. It was this

that Samuel Johnson meant when he said that a man could not be more innocently employed than at his business. It was this that Emerson meant when he said, "a man's task is his life-preserver." It is this that the Old Testament has in view when it recommends us all to live a brisk, healthy, unselfish life, with a certain gaiety of confidence in God. And it is what the New Testament and the Church mean when they ask us to believe that not one of us is safely settled in this life, ready for its long demand, or for its sudden and unexpected assaults, who has not a Holy of holies within his soul, who has not the Lord Jesus Christ as his own private conscience and companion.

"A way of escape." St. Paul knew very well that you have not escaped from a temptation simply when you have moved away from it in a geographical way—in a *lateral* way, so to speak. He knew very well that the temptation can follow you into the cloister, and assault you even upon your knees. And yet his counsel in this passage will stand every test. The only thing you will have to do is to make the level of escaping deeper and deeper, higher and higher. I should say, that the way to escape the thrust or siege of evil things is—to get on to another level. It is the *other level* that rescues us. A man who has *lost* his fortune will be saved if in that same day a beloved

child of his falls into sickness. Pardon a homely illustration. I have seen in my garden a cat on the prowl for birds. I have seen the creature trying to stalk a bird. If the bird remains on the ground, on its enemy's level, it will be lost. But it does not remain on the ground. The emergency discovers to the bird its proper resource. It spreads its wings, it escapes in the midst of the higher element. Behold then the birds of the air. Their Heavenly Father careth for them. And are ye not of more value than they?

IX

THE CHARITY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life.”—REV. xx. 12.

THERE is something about words like these which makes us feel that they are true. When we hear them, something rises out of the hidden places of our life to listen to them ; and that something pronounces them true. Later on, indeed, we may raise arguments in our own minds, in order to soften the strictness of the words ; we may even take measures to pervert the first impression which they make upon us. But in that case we are ourselves no longer at our best ; we are no longer within the shadow of God ; we are simply trying to mislead ourselves, trying to confuse our conscience, trying to find some excuse for doing something which, for one clear and beautiful moment, we knew to be forbidden.

No ; I repeat, when one hears the words, “ I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened,” something as real, as un-

deniable as our own soul, starts to its feet, acknowledging that there the majesty of God is passing by. Every true word of God has certain infallible signs. For one thing, every true word of God is something more than a word; it is a voice, it is something which has life in itself. You can never be quite indifferent to it. You must either receive it or reject it. It immediately sets up correspondences with your own most personal life. Every true word of God has already a deputy in your own heart.

And then again, every true word of God has this further sign: you know that it would be good for you to pay heed to it. A true word of God is always on the side of your higher nature, always on the side of the serious and beautiful way of living. A true word of God has always this about it indeed, that it asks you to come a step nearer to the life of the Cross; but that is only another proof that it is true, because to people like ourselves, who are what we are, the life of the spirit must be the life of the Cross—a certain pressure and refinement and consecration of our natural life.

Another way of saying what I have been saying is, that the sure sign of a true word of God is that there is something within us which immediately *recognises* it. Every true word of God is a *Revelation*; it is the withdrawing of a veil—'αποκαλυψις.

It unveils God to us, and, with equal step, it unveils us to ourselves. Truth never comes quite as a stranger to a man. He has seen it somewhere before—in fact or in a dream.

The purest utterances of the Word of God are just those which can never be assailed or dethroned from their seat of authority; because the purest utterances of the Word of God are just those in which some instinctive, some elementary and unconquerable voice from the heart of man is finding its perfect expression and relief.

The words of the text are of this invincible kind. They deal with a matter about which, since we are moral and responsible beings, we cannot but think, at least from time to time. And circumstances arise in the case of all of us which lead us at one time or another to think very seriously, and often in a troubled way, about that day of moral reckoning in which, according to our Bible, and according to the forecast of our own conscience, this human stage of our eternal journey will reach its period, and will close. Thanks to the light and comfort concerning all ultimate things, which came to the world in Jesus Christ, and which have found their way into our words and ideas and institutions, we are able to live our life without that terror regarding the end of it, which, apart from Christ, must have been our portion.

The world has even now come to Christ so far, that all men to-day who have heard His name have adopted as their own working theory Christ's testimony,—that the Power which lies behind and within and over this world of ours is friendly to mankind. And many are content to see the final judgment in the comfortable light of God's general goodness.

But I doubt very much whether any one can rest peacefully, trusting to a kind of hearsay with regard to that inevitable day. The facts of our own life, the things we have done,—these have the effect of making us separate from one another, of compelling us to think our own thoughts, and to deal in some personal way with those questions which are as old as man, those questions which are the high matters of faith. The text speaks definitely about one of these.

Further, the text speaks of the final judgment in the only way which our conscience—our sense of what is morally right and inevitable—could approve. The moral judgment of all men which Jesus announced, is not only part of His Gospel, it is the heart of His Gospel. In such an announcement Christ is expressing and satisfying the moral necessities of the case. It may be that for people who are living a double and dishonourable life, the prospect of a final reckoning is full of terror and uneasiness.

These therefore will welcome any argument, any way of looking at things, which helps them to imagine that there will be no such event. But the prospect of a final moral judgment, not, mark you, at the hands of men who can at best only know this and that, and nothing completely, but before God who knows everything, that prospect should awaken no terror but only a humble spirit of thanksgiving in every one who loves truth and the victory of God.

The awful thing would be—no final judgment at all. The awful thing would be, having lived our life, to disappear for ever, to lose our identity like rain-drops in the sea. That would be the awful thing—for God to give us up, for God to have such an impatience with us, such a disrespect and contempt for our ridiculous ups and downs that He suffered us to disappear into an eternal silence! That is what I meant when I said, a moment ago, that the promise of a final judgment is one of the most precious promises of Christ. And this, no matter what consequences it may have for you and me. If I have even the rudiments of manhood in me, I must choose rather to be condemned by God than to be permitted to ooze out of life, utterly disregarded by God.

For a final judgment contains at least the pledge that we, being ourselves and none other, shall

“stand before God”; that death shall not scatter our personality like dust upon the wind, that “we shall see Him as He is, and our eyes shall behold Him and not another.” And that, I say, is a prospect which should have no terrors except for people who at this present moment are living in sin. That day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made plain, should be a day of fear only for those who even now are trying to hide something from God.

The reference which we have in the text to what awaits us all, like most of the references in Scripture, is very simple. It does nothing to inflame the imagination. It is a dignified and most reticent account of what will happen, of what must happen. There is nothing merely curious about it. It expresses only those abiding ideas which our religious sense must approve.

In addition to the general announcement that there will follow upon these lives of ours a moral judgment, a thought which must be full of a beautiful and serious comfort to every humble soul, the text contains a more precise suggestion, which, when we once see it, carries with it a very tender promise. For example, it speaks of these lives of ours as “books”—books on the pages of which everything appears in which our soul took part. Our actions, our purposes, the things we did, the

things also which we tried and meant to do,—the words we were wont to speak, the imaginations we were wont to entertain,—our failures, and the spirit in which we took those failures,—they are all within that book which death shall close and seal against that day in which God shall open it, and read it in our presence. That is what is to happen. It is the only thing that can happen if God is. And every good soul rejoices humbly that so it is; that from the moral point of view *everything* is known to God. Perhaps we are afraid of that word *everything*—that everything shall be made manifest. In that case our course is plain. We ought to make manifest to God *now*, we ought to meet fairly and honourably *now*, anything which it troubles us at this moment to think will one day be manifest, whether we will or not. Let us always have a kind of terror of keeping things of that kind about our souls, unconfessed and unforgiven. Let us, at any cost, keep our hearts open to God, inviting Him to search us and try us, and see if there is any wicked way in us.

In our own best hours—and surely there is not one of us who has not a pure hour now and then, when, if it were God's will, we could leave the world and meet Him in great thankfulness—in our own best hours, instead of it troubling us that God whom we shall meet knows *everything*, it should

comfort us and remove our only cause for fear. For it is only He who knows *everything* about us, who knows *anything*. It is only He who knows everything who can be just, that is, who can be merciful.

We sometimes hear men put a tone of threatening into that phrase, "Everything shall be made manifest;"—a tone of revenge, as though they were saying: "Be assured you who are concealing something there, that a day is coming when you will be compelled to pull it out and spread it before the eyes of God and of the angels." And *that is* the tone in which a deceitful and false-hearted man should hear the words, for that is the saving truth for him.

But we err if we import that tone, and only that tone, into every announcement of God's final judgment. To say that God knows everything, that He will judge us in the light of everything, far from having only the note of severity and threatening may have and must have for people of another kind the most tender and precious comfort. For, to say that we shall be judged by One who knows everything is to say that we shall be judged by One who *understands*. And surely it is the gospel for many an one, for some one it may be who reads these words, to feel that God knows everything about us, that He will judge us not by

this and that, not by what the world knew, not even by those things on which we ourselves, in our hours of discouragement, were apt to lay the stress, but by the light of—*everything*. That He knows how we have tried, and how our failures have vexed us and disheartened us; that He knows how our sins have plunged us into uncontrollable grief; that He knows with what difficulty we have begun to hope again in God, how we have often, like Jacob, wrestled with God until the break of day; that He knows how we have believed in Christ often against the despair and bitterness of our own hearts,—that God knows everything, that—to use the quaint and tender idea of the psalm—“Thou tellest my wanderings, put Thou my tears into Thy bottle, are they not in Thy book?”—is not all that just the gospel of Christ, the Gospel of God’s perfect understanding of us—for souls of a certain kind?

At heart, it may be only at the very heart, and when we have pierced through many a subterfuge, at heart we are more liable to despair of ourselves than to be proud of ourselves. Therefore I wish, for once at least, to put the tone of Christ, the tone of hope and of charity, into these words which tell us that at the last “everything will be made manifest,” and that God will judge us by the light of everything.

There are many who, like Peter, have failed, failed perhaps not even so darkly as did Peter, who also, like Peter, have wept bitterly when, looking up, they met the eye of Jesus Christ. In the case of Peter, Jesus, knowing that he had wept, came back to him and saved him from his own remorse. "Lovest thou me?" He asked. And how did Peter answer him? "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." And may not we also find a refuge from our own bitter and disheartening thoughts by reminding ourselves that God knows—everything, and that He will deal with us by the light of everything.

In the text, as everywhere in the book of Revelation, there is a touch of mystery, through which, as through a veil, we seem to see the form of truth. We read: "And the books were opened." But we read further: "And another book was opened, which is the book of life." We know that throughout the book of Revelation, "the book of life" is that record on which God keeps the names of those who, in this world, are faithful to Jesus Christ. On it are inscribed the names of those who live the "overcoming life,"—those who hold this world to be a field of battle, and who, with their deepest and truest will, are contending for the life of the Spirit. Of these, the names are in "the book of life."

The image brought before us, therefore, is a very tender one. "The books are opened." Yes; but "another book is opened, which is the book of life." What does it mean? Just this: "The book will be opened." Yes; the life we have led will be made manifest to ourselves and to God. Our deeds, our words, our failures, will be there. Yes; but another book will be opened which is the book of life,—and in the light of both books God will deal with us. In "the book of life" God has the record of other things which humble and repentant souls may claim as belonging quite as truly to them as do the deeds and facts. In this "book of life"—to quote once more the psalm—God has the record of our tears. There He may read the story of our private lamentings, our shame, our sorrow, our prayers, our cries, our protests against ourselves, our final humility of soul. And it is the message and gospel of this Scripture that those very things which, for the most part, the world could not see, those things which seemed to ourselves to stop short and to avail nothing, shall be known at the last to have been the precious and decisive things, the interceding things, the things which in the sight of God have the saving power, for they are bound up with the eternal intercession of Christ's passion, and for Christ's sake are accounted for righteousness.

For this is the glory of God, to see things that are as though they were not—our deeds, our obvious lives; and to see things that are not, as though they were—the secret aspirations of our true soul.

This is the glory of God—to cast the sins of the contrite behind His back and to lose them in the sea of His forgetfulness for ever; and to judge us by the light and the record of “another book.”

X

OUR LORD'S SERENE OUTLOOK

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”—ST. JOHN xii. 32.

THESE words breathe the atmosphere of peace. There is the note of victory also in them. But in all deep and human matters peace and victory are one. We might even add a line to the wisdom of the world and say that “this is the victory which overcometh the world—even our peace.” It is true that there are great victories which leave us unhappy and not at all at peace with ourselves. Victories of mere aggressiveness are of this kind. A good man is always a little troubled when he finds that, after a controversy, he is to have his way. He begins to think less of himself. He begins to see that it would have been a holier behaviour for him to have yielded. The victory which steeps the soul in peace is, however, of a different kind. It is nearly always a victory which the world would have considered a defeat. A man has the victory over the world when he does not want the world, when he can do very well without

it. I have the victory over the world when my soul is so happy in some holier attachment that I have no desire for those prizes for which the world contends. In short, there is the peace of abstinence, of control, of victory over rebellious appetites. In a word, there is the peace of the Cross. "Take my yoke," said Jesus, "and ye shall find rest for your souls." "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you;" "peace I leave with you,"—I leave with you—peace.

The peace which broods over the last chapters of St. John's Gospel and breathes in this verse, is something which is not beyond our understanding. We ourselves may have had experience of it. Many of us may have known what it is to have had before us some prospect which made us afraid. At first we were not sure whether the hard thing was bound to fall upon us or not. It might fall upon us, but again, something else might happen to deliver us. Looking back now upon that entire section of our life, we see that *that* was really the most painful part of the experience. We suffered most, not when we knew that now the dreaded thing must necessarily fall upon us, and not when it had fallen; we suffered most during the days in which we were not yet quite sure whether it would happen or not. It is a very wonderful fact, and to me a very blessed fact, for it is like the

Face of God behind a veil, that when things are at their worst they are not so bad. Indeed when things are at their worst for us, we sometimes are at our best. You will see why these things are so if you will only recall, in an exact way, your words and feelings under any experience which was important enough to leave a mark upon your soul. At first there was the intolerable suspense—would the thing happen or would it not? That, I repeat (though we did not know it at the time), was really the most miserable part of it all. And the reason is that at that time we did not yet know how to direct our own deepest life. We were still "living by our wits," so to speak—forecasting, planning, worrying, enduring fits of hot and cold. We could not live, for thinking. And when we lay down at night, we could never have promised ourselves, like the good man in the psalm, that we "should sleep." In those days our poor mind, our poor agitated soul, never got an hour's real rest. It never could stretch itself to its full length, relaxing itself, surrendering itself.

In course of time the blow fell, the dreaded thing happened. Yes; and it may even have been worse than we had anticipated and, yet—this is my point—when it at length happened, nay, from the moment we learned that it must happen, we began to have a feeling of peace. It was as though

we had fallen down from one level of our life into another, nearer to the centre of ourselves, and so nearer to truth, nearer to the last realities, nearer to God. Things were now beyond our power to manage or withstand. There was no good now in thinking in a circle. There was nothing for us now but—to submit, which is the case of a fundamentally believing man, was—to ask in the silence, for the help, the forgiveness, the encouragement of God. Truly, when things are at their worst, they begin to mend, if for no other reason than this, that, when things are at their worst, and only then, is many an one sincere enough and simple enough and tender enough to open his heart to God. And it is the coming of God into our life that is the beginning of any true and solid peace.

I find I have spent more space than I had purposed on this matter; and yet I shall not regret it if it puts us at the point of view for understanding, in a manner, the wonderful peace which lay upon the soul of Jesus in the last days of His obedience, and at the very end.

There was a time when, at least so it appears to me, Jesus definitely understood that He must lay down His life. Now it is no honour which many good people think to do Jesus, to say that it cost Him nothing to face that terrible prospect. On the contrary, we read of

many a struggle, many a cry, many a wrestling in prayer while others were asleep—and what are these but records of the soul of Jesus composing itself and being composed to meet the inevitable. But when at length it was revealed to Jesus that the day was indeed inevitable, the worst was past. He found what we find when we are in any measure called upon to take up the cross, He found that what is inevitable is more easily borne than what may or may not come. A day came when, quite clearly, He foresaw the end. A day came when He faced the worst. It was upon the Mount of Transfiguration. There He took a long look at what was coming. He looked and looked until He had pierced the gloom of it, until by the force of His Faith and Consecration He anticipated the thrust of the nails. There, on that Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus was nailed in spirit to the Tree. We read that that night as He prayed, as He fought out these things in the depths of His soul, "The fashion of His Countenance was altered." That light never left His blessed Face, that Peace sustained His spotless Soul until the end. There is no longer any discussion in His own mind. He knows what is before Him, and He has examined His resources in prospect of it. And so He has that wonderful peace, that tone of God, something like what, it may be, we have seen

on the face of some beautiful soul, some young girl, it may be, who knows that she has not long to live, and who is not afraid or unwilling since it is God's will.

There was one thing which, through all the darkness of those last days, was very clear to our Lord ; it was that if He laid down His life in love for us all, we should never be able to forget Him, we should never be able to put out of our minds that revelation of what life had meant for Him, of how He had understood it once for all.

That is the spirit of these words, " I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

And now I have left myself but a few minutes to say what I should have said at length : Jesus here declares and promises to Himself that His giving up of His life for man is a thing which will always draw the human heart to Himself. Well, it rests with ourselves to say whether the Cross of Christ will have this blessed effect upon us. Certainly it should have this influence upon us all—the influence, I mean, of drawing out all that is best in us, nay, of creating in us something new and tender, some new faculty and disposition.

In the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us I see certain things, certain distinct qualities and manifestations which severally and together shall bind man invincibly to Him. There may be times, ages,

generations, when men, because of their absorption in immediate pleasures, may pay no heed to the gentler and holier appeal which Christ's Cross makes. But the trumpet will sound. Man is doomed to follow the highest or to die by the way. Though for a time, it may even be for a long time, we harden our hearts against the holier voices, their day will come again. The world of the human soul is like this earth of ours—it is a circle. It is round. And the further we rush away from our true centre, the nearer are we to coming back to it. The world will not for ever satisfy such a being as man is. We were made for something very different. This nature of ours, which was capable of manifesting the Son of God, will not always be able to forsake its own peace. Like the son of the parable it will one day, in the midst of its chosen degradations, come to itself and arise and go home.

It was a saying of those who heard Jesus speak when He was on this earth, that *He knew what was in man*. He knew the things which ultimately make the deepest appeal to human nature. And He knew that in His death for love's sake those moving and affecting things would find their purest utterance.

Now what are the things which draw us on to what is best, to what is holy? I mention *two*

things, and would point you to Christ's death for their holiest illustration.

In the first place, there is nothing that warms and uplifts us like contact with one who *believes*. It is not necessary that he should believe everything that we believe, or that he should express his belief in our forms. Let a man really *believe*. Let him be quite obviously under the control of Christ. In all his ways, let there be the natural and unpremeditated evidence of a supernatural background to his life—and that man has an invincible power to engage, to attract, to correct, to draw out our soul towards all that is good. How an unbelieving man repels us, how he frightens us even, how he disheartens us! Whereas, how a believing man makes the sun come out again! How, near him, the desert of life's hardest things even begins to rejoice and blossom like the rose!

We live by faith. That is to say, without faith we give up and die. And therefore, if for no other reason, this death of Christ in *faith* will always fill the human lamp with oil.

Again, we are drawn by the call to *suffer*. Ultimately, it is the hard and difficult thing which draws us on. They err who appeal to man on the level of his appetites and sensual satisfactions. Once in history, there arose One who made no

such appeal ; One who, on the contrary, promised His followers persecutions and scourgings, hunger and death. And the soul of man heard this holy and flattering and unusual appeal, and the Church of the Martyrs and Confessors arose from the ruins of the pagan world. "Men of Italy," cried Garibaldi, "come and suffer with us." Unless God has forsaken us, a day will come again when we shall ask Him to lead us on into sacrifices.

In closing, let me say just this : we are here to imitate the imitable things in the soul of Jesus. We are here to imitate His faith. We are here to believe and to act upon the belief that the only way by which we can really influence others for good is by consecrating ourselves. The cause of God in the world is not much helped by argument, by reasonings. It is helped by living people. It is an example which moves. Like attracts like. Let us believe in the undying influence for good of all real goodness now. Christ did not argue with the world's unbelief. He did not even argue with its sins—unless where these were bearing cruelly upon people who could not defend themselves. No ; in those words of Lamennais which I like to say, they so enshrine the spirit of our Lord's sacrifice, "All that Christ asked of the world, wherewith to save it, was a cross whereon to die." And so, if we are for Christ's

sake in some matters denying ourselves, if, for the sake of the great Christian prospect, we are behaving ourselves Christianly day by day, let us rejoice. Every such deed, every such day, is something more than itself. It is a seed of good. It is an interruption in the name of Christ. It is an opportunity not neglected by the holy One who labours behind the veil, for the triumph which is coming in the fulness of its days.

“How shall we find this great multitude?” asked the disciples of Jesus, blindly, unbelievingly. “How many loaves have ye?” their Master asked them in return. And when they gave what they had to give—the power of God did the rest.

XI

THE OPENNESS OF JESUS TOWARDS THOSE WHO NEED HIM

“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.”—ST. MATT. viii. 5-13.

THE references in the Gospels and “Acts” to the Roman soldiers are, without exception, most favourable. It was a Roman soldier who, seeing Christ die upon the cross, exclaimed, “Truly that man was the Son of God.” Even when in the course of duty they had to interfere with the work of the first disciples, they did so with the least possible temper, and made no secret that it was a branch of their duty which they did not like. St. Peter, a man with all the prejudices of a Jew, lost all those prejudices and became rather ashamed of himself when he met Cornelius and got a glimpse of his beautiful and serious home. I am sure it was one of the great blessings which came to the first apostles through their loyalty to Christ, that that loyalty took them out of their narrow surroundings and brought them into contact with good men beyond the boundaries of Judah. Jesus

had, indeed, assured His disciples that He had other sheep which were not of the Jewish fold ; but probably they did not understand His words until long afterwards. In course of time they did understand, for from the very outset it was not the Jewish soul but the Gentile soul that threw open its doors to Christ.

The first apostles tried indeed to force open the Jewish heart, but for the most part they failed. St. James and some others remained at Jerusalem, doing their best and succeeding in a quiet way. But the real Christian movement, the tide on which this day the spiritual destiny of our world is being borne, began not amongst Jews but amongst Gentiles, amongst people, that is to say—and it is the one point of my message now—who had no other preparation for the gospel than the simple and direct need of the human heart. “ I turn to the Gentiles,” cried St. Paul, leaping clear of the bondage of tradition ; I turn, that is to say, to the great world of the human heart. I turn to man as man, with his ancient sorrows and fears, and his ancient perseverance of hope. Perhaps it was because the Gentile world, the outside world, first opened its doors to Christ, that the Early Church preserved in its religious documents such stories as this of the centurion, and set them, with all their charity and good feeling, in deliberate contrast to the sour and

ill-natured strife of the scribes and Pharisees. Take an example: "Then there come to Jesus from Jerusalem, Pharisees and scribes, saying, Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, for they wash not their hands when they eat bread?" And alongside that, hear again the text, "And when He was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented."

You cannot read the story of our Lord's encounter with this Roman officer without feeling that it left our Lord very happy. And you will find this to be the exact case—our Lord was always conscious of a wave of happiness and hopefulness passing over His spirit whenever He stood face to face with what I can only call the natural human heart. Not that He considered the natural human heart as, meanwhile, what it should be, but simply that it seemed to Him to be somehow in a more hopeful condition than the Jewish heart, sophisticated as *it* had become with religious pedantries. When Jesus had finished speaking to the woman of Samaria, He was not depressed. On the contrary, He was full of hope. His face, we are told, was so exalted and unusual that the disciples forbore to speak to Him for a time. And when our Lord broke the silence, what did

He say? This is what He said: "People say that in a few months there will be harvest: but I say to you, that the fields are already white to harvest—there is everywhere the human heart with its unhappinesses, its secrets, its longings, its shame over itself, over what it has been, its cry for something other and better."

And at another time, when the Greeks who had come up to Jerusalem asked to see Him, Jesus, as though to Him it were the dawn of the endless day of His influence—Jesus lifted up His heart in an outburst of grave and serious thanksgiving and said, "Father, the hour is come, . . . for this cause came I into the world."

Let us ask, then, what was it that our Lord found in this centurion which brought over His spirit a certain access of happiness and hope? For if we arrive at it, we shall have discovered at the same time why, as a fact of history, it was the Gentile heart and not the Jewish heart which flung open its doors to Christ, and why it was that such a good Jew as St. Paul grew tired of hammering at the barred and bolted doors of his countrymen and decided with great glee "to turn to the Gentiles." In a word, Jesus found in the centurion a warm and simple human heart. He had not gone to Jesus with any merely curious question. He had gone in obedience

to a natural and human impulse: his servant was lying ill. Now here is a word of wisdom on spiritual things. You go to Christ in the proper attitude only when you go asking Him to do something for you, in fact you go in a proper spirit when you go under a sense of your need. I mean your real human need, not your need of something so rare and fine that great masses of simple souls are living quite beautifully without it, but your need of something which is as natural to your whole life as water is to your body.

The occupation of a Roman soldier in the time of our Lord was one which was well fitted to keep a man quite simple and real. For one thing, he was again and again face to face with death. The elementary things, such as pain, the inevitable separation of friends, the leaving a home which one may never see again,—these elementary conditions of life were well known to him.

There is a sense in which it is true that civilisation is the end of man. How badly we are placed, living as we do in the midst of conventions and securities—how badly placed for seeing life with its abiding circumstances! Now, if there was one thing sure about the life of a Roman soldier in our Lord's day, it was that he did not know what a day or an hour might bring forth. Neither, of course, do we know; but

we think we do, surrounded as we are by the proud works of our hands. Of course the moment we reflect we see that we live almost as hazardous a life as the soldier in the field, and that everything depends upon an inscrutable will or destiny over which we have no control. But that thought does not occur so naturally to us or dwell so habitually with us as would be the case with such a man as this Roman centurion. To him it would be a very small part of the business of life to ask questions. He understood that he was here to obey orders. Now that again is the religious way of regarding life; and the presence of that way of looking at things would be a very welcome thing to Jesus. For it is a great part of Christ's message to us, that we are not to try to get behind the great common sense of the human race with regard to life. We are, as He urged again and again, we are *to believe*. We are to take it for a settled thing that life is a sensible and wise arrangement—as we should admit if we could only see it all. We are to fight against all unbelief or disbelief as we would fight against a disease. Indeed the asking of ultimate questions about life is a disease, and is unnatural. When we begin to ask questions, the golden bowl is broken. Therefore it is a great motto: life is a duty, not a problem. We must

never even raise the ultimate question concerning life. Now that is the moral habit and outlook of the soldier; and the centurion indeed hinted at it in his conversation with Jesus. We are here to obey orders. We are here to fight for a cause, a cause which we inherited with our very blood. In many matters, we must not expect to have our own way. In many matters, we may have to accept things from which our flesh hangs back in fear. Sometimes we may not see the advantage of certain things which, nevertheless, we are commanded to carry through. But in that case, it is best to suppose that what we do not see, some other mind, some superior mind, sees quite clearly. We might wish to fight our battle in one land, but the order comes to us to set out for another land. Let us again believe that we obey One who has the right to command us, and remember that the enemy is wherever we are. Round about us on every side comrades fall, and lie for the most part in unrecorded graves. One day we too shall fall. Nevertheless, all is well if we die with our face to the foe. We have no right to be unfaithful to this life of ours which has given us all we have.

In a word, there was in the life of a Roman soldier in the days of our Lord an element of insecurity, therefore he had to live by faith. He

understood too that he was here not so much to ask questions as to obey orders. Life for him was in its essence a campaign, in which his one glory was that he might die for a cause greater than his own private well-being. And all this lying at the back of his life gave him that freshness, and openness of heart, that instinct to believe rather than to suspect, to be grateful rather than to complain—which leaves us the moment we begin to think unduly of ourselves, dwelling upon our rights and what is due to us, rather than upon our obligations and what is due from us to the great cause of God which has blessed us and our fathers. Our Lord praised this centurion, not because he was a Gentile, but because he had an unspoiled and open heart; and it was because the Gentile heart at that time was, on the whole, more human, more tender, more responsive to the offer of God's forgiveness and care, that in it Christ found almost His first welcome.

And as it has been, so it is and shall be unto the end of the world; many shall come from the East and the West and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, and the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out.

XII

THE LOVE OF GOD

IN THE EMBARRASMENTS OF OUR LIFE

“And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice. . . . And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite. . . . And God stirred up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah. . . . And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, . . . even he lifted up his hand against the king.”—I KINGS xi. 9, 14, 23, 26.

THE Bible is full of the thought, that however free we seem to be in this world, and permitted to do as we please, we are really not free, and not for one moment free. And the Bible is full of this thought simply because life is full of reasons for it.

The Bible is not alone amongst books in declaring that we are all in good hands and that we ought to walk softly. The Bible shares this seriousness with all great literature. But the Bible is the supreme witness to these things, for it never really goes beyond them or departs from

them. Its whole burden from beginning to end is just this, that beneath the surface and everywhere there is the inviolable will of a Holy God.

The great power of the Bible, the thing which makes it God's message to man, is not so much that it tells us what we do not know, but that it confirms and repeats what we *do* know, or what we, when we are alone, dimly believe or suspect.

The story of Solomon, as the Bible tells it, is the story of a man who started life with many things in his favour, who began well and kept a safe course for a time, but who broke down when he had reached the height of his power, and died in a kind of heap of ruins. As a mere story, it has all the substance of tragedy, and hurries on, like a Greek tragedy or a drama of Shakespeare, to its inevitable end. It is the story of a man—for the interest which the Bible takes even in its kings is that they are men—it is the story of a man who, by his own behaviour, arouses those forces of retribution which defend the moral government of the world. The man holds on his way in spite of their threatenings. The conflict becomes closer and more intimate, until we become aware that what we are looking at is a lonely wrestling between a man and God—in which the man must bend or break in pieces.

From the first to the tenth chapter of 1 Kings,

all that we are told of Solomon is in his favour. We learn under what happy circumstances he ascended the throne. How prudently he began his reign, completing the projects which his father had conceived. Particularly how he had built a temple which might well, by its costliness and beauty, bear witness to the glory of God.

We learn, further, that though at the outset of his career Solomon chose wisdom rather than worldly power, nevertheless worldly power had come to him to a degree which his own father would not have thought possible.

Solomon adopted the style of the great rulers of the earth; and yet he seems to have kept his head (as we say), to have maintained his own moral erectness and simplicity. That is the impression of Solomon which we are permitted to have, right up to the end of chapter ten.

With chapter eleven, the sky darkens, great clouds roll up on all the horizons, and in a few verses all the pomp of Solomon is smitten, and he himself buried in the dust—like another splendid sinner of a later time who “was eaten up of worms because he gave not God the glory.”

There is something very terrible in the way the Bible dismisses a man once he has had his chance and has failed. Once God has given a man or a nation the chance of doing something, and the

man or the nation has not done it, but has simply settled down to have a good time, I want you to notice how the Bible seems to give up that man or nation, as though it were saying, "Come, let us hurry on, nothing more is to be looked for from that one."

"And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel which had appeared unto him twice. And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; . . . and God stirred up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, . . . and Jeroboam the son of Nebat, . . . even he lifted up his hand against the king."

The subject then falls under two heads.

The condition of Solomon at this point in his career.

And, how God dealt with him.

Let us consider these in turn.

At the time when these things were said about him, Solomon was a man of from forty to fifty years of age. That is to say, he was no longer a young man. He had reached the time of life when, for the most part, a man has taken the line which, on the whole, he will follow to the end. The sacred writer shows his charity in not saying at an earlier stage what he now says about Solomon. He might have said it earlier; for the sins of which

he accuses him, Solomon had been in the way of committing for a long time. Why did this writer in the Bible not say of Solomon twenty years earlier what he says of him now? Well, I think this was the reason. It is as though he had said, "Let us give Solomon a chance. We know that the root of the matter *was* in him. It may be that he is fighting the battle which we have all to fight to save our soul in our youth. Let us remember too that he is a king, with all the snares of that high place." And so the writer held his peace about Solomon, though he must have had his fears, so long as there was the chance of Solomon fighting his way out to the right side. But at the age which Solomon had now reached, the battle was over and was lost. It was only then that the writer gave him up and began to count him among the enemies of God, of whom nothing henceforth is to be expected, who are now only in the way.

Now it is simply the truth, that we may entertain hopes for one even when we see him going astray, so long as he has youth on his side—hopes which we must with sorrow abandon when he passes the middle term of his life without a change. That is not to say that God is powerless to alter entirely a human life after a certain year, but only that as life passes over us it does case-

harden us, making it less and less likely that we shall ever be fundamentally different from what we are.

Almost anything is possible to us so long as we are young: but let not that be a snare to those who are young. In youth, we have not yet "tampered with the works." If we commit a wrong, we are visited at once by a wave of fear and moral uneasiness. In youth, we can still make extraordinary recoveries, if we will only yield to that spirit of repentance and indignation against ourselves which comes over us when we have gone astray.

It is no uncommon thing to see a young life turn right-about, and, from having been frivolous and headstrong, become suddenly serious and beautiful and happy. It is no uncommon thing to see a young life, which for a time had tried to find its happiness in ways which older and wiser people could not approve, suddenly pull up as though it had come to the end of something within itself, and from that moment break off abruptly and without one moment's regret from habits and a whole style of living which it had formerly found fascinating and necessary.

In a young heart it is still spring, when you may wound the tree without destroying it. In a young heart the great elementary forces, as rich

as nature herself, lie in wait beneath the surface. In a young heart there is still a kind of native moisture and sap, which makes one capable of undoing many a moral blunder and of overtaking lost hours. A young heart has great reactions, and if the pendulum has been pulled violently to one side it is apt to swing back with equal violence. Recall the keenness and poignancy of our moral pains in our childhood and youth—states of conscience so distressing that Kipling somewhere exclaims, "God forbid we should ever suffer as we did in our youth." What moral miseries we are capable of so long as we are young! And, on the other side, what resolutions we can come to, what soaring intentions we can yoke to our souls! How the sun can come out again for us, breaking through banks of clouds, so long as we are young! What deep contrition, what tenderness of repentance, what moments of new consecration, if only God will forgive us! All this, in the days of our youth. Yes; youth is the age, not of the law, but of the gospel, when in one glorious hour the soul may recover itself from years of idleness and folly, when in one day we may wash and be clean from almost any kind of stain. In those days let but the face of God look in, bringing a wave of penitence, of aspiration, of pure love, and in a moment all the works and bondages of the

world, the flesh, and the devil pass away, leaving a young heart right and clean.

But it is one of the disastrous effects of time that it dries up this moisture of the soul, and brings us more and more under the bondage of law and custom. Less and less are we masters of ourselves. More and more do we become the victims of ourselves. We have trained ourselves *not* to yield to the pure uprisings of the spirit, with the consequence that such uprisings do not easily take place within us.

And many other things might be said to explain why it is that unwise habits and unruly impulses which in our youth, wrong though they are, need not indicate that we are going to fling away our life, are ominous and fatal signs when they appear in our mature and settled days. The sacred writer did not say, when Solomon *began* to play the fool, that it was all over with him; but when he saw Solomon fifty and still playing the fool, he gave him up.

A further circumstance about Solomon at this time, which led the sacred writer to come to a final estimate about him, was this: Solomon had now reached the height of his power, possibly of his ambition.

Every season of our life tests us in its own way. We may pass one stage, and fail at a later stage.

Now there are many things that help us to pass the test of youth. Not to speak further, of that natural sap and energy with which we all begin, and which gives us all a flying-start into life,—it also helps us when we are young, that we have yet to make a place for ourselves in the world. Enthusiasm, ambition, the fear of poverty, the spirit of emulation,—these, though not in themselves moral safeguards, do yet assist us in the moral conflicts of the earlier stage of our life. A young man who knows that he has to make his way in the world is saved from many a danger. He pushes on: and most of our dangers find their occasion with us when for one reason or another we are not moving on. And so, I say, many an one passes the first moral stage, if not with distinction at least with safety. He has been kept safe, because he has had to work, to plan, to labour with his hands or to toil with his brain. The prospect that he might remain poor and dependent upon others, or that those dear to him might be left insecure, compelled him to keep his loins girt. With regard to such a man, the state of the case is, not that he has really overcome the world or vanquished his own sin; it is rather that in his case the question has not yet been put, he has not yet been subjected to his fundamental task.

For the real testing-time for most of us is not

when we are striving to win a place, but when we have attained to it, when we are more or less secure. It is not when we are climbing that we are most apt to fall; it is when we have reached the place, and begin to take liberties.

Now Solomon had *attained*. He had everything. It was then that he fell. You know how it was he fell. The Bible is full of warnings about it. He fell where Samson fell, where Julius Cæsar fell, where Mark Antony fell, where Napoleon fell, where, perhaps, all the ancient empires fell, where thousands have fallen in every age, and still fall in our own. I cannot speak of it just now. I cannot speak plainly about it at all. Though perhaps it is the one thing that we ought to think about and guard against. I can only say, for your warning and my own, that it was in the day of his power, of his attainment, in the day when he could look about him and say, "Soul, thou hast many things laid up in store for thee. Take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry,"—it was in that day that Solomon broke down, in that day he began to rot at the heart, in that day the locks of his strength were shorn.

And now, consider most briefly—how God in these circumstances dealt with Solomon. "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which

had appeared unto him twice, . . . and the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; . . . and God stirred up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, . . . and Jeroboam the son of Nebat, . . . even he lifted up his hand against the king."

In short, God showed His displeasure towards Solomon by raising up people and things to trouble and startle him.

The Bible does not commit itself to the idea that when troubles gather round about any one, it is the sign that that one has committed or is committing some sin. The Bible does not say that troubles and sufferings are proofs of sin. The Bible could not say such a thing, for it is not true. On the very contrary, the Bible is full of this, that good people often because of their very goodness are introduced to troubles and sufferings in this world from which careless people and hard-hearted people are free. And the Bible reaches its own consummation and the pure utterance of its message when it shows us our Lord Jesus Christ—because He was altogether without sin—being nailed to a cross by a sinful world.

The Bible, however, does insist on every page, that sin always brings trouble to him who commits it. The trouble may be something very evident, as when a man runs his head against a wall. Or

it may be something secret, intangible, altogether of the spirit, as when a man in his own miserable conscience sees ghosts, and knows, in spite of all the enlightenment of our century, that what he sees is *there*.

The Bible does not say that in every case those troubles are so great that the man, because of them, cannot go on with his usual life, but must, like Balaam, come off his ass and meet God in the dust; or, like Jonah, must ask the decent people round about him to fling him into the sea; or must, like Judas Iscariot, go and hang himself. All that the Bible says is that when a man does wrong he knows he has done wrong, and that things begin to happen within that man and in his affairs, and that the man knows why these things are happening. And if any one objects that all this is not so, that he himself can do wrong and can feel nothing about it, the Bible, rather than yield the position, will simply say, that this man who is claiming to be free from all uneasiness after doing wrong is eternally lost, is in fact not a man at all, for, according to the Bible, a man is that creature of all the creatures who can feel the touch of God.

“The Lord stirred up adversaries unto Solomon.” That might be the motto of every great piece of literature. It is one of the deepest

insights into the heart of things. We may suppose that it is only the greater sins that provoke those mysterious and unfriendly forces. We may suppose that it is only the gross transgressor who awakens the retributive forces which are the angels of God. And it is true that one who commits some flagrant wrong discovers most plainly the legions which God is summoning for his overthrow. But the same God Who sends nightmares to him who has sinned with a high hand, sends subtle troubles, and private shadows, and embarrassments upon finer souls when they are disobedient. And in the case of all, in the case of those who have done some flagrant wrong, and in the case of those who have sinned more lightly, as we should say, God has one object in raising a hedge of obstacles. It is to bring them to a standstill; it is to confront them with the injured Face of Truth. In the one case and in the other, it is God—troubling us in order to lead us to reflect, in order to make a ring of quietness and reality round our souls, out of which we may lift up our prayer to Him.

No, it is not upon those only who, like Solomon, have sinned grievously that God sends disquieting things which He hopes may prove enough. In the same way, He often makes those who fain would serve Him and who have nothing awful to repent of, feel that nevertheless they have in some matters

fallen away from Him. Therefore, when we find life difficult and contrary; when things rise on this side and on that to baffle us and oppose our purposes; when more and more we seem to be caught in a mesh of contradictions as though some one were working against us, like a mysterious chess-player who knows what is passing in our mind and thwarts it; when we are thus conscious of the absence of smoothness and joy, and our own impatience and temper would only aggravate our distress;—it is a profound and spiritual instinct which bids us ask whether all this private entanglement, this consciousness of obstacles and hostile presences, be not God Himself, God in a kind of bodily or material form, interfering with us for our good.

“The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him *twice*, . . . and God raised up adversaries unto Solomon.”

That happened long ago. But it happens still, and happens to ourselves. And whenever it happens—when here and there we find ourselves opposed, thwarted, unhappy,—instead of urging ourselves more violently against the opposing things, as though we could ever get on with the spirit against us, it is the dictate of our deepest religious sense, and it is the proper confession of

our blindness and ignorance, to command our soul to be still, and in the silence, to raise to Him Who so mysteriously is chastening our soul this true and only prayer: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

XIII

HOW CHRIST MEANS MORE AND MORE

“And He made as though He would have gone further.”
—ST. LUKE xxiv. 28.

YOU know the story in which these words occur. How, on the first Easter morning, two disciples of Jesus were on their way from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. They had very sore hearts. As they went on and on their hearts became sorer, for they were speaking all the time of One who had been cruelly taken from them, who was now crucified, dead, and buried.

Just then, and when they had stirred up each other's grief to the breaking-point, a stranger joined them, and spoke to them with great gentleness as though He understood. It was Jesus; but they did not know Him. “What is this that has befallen you,” He asked them, “that ye are sad?” And they looked up, and, feeling somehow sure of this stranger, they told Him all their story. And Jesus allowed them to speak on, knowing that a heavy heart grows lighter when it has poured itself out, just as it may heal a wound to let it bleed. They told Him of One, Jesus, who had come into

their lives and had gone ; of One who had begun to build a holy place within them and who had been taken away before His work was done. "And," said they, "this is now the third day since these things were done"—the THIRD day when we begin to realise what has happened. Thus they poured out their hearts.

But a wound must not bleed too long ; and Jesus set Himself to bind up theirs. He began to speak of other things, to interest them in other things, thus doing for them what we ask God to do for us when in our hymn we pray that He would give us "a heart at leisure from itself."

He spoke to them out of their own sacred books. He showed them how there had always been a promise from the side of God, and a hope in the heart of God's people, that one day there would come into this world of ours One who would bear our sins and carry our sorrows, who would be rejected of men, but who, in His very dying for love's sake, would open the Kingdom of God to all believers.

While He was speaking, the two men listening as in a dream, they had reached the village and their home. But Jesus "would have gone further." *He* would have gone on and on. He would have gone on, telling them about God, weaning them from their sorrow, discovering to

them such a way of looking at things that death would have lost all its bitterness, and would have become nothing worse than a generous cloud within the great sky of God's holy love.

Jesus would have gone on and on, and the stars would have appeared to support the great argument. They would have confirmed His words, each star in its twinkling seeming to say, "It is even so."

But for those two disciples, who were but men, it was toward evening, and the day was far spent.

It is a very simple lesson which I wish to bear upon the words: "Jesus made as though *He* would have gone further."

Those two disciples *felt* this stranger, Jesus, drawing them on. They *felt* that He wanted them to go further—that He had something more to say to them, that they had something more to learn from Him. They felt that. Well, my point is, that we all feel that. There is something in all fellowship with Christ which would draw us on, which would take us further than, it may be, we had proposed. We must confess that He would go on and on; that if the Divine intercourse breaks off, it is we who break it off. It is we who interrupt Jesus, sometimes even running away, leaving Him speaking.

There is no one who has been so neglected

by God that he has never once felt the wish to be a better man—nay, more than that, to become a good man. A fine morning comes to every one now and then, when we shake ourselves in the midst of our moral surroundings and propose to ourselves some better course. There is no explaining how these fine mornings break within our souls if you will not take Christ's explanation that they come from God. But they do come,—times when we protest against our own miserable attainments, are ashamed of ourselves, and take a vow that we shall be something very different. Sometimes, indeed, this new stirring of our soul would be better described, not as a morning that breaks upon us, but rather as an evening which gathers in about us and overcomes us. We do not so much stand up fired with a new moral ambition; we rather sink upon our knees.

But in either case it is Christ, it is the Son of God, joining us on our way.

And then, what happens? Together we set out. We walk for a while with a new erectness. We triumph easily over ourselves, for He is with us. Our heart burns within us as He talks to us by the way. And if that state of victory and happiness comes to an end, and we are left with the cold ashes of what was so recently a fire, we have to confess that it was we who, in some way, broke off

the high intercourse. *We* permitted ourselves to fall away from Him, and so became our poor and downcast selves. As for Christ, He would fain have gone further, He would have gone with us to the end.

This is the very nature of the life of Christian faith. If you give it any place, it will soon ask for itself a larger place. Sooner or later, you come to see that you will either have to go all the way, or break off. You cannot simply propose to yourself to be good *so far*, up to a point, and no further. For, when you get to that point, if you refuse to go on, you simply convict yourself of not having followed Christ even so far, but simply of having followed your own convenience. That is to say, if you refuse to go on, you convict yourself of having really never begun.

The Stoics, whose system rested certainly upon a very close observation of average human nature—the Stoics had a saying that if a man had truly one virtue, he had all the virtues. They meant to say, that you cannot be really good in one particular without being compelled to go further.

And there's a story which has become a proverb—about a man who bought, because it seemed to be cheap, a new wooden door, and how that new door could not be satisfactorily disposed of until he had built an entirely new house to suit it. He first

of all built the new door into the old wall ; but it hurt his eyes to see it there. The old wall looked so very old, and the new door so very new—by contrast. And not until the new door had become an integral part of a new house could the owner be at peace, feeling that now he had acted honourably by certain obscure but invincible demands of his own soul. And our Lord spake two parables, urging the same thing : the parable of the new piece of cloth sewed into an old garment which made the old garment intolerable ; and the parable of the new wine in the old bottles which burst the bottles. Goodness is a living thing, having in itself something vital and personal. Let a man admit it into his life in some particular, and he soon learns that that little streak of goodness is a living, pushing thing, which he must either put out of his life, or give place to more and more.

“He made as though He would have gone further.” When we speak of “going further” in relation to the Christian life, we mean not so much “going further on,” we mean rather going “further in.” Now that is no mere play upon words. Not only does one who admits Christ to any place in his life feel compelled to admit Him into other places, but one who begins by allowing Christ to restrain or control his *outward* life feels sooner or later compelled to allow Christ to deal

with his whole *interior* life, with his motives, his imagination, and all his secret business. Let one seriously propose to himself to *do* good, and he will find that he must either give up doing good, or himself become a good man to greater and greater depths. Let any one propose to himself to break off some bad habit. He knows that it can be broken off, and yet he may find that he is not able to break it off. But if he is a sincere man, he knows that every failure of his is trying to teach him, that he must deal with himself more deeply, that he must break up the fallow ground and not sow amongst tares, that he must call upon God to deliver him, not merely in that one particular sin, but at the very source of his being.

It is a discovery which we make of ourselves as we go on living, that Christ cannot save us so far, or up to a certain point. He can only save us to the uttermost. If you begin you must go all the way. And strange as it may sound to those who do not know, it is easier to go all the way with Christ than to go so far. It is what we keep back from Christ that gives us all our unhappiness.

There is light in all we have been saying, upon a matter which troubles many people, many who speak about it and many more who say nothing. There are those, I can believe, who may not be able to say that they began the

Christian life with an overwhelming sense of their own sinfulness. They may not be able to recall a season of spiritual distress out of which they emerged by faith in Christ. And so they have doubts at times as to whether they may even call themselves Christians.

Well, if I am now speaking to any who understand such questions, I wish to say this. All that Christ asks of any one who would be His disciple is, — sincerity, simplicity, reality. He asks only that you *mean* it, that you are not playing a part. The hour of repentance, the hour when a man's sins come back upon him, and when, out of the misery of it, he cries to Christ,—that hour has indeed been chosen all through history as the typical experience in which the soul comes into a state of faith. But why has that hour been chosen, that hour of moral solitude and pain? Because, of all hours in a man's life that is the one in which he has come right down to *reality*. The salient thing about the hour of repentance is not that it is the hour of repentance, but that it is an hour of utter humility and reality in which a man means what he says, an hour in which a man's "heart and flesh cries out." In the light, therefore, of what we have found in this text, I would say the important thing is not how we begin,

but that we indeed begin. Begin anywhere. Let Christ cut into your life anywhere, and then act honourably by His increasing demand. Let Him join you on the way, and He will take you further than perhaps you intended. Let Him control your outward actions, and you will find that He has something to say about your interior and personal life. Let Him have an inch and He will take an ell. Answer His gentlest knock, and He will come in and sit down with you. Begin with Him, and you will either have to go on or you will have to end the partnership.

One word remains, "He made as though He would have gone further." Perhaps when all is said, our faith that there is a "further" journey, that there is a place and state of being beyond the term of our earthly life,—perhaps that precious faith rests upon the *feeling* which Christ has awakened in those who truly serve Him in this present world. The whole argument for immortality moves in the atmosphere of Christian faith. The hope of the further journey springs only from the life of faith. It is the pilgrim spirit which sees the promised land. It is those whom Christ has brought thus far who know that there might well be a further place. Certain is this, that it is just in the measure to which we

live for eternal things that an Eternal Hope kindles in our hearts and sustains itself.

It is just in the measure that we keep to the narrow way through life, refusing its excesses and its snares, that the confidence becomes firm like a rock within us, that that narrow way leads to the city of God. There are no set arguments for the very things by which we live. The arguments, are the inspirations. Here in this world we walk with Christ, listening to Him, trusting ourselves to Him, —we walk thus until the evening. It rests with the everlasting Justice of God that He will not frustrate that Hope of Immortality which Jesus Christ has stirred in our hearts, by joining us on the journey of our life and by speaking to us as He did speak to us.

XIV

A PASSING SHADOW ON THE SOUL OF JESUS

“Howbeit, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?”—ST. LUKE xviii. 8.

IT is a very disturbing question which our Lord asks here. It is not really a question, for there was nobody present who could give an answer to it. It is rather an ejaculation, something which He muttered to Himself. Occurring where it occurs, it is like a sigh.

But with whatever force the words escaped our Lord, they are amongst the most disturbing in the whole Bible. It is truly an awful idea that perhaps the world as such is getting worse, that with all our enlightenment and freedom, there is something vital to man, which he may slowly be losing, until a day arrives when he shall have lost it utterly. That is a very terrible idea to come into our heads. And it is all the more terrible because our heads, for a long time now, have been full of quite other ideas. We have been talking for the last fifty years about nothing else but evolution, development, progress. Scientists and poets alike have been assuring us that the best is bound

to come; until to-day, if there is one idea which above all others had taken up its place within our mind, it is that things are improving, and are bound to improve, with the corollary, of course, that this old world of ours is going to conclude its long business with a final outburst of Hallelujahs.

Coming, therefore, fresh from the rhetoric of modern ideas to these words of Jesus Christ, we are conscious of a kind of contradiction and collapse. We are like people who have their peace broken by sudden bad news.

“Grew old along with me, the best is yet to be,
The last for which the first was made.

“My own hope is, a sun shall pierce
The deepest cloud earth ever stretched.”

So the poet had sung, and he had persuaded us. And yet here we read from the life of Jesus, from the life of Him who has kindled the hearts of all great poets, who has piled up the wood upon the world's altar of hope, and again and again has rekindled it with His torch, and blown upon it—we have from His lips such words as these: “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” At the end of the days, will the heart of man have lost for ever its capacity for God, for belief, for protest and aspiration? In other words, is it even possible that in this

world, things, from the point of view of faith and the life of the spirit, may get worse? Is it possible that that place which the human heart has so far reserved for God may slowly shrink and disappear like some rudimentary organ in our bodies which bears witness to a kinship now for ever passed away. When Christ comes again, will there be any such thing in the world as goodness? Truly, as He Himself promised, He came not to send peace, but a sword.

Once this question has been raised in our minds, and raised by such Divine authority, we begin to see reason after reason why we should pay heed to it, and not allow ourselves any longer to be lulled to sleep by vague and high-sounding words about the inevitable triumph of good, and the necessary advance and final perfection of the human race. The Christian faith does not pledge itself that the best is inevitable; it only pledges itself that the best is possible. The Christian faith does not say this or that *must* be; it says this or that may be. It was the achievement of Christ to make the best, not a *dead certainty* (as we say; and it is the nature of all certainty to bring death), but a living hope. "Behold I have set before an open door, and no man can shut it." No man can shut the door, and yet we are at liberty—not to use the door, and to stay outside.

One good service, then, the very reading of this text will have done for us, if it has delivered us from the delusion that anything good can come to us or can remain amongst us, without our hearty co-operation. It is a mischievous idea which possesses us to-day in so many departments of our life, that somehow or other good things come about of themselves, that we are in an improving world, that no matter how we, and every one separately, behave, the whole thing is sure to work out all right in the end. If we stop for a moment and ask ourselves how such a result is likely to follow, we see at once that we have no reason at all for believing that it will,—any more than we should expect an orchestra to produce a beautiful effect with every performer fighting for his own hand, with a disregard and contempt for the purposes of those round about him. In personal matters, as in social matters, the only safe maxim for us to act upon is that the worst will happen unless we see to it. If we leave things to themselves the worst is that which shall happen. This is God's ordinance for us in every region of our life, so that we may keep our loins girt. The moment we presume upon our achievements in the past, the moment we relax, switching off the current of power, that moment we begin to fall off, to cool down, to drift back.

We may have been reading about the severe weather through which we have been passing; and the reason for it lies in the nature of things. How at this time of the year our part of the world is at its coldest. Though the earth for a few weeks has been turning toward the sun, nevertheless, so far it is still losing more of its heat every day than it is getting from the sun. In a little while, if God favours us, it will be different, and we shall be getting more heat each day from the sun than we are losing. Our stores of heat will begin to accumulate, warming the bosom of the earth for the functions of spring. Now what is the meaning of all that? It is that the earth has no heat in itself, that in itself it is a place of death. Were the earth, instead of beginning to return to the sun on the 22nd of December, to continue to fall away from the sun, day by day, this northern hemisphere would become colder and colder; region after region would lose the power of sustaining life; we should have to flee southwards, imploring strangers in other lands to make room for us, as did the early dwellers in their islands before historical times. But the point is that, of itself, deprived of its predestined communion with the source of heat, this earth of ours would become the abode of death.

It is a parable of the great truth and fact,

which we may reverently suppose filled the mind of our Blessed Lord for one moment—for this moment when the words escaped Him like a sigh, “When the Son of Man cometh, will He find faith on the earth?” Will He find warm, loving hearts? Will there still be gentle souls that live, not by the raucous maxims of the world, but by the help of prayers and in holy self-denying ways? Or will the world be engaged on that tremendous Armageddon which the first century of the Church foresaw, but which God in His mercy has so far postponed, when the nations, abandoning the counsels of love and brotherhood, shall range themselves in two immense masses and bring on universal chaos? When the Son of Man cometh, will He find faith on the earth? Will He find a new type of man—strong, secular, cruel, carrying out to the full those diabolical maxims of self-assertion with which we are all playing to-day? Or will He find a world grown more beautiful with human love and kindness, a world in which men bear one another’s burdens gratefully, a world in which the nations dwell together in unity, a world in which one believes in God, not because of the darkness and cruelty of things, as is now the case with so many, but because of the brightness of things, because of their sweetness and peace.

The point is, that either alternative is possible.

The Christian religion (in a word, Christ) cannot be quoted in support of the idea that what we are moving on to is the reign in this world of universal peace and holiness. It would be far nearer the truth to say that the Christian religion rather supports the very opposite prospect. It speaks of a great falling away from God which will come before the consummation of things. It speaks of a world-wide convulsion so great that—to quote its very words—it will not only shake the earth but the heavens also. The Bible must not be quoted in support of any indolent optimism. Neither, of course, must it be quoted in support of any indolent pessimism. The Bible must be quoted only in support of faith and action, in support of fidelity, in support of worth, of energy, of prayer, in support of every one who has any glimpse of truth, who has any spirit, any moral ideal, striving for that ideal to the utmost of his power. Christ leaves the question open. This present order may end with a wail; or it may end with a Hallelujah. How it shall end will depend not upon any magical interference from outside, but upon the temper and spirit of those who make up the world.

There are certain spirits, points of view, ambitions, practices, which lead to death. They have always led to death. They always will lead to death.

There are certain other spirits, points of view,

ambitions, practices, which have always led to life, and will—through whatever shadows—still and always lead to life.

As I read my Bible, there is a sense in which the fate of the world as such is a matter of indifference. It may be that we are moving on to a state of perfection even on this side the grave. We may be sure that it is according to the desire of God that we should. But on the other hand it may well be that in consequence of our sin and self-seeking, in consequence, too, of the greater resources for evil as well as for good to which knowledge has introduced us, the race is moving on to some great catastrophe. These things the Bible leaves undecided. The Bible view, the Christian view of things, is simply this—to every soul born into this world a chance is given to follow the higher. In the case of unnumbered millions it may well be that the higher is not very high. Still it is higher than some other alternative, and as such, it is sufficient to test that soul. And Christ came into this world to bring before every soul the choice of living in communion with Him. He came to confront the soul of every human being with the great alternatives of living for self or living for the Spirit of His self-sacrifice. Wherefore, whatever be the end of things, they that put their trust in the Lord shall never be confounded.

XV

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE PLEDGE OF GOD'S HONOUR

“God . . . who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.”
—2 COR. i. 22.

THE thought underlying these words was a familiar one to the Apostle Paul. He uses these very words on three occasions; twice in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and once in the Epistle to the Ephesians—in each case comforting himself, as it were, for his present sorrows, by reminding himself of the triumph that is coming in the fulness of the times. And, in other places, where he does not use these very words, the thought which underlies them is present to his mind,—as, indeed, we do not wonder. Thus he speaks in a certain place of “the testimony of our conscience,” and once again of “the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” If you consult these passages, you will find that there is one tone, one note in all of them. You will find that as this thought comes over the Apostle's mind, every other feeling leaves him suddenly, and he becomes confident, hopeful, happy.

Whenever he thinks this thought, his spirit passes out of its trouble into peace—as a bird might stretch its wings and fly away and be at rest. The pressure becomes easier, things begin to look different,—it is as though some Holy Presence at that moment came into a room, and by its own invincible goodness subdued all things to its own quietness and dignity.

Now what is this thought which could so soothe and fortify the Apostle's soul, bringing such calmness with it? I think it is just this,—that in all circumstances he has it in his power to fall back upon God. Things may seem most forbidding outside; there may be no sign that the sky is about to clear; the day of the Lord may seem to be postponed indefinitely;—well, what then? How may a man who believes in Christ hold his ground and improve the occasion? What is there left for such a man to return to, and to set out from? This —“We have the earnest of the Spirit.” We have God working within ourselves. We have the living God in our hearts, God living in our hearts; and that removes the terrible fear to which we are tempted in our discouraged hours, the fear that our faith is but a dream, and that the twilight, which is meanwhile cast over things, is not the twilight of the morning which must end in day, but rather the twilight of the evening which brings on the night.

Things may look desperate, the world dead to the calling voice of the Holy God;—what then? *We* have the earnest of the Spirit; we know that God is; we know what He is; for His life is in our hearts. The day of the Lord may therefore be a matter for patience: it need never be a matter for doubt.

I said we did not wonder that Paul should come back and back again to this thought, and that it should always have the grace to compose his mind. Remember, he was a solitary man flinging himself in the name of Christ against the darkness and sin of two continents. We can well believe that at times he sat down and covered his face with his hands. We can well believe that in this tabernacle he groaned, being burdened and earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven. But he recovered, as we know, from every depressed mood, he became patient and hopeful after every assault of doubt. And this was how he rose from his despair. He remembered that he had the earnest of the Spirit. He was sure of God, and to be sure of God is to be sure that all God's will shall yet be done. What if this happens only at length, only at the end of the days! If it happens so it must be that that and no other was the will of God. And so his spirit leaned back upon God, he felt for God's hand and found it near, and the anxiety about himself and about the future

passed clean out of his mind. He was anointed for the battle; he was prepared to wait.

Now this is a way of looking at our life, which we also shall have, sooner or later, to take up; we too shall have to learn, like the Apostle, to trust to the earnest of the Spirit. This, indeed, is just the life of faith or the spiritual mind. Without it we are not religious at all.

We, too, must be able to fall back upon some inward and personal confidence, and there to stand as it were upon a rock, perplexed it may be, but never in despair. We must be able and be content to trust the private intimations which God has given us concerning Himself and concerning ourselves and concerning the destiny that awaits us. The things that are seen—the outward things, are temporal; they are only for a time, certainly so far as we are concerned, because one day we shall leave them for ever. But the things which are *not* seen—the inward life, the private knowledge of God, the striving and aspiration of the soul—these are eternal, these survive the weariness of the body and the eventual shock of death. It is according to his *interior* condition, therefore, that any of us is rich or poor, clothed or naked; it is according to the earnest of the Spirit, according to its force and our reliance upon it, that a man has confidence in God.

Let us dwell for some moments then amongst thoughts like these—keeping close to the very words of the Apostle.

“*The earnest of the Spirit.*” The word translated “earnest” was a word used only in business transactions. It was a Phœnician word coined by the Phœnicians, the founders of trade in our modern sense. It meant a portion of the purchase money—the pledge on the one hand that the transaction was settled once for all, and, on the other, that the remainder of the money would be paid in course of time. If the man who gave you the earnest (arrhobo), the pledge, was trustworthy, then you were in as good a position as you would be if you had received the entire amount in your hand.

“We have the earnest of the Spirit,” said Paul. “God has given us the earnest of the Spirit.” The Spirit is God’s earnest to us; on it, we base our confidence that all His will shall yet be done.

We are not to permit the ungodliness of the world to destroy our confidence; neither, on the other side, are we to strengthen our confidence by reckoning the favourable signs that may appear in the world from time to time; we are to find our confidence and to renew it by recalling the fact that God has given us His pledge and written His own name in living letters on the wall of our heart. We have the earnest, the

pledge: if God is faithful, He will bring His whole will to pass.

If we have the Spirit of God in our hearts, or, as perhaps we should say, if the Spirit of God has our hearts under discipline and control and guidance, then certain things are guaranteed to us, though the day of their fulfilment or bestowal may be hidden in the counsels of God. If the Spirit of God is working within us, disturbing our moral indolence, contending with our low and natural appetites, speaking to us in quiet and serious moments,—if God is indeed engaged with us, and we know it, and understand what it means, in that case we have within us the proof of certain glorious truths, the pledge of certain glorious prospects, which are hidden from the wise after the mere manner of the world, and are not otherwise to be apprehended.

I take three matters, concerning which it is of the utmost necessity that we have, each one of us, trustworthy and abiding convictions; and these convictions take root only in hearts which meanwhile have the earnest of the Spirit, in lives which are within the daily illumination and control of God.

Take these three great matters then, concerning which we must each have a private faith and confidence; I mean, *the being of God; the salvation*

of our soul ; and our personal existence after death.

Those three matters are indeed not to be separated. Any inquiry into one of them must take in the others. At the depths of the human soul we cross the frontier and seem to come upon the very life of God. Yet we can separate them in our thoughts, and a man is not really alive who has not arrived at some doctrine or belief concerning these great matters, by which doctrine or belief he is shaping his present life and anticipating his destiny. With regard to these high matters, how true it is that we have only the earnest of the Spirit. We have not the full disclosure, but only the pledge that it shall one day be given. It is not yet *day* ; but the day-star has arisen in our hearts. We have the earnest of the spirit ; we know in part.

Take the supreme matter, namely, the being of God. What do we know of God? How are we to know what He is? how indeed are we to know that He is? We may ask men, as Isaiah did, "to lift up their eyes on high and see who hath erected these things, that bringeth out their host by number . . . that stretcheth the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." We may bid men open their eyes to the majesty of the night-sky, to the beauty and order of the created world. We may bid a

man consider what a piece of work he himself is—his hands, his brain, his heart with its yearnings, its forebodings, its dreams. We may ask men, in short, to think, knowing that if they think on and on they will arrive at some notion about God, by Whom all things stand fast. But the Apostle takes another way, a way too that is more likely to bring conviction in these very days of ours. He bids us trace the outlines of God's character in His dealings with us privately. Has God come near to us? Has He interrupted us, showing us that we do not belong to ourselves, but are here to obey Him, here to do or to bear what He decrees? Does night fall upon our spirits the moment we have done some wrong? And does not night stay with us until we bend our stiff heart before God and ask Him to pardon us and give us peace? When we pray, when we ask for strength to go on beneath some load, it may be, which we know we must bear, do we really find strength? Do we really feel stronger, purer, more patient after we have lifted up our heart to God? Have we ever felt anything like light, like a well-spring of happiness and power, something which did not arise at all from our circumstances, but was, indeed, as we believe, a much-wanted invasion of God?

Have we had any experience of such visitations,

powers, lights, shadows? Then have we the earnest of the Spirit—the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God. God has in these things given us His pledge; the rest will come.

Although it remains for ever true that no man by searching can find out God, it is equally true that we who know ourselves to be under the discipline of the Spirit do know God. We know that He cares for us, that He takes pains with us. We see through a glass darkly; still, what we do see is there, and will remain true for ever. We know in part; the rest will come when we are able to bear it.

There are times when, as we consider the world in which we live, and how it seems to give the lie to all our deepest hopes for it, the cry breaks from us, "O Lord, how long? Will the enemy blaspheme for ever?" But be still, my soul, it is not for thee to know the times and the seasons. Has not God given thee the earnest of the Spirit? To have faith is, to be faithful to that.

The Apostle says elsewhere that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord except by the Holy Ghost." What we have been saying may help us to understand how this is so. Christ, I think, can never acquire His true value for any of us, until we have listened to the voice of God and felt the

efforts of the Holy Spirit contending for our soul. It is only then, that is, when we know how God has interested Himself in us, taken pains to make us serious and pure, taken most wonderful pains to break up the old despotism of the senses and to keep us face to face with Himself—it is only then that we can inwardly believe, and thereafter hold as a doctrine to which we commit ourselves, that God could interfere with the whole human race and meet mankind as He has done in Jesus Christ.

If you have accompanied me up to this point, a word will suffice upon each of the two great matters which we raised in addition.

What ground of confidence have we that our soul shall be finally saved, that it shall rise steadily through all its experiences to God? That it shall rise and not fall: that it shall arrive at the goal, not fainting by the way?

Who is there who has not been troubled about this? Who is there—among those who are really seeking to please God—who has not been humbled and ashamed to find that unworthy things were still alive within him, ready at a moment to master him and hand him over to the tormentors? Who is there who has not been alarmed to find that impulses still flourished within him which he thought had been rebuked once and for all? Our

inward life is so complicated, so subtle, that it is often difficult for us to say that we have made progress, that we are better, that we are more steadily and habitually Christian in our disposition? One day our feet are on a rock; we feel sure of ourselves, of our outward behaviour, and of the very temper of our mind: next day our feet are on miry clay; we struggle and lose ground, and are full of unhappiness. This is our condition at times. Where, in such a case, is our confidence that all these ups and downs are not in vain, that some abiding good is surely coming in spite of many a disheartening sign? We fall back upon God. Our confidence is not in ourselves, not in any small improvement which we may be able to report. Our confidence is in God, Who is working within us. Whatever we *have felt* of His influence, we hold as an earnest, as a pledge from Him of our eventual deliverance. We see not all things put under Him within our soul; we feel the throb and call of unruly instincts; but we see Christ at work in the midst of that inward life of ours, Christ walking on that turbulent, wind-swept sea—the restless element growing calm at His approach and in the wake of His passing! Let us thank God if now at least we cannot lie down in sin, if now we cannot go to sleep upon an unhappy conscience. Let us be grateful and hope unto the end if there is

some One working with us, if some One has really taken hold of us and is dealing with us beneath the surface—if the Redeemer has come into our life.

To repeat the old phrase—we have the earnest of the Spirit. God has given us the morning-star. The day will yet be perfect. Therefore “we are confident of this very thing that He who hath begun a good work in us will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.” And so, in days when we are troubled, as indeed we should be troubled, by our personal failures, by our low aims and unsteady obedience, when, in consequence, our feelings about ourselves as we must appear to God are perplexed and miserable,—let us remember that our confidence is in God; in God, Who was behind such improvement as we could ever claim; in God, Who is what He is, though for the time it may be our faith is weak.

A man gets back his confidence when he reminds himself that his salvation does not depend upon his grasp of God but upon God's grasp of him.

And now to conclude. The profoundest question which can engage us is the question of our personal immortality—the question which Job raised when he said, “A man giveth up the Ghost and where is he?” The truth about this great matter is hidden from us in many of its aspects.

We cannot see into the world of spirits ; we cannot hold fellowship except by faith with those whom we have loved and lost. From that bourne no human traveller has returned.

Where, then, shall we rest our confidence that we shall survive the disaster of death and shall go forward into a closer life with God ?

There are reasons and reasons which may be given to strengthen our instinctive belief in our personal existence after death. And apart from such natural proofs addressed to the reason, for us who trust the word of Jesus and His own experience, the matter is removed for ever from the atmosphere and region of debate. In plain words, He assured us that after this life another awaits the souls of men ; that the life we live here has its true consequence and fulfilment there. And He, having been dead and buried, rose from the grave by the power of God, and was seen of men. That was an earnest that we too should not be holden of death. But that is not what the Apostle means when he speaks of "the earnest of the Spirit."

The belief in our own immortality, the belief that we shall not perish like the beast, can never be a real conviction ;—it will be at best a kind of hearsay,—until we base it upon the earnest of the Spirit. I mean that, until we feel the soul

growing within us, aspiring towards God, protesting against the dominion or invasion of the carnal mind,—until we feel that we have that within us which this present world cannot satisfy, we are not using real words when we speak of immortality.

Only they who have the earnest of the Spirit are quite sure that though the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, they have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And this they know, because even now they feel that they are living unto God. They feel that God is moulding, making, unmaking, remaking, casting down, and building up their life in its secret and immortal parts. And so they feel that their immortality is bound up with God. "If God lives, I shall live," they say, "and live with Him. If Christ lives, then when my soul is set free by death to choose its own place, it will hie away to Christ like a bird to its nest. He will call, and I will answer Him. He will have a desire to the work of His hands." We know that another life awaits us, because even now we hold communications with it; because in this tabernacle we groan, being burdened, burdened with hopes which we have not yet realised, teased with dreams which have not yet come true. We are confident about this great

matter because meanwhile our soul is in travail ; because meanwhile we have the instinct and faculty for the unseen ; because, in a word, we have “the earnest of the Spirit.” Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?

XVI

WEARINESS IN WELL-DOING

“And let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”—GAL. vi. 9.

“**I**N the world of the soul,” said one who knew the human soul in all its moods—“in the world of the soul, there are sometimes shadows when there are no clouds.” The sky may be blue on all horizons ; there may be no immediate difficulty in the way ; yet the man has no joy in the journey. He is not in trouble ; he has no pain ; yet he cannot go forward, he cannot be glad. He is depressed. He has no heart even for the least effort. “The grasshopper is a burden, and desire has failed.” He knows that if he had to face a real difficulty he would rise and deal with it. He would climb a mountain with determination ; but he faints at the long prospect of the level way. This is *weariness* when one—it may be only for a moment ; it is never for long in any earnest mind—when one has a distaste for the life which he yet knows it is his duty and eternal interest to follow. When for a time the responsibilities of life—which,

of course, we have no thought of renouncing—are yet a trouble to us, and when the prospect of having to go on for days and months and years is nearly intolerable,—that is weariness. No doubt it never comes without some reason, and that usually some slip we have made, some evil spirit of indolence or reluctance which we have permitted to cross our threshold,—but now that the mood is on us we seem to have no power over it or over ourselves; no power to protest against it and to assert ourselves. We are like men who are breathing a poisonous atmosphere, or who have taken some powerful drug;—we have no ability to move and no desire to move. We know that unless we do something—bestir ourselves, cry out for help—we shall die; but we cannot help it.

I believe we all know something of this mood, when a kind of sultry weather hangs about us, when the air our soul breathes is stale and has no bracing quality, and when all things seem in vain. Every one must know what it is to be weary of the old road, to have lost heart; every one must have felt—though it is only for moments in faithful souls—a distaste to his whole circumstances, tired of his particular lot, of its difficulties, or of its pleasures. Now all this which seems to be to our discredit, is capable also of a high interpretation. It means—does it not?—that we men and women

are so constituted and are so situated, that life for any of us, without a continual renewal of hope, of faith, without a continual return to some superior and unworldly inspiration—such as a faith in God—becomes soon or late dry and intolerable.

It is easy to show that we, who believe in God and who may go through life under the eye of Jesus Christ, ought never to be weary; and that if we always remembered that we are here not to have our own way but to be good, that life is not a playground but a school, we should never be wearied or depressed. But that is only equal to saying that if we never grew weary we should never be wearied. Weariness, doubtless, need not come and ought not; but it does come.

The very fact that here, and once again in writing to the Thessalonians, St. Paul speaks of this weariness, is proof that in his experience, who is such an authority upon the spiritual life, weariness threatens even the most faithful souls, that Christians especially should lay their account with weariness.

These words of his, "Let us not be weary in well-doing," have not the tone of rebuke as if weariness necessarily meant unfaithfulness. They rather mean, "Let us (that is, both *myself* and you)—let us not be disheartened or surprised if we find ourselves weary; only let us not give way to weariness, let

us shake ourselves free of it, let us guard against it, and look to God out of it."

This weariness has usually certain signs or symptoms. It has also, we may be sure, its own causes. And, lastly, I believe that there are ways of getting over such a mood. Let us make that our line of thought: We may know *when* we are weary; we may know *why* we are weary; and we may learn *how* to get over these disabling moods of weariness, and to win back our power to do our part in this life, and to be patient.

Weariness is never without its signs or symptoms. These signs are familiar to all of us, though we may never have taken them seriously or supposed that they had any *definite* source within ourselves. And yet it would be a real help to us to know that in most cases, when we are suffering from low spirits, when we are without joy or decision or enterprise in our life, we are really for the time being under the power of a malady which, at least, we may name to ourselves, and with regard to which we may take certain steps to recover ourselves.

Here, let me say that we are not thinking at this moment of that weariness of life which gradually comes over those who live day after day for themselves and for their own pleasures. There is a weariness which comes from the *want* of well-doing; there is a weariness which descends upon

lives which have no real and honourable purpose in them. Living for themselves, men reach a point when they do not know what to do with themselves. We are thinking of the higher weariness—that which may come to those who yet have proposed to themselves a pure and honourable life. What are the evidences of it, the symptoms, the signs?

They are, for the most part, private and personal. That is to say, each of us may read only his own or her own. But though the signs are secret, they are unmistakable. Weariness is a real thing. It is very powerful. It can banish the sun from the sky. It can make this fair world *feel* for us as if it were the home of evil spirits. It can cause our circumstances to bristle with difficulties. It can make us impatient and rude to the very kindness of those we love. It can make us angry without reason, or for any reason but the right one. For probably in every case when we are ill-natured, fierce, unkind—and we would see this if we were to take ourselves severely in hand at the time,—the fact is we are impatient and dissatisfied with life; we are weary of the way that life is taking with us, that is, of the way God is taking.

This weariness may show itself within us in other ways. It may make us not angry or rude or unkind so much as melancholy and despondent.

We still keep to our post, we still take up our obligations and discharge them, but it is without joy.

To speak more particularly: we understand by weariness in well-doing, weariness under all those duties and claims and responsibilities which a religious (in our case, a Christian) life lays upon us. To the Christian, life brings one long demand,—upon his substance, or his time, or his patience, or his love, or his faith. He recognises this demand in his home, in his church, in his fellow-creatures,—not to speak just now of the peremptory demands which his own soul makes upon him. A religious man feels that he is where he is, and he is what he is, not for his own sake so much as for others' sakes. He is here to help and bless the world. The great discovery of Christianity was this, that human life might be made better, sweeter, more wholesome; in the words of Scripture, that the world might be saved. And as Christians, we should rejoice in the besetting duties of life, in its unremitting calls and claims upon us. Not to rejoice in this life of ours is to be weary. We are weary when we feel our duties to be dry; when we feel the claims of Christian love and brotherhood troublesome and against the grain. We are weary when we are indolent at the summons of faith or hope or love. We are weary

in those hours when we don't like to think how much sorrow and how much need there is in the world and round about us, and that *we* might do something to reduce the bulk of human misery.

And then over and above these demands for our love and sympathy, which our religion makes, there is the fundamental requirement of God that we ourselves be pure and holy in our own inward parts. That is another region in which weariness always threatens us. We may know what it is to be impatient of the regular duties of the religious life—to feel public worship an interference with our natural indolence, and so to think less of public worship, and to imagine some other way of spending the Sabbath would be better, because we would like some other way—as if we had not to suspect our *likes* rather than be guided by them.

Then to speak of more intimate things, we may know what it is to hurry through our prayers, feeling a certain irksomeness in what—if we were as we should be—is “the great love the Father hath bestowed upon us,” to call Him Father, and to speak to Him as children. We may know what it is to put off the facing of private moral questions; we may know what it is to resent the perpetual demand for goodness, for seriousness, for self-examination, for religion, for restraint and abstinence and prayer. Well, these are among the signs of this weariness

in well-doing, of which the Apostle in this Scripture is bidding Christians beware.

And now let us see if we can come upon the sources of this disabling malady. As Christian people, there are two sides to our obedience. We have our life in the midst of our fellow-men, and towards them; and we have our personal life before Almighty God. In either or in both we may grow weary.

What are the circumstances which lead to coldness, indifference, fatigue, and distaste in that service of God which takes account of others? Why do we grow weary in our life as Christians in our home, and in our church, and in those ministries of sympathy and help towards others, which Christ lays upon us all?

To begin with, there is the instinctive aversion which we all have, more or less, to work, and to the bestirring of ourselves—our natural love of idleness and of our own comfort. Few of us can be sure that we should work at all if we did not need to work. But when, as is always the case in well-doing, that is, in Christian living, it is not for ourselves that we have to work, but for others; when we are asked to labour and deny ourselves, not for our gain but for the good of others, then the natural aversion which we all have to taking pains is enormously reinforced. Of course, in

these private conflicts between the higher voice and the lower, between what Christ asks of us, and what the natural man in us would prefer, a good man will see to it that he gets the victory over himself, he will see to it that in these private matters which nobody knows about but God and himself, he does not give way and lose his soul.

But to pass from that general reason for weariness in well-doing, namely, that doing of any kind, and especially well-doing, is against our old nature, there are particular reasons, for example—

When a man grows "weary in well-doing," it may be the effect of a false modesty. As he thinks of how very much misery, sin, want, there is in the world, he may say, "After all, how little I can do?" "What is my little when compared with the infinite need of the world?" And so, from a genuine feeling of how much there is to be done in the world for Christ, we may actually let ourselves off with doing nothing. Yet surely one great principle of our religion is just this—to believe in the infinite power for good, in the infinite future of the Christ-like behaviour of every *one*. And in any case, *we* have only our duties. We only know what Christ asks of us: it is not for us to know what will become of our deed, or how Christ will arrange for what we cannot overtake. We know the parable of the leaven in the meal. We know

that the few loaves, which Christ blessed and broke, fed five thousand, besides women and children. We know that the Church began with a few, that they spoke and lived out their belief, yielding themselves to Christ, and that to-day we who live in a land which they never so much as heard of, are met together for the glory of their Lord.

Then there is still the other side of our life, namely, what is due from us to God. In this region everything is private. But here weariness may come over us. We may seem to be as devoted as we ever were, but at heart it may not be so; we may be conscious rather of the yoke of Christ than of His anointing. Now we should be very strict to mark these things within ourselves. To discover them is almost to get over them. To make plain to ourselves that we are really in such and such a condition towards God is almost immediately to rise into a better condition.

This leads me to our last inquiry, which is, how we may get the mastery over this mood of weariness which brings such confusion into our lives, and so disengages and alienates our hearts from Christ and from all healthy and unselfish living.

If you ask what is in all probability the *cause* of your weariness, I should say that you will find it best by observing the symptoms of it in your case. The sign helps you back to the source. Just as

you always find the *seed* in the *fruit*. For example, and to be very simple: suppose that your weariness takes this form,—it has made you less interested in the public worship of God, less regular and less in earnest in your attendance upon church ordinances. Suppose, I say, that that is how “weariness in well-doing” comes out in your case. Well, I will say that this has come to you—among other reasons, doubtless—because you have permitted yourself to neglect or to become irregular in the house of God. Everything had a beginning. There was a day when you yielded—and it was not without a protest from a high voice within you, for there is a fineness in our souls until we turn the edge of it, the first sin is always against the hair,—there was a day when you yielded to some feeling of sheer indolence, and you absented yourself from the house of God. There was really no reason for it. You forced yourself—for there was at first a kind of shame about it—you forced yourself to neglect a religious habit for the sake of something lower, and now you find public worship a weariness. Of course you do; because once upon a time you agreed with the lowest feeling of your unregenerate nature,—your natural indolence,—that it was quite right for a man first of all to consider his own comfort. At that moment, though you were not aware of it, your whole soul

began to go downhill. And to say now that you find public worship dull and uninviting is only to say that you find it hard to stop and turn. I make bold to give the same explanation if you now find a certain tediousness and worry in any department of your religious life. It began with a failure or neglect, more or less deliberate and wilful.

I close with three words of counsel, which, if we take them seriously, will bring us near to God in this matter so that He may revive us again.

It is a very sudden medicine for the soul in any state of weariness simply to make plain to itself its condition. We often recoil from ourselves and are delivered when we make it quite plain that weariness of worship, weariness in prayer, weariness in self-examination, weariness in patience, in faith, in hope, in love,—that all such weariness is really *weariness* of God. I say, in most cases when we see into the heart of our *weariness*, there comes over us a secret flood of shame and penitence and supplication, which makes us willing and eager once more in the hands of God.

Once more, we must not suppose that because we seem not to be able to get to the *root* of this weariness, that, therefore, we can do nothing with it when it comes over us. There is a great deal we can do and must do. There is one way, I believe, of attacking any deep-seated disease. It is the

course which physicians adopt when the basis of the disease is beyond their reach. They attack and overcome the symptoms and signs. By this means, and because the symptoms are connected, not accidentally but organically, with the root of the disease, the assault upon the surface is felt at the depths. In the same way, you may not be able to pluck up a tree by the root; but if your object be to kill the root, you need not stand idle. Set to and harass the tree. Tear off the leaves, break down the branches, peel off the bark; give it no rest; and you will kill it from above. In the same way, we may trample down with vehemence and as a wrong thing within us, any *sign* or symptom of reluctance to the will of God, any movement within our minds that we should obey our own weaknesses rather than what Christ lays upon us. We must take ourselves severely whenever we are on the point of giving way, or are tempted to choose our ease rather than our duty. For, we have ourselves as we use ourselves.

My last word is this. There is a way by which most of us may get back our eagerness for God's service—and get it back immediately. It is by remembering our sins or some particular wrong-doing, from the guilt of which we trust to God to hold us pardoned. No other method so

suddenly makes a man—who has had some such history,—real, and brings him to his knees with a full heart. “My sin is ever before me”—weariness passes immediately at that thought. For the proof which one has that God has really forgiven him his sins and has accepted him, is that he himself is now serving God, that he has now given himself to God. And if for a moment he discovers himself reluctant and disobedient towards God, does it not mean for such a man that the old things are back upon him once more, the old sin, the old fear, the old desolation of soul. In a moment the whole life of such a man becomes keen towards God, and altogether willing. He feels bound to Christ by an awful yet blessed secret. And after the sudden anguish has passed his heart is filled to breaking with new fresh love and gratitude. “Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do.”

XVII

THE HOUR WHEN WORDS FAIL

“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”—ST. JOHN xiii. 7.

AS we read these chapters of St. John, in which he tells us with such detail the things that happened on the night in which Jesus was betrayed, we cannot but feel what was in the mind of Jesus in all He said and in all He did. He knew that in a few hours He would leave those eleven men, in a sense, for ever. They were still not much different from what they had been when He called them to His side. We have little reason to believe that they understood Jesus in any deep way. And now that He was about to be taken from them and put to death—and that in a manner which, in their view, covered the victim with ignominy—it was possible that these eleven men might be able to forget Him, and to go back to their old occupations, like men who have been disappointed or even deceived.

It does not seem to have entered into the mind of

Jesus that these men would really forget Him. Quite the contrary. His entire behaviour during the last night He spent with them, the words He spoke, the little things He did—His entire behaviour has, as its background, the feeling on the part of Jesus that it mattered not *now* what happened, there was that between Him and these eleven men which could never, never be undone. They could never be as they had been before they knew Him. They could never take up their lives where they had laid them down. It might break their hearts, it might hinder them from becoming ordinarily happy and useful men; but one thing was certain, something from Jesus had come into their lives which would have its own way with them until death relieved them. Ay, in their very dying, they would not be able to keep back the memory of that beloved Face.

As we read these last chapters in St. John, we feel that Jesus knew all this, knew that He had won these men for ever. They themselves might not know it; they might think that they had it in their power to turn their backs upon Jesus, and go their ways as though they had never known Him—just as men to-day suppose; but Jesus knew better. Jesus knew that henceforth they and He were bound together. And so He sets Himself to comfort them in face of the things that are

about to happen. He speaks to them, allowing them, tempting them almost, to open out their hearts to Him,—to tell Him their difficulties even before those difficulties actually overtake them. Not satisfied with having spoken many a beautiful and assuaging word, such as would be sure to come back to them in their distresses, Jesus took water and a towel and knelt before each of them and washed their feet. It was at this that Peter was amazed, and said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." And it was to Peter thereupon that Jesus answered, meaning more than Peter could understand, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

I say, Peter could not at the time understand what Jesus meant; but we understand, as he would understand later. It was very simple: it was just this. Our Lord—we may not say how He knew, though we may be sure that He had been observing Peter and was aware both of his strength and of his weakness—(our Lord) knew that Peter was going to deny Him. He knew also that the danger for a man like Peter was that, after doing what was wrong, he would next moment almost be so covered with shame that he would seem to himself to have plunged into irretrievable darkness. And so Jesus knelt down and washed his feet. In order to increase the

moral pain to Peter of having denied Him? Yes! But in order also to fill that moral pain with a tender reminiscence which would surge up through the bitterness of His own thoughts and find its way out in gentle, cleansing tears, Jesus knelt down and washed Peter's feet, knowing that Peter was going out to deny him: as a mother bidding farewell to her son who is leaving the old home to meet the world—knowing something of the dangers—fills the parting hour with love, not thinking maybe how wisely she is doing; and yet, as a matter of fact, by that love of hers she is confirming all the safeguards of purity in her child and adding yet another—she is planting in his soul, though *he* may not know it nor she, something that will cry out within him, protesting against all base courses, something which, if he should drift for a time, or fall abruptly, will look at him with the eyes of God, and bring him back.

That same night Jesus stood in the judgment hall, and Peter stood at a distance from Him by the fire. For Peter the hour had come, which comes in various ways to all of us,—the hour which is to try what is in us. You know the story: how first one servant, then another, and yet a third accused Peter of being a friend of Jesus, of knowing Jesus, of having been seen with Jesus; and how Peter denied it, even

with oaths. And how at that point "Jesus turned and looked upon Peter and Peter remembered"! I am sure that Peter had kept his eyes from Jesus all the time he was denying Him. But at last he simply *had* to look up, and there he saw Jesus looking at him. That was all. Yes; but it was everything. It was too much for him. It was enough. Peter remembered—everything. And he went out and wept bitterly.

It is very wonderful how this man, who a moment before was afraid of a servant, afraid of anything that would expose him, stands now at the door of that judgment hall weeping, not caring who should see him; feeling, on the contrary, that in those tears he is beginning to be a man again from having been a craven coward. What did it? The look of Jesus, Whom he had previously known! The look of Jesus, which is never a thing by itself, so to speak, but always something which is in harmony with all that is best in our life and in our memories.

Happy are they for whom, down in their hearts, there is some one, or the memory of some one, who has power with them in the dizzy moments of temptation, when the spirit balances itself between two courses,—who has such power, such potency, that even to look across at such an one, or to throw back their minds towards some sweet intimateness of the spirit, is alone enough to end

the strife, to banish a legion of devils, to settle the matter in favour of God, and purity, and honour! Happy are they, and safe, upon the whole, who have thus God woven into the very texture of their souls, so that in some hour of stress the Divine strands will hold! Happy are they and safe who have memories, reminiscences, past contacts with Christ hidden in their lives; for let but Christ look into their eyes again in some hour when anything is possible, and these will stand fast, or, having gone astray, will feel the arresting hand of God, and come home, led captive by the grace of a day that is past.

“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” That is our condition from every point of view;—it is only later that we know the use of things. And from the use and profit which things bring to us we conclude that it was well they came. This is the attitude of piety concerning everything, which, overtaking us in this present life, seems to come by God’s appointment. We confess that what He hath done we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. We are satisfied, we are reconciled by faith, by that faith.

Let us return, however, to the exact significance of our Lord’s words as He uttered them. He had knelt down and washed Peter’s feet—Peter who was going out to deny Him. He had

done it, in order to send a fire upon Peter when he should fall. He had done it, so that into Peter's bitter thoughts about himself, there might flow in the memory of this last tenderness. "Love never faileth," says St. Paul. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me," said Jesus. It is as though He had said also,—to the eleven, and particularly to Peter: "If I wash their feet, if I stoop to this lowliest service, they will never be able to escape from the memory of my love." They may go far away from me, but they will come back to me." And they did come back. And we are all of us always coming back, it matters not how, or how long, we turn away.

There are some things that rise very naturally to our minds after considering this part of Christ's life, and considering these particular words.

One thing is, that it is a great matter, it may even be a decisive matter, to have high memories. Indeed it is almost the best method of the spiritual life to put ourselves upon the recollection of our best days. As we gather together the old embers, God, in His goodness, is apt to blow upon them, so that out of what seemed ashes there issues a flame!

Another thing is that it is our part, in our several circumstances, as members of homes, as members of the Church, so to live with one

another in these present days, that in days to come we shall have holy memories, and be able to summon a holy and happy presence out of these days which will then be past.

We cannot do much for each other in the deeper things. Parents for their children, the most devoted teacher for those committed to him or her,—how little that is decisive we can do! But we can love them; we can rid ourselves of all selfishness in our bearing towards them; we can do in spirit what Jesus did for Peter when He washed his feet; and we can leave the rest with God—not in a sullen and hopeless way, but happily, trusting to the invincible power of love truly manifested by us and received by others. Love begets love soon or late.

“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” And Peter did come to know. He came to know that Christ had become more to him than he had supposed even in the days of his early enthusiasm.

The love of Jesus for him triumphed over the man's contempt for himself—after he had sinned. That was the faith of Jesus—that if He loved us unto death—as He did—we should never be able to go on, for long, as though He had never been with us here. He believed—He knew—that it would from time to time come back upon us, breaking

up the hard rock of our usual life, that once upon a time, *One* came to this world of men, as Jesus came, and spoke to us, and about us, as Jesus did. That He loved and revered the soul in every human being. That He hoped greatly and believed greatly, rejecting for ever the mean or desperate view of man.

All that remains, Christ remains: and life can never be as though He had not been. "What He did they knew not at the time; but we know now." And this is what we know: that, to repeat some words from Walter Pater, which, the more we ponder them, are seen to veil and unveil a deepening truth,—in Jesus Christ there has been established in this world a permanent protest, a plea, a perpetual after-thought, which humanity will ever possess in reserve, against any wholly mechanical and disheartening theory of itself and its conditions.

XVIII

HOW WE HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE

“And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, *he knoweth not how*. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.”—ST. MARK iv. 26-29 (R.V.).

AT the very moment when our Lord set out upon His public ministry He encountered a long and solitary temptation. No sooner had the Holy Spirit descended on Him than He was hurried into the wilderness, there for forty days to be tempted of the Evil One.

We may not peer too closely into that experience of His. But one thing emerges from it as its real truth and significance. Jesus learned then once for all, and overcame for ever within Himself every voice that might have seduced Him,—He learned that the Kingdom of God which He had come to found would come, must come, not by a sudden catastrophe, but by a gradual movement

and as a long result. In that solitary experience into which He was impelled by God at the very threshold of His mission, other methods flashed into His soul and tempted Him. Why not cast Himself from the pinnacle of the Temple? His Father would send His angels, lest He should dash His foot against a stone. He would fall amongst the kneeling figures of pious Jews, who in those Temple courts were praying at that very moment for the Messiah to come down from heaven! Why, in short, not make use of the Jewish expectation, why not fall in with it, and become in one day the easy and applauded leader of a passionately religious people?

Or, again, let Him only relax a little the demand for holiness which He was insisting upon; let Him (to use a phrase) take the world as He found it; let Him take advantage of the lower ideals of men, and allow them to raise Him to a great place, not indeed for His sake but for their own sakes, because He promised them anything they wanted. Why not compass His aim—if it was His aim to win a place in the world—by ingenuity rather than by goodness, and by Himself *striking* rather than by Himself receiving the stroke?

But the pure spirit of Jesus recoiled from these suggestions of the Evil One; because, in each case, to yield, was to bow down and worship Satan; in

each case, it was to make a mockery of man and to move on to power, over man's prostrate and unenlightened soul.

That was the conflict which, in the wilderness, was waged in the outer courts of the soul of Jesus—whether His Kingdom should, through all the ages, come by weakness or by might, by the profound attraction of *goodness*, however long-delayed, or by mere worldly wisdom and ingenuity and force.

Jesus chose the long, slow way of goodness and patience. He chose to overcome man by love, not by anything which merely amazed man, leaving his heart untouched.

But it was the slow way, and, because He chose it, His whole life was a Passion.

But because He chose that way, every victory He gained and has gained was the pure victory of God, of goodness, of love in some human soul, not the miserable and childish triumph there of mere physical power.

The Kingdom of God has suffered and nothing but suffered from every victory won otherwise than Jesus chose, otherwise than by the way of meekness, of integrity, of real stooping service. For there is no triumph of God unless in the improvement of human beings, in the deepening and enlargement and increased tenderness of human souls. It has been a hard lesson first and last for

the servants of Christ to learn and to submit to—that the Kingdom of God is the pure advance of God in human souls, and through these on other souls, until the whole world, not by outward constraint but by love, shall become the habitation of God through the Spirit.

This parable is one of many in which our Lord describes the genius and spirit of that Kingdom which He had come to found. "So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, *he knoweth not how*. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

The instruction of the parable is plain. It is our Lord's charge to His disciples and to us to have patience; to have patience with God's ways of working, alike with men in the mass, and with ourselves one by one. But as there is something earlier than patience, namely, faith, which really is the basis and reason for any patience that may be asked from an intelligent being, this parable, which was spoken in support of patience, begins further back and deeper down with an appeal for faith.

The faith which Jesus here asks of those who

look to Him out of their difficulties or sorrows is, *a general confidence in life*. We must all begin by taking something for granted. The Christian begins with God ; just, as in our own day, science begins with the hypothesis, which is only an hypothesis, of electrons, and the luminiferous ether. But however deeply we lay our foundation, there must always be something beyond, something deeper. So I say we must all begin by taking something for granted, something as already *there*. Our Lord asks us, in this parable, to begin with a general confidence in life, with the belief, that is to say, as a working rule for our life, that things are being managed, and are being well managed. If, in the course of our experience in this world, we ever become aware of anything which we think ought not to have a place in a well-ordered system, and if we cannot see any deeper or remoter reason for its presence, such as would finally justify it in the total scheme, even then we are to bear with it as an exception, as an inadvertence ; we are never for one moment to allow it to unsettle our general confidence that all through, and at the last, life is with us, that the stars are fighting for us, that there is a correspondence and co-operation between every faithful spirit and the inviolable Will of God.

This, of course, is not to say that things will always turn to the comfort and well-being of a

man no matter how he acquits himself; that at the last he will be in the same case as he would have been in had he behaved differently and more wisely. It is not to say that the best will be sure to happen even when we are too indolent to labour for it or to go out to meet it coming. Quite otherwise. This, which I call a confidence in life or faith in God, means that there is justice, fairness, kindness even at the heart of things. It does not mean that we shall get what we want without working for it. It does mean that, on the whole, there is a just and proper correspondence between what any one does and is, and the things which happen to him in this world—body, soul, and spirit; that life is controlled by order, intelligence, good sense, with a leaning towards generosity and mercy.

“A man casts seed upon the earth, and sleeps, and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up, *he knoweth not how.*” There is a return from life for everything we put into it. Say your word, do your deed, stake yourself, your whole self, for your ideal, as though you believed in it,—and be assured that it is not in vain. “Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap.”

This confidence in life, which is more needful for us than wisdom, is first of all an instinct. It is the unconscious faith of children, and is still the

habit of mind of those whose early faith has never been seriously disturbed. But in the case of many in our day that first instinct has been assailed or even destroyed. Setting out into life with this confidence which was more an instinct than a belief, they have become aware of things in this world of ours which are hard to reconcile with the unthinking faith of their childhood. The very largeness of the world makes us feel insecure. This, I say, is the condition of many in our day. Their own reading and thought, their experience at the hands of other people has broken up their early harmony with life, and they have not yet gone down deeper into things to find the beginning of the only true reconciliation, I mean in God and the way of the Cross.

For indeed there is no other way of peace. I know of no other way by which one who has tasted the "sorrow of knowledge," and has lost his first happy confidence in life, may win back that early peace itself, or something even better than that early peace, except by laying hold, in some profound and lonely act of his will, of that faith in God which Jesus Christ the Son of Man achieved for Himself and for us all in His own passion and loneliness, out of the very heart of a world's shadows and cruelties and contradictions.

Nature, it is true, as I have said more than

once — Nature of herself may now and then bring a certain solace to our wounded spirits, and bring about us something of her own calmness and peace. But Nature by herself is not able really to deliver any one from the troubles and misgivings which come with thought and experience. Nature really only reflects, perhaps intensifies, the feelings which, at the moment, are in our own heart. You get from Nature what you give. Her voice is the echo of your own. You will get from her confirmation alike for your fears and for your hopes. True, the morning sun, rising over a fresh, sweet world, will always have its beautiful and stirring influence upon a sensitive and devout soul. It will seem like a word of encouragement spoken to us by the Author of our being: like the very word of the Saviour, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer."

But the sun not only rises: it also sets. And if one who looks at the sun going down amongst dark clouds has, at the moment, some private cause for heaviness or despair, then the setting sun, the swiftly coming night, will seem only to increase the darkness of his mind. The natural scene on which he is gazing will seem to his unhappy heart a proof even from the dumb world that it is towards some final night of universal defeat, and not towards a great day of the Lord, that all things here are hastening. The fact is, I say, that Nature by her-

self gives no sure word on these great matters : she only accentuates the feeling of our heart.

But if, because of Jesus Christ, because of His firm confidence in things, because of His unperplexed communion with the Eternal Father, beset as He was by life's supreme darkness ; if, because of Christ, and for reasons within our deepest spirit, reasons beyond all reason or controversy ; if, by the election and grace of God, we *do* believe ; if we have this faith, not founded merely upon the bright things of the natural world, not subject, therefore, to the misgivings which spring from Nature's forbidding things ; if for reasons above Nature ; if for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we do believe ;—then do we see in Nature many a beautiful and confirming message.

Her terror then becomes for us the visible majesty of God. Her awful spaces become our human measure of His Eternal Power and Godhead. And the orderly passage of the days and the years, the ebb and flow of tides, spring and harvest, the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear, become for us corroborations of our own most spiritual belief,—that we are not dwellers in an unfaithful world which at the last will mock the vision of our own best hours ; but rather that He who formed the ear Himself will hear, that He who, by obscure ways, has led us thus far, has yet in store for such as are

faithful to the end, some great and final good ; that a world like our own which, meanwhile, has such evidences of law, of growth, of generosity, and mercy, a world which is a cosmos, can never have chaos for its crown ; that " The Eternal God is our refuge, and beneath, the everlasting arms."

2/- net.

By the Rev. J. STUART HOLDEN, M.A.

SUPPOSITION AND CERTAINTY

AND OTHER ADDRESSES.

Crown 8vo. Handsomely Bound in Art Linen, Gilt, 2s.
net (post free 2/3).

LEATHER EDITION, Limp Lamb-skin Gilt, Gilt Top,
Silk Register, 3s. *net (post free 3/3).*

CONTENTS.—SUPPOSITION AND CERTAINTY—MARRIED VESSELS
RE-MADE—DESIRE AND DYNAMIC—THE ENTHRONED LORD—
"HAVE YE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST?"—OUR OBLIGATION—
"WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN?"—LOVE MADE PERFECT—
CHRIST'S CLAMANT CALL—"TO BE SAINTS"—HOW TO REGAIN
LOST POWER—TEMPTATION AND VICTORY.

Rev. Canon A. E. BARNES-LAWRENCE:—"A valuable book by one
who is widely recognised as 'a man with a message.' I wish it a large
circulation."

Rev. HARRINGTON C. LEES:—"Like notes of a wedding march,
recalling the day of a new union with Christ. An inspiration—tender,
wholesome, convincing."

Rev. Dr. GEORGE HANSON: "Heart-searching and soul-inspiring. I
have not read any book of recent years which goes so directly to the
root of our spiritual disorders, or one in which Christ is presented more
winsomely and lovingly as a Saviour able to save to the uttermost. I
thank God for the publication of this book, and I wish it a very wide
circulation."

"This collection of addresses is a valuable addition to the library of
suggestive devotional works."—*The Record.*

"A volume of addresses for the deepening of spiritual life. They are
admirably adapted for their purpose. We hope they will be widely read."

The News.

"Mr. Stuart Holden's style is clear and illuminating. The illustrations are
simple, fresh, and helpful."—*The English Churchman.*

"The discourses are lucid and bright, and intensely practical."—*Good Words.*

"This delightful volume is most devout and suggestive, abounding in good
points and useful illustrations."—*The Preachers' Magazine.*

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

3/6 net.

By the Rev. J. STUART HOLDEN, M.A.

REDEEMING VISION.

Large Crown 8vo. Cloth Gilt 3s. 6d. net (*post free, 3/10*).

"Mr. Holden's sermons are very valuable and suggestive."—*Life and Work*.

"We are especially impressed by the apt illustrations abounding in every discourse, and the freshness of the quotations he employs to drive home his thought. No one can read this book without feeling that the writer has a passion for souls, and a consuming desire to lead men to the knowledge of God."—*Church Gazette*.

"Thoughtful, cultured, and heart-searching sermons."
Free Church Chronicle.

"Full of deep spiritual lessons, brought home by telling illustrations."—*Record*.

"It is a pleasure to read discourses in which, with such simplicity, earnestness, and unfaltering strength of conviction, the foundation things of the Gospel are set forth."—*Sunday School Chronicle*.

"As meditations on the Christian life these pointed chapters will do fruitful service."—*Churchman*.

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

A New Volume of Helpful and Suggestive Sermons.

3/6 net.

LAWS OF THE INNER KINGDOM.

By the Rev. HENRY W. CLARK, Author of "The Philosophy of Christian Experience."

Crown 8vo. Cloth Gilt, 3s. 6d. net (by post, 3/10).

"This volume of sermons should prove rull of seed-thought to preachers and teachers, while for personal meditation it will yield abundant fruit. There are very few sermons which bear the test of print, but Mr. Clark's come out of the ordeal triumphantly. So long as he can give us such suggestive, spiritual, and felicitous teaching, he will never lack readers."—*Churchman*.

"There are books that have no feeling in them—that send leanness into our soul. That cannot be said of this volume. It is full of meat. It contains twenty sermons, and they are fascinatingly fresh."—*Sunday Strand*.

"A book we heartily recommend to preachers; it will suggest a very profitable variety in the fare so largely supplied to modern congregations."—*Preachers' Magazine*.

"Those who read this new volume with the care it deserves can only gain good from it. It breathes the true spirit of devout thought, and is full of hope."—*British Congregationalist*.

"We hope he may have many readers for his twenty very good sermons."—*Methodist Times*.

"These are very fine discourses, which go to the heart of things and present the laws of the inner kingdom with remarkable freshness."—*Teacher and Preacher*.

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

A Volume of Suggestive and Thoughtful Essays.

2s. net.

STUDIES IN THE MAKING OF CHARACTER.

By the Rev. HENRY W. CLARK, Author of "Laws of the Inner Kingdom."

Crown 8vo. Cloth Gilt, 2s. net (*by post*, 2/3).

"A noble pronouncement, so calm, so weighty, so fine in feeling, so lofty in tone, so distinctively spiritual. . . . Within this small limit there is sufficient suggestion to inspire many books, and a quality of thought and of literary style that give it a place among genuine *belles lettres*, which few books merit. A very notable book."

Sunday-school Chronicle.

"One cannot but be struck with the *suggestiveness* of these brief but illuminating 'studies.'"—*Churchman.*

"Well worth perusal for their freshness and stimulus. In the nature of things there ought always to be room for what may be called the religious essay. . . . Of course, without a somewhat rare skill and resource, the performance can be easily of the tamest kind; but, as Mr. Clark achieves it, it is arresting and worth the watching."

Christian World.

"Insight into character, an eye for hidden motive, a philosophical view of life lightened by faith, and a sense of style, make the chapters of this singularly attractive book almost perfect examples of one form of essay."—*British Congregationalist.*

"Character is the most difficult thing that any man is set to make. It needs all the advice and encouragement that experts can provide: the Rev. Henry W. Clark is an expert. His book costs little and is worth much."—*Expository Times.*

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

By the Rev. W. D. M. SUTHERLAND

IDEALS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Introduction by the Rev. G. H. MORRISON, M.A.

Cloth Gilt, 2s. 6d. *net.*

There is much that will elevate and stimulate in this work. The ideals put forward, as necessary elements in the true Christian life, are not merely set out in the abstract, but are *real* in the truest sense of the word, and such that the reader may lay hold upon, and which cannot fail to stand him in good stead in the making of all that is noble in character and personality. There is living force in every page.

Mr. MORRISON says: "The ideal which the author sets before us is a high one, and those whose lifelong task it is to speak to men, in language which they can understand, about the vision and the battle, will be the first to appreciate the strength and the tenderness and the insight which mark this volume, and which will make it a treasured companion to multitudes who are making their journey towards the sunrising."

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

A Scripture Study by the Rev. Harrington C. Lees.

ST. PAUL AND HIS CONVERTS

STUDIES IN TYPICAL NEW TESTAMENT MISSIONS.

By the Rev. HARRINGTON C. LEES.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, 1s. net (*by post 1s. 3d.*).

CONTENTS :—ROMANS, A Missionary Message to the Heart of the Empire.—CORINTHIANS, The Gospel in a Heathen Port.—GALATIANS, The Gospel in the Country Districts.—EPHESIANS, The Gospel in a Heathen Cathedral City.—PHILIPPIANS, The Gospel and Colonial Work.—COLOSSIANS, The Gospel in an Out-Station.—THESSALONIANS, The Gospel in an Independent State.

This book is intended for general use as a series of Bible Studies, which will help to the understanding of the principles upon which fruitful missionary work may be conducted at the present day. Each Epistle therefore has been studied in a particular light, and the treatment is not intended to be more than suggestive. The special groups of readers who have been borne in mind are Missionary Study Bands and Bible-Classes, but there is much which the individual reader may also ponder, and it is hoped, find useful.

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

By the BISHOP OF DURHAM.

MESSAGES FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

By HANDLEY C. G. MOULE, D.D.
BISHOP OF DURHAM

Crown 8vo, Handsomely Bound in Cloth,
Gilt, 2s. net - - - (by post, 2/3)

"A beautiful and gracious treatment of the subject from a devotional standpoint; discussed with great lucidity and simplicity of language."—*Life of Faith*.

"Dr. Moule is one of our most popular evangelistic expositors, and this work will be much valued by all. The book will doubtless remain a very favourite work of pure exegesis among many people."—*Oxford Chronicle*.

"Each section of the Hebrews is dealt with in popular phraseology, but frequent references to the original Greek render the treatment critically valuable. Indeed, it is seldom that we have met with a volume at one and the same time so popular in style and yet so learnedly exegetical."—*Homiletic Review*.

"Bishop Moule does not discuss its authorship, but gathers from the Epistle large and conspicuous spiritual messages likely to be serviceable to mankind. His exposition is full of suggestion, and it opens out new avenues of thought."

Publishers' Circular.

"A thoughtful treatise. Dr. Moule's conclusions carry with them convictions of the stoutest; his messages are from the heart to the heart."

Sheffield Daily Independent.

"The exegesis is above praise. We have the greatest possible pleasure in recommending it as a book of unspeakable worth to Biblical students."

Hull Eastern Morning News.

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

BY THE REV.

ALFRED PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

AN EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY
ON THE
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
S. MATTHEW

Demy 8vo. With full General and
Greek Indices. Cloth Gilt, 12s.

"A work eminently suited to meet the needs of English readers, and which none can study without receiving profit and edification."—*Church Times*.

"Dr. Plummer's book will fill a void which all ordinary students have felt for years past. He has laid us all under a deep debt of gratitude for this masterly work, which will now become as much a standard work as his equally valuable book on the third Gospel."—Rev. W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS in the *Churchman*.

"The most useful English work on St. Matthew that has appeared in our generation. It is exactly the book for which students have been waiting for many years. Indispensable to the student of the Gospels as the best 'Commentary,' on St. Matthew in the English language."—*Guardian*.

"It is a rich book, and full of matter that is most pertinent to its purpose, which is the interpretation of the first Gospel to the modern mind. Henceforth, Plummer on St. Matthew is likely to be consulted as often as Plummer on St. Luke, and that is very often indeed. In all questions of interpretation we shall always turn to it, and we shall often turn to it first of all."

Expository Times.

"Dr. Plummer's 'Commentary' is a masterly specimen, and is a masterpiece of its category."—*Homiletic Review*.

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01026 7898