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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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"THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND  
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**THESSALONIANS to HEBREWS**

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ASLEEP IN JESUS.

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## ASLEEP IN JESUS.

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him.—1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

ST. PAUL, in the early part of his ministry, with all the Christian disciples, was looking for the speedy return of Jesus. And the question was raised, "If it be so, if Jesus is coming to establish His Church, and we shall be with Him in His glory, then what of our brethren who have passed out of the world before us?" This was the absorbing question. Mothers had lost their children, brothers had lost their brothers. One by one these had passed out of their sight. And those who remained said, "What is to become of those who are taken away from us out of this visible world before Christ comes back here?" St. Paul's answer was that they who remained and were alive should not "prevent" (go before) those who had passed away. Jesus would bring with Him those who had already died. He would go through the regions of the dead and bring back the souls that had once belonged to this world, and establish their lives. Thus those who had died and those whom Christ should find at His coming would be united and would dwell for ever with God.

¶ The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians are the epistles of immortality. They have vibrated with rich assurance in multitudes of sorrowing Christian hearts, as men have stood on the borders of life and wondered what is to be their destiny in that state of being towards which their thoughts are so constantly pressing. The idea of immortality has given rise to the greatest emotions which it is possible for men to feel. It has caused the highest hopes and the most terrible fears. The immortal soul has anticipated its own immortality, and refused to believe in any specious argument that tells it life will end here. Pictures of that future life come floating down into this present life. Men

have lived in that other world years before they went there. Men have kept company with the souls there in closer association than with those who were beside them all the time. Multitudes who have doubted the immortality of the soul in their days of ease have, in days of distress and strain, by the bedside of dear friends, believed with a deep human belief that nothing could shake. The heart of man finds its only satisfaction in the expectation of another life. The reaching after immortality has been the heart's deepest underlying root in all the ages of mankind. This world is not enough. We put out our hand, and it falls on one little part of the great scenery; we listen, and hear but one note out of the great chorus. The Thessalonians believed in the other life because they found nothing in this life to satisfy them. We, too, lay hold on the great hope in order to forget how cruel, disappointing, and bewildering this life is which we are living here. And when that impulse rises in our hearts, and we look back amidst our cries and struggles and see the same impulse flickering or else blazing in lives gone before, we become stronger by the sight of their faith.<sup>1</sup>

## I.

### SORROW FOR THE DEAD.

1. There are two very different kinds of sorrow. There is, first, the sorrow which St. Paul here describes as the sorrow of "the rest which have no hope," and elsewhere as "the sorrow of the world" that "worketh death." We may hear it in the wail of paganism over the departed. It views life as a vast disorder, a chaos where all is blank, haphazard, meaningless, without a voice to comfort or a mind to explain. Its characteristic attitude is a surrender to the inevitable which treads with tight lips on to a silent grave. The first mark of this sorrow is that it is ignorant; and, as a natural result, its second mark is that it is hopeless, it cannot look forward. This is "the sorrow of the rest," "the sorrow of the world."

¶ "If we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead." How much hinges on this! What step behind the Veil can we take without this? Is it annihilation, or is it metempsychosis, or is it absorption into the Divine Nature, if there be one? Ask

<sup>1</sup> Phillips Brooks, *The Spiritual Man*, 25.

all the ages, and you have just a dead silence of six thousand years. You may fancy a ghostly laugh at your perplexity, but it is all fancy. There is nothing so distinct as laughter. It is all blank and world-wide silence. There is a little dust before your eyes, and that is all you know of the matter.<sup>1</sup>

2. In strong contrast, over against this sorrow of ignorance and despair, stands the sorrow that understands. It does not deny itself and affect an exaltation of spirit which it cannot feel. It is chastened and humble, accepting the strokes of affliction in patience, because it knows that they must be allowed by Almighty Love. It is a sorrow which develops sympathy, and sanctifies the affections, and breathes strength and nobility into character. It prepares the sufferer to minister comfort to others. It does not become cynical, but all the more tender for its grief, and more kindly in its judgment of others. Its first mark is that it believes and knows; and its second—and this is the result of its knowledge—that it is strong and joyful as it surveys the prospect of “the glory that shall be revealed.” This is the “godly sorrow,” the sorrow which is not as that of “the rest, which have no hope.”

¶ In the catacombs of Rome, that wonderful city of the dead, where several millions have been laid to rest, there is no sign of mourning; everything—picture, epitaph, emblem—is bright and joyous. Although an almost countless number of these early followers of Christ were buried in the periods of bitter persecution, no hint of vengeance on their oppressors is engraved or painted; all breathes gentleness, forgiveness, immortal life. With calm, unwavering confidence these early Christians recorded in a few bright words their assurance that the soul of the departed brother or sister had been admitted to the happy lot reserved for the just who leave this world in peace, their certainty that the soul was united with the saints, their faith that it was with God, and in the enjoyment of good things. Intensely they realized that all the faithful, whether in the body or out of the body, were still living members of one great family, knit together in closest bonds of a love stronger than death. They believed with an intense faith in the communion of saints. And for the departed they knew of no break in existence, no long dreamless sleep, no time, long or short, of waiting for blessedness. The teaching of our Redeemer was remembered well: “To-day,” He said to the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Smetham*, 171.

dying thief hanging by His side, "to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise!" This was the steady, unwavering faith of the Christians whose bodies rest in the vast cemetery which lies all round old Rome.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

### THE NEW ASPECT OF DEATH.

1. There is nothing more marvellous in the history of Christianity than the change which it wrought in men's views of death. The change is one stamped into the very life of humanity, however it may be explained. Whereas men had previously thought of death as only a great darkness, or a dreamless and perpetual sleep, they began to think of it as a change from darkness to light, and as a sleep with a glorious awakening. The brightness and joy were no longer here. This was not the true life from which men should shrink to part. All was brighter in the future; the higher life was above. Death was not only welcome, but joyfully welcome. To die was gain. It was "to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better." This was not merely the experience of an enthusiastic Apostle; it became the overwhelming experience of hundreds and thousands. Death was swallowed up in victory. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" was the triumphant echo from Jerusalem to Rome, and from Antioch to Alexandria, in thousands of hearts, that had but lately known no hope and shared no enthusiasm—not even the enthusiasm of a common country or common citizenship.

2. What is the explanation of all this? What was it that sent such a thrill of hopeful anticipation through a world dying of philosophic despair and moral perplexity and indifference? Was it any higher speculation? any intellectual discovery? any eclectic accident or amalgam of Jewish inspiration with Hellenic thought? Men had everywhere—in Greece and Rome, in Alexandria and Jerusalem—been trying such modes of reviving a dead world, of reawakening spiritual hopefulness; but without success. No mere opinion or combination of opinions wrought

<sup>1</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones.

this great change. Men did not learn anything more of the future than they had formerly known; no philosopher had discovered its possibilities or unveiled its secrets. But there had gone forth from a few simple men, and from one of more learning and power than the others, the faithful saying that "Christ is risen indeed." "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." And it was this suddenly inspired faith that raised the world from its insensibility and corruption, and kindled it with a new hope—and the joy of a life not meted by mortal bounds, but "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

3. It was on the strength of this assurance that St. Paul sought to comfort the Thessalonians. They had been—from what causes are not said—in anxiety as to the fate of their departed friends. They seem to have doubted whether these friends would share with them in the resurrection of the dead and the joy of the second coming of the Lord. The Apostle assured them that they had no need to be in trouble. The departed were safe with God, and the same great faith in the death and resurrection of Christ that sustained themselves was the ground of confidence for all.

¶ Jesus Christ, who knew the universe, whose eye penetrated the unseen, who could not be mistaken, who knew the meaning of every word He spoke and of everything He did, died—died, committing His person and spirit into the hands of a Personal God, that God being His Father. Here is comfort; I feel it, I praise God for it; I see light amidst darkness; simplicity amidst confusion, a path passing through the mysteries of the unseen and going straight up to the throne of God; midnight and great depths are as a wall on either side, but the path itself is beautiful and safe, for Jesus, the very truth and life, goes before as my forerunner. Give me grace only to have this mind which was in Jesus—to be able amidst the agonies of death to see God as my Father, and to know nothing more than this, that I can commit myself into His hands, then, O Death, where is thy sting?—O Grave, where is thy victory?<sup>1</sup>

¶ I agree entirely with what you have said of Death in your last letter; but at the same time I know well that the first touch of his hand is cold, and that he comes to us, as the rest of God's angels do, in disguise. But we are enabled to see his face fully

<sup>1</sup> Norman Macleod, *Love the Fulfilling of the Law*, 219.

at last, and it is that of a seraph. So it is with all. Disease, poverty, death, sorrow, all come to us with unbenign countenances; but from one after another the mask falls off, and we behold faces which retain the glory and the calm of having looked in the face of God. I know that it will please you if I copy here a little poem which I wrote in April, 1841, and of which I was reminded by what you said of Death in your last letter. It is crude in as far as its artistic merits are considered, but there is a glimpse of good in it.

Sin hath told lies of thee, fair angel Death,  
 Hath hung a dark veil o'er thy seraph face,  
 And scared us babes with tales of how, beneath,  
 Were features like her own. But I, through grace  
 Of the dear God by whom I live and move,  
 Have seen that gloomy shroud asunder rent,  
 And in thine eyes, lustrous with sweet intent,  
 Have read that thou none other wast but Love.

Thou art the beauteous keeper of that gate  
 Which leadeth to the soul's desired home,  
 And I would live as one who seems to wait  
 Until thine eyes shall say, "My brother, come!"  
 And then haste forward with such gladsome pace  
 As one who sees a welcoming, sweet face;  
 For thou dost give us what the soul loves best—  
 In the eternal soul a dwelling-place,  
 And thy still grave is the unpilfered nest  
 Of Truth, Love, Peace, and Duty's perfect rest.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### THE VICTORY OVER DEATH.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world," says St. John, "even our faith." And this is the victory, says St. Paul, that overcometh death. "If we believe," he says. A weight of fact lies behind that "if." St. Paul writes it in no doubtful mood, as indeed his Greek construction indicates. It is the "if" not of conjecture but of logic, as when we say that such and such results are certain if two straight lines cannot enclose a space. He

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, i. 87.

brings the Thessalonians, anxious about their buried dear ones, back to a certainty of hope by appealing to this certainty of accomplished fact. They knew that Jesus had died and risen. Well then, granting that "if so," with equal fulness of knowledge were they to say, "Even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Was it a certainty to them that He had risen? Yes; and why? Because, on the one hand, adequate testimony attended the assertion, the testimony not only of the words of many witnesses, but of the moral miracle which those witnesses themselves were; they were transfigured men compared with what they had been before Jesus rose. On the other hand, the Thessalonians had themselves made proof of the transforming power of Him who was presented to them as risen again; they were themselves transfigured men, knowing God, loving God, at peace with Him now, and looking with indescribable assurance of hope for His glory hereafter.

1. It is plainly suggested in the text that in the fact that Jesus died there is a special consolation for those who sorrow for the dead. If Jesus had tasted of all that life brings to us except its close; if through the powers of His Divine nature He had in some way asserted and won for us eternal life apart from death, should we not feel that the darkest tract of human experience was untouched by His sympathy, even if it were transformed by His power? But now, is it not written, "Jesus died"? He is no stranger to the terrors of that mysterious land which one day we all must know. Death is not "the undiscovered country" to Him, for He has explored it for us that we should know no dread. He has stepped into the fast-running waters of that cold river which severs time and eternity, and lo! "a way for the ransomed to pass over" has marked the passage of His pierced feet. Christ died, and therefore Christianity is at home with grief for the dead; and the first condition of an ample comfort is satisfied in the assurance that there is nothing He does not know concerning death.

2. From the fact that "Jesus died," the Apostle passes on to the triumphant sequel: "and rose again." Here is the second fact which will illuminate sorrow and rob death of its sting.

“We believe that Jesus rose again.” Think what Christ would have been to us, if our faith had been shut up to a bare knowledge that He died. If there had been no stone rolled away on the third morning would not His sepulchre in Joseph’s garden have been, in no small measure, the sepulchre of comfort too? Christian faith, which suns itself in the assurance that “now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept,” knows that it will lose all its brightness, its very vital breath even, if the certainty of that resurrection is broken, and the light and the warmth of that revelation are taken away. In the light of Christ’s resurrection alone does death assume or retain for us any higher meaning than for the ancient world. It is the light of the higher life in Christ which alone glorifies it. And unless this light has shone into our hearts, who can tell whence hope can reach us? We may be resigned or peaceful. We may accept the inevitable with a calm front. We may be even glad to be done with the struggle of existence, and leave our name to be forgotten and our work to be done by others. But in such a mood of mind there is no cheerfulness, no spring of hope. With such a thought St. Paul could comfort neither himself nor the Thessalonians. For himself, indeed, he felt that he would be intensely miserable if he had only such a thought. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” Hope in death can spring only from the principle of personal immortality; and this principle has no root save in Christ.

¶ If we quit the living Christ, we quit all hold of the higher life. “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” Heaven becomes a dumb picture; and death—euphemize it as we may—merely blank annihilation. We may say of our dear ones, as we lay them in the dust, that they have fallen asleep; but the gentle words have no true meaning. The sleep is without an awakening. The higher and hopeful side of the image is cut away. The night becomes a perpetual slumber, on which no morning shall ever arise. It is only in the light of the resurrection of Christ that the phrase represents a reality, and the idea of death is transfigured into a nobler life. Let us believe that behind the veil of physical change there is a spiritual Power from which we have come—one who is the Resurrection and the Life—in whom, if we believe, we shall never die,—and we

may wait our change, not only with resignation, but with hope, and carry our personal affections and aspirations forward to another and a better state of being, in which they may be satisfied and made perfect.<sup>1</sup>

¶ What do the words "bring with him" signify? Say, if you will, they are too high for us, we cannot attain to them,—and you speak truly. But do not cast them aside because they are too high for you. The sun which shows you all that is at your feet is always too high for you to ascend to it, too bright for you to gaze upon it. These words may be full of illumination to us, in some of our dreariest and darkest hours, though they must be fulfilled to us, before the mists which rise from below to obscure them to us can be entirely scattered.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV.

#### THE NAME FOR DEATH.

1. It is to Jesus primarily that the New Testament writers owe their use of sleep as the gracious emblem of death. The word was twice upon our Lord's lips; once when over the twelve-year-old maid, from whom life had barely ebbed away, He said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth"; and once when in reference to the man Lazarus, from whom life had removed further, He said, "Our friend sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." But Jesus was not the originator of the expression. We find it in the Old Testament, where the prophet Daniel, speaking of the end of the days and the bodily resurrection, designates those who share in it as "them that sleep in the dust of the earth." And the Old Testament was not the sole origin of the phrase. For it is too natural, too much in accordance with the visibilities of death, not to have suggested itself to many hearts, and to have been shrined in many languages. Many an inscription of Greek and Roman date speaks of death under this figure; but almost always it is with the added, deepened note of despair, that it is a sleep which knows no waking, but lasts through eternal night.

<sup>1</sup> Principal Tulloch, *Some Facts of Religion and of Life*, 138.

<sup>2</sup> F. D. Maurice, *Christmas Day*, 405.

2. The expression in the text "them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus," suggests a very tender and wonderful thought of closeness and union between our Lord and the living dead, so close that He is, as it were, the atmosphere in which they move, or the house in which they dwell. But, tender and wonderful as the thought is, it is not exactly the Apostle's idea here. For, accurately rendered, the words run, "them which sleep *through* Jesus." They "sleep through Him." It is by reason of Christ and His work, and by reason of that alone, that death's darkness is made beautiful, and death's grimness is softened down to this. What we call death is a complex thing—a bodily phenomenon plus conscience, the sense of sin, the certainty of retribution in the dim beyond. The mere physical fact of death is a trifle. Look at it as you see it in the animals; look at it as you see it in men when they actually come to it. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is painless and easy, and men sink into slumber. Strange, is it not, that so small a reality should have power to cast over human life so immense and obscuring a shadow! Why is it? Because, as St. Paul says, "the sting of death is sin," and if you can take the sting out of it then there is very little to fear, and it comes down to be an insignificant and transient element in our experience. Now, the death of Jesus Christ takes away the nimbus of apprehension and dread arising from conscience and sin, and the forecast of retribution. Jesus Christ has abolished death, leaving the mere shell, but taking all the substance out of it. It has become a different thing to men, because in that death of His He has exhausted the bitterness, and has made it possible that we should pass into the shadow, and not fear either conscience or sin or judgment.

¶ We may tell the story of the Christian's burial no longer in that brief hollow phrase which to the ancients seemed the tenderest allusion that could be made to the deceased, "Non est," he is not; but in words like those of Bunyan's, so fragrant of heart's-ease and immortelle,—“The pilgrim they laid in a chamber whose window opened towards the sunrising; the name of that chamber was Peace, where he slept till the break of day.”<sup>1</sup>

¶ Notice with what a profound meaning the Apostle, in this very verse, uses the bare, naked word "died" in reference to

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Gordon, *In Christ*, 189.

Christ, and the softened one "sleep" in reference to us. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep." Ah! yes! He died indeed, bearing all that terror with which men's consciences have invested death. He died indeed, bearing on Himself the sins of the world. He died that no man henceforward need ever die in that same fashion. His death makes our death sleep, and His Resurrection makes our sleep calmly certain of a waking. It is profoundly significant that throughout the whole of the New Testament the plain, naked word "death" is usually applied, not to the physical fact which we ordinarily designate by the name, but to the grim thing of which that physical fact is only the emblem and the parable, viz. the true death which lies in the separation of the soul from God; whilst predominately the New Testament usage calls the physical fact by some other gentler form of expression.<sup>1</sup>

## V.

## THE GREAT CONSUMMATION.

1. The one great assurance of the New Testament in regard to the eternal world—an assurance that ought to be satisfactory and sufficient—is that those who have gone before *are with God*. Let that cheer us. Let us restrain our wondering and curiosity, or be willing that they should not be satisfied, so long as we know with certainty that every soul passing out of this mortal life into the immortal is with the great, true, loving, unforgetting Father. Such souls are in the hands of a mercy that never fails, in the hands of a power that can provide for all the wants of that unknown life. Is there not, in this teaching which St. Paul sent back by Timothy to the Thessalonians, a kind of answer to one of the deepest questions which we ask? We have here the assurance that there shall be no separation of those who have passed before from those who are left behind. God will gather together all souls, and they shall be together through all eternity.

¶ Is it not true that the fact that our beloved are with the Lord is assuredly meant to develop a new gravitation of the soul towards "that world"? On earth if a dear friend leaves us for the other hemisphere, for a place perhaps of which we

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Maclaren.

never heard before, there rises for us a new interest there, a new attraction. We busy ourselves to find out all we can about the locality and the life, and we supplement information with imagination for very love. "Where the treasure is, there is the heart also." We live where our affections are. Even so, will not thought and aspiration be even unconsciously magnetized towards the Home which now holds our holy ones? Shall we not through them be drawn anew towards the Lord with whom they now converse face to face.<sup>1</sup>

2. There are inevitably some perplexities which result from the finiteness of our nature, and the impossibility of comprehending the infinite. We have looked in imagination into the other world, and seen it thronged and crowded with the millions in all the ages sweeping into it, and we have said, "How shall we find the few scattered souls that we have known on earth?" The doubt comes of finiteness. Those few souls are for us essentially *the* souls of the everlasting life. Next to the Saviour and the Father and the Holy Spirit, the souls through whose ministry our soul has been helped are to us *the* dwellers in the heavenly world. We shall go to them there as each soul goes to its own degree and place in the life of the New Jerusalem. We come back to the truthfulness of our first impulse, and *know* that we are to be not only for ever with the Lord, but for ever with all those we love. The question, "Shall we know each other there?" presses upon the souls of believers in all ages. The Thessalonians longed, as we long, for the everlasting company of those near and dear. And St. Paul's assurance was that God would bring them who had gone before, and fasten their lives to the lives of those whom Christ should find here at His coming. They who had gone before should come, with all the life opened to them in their immortality, and there should be no separation. We cannot think of ourselves apart from those whom we most intimately love. But that which has laid hold on the spirit is part of the spirit. We know it by the way in which we live continually a part of the life of those who have passed to the eternal world. We are not separated from them now. We live in memory of what we know they once were, and in thought of what they are now in the eternal world. We shall not merely

<sup>1</sup> H. C. G. Moule, *Concerning Them Which are Asleep*, 18.

be with those with whom we have had spiritual communion here; we shall be with them as we have never been with them here. The bodily differences will be taken away, the prisons will be broken open, our souls will meet in close union as they have never met here on earth.

¶ If we think much of those whom we have loved on earth, and who have passed out of sight, we try to follow them, to be imitators of those who now "inherit the promises." They are above us, but not too much above us. They are still branches of the same vine, members of the same Body. The branches of the tree are equally near to each other, whether the moonlight shine on all or only on one branch. The hand in the shadow and the hand in the light are not more near to each other, than we are to them. If one hand is in the light and one hand in the shadow, they are not really more separated than when both were in the light or both in the shadow. The union remains, the union with Christ, and with each other.<sup>1</sup>

¶ To our child as she approached eternity, there was given (I cannot use a weaker word than *given*) a conviction—I may venture to call it an intuition, so calm and balanced was the certainty—that in that new life "with the Lord" she would still be near to us and "know about us." Of course we do not treat her expectations as a revelation. But when we put them into context with the intimations of the written Word, we find in them a gentle light in which to read those intimations more clearly. That "cloud of witnesses" who are seen in the glass of Scripture (Heb. xii. 1), watching their successors as they run the earthly course, are assuredly permitted to be cognizant of us and of our path. And the same great Epistle informs us, on our side, in the same chapter (ver. 23), that we, in Christ, "have come," not only (wonderful fact) "to an innumerable company of angels," but also "to the spirits of the just made perfect." "In vain our fancy strives to paint" the conditions of contact and cognizance. But it is enough to have even the most reserved intimation from the Divine Book that a contact there is. And the subordinate evidence of experience is not wanting. Instances may be few, but instances there are, as trustworthy as sound evidence can make them, of leave given to mourning Christians to know, mysteriously but directly, that their beloved have indeed been near them in full and conscious love.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. H. Wilkinson, *The Communion of Saints*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> H. C. G. Moule, *Concerning Them Which are Asleep*, 14.

## ASLEEP IN JESUS

Not mine the sad and freezing dreams  
Of souls that, with their earthly mould,  
Cast off the loves and joys of old. . . .

No! I have Friends in Spirit-land,  
Not shadows in a shadowy band,  
Not others but themselves are they.

And still I think of them the same  
As when the Master's summons came;  
Their change, the holy morn-light breaking  
Upon the dream-worn sleeper, waking—  
A change from twilight into day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Whittier.

CEASELESS PRAYER.

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## CEASELESS PRAYER.

Pray without ceasing.—1 Thess. v. 17.

It seems as if these words contained some exaggeration, as if they were more a figure of speech than a reality, as if they expressed more than the actual truth. We can hardly suppose that a man of active duties, requiring close attention, application and energy, could possibly be engaged all day long in prayer and acts of devotion. And we may suppose that the idea to be conveyed is rather that we are required to attend regularly to the duties of private devotion. If we interpret the text thus the grand truth which it contains is lost sight of, and the sublime spirituality which it enjoins is not realized. It is no mere rhetorical description, no figure, no exaggeration, but a simple actual fact. And when we are enjoined and commanded by the Apostle to "pray without ceasing," to "continue instant in prayer," to "pray always," it naturally occurs to us to ask, If this is a literal duty, how is it to be complied with? How can we, amidst our ordinary employments and engrossing duties, fulfil this requirement?

Let us answer this question first of all; and then let us see what we can do to fulfil to the letter the Apostle's injunction.

### I.

#### PRAYER IS A SPIRITUAL ATTITUDE.

1. The chief, sometimes the one, idea we have of prayer is that it is *petition*, asking for certain things we want, some help we desire, or deliverance from the power of some evil. But this is just where we make a mistake. Prayer, the very highest, is where there is least petition, least asking of definite benefits, most

of communion, reliance, trust in God. The higher our spirituality, the more full our confidence in God, the more complete our acquiescent surrender to His will, the less petition there will be. Prayer in its highest meaning is thus communion with, recognition of, and sympathy with God, continual desire of the soul after God as the one supreme object of its love, intercourse of our spirit with the Divine. It is the soul living and feeling as if it were always in the presence of God, holding converse with Him, not always by audible words, but with a constant sense of His presence, trusting, loving, following, and serving Him. In one word, the soul in a state of sympathy and love to God—that is prayer. As the needle, however the ship may swing, points ever to the pole, so the soul, in every place and in every circumstance of life, turns to God and sets and rules its life by Him.

¶ It is impossible to doubt the spiritual intensity, the religious fervour, of passages such as these from the pages in *Suggestions for Thought* in which she describes “Communion with God” :—

“If it is said ‘we cannot love a law’—the mode in which God reveals Himself—the answer is, we *can* love the spirit which originates, which is manifested in, the law. It is not the material presence only that we love in our fellow-creatures. It is the spirit, which bespeaks the material presence, that we love. Shall we then not love the spirit of all that is lovable, which *all* material presence bespeaks to us? . . . What does ignorant finite man want? How great, how suffering, yet how sublime are his wants! Think of his wounded aching heart, as compared with the bird and beast! his longing eye, his speaking countenance, compared with these! *they* show something of such difference, but nothing, nothing compared with what is within, where no eye can read. What then, poor sufferer, dost thou want? I want a wise and loving counsellor, whose love and wisdom should come home to the whole of my nature. I would work, oh! how gladly, but I want direction how to work. I would suffer, oh! how willingly, but for a purpose. . . . God always speaks plain in His laws—His everlasting voice. . . . My poor child, He says, dost thou complain that I do not prematurely give thee food which thou couldst not digest? My son, I am always one with thee, though thou art not always one with me. That spirit racked or blighted by sin, my child, it is thy Father’s spirit. Whence comes it, why does it suffer, or why is it blighted, but that it is incipient love, and truth, and wisdom, tortured or suppressed? But Law (that is, the will of the Perfect) is now,

was without beginning, and ever shall be, as the inducement and the means by which that blight or suffering which is God within man, shall become man one with God.”<sup>1</sup>

2. If, then, we define prayer as the means whereby the fellowship of the soul with God, the oneness of our life with the life of God is realized, prayer will not necessarily be the saying of words. Words give definiteness to our thoughts, and there are times when words make concentration of mind possible; but words in themselves are nothing. The real act of prayer is not in the words that are used, but in the attitude of the man towards his God when he is using them. God does not hear the words, but He is infinitely sensitive to the spiritual attitude. So prayer is much more than the “saying of prayers.” The utterance of thoughts in words may be true prayer; thinking may also be true prayer; work may be prayer; wrestling with a problem may be prayer; fighting for a noble cause may be prayer; private meditation may be prayer; there is such a way of doing the ordinary round and the daily task of life that this shall be true prayer; any act of our lives, whatsoever it may be, if we do it in such a way as consciously and concentratedly to cultivate a spiritual attitude of sympathy and fellowship with God, is prayer.

¶ St. Anthony was once asked how we might know if we prayed properly. “By not knowing it at all,” he answered. He certainly prays well who is so taken up with God that he does not know he is praying. The traveller who is always counting his steps will not make much headway.

I am asked to explain that saying attributed to our Blessed Father St. Anthony, that he who prays ought to have his mind so fixed upon God as even to forget that he is praying. Here is the explanation in our Saint’s own words. He says: “The soul must be kept steadfastly in this path (that, namely, of love and confidence in God) without allowing it to waste its powers in continually trying to ascertain what precisely it is doing and whether its work is satisfactory. Alas! our satisfactions and consolations do not always satisfy God; they only feed that miserable love and care of ourselves which has to do neither with God nor with the thought of God. Certainly children whom our Lord has set before us as models of the perfection to be aimed at by us are,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 489.

generally speaking, especially in the presence of their parents, quite untroubled about what is to happen. They cling to them without a thought of providing for themselves. The pleasures their parents procure them they accept in good faith and enjoy in simplicity, without any curiosity whatever as to their causes or effects. The love they feel for their parents and their reliance upon them is all they need. Those whose one desire is to please the Divine Lover have neither inclination nor longing as to turn back upon themselves, for their minds tend continually in the direction whither love carries them."<sup>1</sup>

¶ So far is this "pray without ceasing" from being a sense of because extravagant, that every man's life is in some sense a continual state of prayer. For what is his life's prayer but its ruling passion? All energies, ambitions and passions are but expressions of a standing nisus in life, of a hunger, a draft, a practical demand upon the future, upon the unattained and the unseen. Every life is a draft upon the unseen. If you are not praying toward God you are toward something else. You pray as your face is set, towards Jerusalem or Babylon. The very egotism of craving life is prayer; the great difference is the object of it. To whom, for what, do we pray? The man whose passion is habitually set upon pleasure, knowledge, wealth, honour or power is in a state of prayer to these things for them. He prays without ceasing. These are his real gods, on whom he waits day and night. He may from time to time go on his knees in church, and use words of Christian address and petition. He may even feel a momentary unction in so doing. But it is a flicker; the other devotion is his steady flame. His real God is the ruling passion and steady pursuit of his life taken as a whole. He certainly does not pray in the name of Christ. And what he worships in spirit and in truth is another God than he addresses at religious times. He prays to an unknown God for a selfish boon. Still he prays. The set and drift of his nature prays. It is the prayer of instinct not of faith. It is the prayer that needs total conversion. But he cannot stop praying either to God or to God's rival—to self, society, world, flesh, or even devil. Every life that is not totally inert is praying either to God or God's adversary.<sup>2</sup>

3. This attitude, this spiritual communion with God may be carried with us all day. It may pervade all we do, be a light and a joy, a principle and a motive in the midst of every duty, and in

<sup>1</sup> J. P. Camus, *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, 246.

<sup>2</sup> P. T. Forsyth, in *Prayer*, by Dora Greenwell and P. T. Forsyth.

every position. In the case of husband or wife or child, parent or friend, or any one that we love sincerely, the love for them is not dropped at the threshold of the door. We cannot always be beside them to lavish endearments, or to whisper affection, but the thought of them goes with us, the sense of their presence comes unbidden to mould and inspire, to elevate and ennoble our whole life and acting. Carry something of that idea into our relations with God. We have hours of close fellowship and converse with God, times when we are alone with Him, when our heart goes out in deeper intensity, in more earnest consecration, times of whisperings and breathings of love and tenderness between our soul and God. But the love of God and the thought of God are not confined to such times. The thought of God goes with us all the day long. Let us make it the wish and endeavour of our life that every thought, word, and action shall be ruled as if we felt that we were constantly under the eye of Omniscience. Our desire is that all may be done to please Him, that there may be nothing to offend Him, or opposed to what we know to be His will and wish. To have our life full of the consciousness of God, as if we heard ever the voice of God bidding us, and the eye of God looking on us, and the hand of God leading us, to do everything so that He may be pleased with and approve of it, that He may be honoured and glorified—this is what makes the whole life one great connected beautiful prayer.

¶ The greatest thing any one can do for God and for man is to pray. It is not the only thing. But it is the chief thing. A correct balancing of the possible powers one may exert puts it first. For if a man is to pray right, he must first be right in his motives and life. And if a man be right, and put the practice of praying in its right place, then his serving and giving and speaking will be fairly fragrant with the presence of God. The great people of the earth to-day are the people who pray. There are people that put prayer first, and group the other items in life's schedule around and after prayer. These are the people to-day who are doing the most for God; in winning souls; in solving problems; in awakening churches; in supplying both men and money for mission posts; in keeping fresh and strong these lives far off in sacrificial service on the foreign field where the thickest fighting is going on; in keeping the old earth sweet awhile longer.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 12.

## II.

## HOW TO MAINTAIN THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

This spirit of devotion is itself the fruit of ceaseless prayer. This strong consciousness of dependence on God becomes an ever-present and abiding thing only when in all our necessities we betake ourselves to Him. Occasions are never wanting, and will never be wanting, which call for the help of God; therefore, let us pray without ceasing. It is useless to say that the thing cannot be done, before the experiment has been made. There are few works that cannot be accompanied with prayer; there are few indeed that cannot be preceded by prayer; there are none at all that would not profit by prayer. Take the very first work to which we must set our mind and our hand, and we know it will be better done if, as we turn to it, we look up to God and ask His help to do it well and faithfully, as a Christian ought to do it for the Master above.

1. Thus the spirit of prayer is created and fostered by frequent and deliberate approaches to the Throne of Grace. This medical advice is given to students who sit much at their desks, contracting their chests by bending over their books: "Rise from time to time, throw back your head and shoulders, and draw a deep, full breath." This is what we do when we definitely and consciously pray: we draw a deep, full breath. And it is a habit which it were well for us to acquire and practise. We need our still hours, our stated seasons of communion, morning by morning, evening by evening; but these are not enough. It would rid us of many a vexation and deliver us from many a temptation if, amid our toil and fret, we would ever and anon remember Jesus and tighten our grip upon Him, escaping for one refreshing moment from the noise and dust and getting our heads into Eternity.

¶ I do not believe in silent adoration, if there is nothing but silence; and I do not believe in a man going through life with the conscious presence of God with him, unless, often, in the midst of the stress of daily life, he shoots little arrows of two-worded prayers up into the heavens, "Lord! be with me"; "Lord! help me"; "Lord! stand by me now"; and the like. "They cried

to God in the battle," when some people would have thought they would have been better occupied in trying to keep their heads with their swords. It was not a time for very elaborate supplications when the foemen's arrows were whizzing round them, but "they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them."<sup>1</sup>

¶ While your hands are busy with the world, let your hearts still talk with God; not in twenty sentences at a time, for such an interval might be inconsistent with your calling, but in broken sentences and interjections. He who prays without ceasing uses many little darts and hand-grenades of godly desire, which he casts forth at every available interval.<sup>2</sup>

2. Further, if we honestly try to obey this precept we shall more and more find out, the more earnestly we do so, that set seasons of prayer are indispensable to realizing it. There must be, away up amongst the hills, a dam cast across the valley that the water may be gathered behind it, if the great city is to be supplied with the pure fluid. Otherwise the pipes will be empty. And that is what will become of Christian professors in regard to their habitual consciousness of God's presence, if they do not take care to have their hours of devotion sacred, never to be interfered with, be they long or short, as may have to be determined by family circumstances, domestic duties, daily avocations, and a thousand other causes. But, unless we pray at set seasons, there is little likelihood of our praying without ceasing. Unless we set apart each day certain times for private prayer, we should tend to neglect it altogether; we should be giving a terrible opportunity to the world to take advantage of a day of forgetfulness to encourage us to forget God altogether. If we said that this prayer without ceasing of which the Apostle is here speaking was the only kind we needed, that our aspirations always accompanied our actions, we should indeed be presumptuous, we should indeed be forgetting our real character; we should become day by day less definite in our efforts, because we should be omitting periodical self-judgment, and so through want of any regulation we should tend to relapse into carelessness or presumptuous fanaticism. Private prayer at definite periods reminds us of our aims, enables us to judge of our actions, brings back our life into God's presence, from which it has too often strayed.

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Spurgeon.

¶ Every morning he renewed his touch with Christ so that he would not lose it through the busy hours. It was his habit to close every day by reporting to his Friend. Of this habit he said: "The disciples returned at evening and made a report to Christ of their work. Thus I tell Him of my life during the day, my dealings with persons who have come into it, and whatever has been attempted—in short, the whole day's work: its efforts, failures, mistakes, sins and joys. That is my evening prayer."<sup>1</sup>

¶ It will, I suppose, be admitted that there is no greater proof of complete religious sincerity than fervour in private prayer. If an individual, alone by the side of his bed, prolongs his intercessions, lingers wrestling with his Divine Companion, and will not leave off until he has what he believes to be evidence of a reply to his entreaties—then, no matter what the character of his public protestations, or what the frailty of his actions, it is absolutely certain that he believes in what he professes. My Father prayed in private in what I may almost call a spirit of violence. He entreated for spiritual guidance with nothing less than importunity. It might be said that he stormed the citadels of God's grace, refusing to be baffled, urging his intercessions without mercy upon a Deity who sometimes struck me as inattentive to his prayers or wearied by them. My Father's acts of supplication, as I used to witness them at night, when I was supposed to be asleep, were accompanied by stretchings out of the hands, by crackings of the joints of the fingers, by deep breathings, by numerous sounds which seemed just breaking out of silence, like Virgil's bees out of the hive, "magnis clamoribus." My Father fortified his religious life by prayer as an athlete does his physical life by lung-gymnastics and vigorous rubbings.<sup>2</sup>

¶ One of the surprises of my childhood was my father's locked study. It is true that when his children knocked he would come to the door, and open to us, but there was first a little shuffling of feet, and then in a few moments he stood before us. Sometimes I thought there must be some one else in the room—for I heard my father's voice; but on entering I saw him only. It was all mysterious to a child, but as the years passed on I learnt what it meant. For the locked study was the secret of the Open Heart. Because he dwelt every day in the kingdom of penitence and tears and submission, he found his city of mirth and laughter and sunshine.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. T. Faris, *The Life of Dr. J. R. Miller*, 223.

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*, 229.

<sup>3</sup> *Love and Life: The Story of J. Denholm Brash*, 65.

3. Public prayer, too, is a necessary corrective to private prayer, which, if that were all, would tend to spiritual selfishness, would isolate the individual believer from the great company of his fellow-Christians, would limit his conception of his Christian duties by rendering him liable to think only of some and forget others, would, in fact, leave him one-sided in his religion, just as solitude makes a man one-sided in his social character.

¶ We know how hard it is for most men, how hard, it may be, we ourselves continually find it, to keep the act of worship truly, purely spiritual; to be always lifting up our hearts to the Unseen, the Eternal, the Incomprehensible; always striving beyond the thoughts, the scenes of sense and time; always remembering that the ultimate reality of worship is in the light that no man can approach unto, and that our highest acts are but as hands stretched out, as avenues of access, towards the everlasting adoration and intercession that is on high, where Christ "ever liveth to make intercession for us": where St. John saw "in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as though It had been slain." We know how our hearts are ever faltering away from the effort of faith, and wanting to stay at some resting-place amidst the things that are seen, amid the ways of that lower level which we think we can understand. That appeal to come up higher, to raise the venture of our hearts above all that is on earth, is made to us all; and to answer it rightly is the soul's great task. It is a task from which men swerve in diverse ways; proffering in lieu of the uplifted venture, sometimes a moral life or activity in good works, sometimes a zeal for the cause of religion, sometimes the acceptance of a creed, sometimes the conviction that they are saved, and sometimes a worship that lingers unduly at the counterpart on earth of the supreme reality, the fount of all reality, in heaven. Out of the knowledge of our own weakness, let us learn the care we need to take lest others be weakened, lest others be allowed to halt where they should find the very spring and power for that ceaseless ascent to which God beckons all.<sup>1</sup>

I build the palace of my Lord the King  
 Wherein Life makes her crimson offering,  
 With rite of consecration and long praise.  
 With weight of prayer and length of many days  
 She makes her sacrament of suffering.

<sup>1</sup> *Francis Paget, Bishop of Oxford, 354.*

## CEASELESS PRAYER

The music of meet words and magical,  
That rise as incense and as incense fall,  
    Fills all the palace of my Lord the King.  
The House is dim with voices murmuring  
The sacred burden of their ritual.

If, after many suns have come and gone,  
The light of some apocalyptic Dawn  
    Shall flame with splendour in a crimson sky,  
Grant, Dweller in the Shrine, that even I  
May hear the Voice, and see Thy veil withdrawn!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D. H. S. Nicholson, *Poems*, 69.

PROVING AND HOLDING FAST.

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## PROVING AND HOLDING FAST.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.—1 Thess. v. 21.

1. THESE are very astonishing words to address to a community of new converts. We might have expected that the Apostle would be careful to give them precise and detailed instructions, plain and solemn warnings, encouraging assurances of Divine approval, but hardly that he should bid them take account of their own experiences, and train themselves in the difficult and risky art of self-direction. We might have expected that this earliest Epistle of St. Paul would point out clearly the manner in which controversies might be quickly and finally closed by reference to some authoritative tribunal; that it would have stated the constitution of the Christian Church in plain language, which should leave no loophole for schismatical casuistry; that it would set out in unambiguous language the powers of the Christian clergy, and the manner in which those powers were to be exercised. Of all this, however, we find nothing. The Epistle is addressed to the community or Church of the Thessalonians, and contains no clear reference at all to an official ministry; for the mention of some prominent members of the community, as supervising its business and "admonishing" it, hardly suggests an official ministry, but rather a volunteer executive sustained in office by the general confidence and goodwill. The Thessalonians are "to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake." The Apostle's appeal is directly to the whole body of members: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

2. The words of the text stand in close relation to the words which they immediately follow: "Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesyings; prove all things; hold fast that which is good." It is manifest from the record of those Apostolic times that the

operations of the Holy Spirit were of an exceptional and temporary character. This is specially apparent in those spiritual utterances, those mysterious "tongues," to which St. Paul refers in his First Epistle to the Corinthians. But, further, there appears to have been on the part of those early Christians a very natural desire to prophesy—to speak out, in the presence of others, their own impressions or experiences of the spiritual life. A new prospect, transcendent in its beauty and glory, had been opened up to them by the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the freshness of their new hopes and new joys, they were eager to make known to one another, with unregulated fervour even in their religious assemblies, their individual experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord. There would, however, be some among the Christian converts, some of the less enthusiastic and more sober-minded, who would both dislike and distrust such utterances. It is probably such critics as these that the Apostle has in his mind when he addresses to them the words of caution, "Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesyings." He could see the possible danger of such utterances; but he recognized in them the workings of the Holy Ghost, and would have them not suppressed, but tested and controlled. There were in them, no doubt, elements of exaggeration, dangers of self-seeking and of unreality, of presumption and pride; and these were not of God, but of the evil one. Yet behind all these there was a spiritual reality, obscured but not obliterated, and therefore they were to prove all things and to hold fast the good.

¶ Many of the fathers of the Church connect these verses with what they consider a saying of Jesus, one of the few which are reasonably attested, though it has failed to find a place in the written gospels. The saying is, "Show yourselves approved money-changers." The fathers believed that the Apostle uses a metaphor from coinage. To prove is really to assay, to put to the test as a banker tests a piece of money; the word rendered "good" is often the equivalent of our "sterling"; "evil," of our base or forged; and the word which in our old Bibles is rendered "appearance"—"Abstain from all appearance of evil"—and in the Revised Version "form"—"Abstain from every form of evil"—has, at least in some connexions, the signification of mint or die. If we bring out this faded metaphor in its original freshness, it will run something like this: "Show yourselves skilful money-

changers; do not accept in blind trust all the spiritual currency which you find in circulation; put it all to the test; rub it on the touchstone; keep hold of what is genuine and of sterling value, but every spurious coin decline."<sup>1</sup>

## I.

## PROVE.

1. Why must we prove? Because faculties have been given us for that very purpose. The possession of faculties for thinking and reasoning tells us that we have the duty as well as the right of exerting them, just as truly as to have been born with eyes confers upon the individual the right to see. The eye has to be trained and so to become adjusted to objects about it. In many cases it is defective. We do not, therefore, bandage every man's eyes or put spectacles upon him, because these are required by certain persons. The maxim, *Usum non tollit abusus*, obtains here. Persons have grievously abused their right of private judgment; it does not follow that they should be deprived of it. It would be safer to infer that the faculty for forming such judgments imposes upon them the duty of using it.

¶ The question you put is by no means an easy one to answer: whether, namely, it be right and wise for you to read on both sides of the question—or rather, I should say, questions? for on this subject they are endless, and grow up like Hydra's heads. I could not reply, No: for that is the very advice given by the Romish Church, which we so much blame; and it is very inconsistent in us to condemn their prohibitions of heretical or Protestant books to the laity, if we, tractarian or evangelical clergy, forbid, as is constantly done, the perusal of books which we judge heretical. Now, first of all, the questions of religious truth are interminable, and a lifetime would scarcely suffice to pass even the outworks of them all. Next, very few minds are in possession of the means or of the severe mental training which qualifies a man to set out as an original discoverer of truth; so that if we cannot begin with a large number of truths, which must be considered as first principles and settled, life must be one perpetual state of Pyrrhonism and uncertainty. On the other

<sup>1</sup> J. Denney, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 244.

hand, to refuse to examine when doubts arise is spiritual suicide; and I do not see how, on this principle, any progress in truth could ever have been made. Why should the Pharisees have been blamed for the views so long stereotyped or the Jews for remaining in Judaism? <sup>1</sup>

2. This duty is not dropped when a man accepts the obedience of Christ. The Christian life is necessarily a struggle with intellectual as well as with moral difficulties, with ignorance as well as with sin. Let no one enter upon it with the thought that his days of perplexity are over, that henceforth he is to be within the calm shelter of the haven, where no breath of wind or stormy wave can reach him from the open sea. There may be those who are thus blessed, but most are called to the battle. But the battle is itself a blessing when it graces, strengthens, confirms. The great German thinker may have been guilty of an exaggeration, but it was the exaggeration of a truth, when he said, "Did the Almighty, holding in His right hand 'Truth,' and in His left 'Search after Truth,' deign to tender me the one I might prefer, in all humility, and without hesitation, I should request 'Search after Truth.'" There are, indeed, some who, wearied of searching after truth, have bowed their reason to some external authority, some infallible Church, admitting all its assertions as equally true; while others have found refuge in a universal scepticism denouncing all as equally false. The one goes against the precept, "Prove all things," the other against its natural and necessary counterpart, "Hold fast that which is good"; and both evade one of the most potent means of moral training for this ceaseless conflict, this patient endurance, this quiet hope, this earnest longing, this immovable confidence in what is right and good, when they do not use it as one of the ways in which God has chosen to educate us for Himself.

¶ Faith, whatever else it may be or imply, involves definite and strong conviction. Conviction requires evidence. Evidence is the objective truth which compels assent. Subjectively and spiritually, faith in a Fiji islander may be the same as it is in a cultivated and reflecting man, but intellectually it cannot be the same. Whatever the truth may be, or in whatever form it may meet the mind,—whether by an argument, or a person, or a dream,

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of the Rev. F. W. Robertson*, 317.

or a fantasy,—it must convince the intellect that something is true.<sup>1</sup>

¶ In the Cathedral Church of Copenhagen, amid Thorwaldsen's famous group of the Twelve Apostles, stands the figure of a grave and meditative man, with earnestly questioning face, rule and measure in hand, as though prepared to bring all things under strict verification, whose name no one needs to ask, so plainly does the statue stand for the doubting Thomas. Thomas was, according to the traditions of the Early Church, a born sceptic, a constitutional questioner, whose faith followed his understanding, who could not rest on external authority, who brought even Christ's words to the bar of reason, and, failing to elicit an intelligible answer, withheld his assent—in short, a genuine Rationalist. Yet this Thomas was one of the twelve disciples, a full member of the Apostolic College.<sup>2</sup>

## II.

### PROVE ALL THINGS.

1. "Prove all things" is a favourite text with Protestants, and especially with Protestants of an extreme type. It has been called "a piece of most rationalistic advice"; it has been said to imply that "every man has a verifying faculty, whereby to judge of facts and doctrines, and to decide between right and wrong, truth and falsehood." But this is a most unconsidered extension to give to the Apostle's words. He does not say a word about every man; he is speaking expressly to the Thessalonians, who were Christian men. He would not have admitted that any man who came from the street, and constituted himself a judge, was competent to pronounce upon the contents of the prophesyings, and to say which of the burning words were spiritually sound, and which were not. On the contrary, he tells us very plainly that some men have no capacity for this task—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit"; and that even in the Christian Church, where all are to some extent spiritual, some have this faculty of discernment in a much higher degree than others.

¶ Again and again it comes home to me that true wisdom lies in the abiding recognition that spiritual things are spiritually

<sup>1</sup> N. Porter, *Yale College Sermons*, 337.

<sup>2</sup> R. H. Newton.

discerned. If we labour for the meat which perisheth not, and if we witness to the Kingdom of God in word and deed, our labour and our witness must be in the Spirit, *i.e.* by and to the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Johann was one day on his travels, and came to a wood. In an old tree he found a bird's nest with seven eggs, which resembled the eggs of the common swift. But the latter bird only lays three eggs, so the nest could not belong to it. Since Johann was a great connoisseur in eggs, he soon perceived that they were the eggs of the hoopoo. Accordingly, he said to himself, "There must be a hoopoo somewhere in the neighbourhood, although the natural history books assert that it does not appear here." After a time he heard quite distinctly the well-known cry of the hoopoo. Then he knew that the bird was there. He hid himself behind a rock, and he soon saw the speckled bird with its yellow comb. When Johann returned home after three days, he told his teacher that he had seen the hoopoo on the island. His teacher did not believe it, but demanded proof. "Proof!" said Johann. "Do you mean two witnesses?" "Yes!" "Good! I have twice two witnesses, and they all agree: my two ears heard it, and my two eyes saw it." "Maybe. But I have not seen it," answered the teacher. Johann was called a liar because he could not prove that he had seen the hoopoo in such and such a spot. However, it was a fact that the hoopoo appeared there, although it was an unusual occurrence in this neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup>

2. The truth is, St. Paul is not concerned so much with the things which we are to prove as with the spirit in which the duty should be performed. What he would say to us is in substance this: "Whatever subjects may engage your attention, or require the formation of your opinion, let this be the course you pursue: be not prejudiced, be not hasty either in approving or in condemning; 'prove all things'; weigh them in the balance of a sober judgment, and deal with them by the use of that reasoning power with which God has endowed you. Estimate the value of every statement and every argument with what power and ability you may possess, deal with them in a philosophic rather than a polemic spirit. Pray that your intellectual gifts may be guided in their services by the Holy Spirit of Truth, and then, whatever truth, whatever good you may find, lay hold on that and hold it fast."

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 112.

<sup>2</sup> A. Strindberg, *Zones of the Spirit*, 13.

¶ A man has as much right to use his own understanding, in judging of truth, as he has a right to use his own eyes, to see his way: therefore it is no offence to another, that any man uses his own right. It is not to be expected that another man should think as I would, to please me, since I cannot think as I would to please myself; it is neither in his nor my power to think as we will, but as we see reason, and find cause. It is better for us that there should be difference of judgment, if we keep charity: but it is most unmanly to quarrel because we differ. Men's apprehensions are often nearer than their expressions; they may mean the same thing, when they seem not to say the same thing.<sup>1</sup>

3. This shows us the place and the duty of criticism in relation to the Bible. To criticize is, first, to distinguish—to distinguish in a complex reality what is primary, essential, eternal, from what is secondary, accidental, temporary. So we find out what is the essence of the thing itself, making it what it is, as distinct from accessories not necessarily peculiar to it, which have gathered round it, and which can be, and perhaps at times should be, stripped off. To criticize is, next, to test. When this first duty of distinction has been discharged, and the root of the matter made known to us, it has then to go on to the work described in the text—to test or prove it. It must try to discern, first, whether it is a reality—whether (that is) what it declares as truth is a real truth, accordant with the great laws of being; whether the power which it claims to wield is a real power, able to guide, to rule, and to exalt humanity. Historical science has studied and analysed the actual Christianity, the Church of Christ, in all ages. It has bidden us look through the visible developments of law, system, ritual, to the inner spiritual force, which gives them life; it has distinguished in it the obviously human element, with all the imperfection and evil clinging to it, which it shares with other great world-wide powers, from that element which is its peculiar characteristic, clearly unique and claiming to be miraculous and Divine. It makes us see plainly that this inner reality is, in spite of all imperfections, accretions, superstitions, the reproduction in the individual and the community of the life of Christ Himself. So, again, literary and critical science examines the Holy Scripture. It distinguishes in it also the

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*.

human element of imperfection and progressiveness from that which claims to be Divine—the essential truth itself from the forms in which it has been conveyed. And the result is to make us see clearly that the one key to its right interpretation is the knowledge of the central manifestation of Christ Himself—His Life, His Word, His Person—that in relation to this all other parts stand simply as preparatory or explanatory, and only in that dependence can be rightly understood and reasonably revered.

¶ Professor Huxley once said that men of science no longer believed in justification by faith, but in “justification by verification.” Now, St. Paul taught justification by faith, but he also, as we see, taught justification by verification. In his view, the one did not exclude the other. St. Paul calls, not for the surrender, but for the exercise, of the reason. We have his approval if we feel that, in religious as in other matters, we wish to have our intelligence satisfied, before we yield the submission of our hearts.<sup>1</sup>

¶ In order to the discovery of that which is better of two things, it is necessary that both should be equally submitted to the attention, and therefore that we should have so much faith in authority as shall make us repeatedly observe and attend to that which is said to be right, even though at present we may not feel it so. And in the right mingling of this faith with the openness of heart which proves all things, lies the great difficulty of the cultivation of the taste, as far as the spirit of the scholar is concerned; though, even when he has this spirit, he may be long retarded by having evil examples submitted to him by ignorant masters. The temper, therefore, by which right taste is formed is characteristically patient. It dwells upon what is submitted to it. It does not trample upon it, lest it should be pearls, even though it looks like husks. It is a good ground, soft, penetrable, retentive; it does not send up thorns of unkind thoughts, to choke the weak seed; it is hungry and thirsty too, and drinks all the dew that falls on it. It is “an honest and good heart,” that shows no too ready springing before the sun be up, but fails not afterwards; it is distrustful of itself, so as to be ready to believe and to try all things, and yet so trustful of itself, that it will neither quit what it has tried nor take anything without trying. And the pleasure which it has in things that it finds true and good is so great, that it cannot possibly be led aside by any tricks of

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Henderson.

fashion, or diseases of vanity: it cannot be cramped in its conclusions by partialities and hypocrisies; its visions and its delights are too penetrating, too living, for any whitewashed object or shallow fountain long to endure or supply. It clasps all that it loves so hard that it crushes it if it be hollow.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.

1. The command addressed by St. Paul to the Thessalonians describes with incisive brevity the only kind of criticism that is right in principle and likely to be fruitful in results. It is the criticism, first, which claims, not to discover, but to "test" all things—taking the thing criticized as it actually presents itself, and not reconstructing it out of our own discovery or imagination. It is the criticism, next, which, until it is forced to an opposite conclusion, holds (with Richard Hooker) that whatever has spiritual life and power in it cannot be "wholly compacted of untruths," but must have in it something "which is good," and which it is therefore worth while "to hold fast." It is, moreover and above all, the criticism which performs its two functions simultaneously, not waiting in suspense till the whole conceivable work of testing is over, before it proceeds to grasp anything firmly, but at every point laying strong and enthusiastic hold of whatever, so far, it has found by trial to be good, living in it by strong sympathy, and making this experience of its inner meaning a means of advancing towards larger knowledge.

¶ It is interesting to observe the various shades of meaning in which the Apostle uses the word *δοκιμάζειν*, which he here employs. There are passages, like the present, where the sense is general. But there are others where it clearly implies, not the exercise of the critical faculty, but the appreciative acceptance of what is manifestly good and true, as when he exhorts the Philippians to approve the things that are excellent, and the Romans to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, pt. iii. sec. 1, chap. iii. (*Works*, iv. 58).

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Maclagan.

2. So we are not only to prove all things; we are bidden to "hold fast that which is good"; to be faithful to whatever has proved itself to us as worthy of love and reverence. The value of every discovery or invention consists largely in its power to satisfy some human want. The great test is experience of its results. May we not apply the same test to religious truth? If we have felt a craving to be delivered from sin, and to be made partakers of light and holiness; to be drawn nearer to God and to be lifted above ourselves; to know something of human destiny, and to obtain more worthy views of the world, and a deeper insight into moral truth, then let us ask, Does Christianity meet any or all of these requirements? If, in our assurance that God is love, and that we, though weak and ignorant and sinful, are His children, we feel convinced that God has spoken to us, and that His Word is in His own Gospel; if we have believed in His promises, and tasted the blessings of forgiven sin, and the peace which the toil and the changes of the world cannot reach; if we have attained higher views of holiness and truth—are not these things good, and shall we not hold them fast? These are sufficient for our life; and as for others, we must maintain towards them an attitude, not indeed of indifference, but of bold and ceaseless endeavour, proving all things, and holding fast that which is good.

When the anchors faith has cast are dragging in the gale,  
 I am quietly holding fast to the things that cannot fail.  
 I know that right is right, that it is not good to lie;  
 That love is better than spite, and a neighbour than a spy;  
 In the darkest night of the year, when the stars have all  
 gone out,  
 That courage is better than fear, and faith is better than doubt;  
 And fierce though the fiends may fight, and long though the  
 angels hide,  
 I know that truth and right have the universe on their side,  
 And that somewhere beyond the stars is a love that is better  
 than fate;  
 When the night unlocks her doors I shall see Him, and I can  
 wait.

3. Happily for us, the great truths which should guide our judgment are just those which cannot escape our observation.

The distinction between good and evil is written upon our conscience in characters which nothing can altogether efface. The love of God beams in the sunshine, is poured forth in the refreshing shower, reveals itself in all the wondrous glory and beauty of the world. History reveals one human life in which Divinity shines out in all the radiance of perfect love, and purity, and Divine self-sacrifice. The condemnation of sin and the way of deliverance for the sinner were manifested in the death upon the cross. Thus, grasping with a perfect faith the great elements of good, we are able to look accurately at the difficulties which beset us, and prepare ourselves boldly for the journey or the fight.

¶ Christianity has abler advocates than its professed defenders, in those quiet and humble men and women who in the light of it and the strength of it live holy, beautiful, and self-denying lives. The God that answers by fire is the God whom mankind will acknowledge; and so long as the fruits of the Spirit continue to be visible in charity, in self-sacrifice, in those graces which raise human creatures above themselves, thoughtful persons will remain convinced that with them in some form or other is the secret of truth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Froude.



A PRAYER FOR SANCTITY.

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## A PRAYER FOR SANCTITY.

And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly ; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.—1 Thess. v. 23.

VERY beautiful is St. Paul's affection for the Thessalonians. It may have been the more tender because they had treated him with kindness, a kindness the more appreciated as a contrast to his experience at Philippi, whence he had just escaped on the occasion of his visit to their city. Be that as it may, he himself likens the love he felt for them to that of a father towards his children, or of a mother nursing her own little ones. And the purer his love, the higher were the blessings he longed for on their behalf. Hence he prays here not that his friends may escape persecution, or have worldly prosperity, but that in Christian character they may be wholly God's. To desire such a benediction for others is one of the best signs of newness of life, for this is what Jesus Himself was seeking when He came here to save His people from their sins, and to present them faultless before His Father's face in glory.

Human love is so mixed with alloy that we are not naturally anxious that our friends should be faultless, but are rather gratified when we see that they are no more perfect than ourselves, and are not always displeased when their failings are pointed out. It seems to raise us higher if they are just a little lowered, for a tree which is by no means tall begins to look tall when all those around it are cut down to a lower level. And in addition to this common yet sinful tendency to disparagement, prejudices and animosities play a very important part in our judgment of others, and in our desires for them. This prevalence of prejudice, and this wish to be thought better than our neighbours, often prevent us from earnestly desiring their true ennoblement, and from praying for their redemption from all evil, that they may

be blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. From all this jealousy St. Paul is singularly and nobly free. His prayer for his friends is that they may be found blameless, that they may be sanctified wholly.

¶ Jealousy is a terrible thing. It resembles love, it is precisely love's contrary. Instead of wishing for the welfare of the object loved, it desires the dependence of that object upon itself, and its own triumph. Love is the forgetfulness of self; jealousy is the most passionate form of egotism, the glorification of a despotic, exacting, and vain *ego*, which can neither forget nor subordinate itself. The contrast is perfect.<sup>1</sup>

¶ He rarely spoke contemptuously of any one's views or methods. When Evan Roberts, the Welsh revivalist, was holding his meetings at Liverpool, a fellow-clergyman spoke disparagingly of his efforts to Watson, who replied: "Well, I don't know anything about that, but remember we don't draw these audiences, so let us keep quiet." He was present himself with Roberts on the platform a few weeks after. When Dr. Torrey and Mr. Alexander were conducting their mission in Liverpool, a wave of criticism swept over them. One afternoon Watson attended a service, and the next day a Liverpool paper had a warm yet discriminating eulogy on the missionaries, signed "A City Pastor." The style proclaimed the author, and later on Watson owned to having written that kind letter of encouragement.<sup>2</sup>

## I.

### THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION.

1. What does the Apostle mean by this prayer for sanctity? Sanctification may be looked at from different standpoints.

(1) There is a true sense in which Christ is made to us, judicially, sanctification. That is to say, Christ's perfect holiness covers the failures and the defects of believers after their conversion, as well as the sins of the soul when it first draws near to Him. It is not an imputed sanctification that the Apostle is dealing with here. If it were an imputed sanctification, it could not be the subject of prayer; because they would have it already. Nor does he mean by sanctification here—and it is important to

<sup>1</sup> *Amiel's Journal* (trans. by Mrs. Humphry Ward), 284.

<sup>2</sup> W. R. Nicoll, *Ian Maclaren: Life of the Rev. J. Watson*, 383.

see it—*glorification*, as some would almost seem to think he does. We must not put the standard too high; we must not put it where it is altogether out of reach. He is not praying for the dead. His prayer is for us to-day. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," he says.

(2) Nor is this sanctification sinless perfection. Sinless perfection is the scarecrow that the devil employs to frighten God's children off the finest of the wheat. The fact is that sanctification is God's truth, and sinless perfection is the devil's counterfeit. But wherever there is a counterfeit there is always a truth; and very often the grossness of the counterfeit is the measure of the importance of the truth. Satan is only a copyist. There is no condition here upon earth in which we do not need atoning blood; there is no condition here in which we do not need the forgiveness of our trespasses; there is no condition here in which we do not need the perpetual intercession of our Great High Priest. Within these limits comes the prayer for entire sanctification.

(3) Sanctification is not merely the repression of evil; that is virtue. The pagan, the Roman philosopher, can teach that, more or less. But sanctity, as an old divine once said, is "the life of God in man." The moralist knows nothing of it; he has neither the thing itself nor the word.

(4) Sanctification is not the same as good works. Sanctification is God's work in us, whereby He imparts to our members a holy disposition, inwardly filling us with delight in His law and with repugnance to sin. But good works are acts of man which spring from this holy disposition. Hence sanctification is the source of good works; it is the lamp that shines with their light, the capital of which they are the interest. "Sanctification" imparts something to man; "good works" take something out of him. "Sanctification" forces the root into the ground; to do "good works" forces the fruit out of the fruitful tree.

¶ The Pietist says: "Sanctification is man's work; it cannot be insisted upon with sufficient emphasis. It is our best effort to be godly." And the Mystic maintains: "We cannot do good works, and may not insist upon them; for man is unable; God alone works them in him independently of him." Of course, both are equally wrong and unscriptural. The former, in reducing

sanctification to good works takes it out of God's hand and lays it upon man, who never can perform it; and the latter, in making good works take the place of sanctification, releases man from the task laid on him and claims that God will perform it. Both errors must be opposed.<sup>1</sup>

¶ John Brash was amid the arduous work of his first circuit when, as he says, "I began to seek the blessing of perfect love. One Sunday, having to preach in the country in the afternoon and evening, I spent the forenoon in prayer. While pleading with God for the blessing, my agony became so great that I resolved not to rise from my knees until I had obtained it. It was easy for me to yield up to God everything that I felt He required from me but *one*—and that was my *reputation*. In order to live a life of consecration to Him, it would be necessary for me to adopt a simple and unadorned style of preaching, to discard all subjects that would be pleasing and interesting merely, and to aim solely and always at usefulness. The consequence of adopting such a style would be, as it then seemed to me, obscurity and hard work in discouraging spheres, and amongst small congregations. The struggle was severe, but all attempts at compromise, and all sophistical reasoning about seeking popularity as a stepping-stone to usefulness failed to satisfy my conscience, and I at last made a full surrender of all my powers to God, that they might be employed for His glory alone. In the instant that I made the offering I felt that it was accepted, and that God had taken full possession of my heart. The experience was so distinct from anything I had previously felt that it was impossible to doubt the nature of the blessing I had received. Throughout the day there was an abiding consciousness of a *presence* which I knew to be that of Christ Himself. My feeling was one of reverent, subdued joy, arising from the knowledge that I was united to Him, and filled with His Spirit. Since that memorable Sunday the discussions I have read and heard on the subject of instantaneous and conscious sanctification from sin have had little interest for me. I know that the blessing may be received instantaneously; though in some cases the transition from partial to entire sanctification may be imperceptible to the subject of it."<sup>2</sup>

2. To "sanctify" is to set something apart for a holy purpose, so that it may be regarded as holy, and as being profaned if used for a lower purpose. If we were to distinguish between "sancti-

<sup>1</sup> A. Kuyper, in *Homiletic Review*, lv. 136.

<sup>2</sup> *John Brash: Memorials and Correspondence*, 26.

fication" and "consecration" we should say the latter represents the human and the former the Divine side of the same act or experience. We "consecrate" ourselves when we yield ourselves up to God, for Him to do with us what He wills, laying ourselves as it were upon the altar as a living sacrifice. God "sanctifies" us when He accepts this offering, and conforms us to His Son. Hence we are not told that we must wholly "sanctify" ourselves, but the God of peace is asked to effect this for us. Similarly, Jesus prays in His final intercession on earth for His disciples: "sanctify them through thy truth." But in the same prayer, alluding to Himself, He says, "for their sakes I sanctify myself," a solemn declaration in which He claims the Divine as well as the human power. What He meant was that He had set Himself apart for the holy purpose of redeeming man, even by the sacrifice of Himself; and this was a sacrifice not confined to Calvary though it was consummated there.

¶ In the sanctification of Jesus Christ to the Father's redemptive service of mankind, a process by which He passed from unspotted personal perfection into the new perfection of a vicarious Mediatorship, two methods of operation merge into each other. Our Lord speaks of Himself as "him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world." The life received from the everlasting springs brought with it inspirations of love which determined His office and moved Him to an act of supreme self-dedication for the race. Side by side with the effusion of sanctifying life from the Father there came the voluntary consecration of the Son to His sacred and benign tasks. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself." And in the sanctification of the redeemed Church two similar acts must be co-ordinated—sanctification by the act and operation of God Himself, and also a sanctification in the free, practical, self-determined acts of the daily life, responding to the will and work of God.<sup>1</sup>

3. Sanctification, then, is the imitation of Christ. It is being in the world as He was in the world. And that man is most holy, or most sanctified, who has least ignorance and error in his mind, least selfishness and earthliness in his heart, least perversity and stubbornness in his will, all of which Christ was without; the opposite and Godlike virtues adorning His character in perfect

<sup>1</sup> T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, 481.

measure. Hence it is easy to understand how it should be said that men were sanctified by faith, sanctified through the truth.

This cannot be understood so long as we conceive of the human soul as a material substance that becomes brighter, more fruitful, or more fragrant, according to some supposed mysterious action of the Holy Spirit upon it. But if we look at the soul as brought to understand and believe the truth about Christ, His person, His cross, and His work, then we see how it straightway becomes like Christ; for it is only by the truth acting upon it that a rational soul can become enlightened, affectionate, devout, as Christ was. A soul that understands and believes the truth must become like Him, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." The Spirit does not sanctify us by putting some mysterious principle into our hearts called grace. The *truth* is the grace that He puts into our hearts, and out of this comes every other which deserves the name, even all the features of Christ's image—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." We have the whole process described in the words of the Apostle Paul, perhaps the most beautiful description of sanctification in the whole Bible. We are beholding as in a glass, the glass of the Bible, "with open face" (with clear view), the glory of the Lord, *i.e.* of the Lord Jesus, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The whole truth on the subject, then, is this: to be sanctified is to be Christ-like. We are thus sanctified by knowing the truth as it is in Jesus, and feeling its power more and more. And the great force that works out the change is the same Spirit that began it in the day of regeneration, revealing Christ to us in His Word, and forming Him in our hearts, the hope of glory.

¶ Of all the Italian artists the Pre-Raphaelite Fra Angelico, the angelic brother, and saintly painter, is his great favourite. No one is so frequently mentioned, or spoken of in terms of such affectionate admiration. "These are the pictures," he exclaims enthusiastically regarding the works of the great Dominican, "in which every face has soul within, and every hand a heart; all is life; joy is joy, and grief is grief; and piety through all mellows the whole to charity, as heavenward tread the holy saints of old. Describe each I cannot; only their remembrance is with me, and hooded Fra Angelico, pencil in hand, sketching and limning the faces, embodiment of Christ on earth." Again: "The Madonna

della Stella by Fra Angelico for sweetness and love surpasses all of his age, while the Christ nestles into her neck and loves, and for a while, before the thorny way is opened to Him, tastes all love of earth." This is the painter of whom it is written that he was wont to say that the practice of art required repose and holy thoughts, and that he who would depict the acts of Christ must learn to live with Christ. This was the man who above all others took captive William Denny's admiration. It was like drawing like.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

## ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.

1. There is a sense in which sanctification is entire in regeneration. To the measure of every man's light the surrender to God must be without reserve, and the cleansing of the heart from an evil conscience is as entire as justification is complete. "By one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Though sanctification is in this sense complete in regeneration, in the purpose of God and the experience of the believer, much is left to be accomplished in the nature of the sanctified. The carnalities need to be purged out. Entire sanctification completes the work of regeneration, pervading every part of the renewed nature. The spirit is sanctified wholly; the reason is filled with the all-pervasive presence of God realized in the consciousness. Every faculty of the mind is not only cleansed from defilement, but in every part there is reflected the mind of God. The soul is sanctified wholly; its desires are holy, its passions clean, its thoughts pure, its impulses God-ward, and its delight is in the will of the Lord. The tugging of the old nature with its evil lusts is over. The body is sanctified wholly; its members become instruments of righteousness; it is a temple of God, cleansed, sanctified, and filled with the glory of His presence. The sanctification of the parts is not a separate process. The work is one, and is accomplished in the sanctification of the man. The parts are mentioned to set forth the completeness and entireness of the work of God in redeemed and sanctified man. It is entire, complete, without restriction, and without defect. Every part is

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bruce, *The Life of William Denny*, 19.

cleansed, perfected, and pervaded with the energy of the Divine Presence. The fleshly is eradicated and the spiritual prevails.

¶ What you say about the sin attaching to a reserve in the consecration reminds me of the truth on which Benjamin Hellier used to insist, that in the New Testament the only Christian life *allowable* is that of entire sanctification. For those who are stopping short of this there are exhortations, warnings, expostulations, invitations, prayers; but the life there presented to every believer is one of a surrendered will, an obedient heart, a victorious Spirit-filled life in union with Christ, bringing salvation from sin, and leading to steady growth, through increasing knowledge and manifold temptations. This is the true answer to those who ask where the New Testament speaks of a second blessing. Salvation is *one* blessing, which many Christians, through their own fault or that of their teachers, are not receiving in its completeness.<sup>1</sup>

2. What the Apostle meant by this threefold division of human nature cannot be determined with absolute confidence. It is possible that he availed himself of a current division of human nature into three parts—spirit, soul, and body; and that, without at all pronouncing on the truth of this view, he made use of it to express emphatically the whole of man's being; just as we are commanded to love God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind, although it is not laid down as a fixed truth that man's nature is made up of these four parts.

It is probable, however, that the Apostle meant more than this, and taught us to seek from God not only in general the recovery of our whole being from sin, but also of the particular parts and in the particular order in which they are here mentioned. He does not at all decide whether the spirit, soul, and body are rightly arranged by the philosophers in separate order. But he does teach that there are such parts of human nature, and he gives directions how they should be treated. There is the spirit, by which he means our highest faculties that come nearest to God, the faculties that connect man with the spiritual and the invisible. These might be perverted to pride and unbelief, and lead man into the condemnation of the devil. There is the soul, the seat of the affections and desires that more especially connect man with this lower world. These might be perverted to covetousness, to lust,

<sup>1</sup> *John Brash: Memorials and Correspondence*, 36.

to sinful anger, and the other soul passions that corrupt and embitter society. And there is the body, the instrument of man's higher nature, with its own appetites and cravings, which might be perverted to excess and vicious indulgence, and become the tyrant over the highest powers it ought to serve.

From all these evils and dangers, the Apostle fervently prays that the Thessalonians may be preserved; and there is something in the order in which he arranges his petitions which is instructive. For if the spirit, which is placed first, be preserved, it will tend to preserve the soul; if the soul be preserved, it will tend to preserve the body. The favourable influence might begin above with man's conscience and reason, then descend to his social affections and desires, then govern and regulate his bodily appetites. What the Apostle prays for is, that every man's spirit should be as much in communion with God as the spirit of Jesus Christ; his soul as full of social affection and unselfish desire; his body as much the pure and willing instrument of his superior nature in God's service. Then he would be sanctified wholly. All the parts of his being, like the several strings of a harp, would vibrate in perfect unison with each other, and with the master-strain of Christ's example.

¶ The soul opens upward to the Infinite and Eternal through the *Spirit*, with its capacity for God, and downward to the Finite and Temporal through the *Body*, with its capacity for material objects. The spirit stands for our heavenly aptitudes, the body for our earthly ones. By the one we are able to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God; through the other we are apt to become entangled with the things that pertain to earth (Col. iii. 1-5).<sup>1</sup>

(1) The *spirit* stands first in this enumeration because the work within its unseen recesses determines the surrender of the rest of a man's powers to God's uses. This is the point at which we touch the Eternal. Just as fire came first to the altar and from that central point spread in mystic and broadening illumination to the outer courts, with their lamps, vessels, and sacred treasures, so, in the later dispensation, the process by which God claims men for His will and hallows their powers, begins with the spirit. Here is the golden altar, and God descends into soul

<sup>1</sup> F. B. Meyer, *The Soul's Pure Intention*, 5.

and body by first stirring into movement those higher affinities which link our natures immediately with His own. The strict and unhalting preparation of the outward life is imperative, but the mystery through which we become God's dawn at the inmost centre of our being. We can never level ourselves up to this state by bodily acts and exercises, however intense the emotion which pervades them. Here lie the sources of character, and in sweetening these God makes the life a fragrant sacrifice. The spirit was designed for sovereignty over soul and body, and when God's fiat restores its withered powers and puts within its grasp the sceptre of royalty, all other parts of man's nature fall into due subordination and attain that faultless co-adaptation of movement in which perfection consists.

(2) The sanctification of the *soul*, which is the earthen vessel containing the lower passions and appetites, follows that of the spirit. When God possesses us for His own uses all natural instincts fulfil a Divine purpose, and fulfil it in harmony with providential plans. The forces of the nervous life may lend virility to a man's service.

(3) It is not in its own strength and beauty that the glory of the *body* consists, but in its connexion with the other parts of man. It is the servant of man's higher nature. It is the medium of communication between it and the outer world, conveying to the mind, through the senses, impressions of the outer world; and on the other hand, conveying the purpose of the higher powers of man, by means of its activity, into action in the outer world. It is in this service that the glory of the body consists. But the servant may become the master; this lowest part of human nature may become the ruling part. In that case the soul, with its strong and noble powers, becomes a shorn Samson in the lap of Delilah, and the spirit—that pure dove with wings of silver and feathers of yellow gold—has to lie among the pots, and bathe its breast in the mud of sensuality. Even the body itself, deposed from its true position and its true function, becomes degraded, and approaches towards brutality.

¶ How well I remember when I was a young man, before I was ordained, being in a foreign town, just after leaving Oxford, and a boy came to me with a question which tested the truth of my manhood to the bottom. He was, I remember, five years

younger than I was ; I was twenty-three. He in that town had been spoken to in this manner by other young Englishmen who were spending their winter in that town. They asked him to come with them to the low parts of the town. They said : " All young men of your age always act like this ; they are not men if they don't." He came to me ; he was a very excitable, impulsive, lovable boy ; and he said : " I have asked for an hour before I would give them my final answer. If I can find one man of your age who will on his word as a gentleman say he has not done that, I will not go ; but, if not, I will go." So he came to me. I was on my honour to give him a true answer, and, although it is thirty years ago, I thank God to-day that I could look him in the face and say : " I have never gone ; I have never sinned in that way. I have many infirmities, many short-comings, but I have never misused my body in that way." " Then," he said, " I won't go with them."<sup>1</sup>

¶ If you would see what it is to be " sanctified," look to Jesus. *His body* was sanctified ; for all its powers were used in absolute accordance with the will of God. His feet, to hasten to the bed of pain, or the haunt of the sin-stricken. His hand, to raise the dead and to save the sinking. His eyes, to look with ineffable pity on the city which spurned Him, or with silent rebuke on the disciple who denied Him. His voice, to teach with such ineffable wisdom and power as to constrain even His enemies to say, " Never man spake like this Man!" Even in what we may call the ordinary scenes of His life there was the same sanctity. He took part in festivities ; and though some dared to say, " Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber," they knew the charge was false ; for by His holy presence He made every meal a sacrament, and every social gathering sacred. To be sanctified is to be like Him ; so that on the tables of the home, and on the ledgers in the office, on our warehouses and marts, it shall be as though in letters of light these words were blazoned, " Holiness unto the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

¶ How should I describe the relations to each other of these factors of our human fabric ? Should I call the body the sheath of the soul and the soul the sheath of the spirit. So saith the Latin father Tertullian. Or should I say that the body is the organ of the soul and the soul the organ of the spirit ? Or the first the utterance of the second and the second the expression of the third ? What is the body for ? Not for intemperance, not for drunkenness, not for incontinence, not for the greed of avarice :

<sup>1</sup> Bishop A. F. W. Ingram, *Secrets of Strength*, 211.

<sup>2</sup> A. Rowland, *The Burdens of Life*, 117.

but the body, saith St. Paul, is for the Lord. He is the proprietor of it. He is the builder of the body and redeemer of it; doubly owner of it and twice proprietor, first by creation and then by redemption. His body, pierced on the cross, redeemed ours; and we were then bought with a price. If then we would live to the Lord who died to make us His own again, let us keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity; if we do not He will cast us into outer darkness. But what did I say? Let us keep the body in order? Why, the body is the organ of the soul; the soul rules it with a will, *uses* it with a will, bids it walk with feet, touch with hand, taste with tongue, speak with mouth, see with eyes. The soul stares and peers through the eyes of a bad man with looks of lust, of pride, of hate: for the eyes of the body are the windows of the soul surveying through them this material world of sun and moon, of mountains and cities: while the hands and feet are the willing servants of the soul, executing its will, doing its bidding and going on its errands. Eyes, hands, feet, tongue, all instruments of unrighteousness to the soul of a bad man, of righteousness to the soul of the good. So then if the soul rules the body, let us keep the body in order. How? Clearly by keeping the soul in order, filling it with good desires, with pure motives, with wise counsels, with noble aims and aspirations: but what was I saying? Let us keep the *soul* in order, that through it we may keep the body in order? Yes, but *quis custodiet ipsam custodem?* What is to keep the soul in order? Why the soul itself is controlled by that of which it is the organ and the expression, even by the spirit. So then let each of us fill our highest nature, even the spirit, with good desires, with pure motives, with noble aspirations, with lofty thoughts of God's Paradise and the glories of the coming Kingdom. What is this? That the body may be kept in order by its superior the soul, and the soul kept in order by its superior the spirit, let us each fill his own spirit with good desires? Let us? *Can* we? Is a man's ego or self outside a man that he should pour into his own spirit good desires, as he would pour water into a cistern? A man's ego is *inside* the man, whether it be seated in the soul or in the spirit or in both. For behind the body is its ruler and director the soul, behind the soul is its ruler the spirit: but behind the spirit of man is what? Is there no superior? No controller behind that? Why, yes, some unseen power there is that plays the part of King David to the harp and makes the music of the instrument; that suggests, that inspires, that persuades, drawing to virtue or tempting to vice. An evil power drawing to evil, a good power to good. Certainly behind the human spirit of a good man is that which is akin to it, even

the Divine Spirit of the unseen Christ breathing into it good desires, pure motives, lofty inspirations, instilling a steady belief in a better world and a quiet assurance of a blessed immortality hereafter; shedding meekness, gentleness, purity, charity, a high nature filling with joy and peace a lower kindred nature, like sunshine filling daylight.<sup>1</sup>

## III.

## THE MEANS AND THE MOTIVE.

1. Though, as we have seen, our own will must co-operate with God's will in our sanctification, yet sanctification is not the result of our own effort. Our text, especially in the original, where emphasis is strong on "God himself," suggests that it is in Him, not in ourselves, that we have hope. This is clearer in the Revised Version. In the verses immediately preceding the text St. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians as to what *they* were to do. Then suddenly he turns from the work of the human will to the work of the Divine Spirit, and says, "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly." And in the next verse he encourages them to believe that this will be so by the declaration, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it."

2. But not only does St. Paul say it is God that sanctifies us, he says also that it is "the God of peace." The use of this epithet is perhaps intended to teach us two truths.

(1) It teaches us this great lesson, that sanctification, like every other blessing of redemption, comes to us from God through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Previously to the atonement God could neither pardon nor sanctify. God is light as well as love. He would, to speak with reverence, have become unholy Himself had He consented to make the sinner holy before atonement was made. Now the great work is finished. God, as the God of peace, has "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," and is ready to make us perfect

<sup>1</sup> T. S. Evans, *Body, Soul, and Spirit*, 4.

in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight.

¶ Suppose a rich and fertile country from which alone we derived the supply of our tables, the clothing of our persons, the ornaments of our houses, were alienated from us by war, and by war of our own provoking. It would need some atonement, some reconciliation, to reopen our lost sources of improvement or even of subsistence. And suppose another powerful nation were to mediate on our behalf and restore pacific relations; then it would be possible for the old supplies to flow in, not because there was any pleasure in withholding them, but because, till then, the honour of the nation we had provoked was not satisfied. Such is a faint image of the change which has come over our relations to God by the interposition of Jesus Christ. Now, as the very God of peace, He can bestow what before His heart yearned to confer, but for which an honourable way was not found. Now the richest treasures of heaven may be brought down to us by the Holy Spirit. Heaven and earth are leagued in friendship, and there is no Christian who desires these ornaments of the soul, better far than the choicest productions found beneath the skies, that will not find the God of peace prepared to impart them, and to do unto him exceeding abundantly above all that he can ask or think.<sup>1</sup>

(2) But, again, the calmness He gives when we cease our own efforts, and trust Him, is our truest might to maintain this complete consecration. While the calm and holy light of that peace shines in the soul, the storm may roar without and be unheeded; and the phantoms of temptation beckon and allure us in vain. It was the power of that peace that gave St. Paul strength to control the temptations which assailed his vehement, sarcastic, fiery soul, and to bear the burdens of the weak, and submit silently to the slanders and scorns of the Church and the world.

Power that is not of God, however great,  
Is but the downward rushing and the glare  
Of a swift meteor that hath lost its share  
In the one impulse which doth animate  
The parent mass: emblem to me of fate!  
Which through vast nightly wastes doth onward fare,  
Wild-eyed and headlong, rent away from prayer—  
A moment brilliant, then most desolate!

<sup>1</sup> Principal Cairns, *Sanctification*, 20.

And, O my brothers, shall we ever learn  
 From all the things we see continually  
 That pride is but the empty mockery  
 Of what is strong in man! Not so the stern  
 And sweet repose of soul which we can earn  
 Only through reverence and humility!<sup>1</sup>

3. The words of the Apostle are chosen with the utmost care. He prays that they may be kept, not without fault, but without blame. Many blameless things are faulty, and many faulty things are blameless. A work done from purest love and to the utmost capacity may be full of faults but entirely free from blame. A picture is often hung in the home that has a value apart altogether from the judgment of the Academy. Faultless? Not by a long way. But a pure soul put its best into it, and soul is more than precision. Faultless? Nay, for though the sanctification be entire, it is not final. The glorification is not yet. Until it comes the spirit will be beset with limitations and infirmities, the soul will be hampered in its aspirations, and the body will continue to be an imperfect instrument preventing with its weakness the will of the spirit. Not faultless but blameless. Without reproach, without condemnation, and in all things acceptable before God!

¶ To a person who was troubled at her imperfections, St. Francis de Sales wrote thus: "We should, indeed, like to be without imperfections, but, my dearest daughter, we must submit patiently to the trial of having a human, rather than an angelic, nature. Our imperfections ought not, indeed, to please us; on the contrary, we should say with the holy Apostle: Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! But, at the same time, they ought not to astonish us, nor to discourage us: we should draw from them submission, humility, and mistrust of ourselves; never discouragement and loss of heart, far less distrust of God's love for us; for though He loves not our imperfections and venial sins, He loves us, in spite of them. The weakness and backwardness of a child displeases its mother, but she does not for that reason love it less. On the contrary, she loves it more fondly, because she compassionates it. So, too, is it with God, who cannot, as I have said, love our imperfections and venial sins, but never ceases to love us, so that

<sup>1</sup> George MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, ii. 322.

David with reason cries out to Him: 'Have mercy on me, O Lord; for I am weak.'"<sup>1</sup>

4. And what is the motive that ever urges us to this sanctification? To St. Paul it is "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." That great event is the most powerful of all motives to cultivate Christian holiness. For to what end does Christ come? He comes to see in what degree His image has been perfected in His professing people. He comes to see who have called Him Lord, Lord, but have not done the things that He commanded them, and to expose them to shame and everlasting contempt. He comes also to display the graces and holy beauties of His genuine followers, and to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe.

The labours of those that have struggled to be like Him, who have watched and prayed that they might not walk unworthy of His Kingdom and glory, who have wept and made supplication, when no eye saw them, over their remaining spots and blemishes—their labours will not be in vain in the Lord. Every prayer for themselves, and every prayer for others that they too may be prepared and complete in all the will of God, shall find its reward openly; and the sighs that have gone up to heaven for entire sanctification will then receive a glorious answer, when they shall be fully conformed to the image of Him who is the firstborn among many brethren and presented holy and unblamable and unprovable in His Father's sight! "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

¶ The great thing, I suspect, is to assure ourselves, not that these things *may be*, but that they *shall be*: that Christ's appearing is as certain as the sun's rising, or as our deaths; that we do not make it certain by our faith, but that its certainty is the warrant of our faith, and that which is to cure us of its sluggishness. And if this is so, we may encourage all persons always to expect Christ's manifestation; the more they do expect it, the better they will be, the more they will rise out of their sloth, their scorn, their confusions, their selfishness; the more they will work on manfully in their own appointed tasks, whatever they be, the more they will work with each other; the more they will fight

<sup>1</sup> J. P. Camus, *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, 372.

against the temptations which will recur in a thousand different shapes, and will come again and again, as angels of light, to separate themselves from others under any pretence whatever, in faith, in hope, in worship; the more they will prize common thanksgivings, common prayers, and will rejoice to meet in using them, that they may pray against the devil, who is leading them, and all the people about them, to set up themselves, that they may not trust Christ, and glorify God.<sup>1</sup>

The Porter watches at the gate,  
 The servants watch within;  
 The watch is long betimes and late,  
 The prize is slow to win.  
 "Watchman, what of the night?"  
 But still  
 His answer sounds the same:  
 "No daybreak tops the utmost hill,  
 Nor pale our lamps of flame."

One to another hear them speak  
 The patient virgins wise:  
 "Surely He is not far to seek"—  
 "All night we watch and rise."  
 "The days are evil looking back,  
 The coming days are dim;  
 Yet count we not His promise slack,  
 But watch and wait for Him."

One with another, soul with soul,  
 They kindle fire from fire:  
 "Friends watch us who have touched the goal"  
 "They urge us, come up higher."  
 "With them shall rest our waysore feet,  
 With them is built our home,  
 With Christ."—"They sweet, but He most sweet,  
 Sweeter than honeycomb."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, ii. 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Christina G. Rossetti, Poems*, 202.



PRAYER AND PROGRESS.

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## PRAYER AND PROGRESS.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified.—2 Thess. iii. 1.

THE main part of this Epistle is finished with the previous chapter. The Apostle has completed his teaching about the Second Advent, and the events which precede and condition it; and nothing remains to dispose of but some minor matters of personal and practical interest. He begins by asking again, as at the close of the First Epistle, the prayers of the Thessalonians for himself and his fellow-workers. It was a strength and comfort to him, as it is to every minister of Christ, to know that he was remembered, by those who loved him, in the presence of God. But it is no selfish or private interest that the Apostle has in view when he begs a place in their prayers; it is the interest of the work with which he has identified himself. "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified." This was the one business and concern of his life; if it went well, all his desires were satisfied.

We might be ready to think that, if ever there was a minister of Jesus Christ who was raised above the need of his people's prayers, that minister was St. Paul. He was endowed, both by nature and by grace, beyond the measure of ordinary men. Whether as a man or as a servant of the Lord Jesus, he towers above the level of the common ranks, and from our distant point of view looks nearer and liker to his Master than any of his fellows. Since this great and good Apostle did feel deeply his need of prayer, not only his own, but also the prayers of all saints on his behalf, so felt this great and constant and pressing need, that he turned with touching importunity from church to church and pleaded with them that they would pray for him and not forget him, is not this to proclaim in the most emphatic manner that, as necessity is laid on ministers to preach the gospel, even

so necessity is laid upon the people to pray for their ministers—to uphold and help them daily with their prayers ?

¶ There is an almost pathetic eagerness in St. Paul's oft-recurring entreaty, "Brethren, pray for us," "Brethren, pray for us." Was it that the Apostle thought of his own salvation as in one sense owing to the prayer of another? It may not be possible to determine with exactness the indebtedness of Paul to Stephen; but that the dying martyr's prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," shook to its very centre the confident Pharisaism of the youthful Saul of Tarsus it seems impossible to doubt. Perhaps St. Augustine scarcely goes too far when he says that the Church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen.

Si Stephanus non orasset  
Ecclesia Paulum non haberet.<sup>1</sup>

## I.

### THE PRACTICE OF INTERCESSION.

#### "Pray for us."

The Apostle loved to be prayed for, and in thus beseeching the Churches to remember him in intercession, he almost invested the humblest member of the household of Christ with a new function and a special ministry. The Apostle did not deign to disregard the prayers of the poorest for his own personal protection and comfort, but he specially desired the supplication of the saints on behalf of the gospel itself, that it might spread over all the world. He would have all people be, as it were, reproductions of the Thessalonians, who had provided an open door for the evangelical message, and had in their own persons so glowingly illustrated the power of the gospel that others might reproduce the Thessalonian example, and rest sure that in going in the direction of the Thessalonians they were pursuing the right way. What a tribute was this to the excellence of the Thessalonian Christians !

1. The double note ("We pray always for you . . . pray for us") is heard through all St. Paul's Epistles. He prays for

<sup>1</sup> G. Jackson, *Memoranda Paulina*, 250.

others, and he entreats others to pray for him. "Making mention of you in my prayers"—this is the Apostolic token in almost every Epistle. The care of all the Churches was upon St. Paul daily, and daily he carried his care to God. Brethren in Asia Minor, brethren in Philippi, in Thessalonica and in Corinth, brethren in far-off Rome—he remembered them all when he knelt to pray. Nor was it only for Churches that he prayed; he named men and women by name before God. "Making mention of thee in my prayers," he writes to Philemon; and to Timothy, "I thank God how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications." And a man who prayed thus for his friends could not but desire the prayers of his friends for himself.

2. How St. Paul delighted in the practice of prayer and in enjoining it upon the Churches! "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. vi. 18). "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6). To the Thessalonians he said, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17). Jesus Christ Himself had enjoined upon His disciples the duty of prayer. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1). "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. ix. 38). The Apostle had confidence that by the prayers of the saints his ministry would be brought to the highest issues. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. xv. 30). In writing to the Colossians he desired a special interest in their prayers for the same purpose: "Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Col. iv. 3). If a great man like the Apostle Paul could not dispense with the prayers of Christians, ought not every preacher of the gospel to encourage the offering of such prayers on his own account? When men pray for their ministers, they cannot undervalue their labours. They should regard such labours as an answer to

their own prayers. Having sown the seed of prayer, they should expect the harvest of profitable service.

¶ You may be sure that in my hermitage by the unseen brook Cherith I do not cross my arms in daily and nightly supplication without enfolding you all in them; and may I say again, like John Newton to his friend, "When you are with the King and getting good for yourself, speak a word for me." I must quote more—the words are truly beautiful—"I have reason to think you see Him oftener and have nearer access to Him than myself. Yet I am not wholly without His notice. He supplies all my wants, and I live under His protection. My enemies see His royal arms over my door and dare not enter."<sup>1</sup>

¶ One of Millais' most powerful pictures is that in the Manchester Art Gallery, entitled "Victory, O Lord." It represents the incident related in Ex. xvii. 10-12, of Moses sitting on the top of the hill, while Joshua is leading the Israelites against the Amalekites on the plains below. Moses, the great lawgiver, is represented seated upon a stone, his body bent with age and weariness. Aaron and Hur stand on either side of him supporting his upraised arms, since as long as these were held up Israel prevailed. The faces of the two supporters are ablaze with zeal. They watch the conflict below, and can hardly remain passive through agitation. Yet there they remain holding up the arms of the aged leader. The whole picture is a lesson in the practice of prayer.

## II.

### THE PURPOSE OF THIS INTERCESSION.

"That the word of the Lord may run and be glorified."

1. "The word of the Lord" is the gospel, of which St. Paul was the principal herald to the nations; and we see in his choice of the word "run" his sense of its urgency. It was glad tidings to all mankind; and how sorely needed wherever the Apostle turned his eyes! The constraint of Christ's love was upon his heart, the constraint of men's sin and misery; and he could not pass swiftly enough from city to city, to proclaim the reconciling grace of God, and call men from darkness to light. His eager heart fretted against barriers and restraints of every description; he

<sup>1</sup> W. B. Robertson, in *Life*, by J. Brown, 212.

saw in them the malice of the great enemy of Christ: "We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered me." Hence it is that he asks the Thessalonians to pray for their removal, that the word of the Lord may run.

¶ The singular metaphor of the running word is probably suggested by Ps. xix. 5, where the course of the sun is pictured in glowing poetic language—"rejoicing as a hero to run a race," while the latter part of the Psalm sets "the law of the Lord" in comparison with his glorious career. St. Paul applies ver. 4 of the Psalm in Rom. x. 18, with striking effect, to the progress of the gospel. Through "running" the word is "glorified," and that is true of it which Virgil writes in his splendid lines on Fama (*Aeneid*, iv. 175):

Mobilitate viget, viresque acquirit eundo.<sup>1</sup>

¶ It is one of the happy omens of our own time that the Apostolic conception of the gospel as an ever-advancing, ever-victorious force, has begun again to take its place in the Christian heart. If it is really to us what it was to St. Paul—a revelation of God's mercy and judgment which dwarfs everything else, a power omnipotent to save, an irresistible pressure of love on heart and will, glad tidings of great joy that the world is dying for—we shall share in this ardent, evangelical spirit, and pray for all preachers that the word of the Lord may run very swiftly. How it passed in apostolic times from land to land and from city to city—from Syria to Asia, from Asia to Macedonia, from Macedonia to Greece, from Greece to Italy, from Italy to Spain—till in one man's lifetime, and largely by one man's labour, it was known throughout the Roman world! It is easy, indeed, to over-estimate the number of the early Christians; but we can hardly over-estimate the fiery speed with which the Cross went forth conquering and to conquer. Missionary zeal is one note of the true Apostolic Church.<sup>2</sup>

2. St. Paul wishes the Thessalonians to pray that the Word of the Lord may be "glorified," as well as "run" or "have free course" as the Authorized Version puts it. The Word of the Lord is a glorious thing itself. As the Apostle calls it in another place, it is the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. All that makes the spiritual glory of God—His holiness, His love, His wisdom—is concentrated and displayed in it. But its glory is acknowledged, and in that sense heightened, when its power is

<sup>1</sup> G. G. Findlay.

<sup>2</sup> J. Denney.

seen in the salvation of men. A message from God that did nothing would not be glorified: it would be discredited and shamed. It is the glory of the gospel to lay hold of men, to transfigure them, to lift them out of evil into the company and the likeness of Christ. For anything else it does, it may not fill a great space in the world's eye; but when it actually brings the power of God to save those who receive it, it is clothed in glory. St. Paul did not wish to preach without seeing the fruits of his labour. He did the work of an evangelist; and he would have been ashamed of the evangel if it had not wielded a Divine power to overcome sin and bring the sinful to God. Pray that it may always have this power. Pray that when the word of the Lord is spoken it may not be an ineffective, fruitless word, but mighty through God.

¶ There is an expression in Titus ii. 10 analogous to this glorifying of the Word—"adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." It is only too possible for us to disgrace the gospel; but it is in our power also, by every smallest action we do, to illustrate it, to set it off, to put its beauty in the true light before the eyes of men. The gospel comes into the world, like everything else, to be judged on its merits; that is, by the effects which it produces in the lives of those who receive it. We are its witnesses; its character, in the general mind, is as good as our character; it is as lovely as we are lovely, as strong as we are strong, as glorious as we are glorious, and no more. Let us seek to bear it a truer and worthier witness than we have yet done. To adorn it is a calling far higher than most of us have aimed at; but if it comes into our prayers, if its swift diffusion and powerful operation are near our hearts in the sight of God, grace will be given us to do this also.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Lull had no idea that Christianity was not a complete and sufficient religion. He did not study other religions with the purpose of providing from them ideals which Christianity was supposed to lack. Nor did he propose to reduce out of all religions a common fund of general principles more or less to be found in all and regard these as the ultimate religion. He studied other religions to find out how better to reach the hearts of their adherents with the gospel, itself perfect and complete, lacking nothing, needing nothing from any other doctrine. With him there was a difference between Christianity and other religions not in degree only, but in kind. It possesses what they lack

<sup>1</sup> J. Denney.

which is desirable. It lacks what they possess which is unworthy. It alone satisfies. It alone is life. They are systems of society or politics, religions of books, methods, organizations. It and it alone is life, eternal life. Lull studied other religions, not to discover what they have to give to Christianity, for they have nothing, but to find how he might give to those who follow them the true life, which is life, and which no man shall ever find until he finds it in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

3. What strikes a reader of the Acts of the Apostles is the wisdom shown in the preaching of the Word, and the important and prime place given to preaching. Beyond all question both in the service and in the ministry of Apostolic Christianity the Word had the first place as being the most efficient and best acknowledged agent in the conversion of sinners and edification of believers. If early Christian practice has any force as precedent for subsequent times, the preaching of the gospel is the most prominent and urgent duty of the Church. The practical emphasis laid by early Christians on the place of preaching should be to us an incentive and an inspiration. Why this perpetual insisting on the Word? Why this conveying of it as of seed even upon the wings of the wind of persecution by dispersed martyrs? Why this tracing of the growth of discipleship and of the Kingdom of God to the Word almost without a mention of the sacramental observances and indulgences? Why this great charter of Jesus to His folk to preach the gospel to every creature, unless the preaching of the cross is the one great, solemn, and constant call of the Lord? It may be replied that the novelty of Christianity required the accentuation of preaching because her hope of progress depended on her missionary activity; but our answer is that when a Church ceases to be missionary in spirit or in practice she thereupon ceases to be a Church.

¶ I sometimes think that a verse in one of the Psalms carries the whole pith of homiletics—"While I was musing the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue." Patient meditation, resulting in kindled emotion and the flashing up of truth into warmth and light, and then—and not till then—the rush of speech "moved by the Holy Ghost"—these are the processes which will make sermons live things with hands and feet, as Luther's words were said to be. "Then spake I," not "Then sate

<sup>1</sup> S. M. Zwemer, *Raymond Lull*, xvii.

I down at my desk and wrote it all down to be majestically read out of manuscript in a leather case." May I add another text, which contains as complete a description of the contents of preaching as the Psalm does of its genesis? "Whom we preach"—there is the evangelistic element, which is foundation of all, and is proclamation with the loud voice, the curt force, the plain speech of a herald; and there is, too, the theme, namely, the Person, not a set of doctrines, but, on the other hand, a Person whom we can know only by doctrines, and whom, if we know, we shall surely have some doctrine concerning. "Warning every man"—there is the ethical side of preaching; "and teaching every man"—there is the educational aspect of the Christian ministry. These three must never be separated, and he is the best minister of Jesus Christ who keeps the proportion between them most clearly in his mind, and braids all the strands together in his ministry into a "threefold cord, not quickly broken."<sup>1</sup>

¶ One great qualification for successful labour is power to get the truth home to the heart not to "deliver" it. I wish the word had never been coined in connexion with Christian work. "Deliver" it, indeed—that is not in the Bible. No, no; not deliver it; but drive it home—send it in—make it felt. That is your work; not merely to say it—not quietly and genteelly to put it before the people. Here is just the difference between a self-consuming, soul-burdened, Holy Ghost, successful ministry, and a careless, happy-go-lucky, easy sort of thing, that just rolls it out like a lesson, and goes home, holding itself in no way responsible for the consequences. Here is all the difference, either in public or individual labour. God has made you responsible, not for delivering the truth, but for getting it in—getting it home, fixing it in the conscience as a red hot iron, as a bolt, straight from His throne; and He has placed at your disposal the power to do it, and if you do not do it blood will be on your skirts.<sup>2</sup>

¶ "Do you wish to know," continued St. Francis, "how I test the excellence and value of a preacher? It is by assuring myself that those who have been listening to him come away striking their breasts and saying: 'I will do better'; not by their saying: 'Oh how well he spoke, what beautiful things he said!' For to say beautiful things in fluent and well-chosen words shows indeed the learning and eloquence of a man; but the conversion of sinners and their departing from their evil ways is the sure sign that God has spoken by the mouth of the preacher, that he

<sup>1</sup> *Dr. McLaren of Manchester*, 71.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life of Catherine Booth*, i. 163.

possesses the true power of speech, which is inspired by the science of the Saints, and that he proclaims worthily in the name of Almighty God that perfect law which is the salvation of souls.”<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### THE PERSON IN THE INTERCESSION.

##### “Pray for us.”

St. Paul gathers up all that he has to request for himself in one crowning petition, and the petition of the Apostle in the first age is the petition of all to whom Apostolic work is committed in every age. The want which St. Paul felt, the help which St. Paul craved, the power which St. Paul knew to be accessible, remain unaltered. The ambassador of Christ now as then, baffled and perplexed by ignorance and wickedness, alone and yet not alone, looks to his brethren in other lands for the sustaining ministry of love; the distant churches, now as then, are called to share by spiritual sympathy in a work which belongs to the fulness of their life; the treasury of heaven now as then is open for all who claim their inheritance of unexhausted blessings. Not one promise made to the Church has been revoked. Not one gift has been annulled. Not one command has been withdrawn. “Make disciples of all the nations”; “Receive the Holy Ghost”; “I am with you all the days”—these are still living words of a living Saviour, spoken once and spoken always. The slackness of our own energy is alone able to hinder the progress of His triumph: the dimness of our own vision is alone able to dull the effulgence of His glory.

1. Prayer is essentially active and expansive. If we pray for the attainment of an object, we shall work for it also; and we shall even without any set purpose make our interest in it felt. At present we seem to limit in some strange way our practical interpretation of one of our commonest petitions. The coming of our Father’s Kingdom, so far as this phrase has any definite meaning for us, stands for something far less vast than those promises suggest which help us to rise to the magnificence of its

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, 477.

hope. If we learn to say, not with the lips only but with the heart and with the understanding, "Thy kingdom come"; if we intensify our prayers by due reflection on the vastness and variety of the work for which we pray; then we shall soon speak one to another of that which burns within us. Zeal will kindle zeal where before silence chilled it, and devotion will pass into deed.

¶ Immediately after dressing, he settled down to work at whatever his special task for the time might be, though very frequently, if one came into his room at all suddenly, the result was to make him rise hurriedly from his knees, his face reddened, and his eyes depressed by the intense pressure of his hands, the base of each of which had been driven and almost gouged into either eye-socket, the fingers and thumbs pressed down over forehead and head. The Greek Testament, open at some special point which had occupied him at the moment he kneeled down, lay on the chair before him; but as he rose the spirit seemed to have come back again into his face from the far-off region to which it had been travelling, and there was just the hint in the face of an involuntary sadness and almost of reproach that the spirit should be recalled from the intercourse it had been enjoying. Mrs. Maurice's note-book adds to this: "Whenever he woke in the night he was always praying. And in the very early morning I have often pretended to be asleep lest I should disturb him whilst he was pouring out his heart to God. He never began any work or any book without preparing for it by prayer."<sup>1</sup>

2. We do not indeed care to inquire how prayer affects the will of God. It is enough for us to know that our God is a God who, seen under the conditions of human life, answers prayer. It is not for us to prescribe, it is not for us to know, the seasons which answer to the fitting accomplishment of the Father's purpose. We pray according to our most imperfect sight. We trust our prayers to the absolute love of God, sure at least of this that no effort will be lost which is consecrated to Him, sure that the good seed which is watered with tears will hereafter bring gladness to the reaper's heart, sure that, if we pray to Him and as we pray to Him, the Lord of the harvest will send forth His labourers, some, as it must be, for the toil of patient waiting,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, ii. 285.

and some for the toil of thankful ingathering, but all alike sobered and strengthened by the burden of His cross, all alike crowned with the undying wreath of His victory.

¶ It is said that the way-worn labourers of Iona found their burdens grow lighter when they reached the most difficult part of their journey because the secret prayers of their aged master Columba met them there. I can well believe the story; and such comfort of unspoken sympathy the Church at home can give to the isolated missionary. If when he is saddened by the spectacle of evil which has been accumulated and grown hard through countless generations; if when his words find no entrance because the very power of understanding them is wanting; if when he watches his life ebb and his work remain undone and almost unattempted, he can turn homeward with the certain knowledge that in England unnumbered fellow-labourers are striving from day to day to lighten his sorrows and to cheer his loneliness; I can well believe that he too will find that refreshment and joy in the consciousness of deep human fellowship, in our Lord and Saviour, which will nerve him for new and greater toils: that he will be strong again with the strength of holy companionship and courageous with the solace of hope.<sup>1</sup>

3. We have to-day—let us in most humble reverence face the fact—a Divine gospel to proclaim and a Divine force to use. No temporary disappointments, no apparent failure, no deferred hope can alter this truth. For the way in which God's counsel is fulfilled must necessarily vary according to the varying circumstances of the world. It is not given to us to foresee how Christ will show Himself, or by what advances and after what delays this end towards which we aspire will be reached. We cannot even tell of ourselves what is the right fulfilment of our own desire. We all know how St. Paul's prayer was answered. He was opposed, rejected, imprisoned, martyred. The unreasonable and evil men from whom he sought protection finally triumphed over him. He asked for deliverance and he found death. But what then? His message was not lost. It was for a time hidden; and few things in the history of the Church are more striking. But after a dark, cold season of waiting the harvest was matured. Where he had sown, others reaped; and through manifold discouragements and checks and antagonisms the gospel of the cross

<sup>1</sup> B. F. Westcott, *Lessons from Work*, 208.

within three centuries conquered the family, the schools, the state. The lesson is written for our learning. Let us do our work. Let the harvest, if God so will, be for those that come after us; there will be joy then for the sower.

¶ Perhaps in the modern mission-field the prayer of the text has had no better fulfilment than in the kingdom of Toro, near the Albert Nyanza and adjacent to Uganda, the king of which, David Kasagama, wrote in an interesting letter some years ago: "I want my country to be a strong lantern, that is not put out in this land of darkness." The queen-mother is also a Christian, and in a letter of hers wrote these words: "Friends, I thank God that we are one with you although we are black and you are white, because now we are one in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, my masters, persevere in praying to God to give us strength every day." Such words echo the Apostolic precept to pray for the success of God's Word, while they encourage us, from the triumph of the gospel in Toro, to believe the prophetic word that it shall not return to God void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases, and shall prosper in the thing whereto He hath sent it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Silvester.

A FAITHFUL SAYING.

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## A FAITHFUL SAYING.

Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief.—1 Tim. i. 15.

1. IN these words we have the first of a short series of five "faithful sayings," or current Christian commonplaces, incidentally adduced by the Apostle Paul in the course of his letters to his helpers in the gospel—Timothy and Titus—*i.e.* in what we commonly call his Pastoral Epistles. They are a remarkable series of five "words," and their appearance on the face of these New Testament writings is almost as remarkable as their contents.

Consider what the phenomenon is that is brought before us in these "faithful sayings." Here is the Apostle writing to his assistants in the proclamation of the gospel, little more than a third of a century, say, after the crucifixion of his Lord—scarcely thirty-three years after he had himself entered upon the great ministry that had been committed to him of preaching to the Gentiles "the words of this life." Yet he is already able to remind them of the blessed contents of the gospel message in words that are the product of Christian experience in the hearts of the community. For just what these "faithful sayings" are, is a body of utterances in which the essence of the gospel has been crystallized by those who have tasted and seen its preciousness. Obviously the days when this gospel was brought as a novelty to their attention are past. The Church has been founded, and in it throbs the pulse of a vigorous life. The gospel has been embraced and lived, it has been trusted and not found wanting ; and the souls that have found its blessedness have had time to frame its precious truths into formulas—formulas, not merely that have passed from mouth to mouth, and been enshrined in memory after memory until they have become proverbs in the Christian community, formulas, rather, which have embedded themselves

in the hearts of the whole congregation, have been beaten there into shape, as the deeper emotions of redeemed souls have played round them, and have emerged again suffused with the feelings which they have awakened and satisfied, and moulded into that balanced and rhythmic form which is the hall-mark of utterances that really come out of the living and throbbing hearts of the people.

2. The particular one of these "sayings" which has been chosen as the text is a great assertion—an assertion which, if it be truly a "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," is well adapted to become even in this late and, it would fain believe itself, more instructed age, the watchword of the Christian Church and of every Christian heart. On the face of it, it simply announces the purpose, or, we may perhaps say, the philosophy, of the incarnation: "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." But it announces the purpose of the incarnation in a manner that at once attracts attention. The very language in which it is expressed is startling, meeting us here in the midst of one of St. Paul's letters. For this is not Pauline phraseology that stands before us here; as, indeed, it does not profess to be—for does not St. Paul tell us that he is not speaking in his own person, but is adducing one of the jewels of the Church's faith? At all events, it is the language of St. John that here confronts us, and whoever first cast the Church's heart-conviction into this compressed sentence had assuredly learned in St. John's school. For to St. John alone belongs this phrase as applied to Christ: "He came into the world." It is St. John alone who preserves the Master's declarations: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world"; "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." It is he alone who, adopting, as is his wont, the very phraseology of his Master to express his own thought, tells us in his prologue that the true Light—that lighteth every man—was coming into the world, but though He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, yet the world knew Him not.

Let us consider, first, the way in which the Apostle commends the great saying to us—it is (1) "faithful," and (2) "worthy of

all acceptance." Next, let us look at the saying itself. And, then, let us see how St. Paul adds his own fervent Amen to it: "of whom I am chief."

## I.

## THE APOSTLE'S COMMENDATION OF THE SAYING.

"Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance."

1. *It is faithful.*—It is faithful because men have proved it so in their experience, and because it agrees with sense and reason.

(1) When a man in the middle of some slight plank thrown across a stream tests it with a stamp of his foot, and calls to his comrades, "It is quite firm," then they may venture upon it too. That is exactly what St. Paul is doing here. How does he know that "faithful is the saying"? Because he has proved it in his own experience, and found that in his case the salvation which Jesus Christ was said to effect has been effected. Now there are many other grounds of certitude besides this, but, after all, it is worth men's while to consider how many millions there have been from the beginning who would be ready to join chorus with the Apostle here, and to say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." My experience cannot be your certitude; but if you and I are suffering from precisely the same disease, and I have tested a cure, my experience should have some weight with you. And so, we point to all the thousands who are ready to say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him."

¶ Go to-day whither you will, north or south, east or west, and find the homes that are happiest, the lives that are sweetest, the souls that are sunniest, the hearts that are most helpful and most eager in helping others, you shall find all this among those who set their seal to this as true—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Go to-day amongst the roughest and the vilest, the drunken and the brutal, the coarsest and the most depraved. What can uplift them? Bring education, good houses, pure water, good food and enough of it—by all means get these things, it is a duty to demand them. But none of them, nor all of them put together, can cast out devils, or loose the

chains of sin. Here in the West End of London, amidst stately architecture and splendid luxury, there is a show of vice more crowded and more hopeless than anything in the East End. Have education, or art, or any of these agencies wrought the cure of humanity anywhere? They have their place, and a lofty and noble place it is; but the maladies of humanity are beyond their power to heal. But we can show thousands and tens of thousands who will tell us: "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, injurious." Ask them what has made them so different, and they will tell you, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."<sup>1</sup>

¶ On New Year's Day, 1894, seeing a favourable opportunity to have a serious and pertinent talk with Keamapsithyo (Philip), the first Indian who had shown any really marked interest in Christianity, I walked out with him some distance from the village, and sat down on the bank of a stream. After a long conversation, I told him that, although his knowledge was exceedingly rudimentary, chiefly owing to my inadequate command of his language, and consequent inability to put the truths of the gospel clearly before him, yet he had been able to comprehend sufficiently to warrant him in deciding there and then to abandon heathenism once and for all, and follow Christ as his Chief. He replied that it was as I had said, only that I had not seemed to understand how sinful his past life had been; he knew that, to follow Christ, he would have to give up that life of sin, but, as it had such a hold upon him, he felt that he could not; furthermore, his sins had been so many that he felt sure the Christ about whom he had been taught could not possibly go so far as to forgive him. He added that, of course, in my case it was different, because I was a good man, as all the Indians knew, and doubtless Christ had been quite pleased to receive me, seeing that I had never committed such and such sins. In his own case, however, it must be otherwise. I went over with him in detail the particular sins which he had instanced, and assured him that many of them I had myself committed innumerable times; that others, although not committed in act, I had committed in intention; and that he knew, according to the theories of his own people, as well as from the teaching of Christ Himself, that the sin of the will was as much a sin as the deed itself. I tried to convince him that I was really in no way a better man than himself, in spite of his opinion of me and that of his people, who had only judged me superficially, yet Christ had accepted me, and therefore would accept him. I showed him that I still had the

<sup>1</sup> M. G. Pearse.

same temptations as he had, only the difference was that my will was to do good and abstain from evil; that this was not a natural, but a changed will, given me by God; and although I certainly did things of which I did not approve yet it grieved me when I did, and that I was continually striving to overcome these failings. I then expounded the doctrine that, in such a case, will-power would be given to overcome evil in proportion as the desire to overcome was strong. I pointed out that, by his own confession, he desired to lead a good life, and that, as I had already made it clear, his past guilt could be atoned for. Although he would continue to stumble for long after taking this step, I explained how he would be given strength to subdue his natural weakness; how, as his knowledge increased, and his experience ripened, and his desire tended unswervingly in the right direction, so he would in time come to realize the happiness of doing right, and discover that strength to do it would be imparted to him. After this, without giving any decision one way or another, he broke off the conversation and left me.

It was not until four years and a half afterwards that I learnt the immediate result of our talk. He was preaching to his countrymen, and in the course of his address stated distinctly and unhesitatingly that it was on that day that he definitely resolved sincerely to endeavour to carry out what I had advised. He remarked that it was only the perception that suddenly dawned on him of the similarity of my own condition with his that encouraged him to make the effort.<sup>1</sup>

(2) But it is not only because of that consentient chorus of many voices—the testimony of which wise men will not reject—that the word is “a faithful saying.” There is no fact in the history of the world better attested, and the unbelief of which is more unreasonable, than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And if Christ rose from the dead—and you cannot understand the history of the world unless He did, nor the existence of the Church either—if Jesus Christ rose from the dead, almost all the rest follows of necessity: the influx of the supernatural, the unique character of His career, the correspondence of the end with the beginning, the broad seal of the Divine confirmation stamped upon His claims to be the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. All these things come necessarily from the fact. And given the consentient witness of nineteen centuries, given the existence of the Church, given the effects of Christianity in the

<sup>1</sup> W. B. Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land*, 225.

world, given that upon which they repose—the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—the conclusion is sound: This is a faithful saying, that He came into the world to save sinners.

¶ If the lowest form of energy, however it may be transformed or degraded, be still conserved in some shape and place, can any one believe that the Author of Life in this world was extinguished on a Roman cross? The certainty of Jesus' Resurrection does not rest in the last issue on His isolated appearances during the forty days; it rests on His Life for thirty-three years. His Life was beyond the reach of death; it was Ageless Life. Jesus' Life impressed His generation as unparalleled and inexplicable, a Life with inscrutable motives and incalculable principles. What was its explanation according to any known standard? Jesus was accustomed frankly to admit that it had none; that it was an enigma from the earthly standpoint. But He pleaded that it was supreme and reasonable from the Heavenly standpoint. It was foreign here; it was natural elsewhere. He did the works He had seen His Father do, He said the words He had received of His Father, He fulfilled the will of His Father. There was a sphere where His Life was the rule, where His dialect was the language of the country and His was the habit of living. His unlikeness to this world implies His likeness to another world. One evening you find among the reeds of your lake an unknown bird, whose broad breast and powerful pinions are not meant for this inland scene. It is resting midway between the two oceans, and by tomorrow will have gone. Does not that bird prove the ocean it left, does it not prove the ocean whither it has flown? "Jesus, knowing . . . that he was come from God and went to God," is the Revelation and Confirmation of Ageless Life.<sup>1</sup>

2. *It is worthy of all acceptance.*—This phrase, "all acceptance," may mean either of two things: it may mean worthy of being welcomed either by all men, or by the whole of each man.

(1) This gospel deserves to be welcomed by every man, for it is fitted for every man, since it deals with the primary human characteristic of transgression. We need different kinds of intellectual nutriment, according to education and culture. We need different kinds of treatment, according to condition and circumstance. The morality of one age is not the morality of another. Much, even of right and wrong, is local and temporary; but black man and white, savage and civilized, philosopher and

<sup>1</sup> J. Watson, *The Mind of the Master*, 82.

fool, king and clown, all need the same air to breathe, the same water to drink, the same sun for light and warmth, and all need the same Christ for redemption from the same sin. For safety from the same danger, for snatching from the same death. This gospel is a gospel for the world, and for every man in it.

¶ Jesus Christ did not die for a few of us. He tasted death for every man. He did not in His great heart think of this little nationality, or that. He is the propitiation for our sins, and *not for ours only*, but for the sins of the whole world. Yonder Man does not think of little pieces or of parts of things; when He thinks He thinks entireties, when He loves, He loves entireties. No fraction could ever satisfy His infinite love.<sup>1</sup>

(2) It is also "worthy of all acceptance" in the sense of worthy of being accepted into all a man's nature, because it will fit it all and bless it all. Some of us give it a half welcome. We take it into our head, and then we put a partition between it and our heart, and keep our religion on the other side, so that it does not influence us at all. It is worthy of being received by the understanding, to which it will bring truth absolute; of being received by the will, to which it will bring the freedom of submission; of being received by the conscience, to which it will bring quickening; of being received by the affections, to which it will bring pure and perfect love. For hope, it will bring a certainty to gaze upon; for passions, a curb; for effort, a spur and a power; for desires, satisfaction; for the whole man, healing and light.

¶ Charles Kingsley, a few hours before his ordination, wrote: "Oh! my soul, my body, my intellect, my very love, I dedicate you all to God! And not mine only . . . to be an example and an instrument of holiness before the Lord for ever, to dwell in His courts, to purge His temple, to feed His sheep, to carry the lambs and bear them to that foster-mother whose love never fails, whose eye never sleeps, the Bride of God, the Church of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Parker.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Kingsley: *His Letters and Memories of His Life*, i. 51.

## II.

## THE SAYING.

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

I. To understand this great saying we must first of all look closely at the words.

(1) “Christ Jesus” was a formula with a special significance for Jews. The first name carried the mind away to the long-promised “hope” of Israel, of whom psalmist sang and prophet dreamed, the cherished expectation of the faithful. “Christ” is “Messiah,” the “Anointed.” Their kings in the days of national glory were “Messiahs” anointed with holy oil and set apart to their lofty office. In course of time the name came to be applied specially and exclusively to the expected Prince who should redeem His people from their troubles. As the nation’s calamities multiplied and they sank in adversity this hope was maintained with an almost fierce energy; and the Messiah became to the Jew in some respects what el-Mahdy is to the Moslem and el-Hady to the Druze, the Leader or Guide who should deliver them and reduce their oppressors to bondage. “Jesus,” Saviour, was also a name of happy augury. It is “Joshua,” the name borne by the mighty warrior who led Israel through victory to possession of the promised land. It was an auspicious combination of names. Paul and Timothy rejoice together in the realization of the nation’s hope. Messiah has come: the Saviour has appeared. But in the spirit of enlargement begotten by this new-found joy they give a more generous interpretation of the Messianic functions. He is not a Prince of deliverance to one people alone: His mission is to “sinners.” Not the children of Jacob in lonely gladness shall He restore to the land of their fathers. This Joshua shall lead His Israel from every kindred and people to “an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

(2) “Christ Jesus *came* into the world.” This implies that Christ was before He came into the world. Perhaps, indeed, the expression in itself, apart from all similar phrases, torn from the substance and isolated from the analogy of Scripture, would not

bind us down to attach this sense to it. But we must interpret it as what it is—a general expression of the revelation of God which centres in Christ; we must look at it in the light of other statements plainly kindred to it. Christ came into the world. He came from the bosom of the Father, where He had from eternity been, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In giving us Him, God gave us of His own very self—of His own very substance, His own very life, His own very character, His own very love. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” And Christ, that Son, came; He came from God; He was God; He came “from the bosom of the Father” to “shew us the Father.” He came from out the Infinite fully to meet and satisfy the cry of the creature after God. He came, in whom “dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” to draw us into a loving communion and transforming sympathy with God, through revealing God to us as just and holy, but also as tender and compassionate, gracious and forgiving.

¶ How did life originate upon this planet? The grass, trees, flowers, birds, animals, whence came they? What was the origin of the first mysterious seeds which held within themselves these various forms of life and beauty? Lord Kelvin believes that meteoric stones are seed-bearing agents, and that it is not improbable that these aerolites first brought to us the seeds of vitality and loveliness from distant worlds. It may be so. The law of the cosmos may be that living worlds vitalize dead worlds. So the Son of God descended from the celestial universe that He might bring into this realm of death and despair all those glorious truths, influences, and hopes which are making the desolate sphere to blossom as the rose and to shake like Lebanon.<sup>1</sup>

(3) “Christ Jesus came *into the world.*” In the Johannean phraseology which we have here—though certainly not in the Johannean phraseology only—the term “the world” does not express a purely local idea, but is suffused with a deep ethical significance. When we read accordingly of Christ Jesus coming into the “world,” we are not reading of a mere change of place on the part of our Lord—of a mere descent on His part from heaven to earth, as we may say. We are reading of the light coming into

<sup>1</sup> W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, 18.

the darkness; "the world" is the sphere of darkness and shame and sin. It is, in a word, the great ethical contrast that is intended to be brought prominently before us, and in this lies the whole point of the incarnation as conceived by St. John, and as embodied in this passage. Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, came into "the world," into the realm of evil and the kingdom of sin. In the present passage this idea is enhanced by the sharp collocation with it of the term "sinners." For, in the original, the word "sinners" stands next to the word "world," with the effect of throwing the strongest possible emphasis on the ethical connotation. This is the faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that the Apostle commends to us—that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." For what else, indeed, could He have come into "the world," the sphere of evil, except to save sinners?

¶ What could such an one as Christ have to do in coming to such a place as the world? The incongruity of the thing requires accounting for. It is much as if we saw a fellow-Christian in some compromising position. We might meet with him here, there and elsewhere, and no remark be aroused. But by some chance swing of the shutter as we pass by we see him standing in the midst of a drinking-saloon; we see him emerge from the door of a well-known gambling hell, or of some dreadful abode of shame. At once the need of an explanation rises within our puzzled minds, and the whole stress of the situation turns on the explanation. What was his purpose there? we anxiously inquire. So it is with Christ Jesus coming into the world; and so we feel in proportion as we realize the ethical contrariety suggested by the term. Thus it comes about that the primary emphasis of the passage is felt to rest on the account it gives of the situation it brings before us—on its explanation of how it happens that Christ Jesus could and did come into the world.<sup>1</sup>

2. What, then, was the purpose of Christ's coming, and how did He fulfil it?

(1) Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We despair of finding an English phraseology which will reproduce with exactitude the nice distribution of the stress. Suffice it to say that the strong emphasis falls on the fact that it was specifically to save sinners that Christ Jesus came, and that the way for this

<sup>1</sup> B. B. Warfield, *The Power of God unto Salvation*, 35.

strength of emphasis is prepared by the use of phraseology which implies that there was no other conceivable end that He could have had in view in coming into such a place as the world except to deal with sinners, of whom the world consists. He might indeed have come to judge the world; and in contrast with that the emphasis falls on the word "to save." But He could not conceivably, being what He was, the Holy One and the Just, have come to such a place as the world is—the seat of shame and evil—save to deal with sinners. The essence of the whole declaration, therefore, is found in the joyful cry that it was specifically to save sinners that Christ Jesus came into this world of evil.

If we do not read the mind and purpose of Christ with this key in our hand, we shall read it wrongly, superficially, and upside down; we shall never get into its deeper places, but be walking only in the outside chambers. He came to reveal sin, to condemn it, to emphasize God's eternal hatred of it, to make it hideous and loathsome in His all-revealing light; He came to bring deliverance from it, and forgiveness by offering a propitiation, and Himself bearing the curse of it. He came to fight against sin and subdue it, and ransom those who had been held fast in its deadly bondage. For this end was He born, for this He died, and for this consummation He employs His risen and exalted power for ever. It is the Alpha and Omega of the gospel message, and, whatever else Jesus was and did, we must begin and end there if we would understand the rest.

¶ Christ often explained the purpose of His coming in other words. He had come, He said, to show the Father and to do the Father's will. He had come to be the Light of the world and to give men life more abundantly. He had come to be the servant of all, and to set men an example that they should follow His steps. He had come to give deliverance to the captives, and to heal the bruised and broken heart. He had fifty gracious, merciful, saving ends in view, but they were all included in the one supreme purpose to save sinners from their sins, to scatter the darkness and heal the blindness which sin had made, to remove the alienation from God which sin had produced, to heal the hatreds, enmities, and moral diseases which were the offspring of sin, to redeem men from the sorrows, heart-burnings, and fears which sin brought, and to shed abroad in all hearts the love which sin kills. Man has only one enemy in Christ's thought, though

he often thinks he has a legion. Sin is the enemy, and Christ's long warfare in living and dying was against that. "He came into the world to save sinners."<sup>1</sup>

¶ It is only by saving us from sin that Christ saves us from ignorance and from misery. There is a high and true sense, valid here too, in the saying that faith precedes reason: that it is only he that is in Christ Jesus who can know God and acquire any effective insight into spiritual truth. And equally in that other maxim that the regeneration of the individual is the condition of the regeneration of society: that it is only he that is in Christ Jesus who can have added to him even these lesser benefits. Apart from the central salvation from sin, knowledge can but puff up, and society at best is a whited sepulchre, full of dead men's bones. And it is only by His prime work of saving from sin—that sin which is the root of all ignorance and of all our bitterness alike—that He makes the tree good that its fruits may be good also.<sup>2</sup>

From the palace of His glory,  
From the radiance and the rest,  
Came the Son of God to seek me,  
Bear me home upon His breast.

There from that eternal brightness  
Did His thoughts flow forth to me—  
He in His great love would have me  
Ever there with Him to be.

Far away, undone, forsaken,  
Not for Him my heart was sore;  
But for need and bitter hunger—  
Christ desired I nevermore.

Could it be that in the glory,  
Ere of Him I had a thought,  
He was yearning o'er the lost one,  
Whom His precious Blood had bought?

That it was *His* need that brought Him  
Down to the accursed tree,  
Deeper than His deep compassion,  
Wondrous thought! His need of me.

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Greenhough, *The Mind of Christ in St. Paul*, 30.

<sup>2</sup> B. B. Warfield, *The Power of God unto Salvation*, 46.

Trembling, I had hoped for mercy,  
 Some low place within His door—  
 But the crown, the throne, the mansion,  
 He made ready long before.

And in dim and distant ages,  
 In those courts so bright and fair,  
 Ere I was, was He rejoicing,  
 All He won with me to share.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Jesus came to save sinners! But from what? Was it from the consequences of our sins? Or was it from sin itself? Here we encounter one of the most prevalent misconceptions of the atonement. The doctrine is sometimes presented as if our Lord was punished in order that we might be let off, and as if the sufferings of the Just for the unjust were undergone so that the guilty might escape the reward of their misdeeds. According to this theory, salvation is regarded as an escape from penalty, a deliverance from the result of wrong-doing, a rescue from loss and ruin. No wonder that men have revolted from such a doctrine, stated, as it often has been, in a form that contradicts the moral instincts of our nature. "We must pay our debts," says Mr. Bernard Shaw; and the conscience of the modern world approves his dictum, and cannot tolerate the notion of a decree which, professing to be Divine, cancels moral obligations, and sets the wrong-doer free from the outcome of his sin. Moreover, while the nobler souls are in protest against such a representation, the meaner souls have at times been ready to take shelter under it, and to say to themselves that, since through the gospel they can escape the consequences of their sins, they need not be specially careful to avoid transgression. "Let us continue to sin, that grace may abound!" So spake the deceitful heart of men in the age of the Apostles, and the evil whisper is re-echoed to-day by the Enemy of our souls.

The protest of the world's conscience is entirely justifiable. Yet it is just at this point that we must be particularly careful, and try to disentangle the truth from the falsehood in the popular misinterpretation. The truth is this: Sin, in one of its aspects, is its own punishment. It separates us from God, producing a sense

<sup>1</sup> F. Bevan, *Hymns of Ter Steegen*, 133.

of estrangement and alienation, and making us imagine that we are outcast from His Presence. It obscures the fact of our fellowship with Him, and destroys the freedom of our mutual intercourse. This is part of the essential curse of sin, the inevitable outcome which God has attached to all wrong-doing. And when, by faith in Jesus, we receive pardon for our sins, we are at the same time released from part also of their penalty. When we come to ourselves, when we realize how we have offended, when we resolve to return to the Father with a confession on our lips, He is ever ready to welcome us back, and to renew in us the sense of our filial relationship to Him which has been established in Christ Jesus. And day by day, through fresh acts of penitence for our shortcomings, we are continually being saved from that result of our sin which consists in a separation of ourselves from the love of our Heavenly Father.

¶ Salvation is not forgiveness of sin: it is not the remission of a penalty: it is not a safety. No, it is the blessed and holy purpose of God's love accomplished in the poor fallen creature's restoration to the Divine image. And to this end is the news of God's love in this great work declared to men, that they hearing it may have confidence in Him who hath thus loved them, and so open their hearts to let in His Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Harriet Martineau speaking of her early religious difficulties says: "To the best of my recollection, I always feared sin and remorse extremely, and punishment not at all; but, on the contrary, desired punishment or any thing else that would give me the one good that I pined for in vain,—ease of conscience. The doctrine of forgiveness on repentance never availed me much, because forgiveness for the past was nothing without safety in the future; and my sins were not curable, I felt, by any single remission of their consequences,—if such remission were possible. If I prayed and wept, and might hope that I was pardoned at night, it was small comfort, because I knew I should be in a state of remorse again before the next noon. I do not remember the time when the forgiveness clause in the Lord's Prayer was not a perplexity and a stumbling-block to me. I did not care about being let off from penalty. I wanted to be at ease in conscience; and that could only be by growing good, whereas I hated and despised myself every day."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Erskine of Linlathen.

<sup>2</sup> *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*, i. 40.

## III.

## ST. PAUL'S AMEN.

“Of whom I am chief.”

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” says the Apostle, and then he adds the words—which sound strange coming from the lips of such a man—“of whom I am chief.” It was his way of confirming the “faithful saying,” his “Amen” to all it meant.

## 1. Why did St. Paul estimate himself thus?

(1) Was it false humility? The Emperor Augustus, alarmed at his own prosperity, and fearing that happiness so unmixed as his might create jealousy, attired himself once a year as a beggar, and sat asking alms in a crowded part of the city. It is with similar feelings of voluntary humility, and as if apologizing for their exceptional comfort, that some persons profess themselves “miserable sinners,” although surrounded with everything that can make life easy and pleasant to them. There is in the human heart an obstinate superstition that God grudges us happiness, and that if we are happy we should at least wear sackcloth and ashes before Him. And, possibly, it may be fancied that St. Paul's words ought not to be pushed as if he really meant he was the worst of men, and that all he intended was a decent humility. But if we can suppose that St. Paul thought there was some virtue in calling himself the chief of sinners, while he was in fact convinced he was much better than others, we have yet to learn both the nature of humility and the character of St. Paul. Humility must be founded on truth; an affectation of humility is silly and offensive. To call ourselves the chief of sinners with a feeling of self-complacency in our humility is a mark of a nature neither sincere nor simple. And for a man of so clear a spiritual understanding as St. Paul to make this confession untrue would have gone far to make it true.

¶ A man knelt at the altar and prayed.

“O God,” he said, “I am all evil, without and within. My soul is black with the colour of my sin, and my shoulders are

bowed down with the weight of it. God of all mercies, be merciful to me, the chief of sinners."

As he went out he met a friend.

"Where have you been?" asked the friend.

"I have been at the altar," said the man, "confessing my sins."

"Speaking of sins," said the friend, "there is a fault that I have often noticed in you."

And he told him of his fault.

"Liar!" said the man, and smote him on the mouth.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Was it, then, ignorance of life, or of human nature, that led St. Paul so to speak of himself? That was hardly possible. He lived when the world was at its worst. He had travelled and seen much. He had mixed with all sorts and conditions of men. He had known the chief priests and rabbis of Jerusalem, and the philosophers of heathendom; he was acquainted with the slums of cities, and with the manners of coarse and brutal people; he had lived in Rome when Nero was Emperor. Therefore we must conclude that he knew what he was saying when he described himself as "the chief of sinners."

¶ A Greek fortune-teller was once reading Socrates's hands and face to discern his true character and to advertise the people of Athens of his real deserts. And as he went on he startled the whole assembly by pronouncing Socrates to be the most incontinent and libidinous man in all the city; the greatest extortioner and thief; and even worse things than all that. And when the enraged crowd were about to fall upon the soothsayer and tear him to pieces for saying such things about their greatest saint, Socrates himself came forward and restrained their anger and confessed openly and said, "Ye men of Athens, let this truth-speaking man alone, and do him no harm. He has said nothing amiss about me. For there is no man among you all who is by nature more disposed to all these evil things than I am." And with that he quieted and taught and solemnized the whole city.<sup>2</sup>

(3) It is a commonplace of religion that in proportion as a man is himself good, he is quick and severe in dealing with his own unrighteousness, and charitable towards other men; admitting all conceivable apology for them, "hoping all things, believing all things," in their exculpation, but condemning himself

<sup>1</sup> Laura Richards, *The Golden Windows*.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Whyte, *The Apostle Paul*.

without a hearing. And this fact, in the first place, must be taken into account in explaining St. Paul's words. His own sins were his immediate concern, on them the weight of God's law had first manifested itself in his conscience; and in connexion with them, and not with the sins of other men, had God's holiness first revealed to him its reality, its penetrative truth, its power, its relation to human life. And it is so universally. For he who sees God, sees sin also. And though we know it cannot be true that each Christian is the chief of sinners, yet each Christian is again and again convinced—and not in moody hours, in which everything is seen distorted, but in his hours of clearest vision and most inspiring purpose—that no one can possibly be quite so bad as himself.

¶ In the Christian life the sign of growing perfection is the growing consciousness of imperfection. A spot upon a clean palm is more conspicuous than a diffuse griminess over all the hand. One stain upon a white robe spoils it which would not be noticed upon one less lustrously clean. And so the more we grow towards God in Christ, and the more we appropriate and make our own His righteousness, the more we shall be conscious of our deficiencies, and the less we shall be prepared to assert virtues for ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

¶ We cannot attain this virtue of humility except by true knowledge of ourselves, knowing our misery and frailty and sins; wherefore we ought always to abide low and humble. But to abide wholly in such knowledge of one's self would not be good, because the soul would fall into weariness and confusion; and from confusion it would fall into despair; so the devil would like nothing better than to make us fall into confusion, to drive us afterward to despair. We ought then to abide in the knowledge of the goodness of God in Himself, perceiving that He has created us in His image and likeness, and re-created us in grace by the blood of His only-begotten Son, the sweet incarnate Lord; and reflecting how continually the goodness of God works in us. But see, that to abide entirely in this knowledge of God would not be good, because the soul would fall into presumption and pride. So it befits us to have one mixed with the other—that is, to abide in the holy knowledge of the goodness of God, and also in the knowledge of ourselves: and so shall we be humble, patient, and gentle.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

<sup>2</sup> St. Catherine of Siena.

¶ Mr. North on several occasions was at pains to explain the position he then occupied. "Don't think," he said, "that I am intruding into the office of the holy ministry. I am not an authorized preacher, but I'll tell you what I am; I am a man who has been at the brink of the bottomless pit and has looked in, and as I see many of you going down to that pit, I am here to 'hollo' you back, and warn you of your danger. I am here, also, as the chief of sinners, saved by grace, to tell you that the grace which has saved me can surely save you."<sup>1</sup>

(4) St. Paul is not therefore boasting of his sin. He is, on the contrary, glorying in his salvation. If Christ came just to save sinners, he says, in effect, Why that means me; for that is what I am. There is a sense, then, no doubt, in which he can be said to be glad that he can claim to be a sinner. Not because he delights in wickedness, but because that claim places him within the reach of the mission of Him who Himself declared that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

¶ "Methought," said "Rabbi" Duncan on one occasion, "I heard the song of one to whom much had been forgiven, and who therefore loved much. But it was the song of the chief of sinners, of one to whom most had been forgiven, and who therefore loved most. I would know, O God," he went on, "what soul that is. O God!"—he pleaded, "let that soul be mine."<sup>2</sup>

2. The Apostle does not say "I was," but "I am chief." What! A man who could say, in another connexion, "if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away"—the man who could say, in another connexion, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God"—does he also say, "I am chief"? Is he speaking about his present? Are old sins bound round a man's neck for evermore? If they are, what is the meaning of the gospel that Jesus Christ redeems us from our sins? Well, he means this: No lapse of time, nor any gift of Divine pardon, nor any subsequent advancement in holiness and righteousness, can alter the fact that I, the very same I that am now rejoicing

<sup>1</sup> K. Moody Stuart, *Brownlow North*, 62.

<sup>2</sup> A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 145.

in God's salvation, am the man that did all these things; and, in a very profound sense, they remain mine through all eternity. I may be a forgiven sinner, and a cleansed sinner, and a sanctified sinner, but I am a sinner—not I was. The imperishable connexion between a man and his past, which may be so tragical, and, thank God, may be so blessed, even in the case of remembered and confessed sin, is solemnly hinted at in the words before us. We carry with us ever the fact of past transgression and no forgiveness, nor any future “perfecting of holiness in the fear” and by the grace “of the Lord” can alter that fact. Therefore, let us beware lest we bring upon our souls any more of the stains which, though they be in a blessed and sufficient sense blotted out, yet leave for ever the marks where they have fallen.

¶ “That good man, Stead,” that Waugh put upon his kind little extravagant eulogy of me, refers properly, not to me, but to father. He was a good man, I am not, never was, and, I fear, never will be. I often feel as if I were far worse than any of the other convicts. They had not such a home as ours, such a father and such a mother.<sup>1</sup>

Also I ask, but ever from the praying  
 Shrinks my soul backward, eager and afraid,  
 Point me the sum and shame of my betraying,  
 Show me, O Love, Thy wounds which I have made!

Yes, Thou forgivest, but with all forgiving  
 Canst not renew mine innocence again:  
 Make Thou, O Christ, a dying of my living,  
 Purge from the sin but never from the pain!

So shall all speech of now and of to-morrow,  
 All He hath shown me or shall show me yet,  
 Spring from an infinite and tender sorrow,  
 Burst from a burning passion of regret:

Standing afar I summon you anigh Him,  
 Yes, to the multitudes I call and say,  
 “This is my King! I preach and I deny Him,  
 Christ! whom I crucify anew to-day.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. T. Stead, in *My Father*, 141.

<sup>2</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul*.



THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

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## THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness ; He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory.—1 Tim. iii. 16.

THE sudden ascension of thought expressed in the text takes us by surprise. A moment before we were occupied with the bishop and the deacon, and were entering with minute attention into their qualifications, the possible faults of their characters, and the proper state of their families ; and now we are in the midst of the mystery of godliness, and by a close and sudden condensation of its history, have seen at a glance the whole course of its revelation. Yet the transition of thought is natural in itself, and especially natural with him who makes it. One great part of the Divine instruction afforded us through the mind of St. Paul lies in the close connexion which he felt between the great facts of revelation and all common thoughts and duties, whereby practical life is elevated and irradiated by the constant presence of the glorious objects of faith. Here indeed the association of thought is obvious to all. I have (he seems to say) been speaking to you of your conduct in all these points of detail ; they are no trifles, they are part of your behaviour in the “house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Not only the interests of persons, but also the interests of truth are involved in your guidance of these matters ; for the Church exists to support that truth in the world, and to hold it up before the eyes of men. It is an institution for that end, and it is needed for that end. The truth is lodged in the world, but it finds there no sure resting-place ; it will sink and settle in the yielding soil till it has partly or wholly disappeared from view, unless some substructures are laid, fitted for its permanent support ; a pillar must bear it on high, a pavement must sustain its weight. These offices the Church is ordained to fulfil. In reference to

God it is His house, in reference to the truth it is its pillar and its ground. Hence arises a grave responsibility for the rulers and guides of the Church, for it lies with them to see to the maintenance of this substructure in its intended state, and to keep it sound and serviceable for its appointed purpose.

1. Why does St. Paul speak of "the *mystery* of godliness"? In order to express both the Divine and the human aspect of the Christian faith. On the Divine side the Gospel is a mystery, a disclosed secret. It is a body of truth originally hidden from man's knowledge, to which man by his own unaided reason and abilities would never be able to find the way. In one word it is a revelation: a communication by God to men of truth which they could not have discovered for themselves. "Mystery" is one of those words which Christianity has borrowed from paganism, but has consecrated to new uses by gloriously transfiguring its meaning. The heathen mystery was something always kept hidden from the bulk of mankind; a secret to which only a privileged few were admitted. It encouraged, in the very centre of religion itself, selfishness and exclusiveness. The Christian mystery, on the other hand, once hidden, is now made known, not to a select few, but to all. The term therefore involves a splendid paradox: it is a secret revealed to every one. In St. Paul's own words to the Romans, "the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the Eternal God, is made known unto all the nations." He rarely uses the word "mystery" without combining with it some other word signifying to reveal, manifest, or make known.

¶ There is a modern and popular use of the word *mystery*, in which it means something inscrutably dark and perplexing—something hopelessly baffling to the powers of the human mind—an absolute riddle or enigma; and this modern and popular sense of the word is often enough carried back into the Scriptures and applied to the word as found there, in such a way as to hide the meaning of it. It is a very favourite word with some theologians, who are fond of shortening up an argument, when it begins to be troublesome, by saying of one subject or another, "Oh, that is a mystery!"—as if this word were the end of all questioning.

Now it is well to understand that the word in the New Testament has no such sense. It means a thing once hidden, but now brought to light. It means a *new discovery*. It does not at all imply that the matter, when once revealed, is difficult of understanding. It may be a very simple and elementary matter, such as simple minds can easily grasp when it is brought to them. Our Lord did not call around Him, for His disciples, a group of twelve acute philosophers; but to the twelve simple and teachable fishermen whom He did call He said, "To you it is given to *know* the mysteries of the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup>

2. But the Christian faith is not only a mystery; it is a "mystery of *godliness*." It not only tells of the bounty of Almighty God in revealing His eternal counsels to man; it also tells of man's obligations in consequence of being initiated. It is a mystery, not "of lawlessness" but "of godliness." Those who accept it "profess godliness," profess reverence to the God who has made it known to them. It teaches plainly on what principle we are to regulate "how men ought to behave themselves in the household of God." The gospel is a mystery of piety, a mystery of reverence and of religious life. Holy itself, and proceeding from the Holy One, it bids its recipients be holy, even as He is holy who gives it.

¶ Those for whom St. Paul wrote knew well what "mysteries of ungodliness" were; for there were several such mysteries, which formed a part of the old Pagan religions. Mysteries were certain sacred rites, in which a traditional secret was divulged to the initiated, and made the nucleus and centre of a form of worship. Some of the rites connected with this worship were horribly impure and cruel; the heathen mysteries were "mysteries of ungodliness." But God's revelation in Christ, the magnificent secret into which the Church indoctrinates mankind, the secret of redeeming love and grace, the secret of the atonement and its allied truths, which also is the centre and nucleus of the Church's whole system of worship, is a "mystery of godliness"; that is, a secret which, really imbibed by the inner man, produces the fruit of godliness.<sup>2</sup>

3. The Apostle proceeds to give "the mystery" in the enforced terms in which the Church had received it. "Who was

<sup>1</sup> L. W. Bacon, *The Simplicity that is in Christ*, 81.

<sup>2</sup> E. M. Goulburn, *The Holy Catholic Church*, 253.

manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory."

¶ After the text about the three Heavenly Witnesses in the First Epistle of St. John, no disputed reading in the New Testament has given rise to more controversy than the passage before us. It is certain that St. Paul did not write, "God was manifest in the flesh," but "who was manifested in the flesh." The reading "God was manifested in the flesh" appears in no Christian writer until late in the fourth century, and in no translation of the Scriptures earlier than the seventh or eighth century. And it is not found in any of the five great primary MSS., except as a correction made by a later scribe, who knew of the reading "God was manifested," and either preferred it to the other, or at least wished to preserve it as an alternative reading, or as an interpretation. In an old Greek MS., it would require only two small strokes to turn "who" into "God"; and this alteration would be a tempting one, seeing that the masculine "who" after the neuter "mystery" looks harsh and unnatural. But here we come upon a highly interesting consideration. The words that follow look like a quotation from some primitive Christian hymn or confession. The rhythmical movement and the parallelism of the six balanced clauses, of which each triplet forms a climax, points to some such fact as this. It is possible that we have here a fragment of one of the very hymns which, as Pliny the Younger tells the Emperor Trajan, the Christians were accustomed to sing antiphonally at daybreak to Christ as a God. Such a passage as this might well be sung from side to side, line by line, or triplet by triplet, as choirs still chant the Psalms in our churches. "Who was manifested in the flesh; justified in the spirit; seen of angels; preached among the nations; believed on in the world; received up in glory." Let us assume that this very reasonable and attractive conjecture is correct, and that St. Paul is here quoting from some well-known form of words. Then the "who" with which the quotation begins will refer to something in the preceding lines which are not quoted. How natural, then, that St. Paul should leave the "who" unchanged, although it does not fit on grammatically to his own sentence. But in any case there is no doubt as to the antecedent of the "who." "The mystery of godliness" has for its centre and basis the life of a Divine Person; and the great crisis in the long process by which the mystery was revealed was reached when this Divine Person "was manifested in the flesh."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Plummer, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 133.

¶ For many years the great Alexandrian MS. was supposed to read Theos, Θεός, and scholars who examined it were confident they saw the line across the middle of the O. It now turns out—and the discovery is a curious one—that the supposed line is really the shadow of another letter *on the opposite page* showing through it, and tracing out the apparent stroke exactly across the middle of the O.<sup>1</sup>

4. It is remarkable how many arrangements of these six clauses are possible, all making excellent sense. We may make them into two triplets of independent lines; or we may couple the two first lines of each triplet together and then make the third lines correspond to one another. In either case each group begins with earth and ends with heaven. Or again, we may make the six lines into three couplets. In the first couplet flesh and spirit are contrasted and combined; in the second, angels and men; in the third, earth and heaven.

## I.

“He who was manifested in the flesh.”

This clause of the text is one of many witnesses to the double nature of our blessed Lord—His Divine nature as existing before all worlds in union with the Father, and His human nature as actually “manifested in the flesh.”

1. If the Person spoken of in the text had had no existence before His birth, it would not have been natural to speak of Him at His birth as being “manifested in the flesh.” When an infant is born in any of our families, we do not say that it is “manifested in the flesh.” Why not? Because, although that infant now has an immortal soul distinct from its body, although linked with it, and in a certain true sense manifested through it, that soul had no existence independent of and before the body of the infant. We do not speak of a thing being “manifested” at the moment of its beginning to exist. The idea of manifestation is not opposed to non-existence, but to hidden existence; indeed, manifestation takes for granted a previous unmanifested existence.

<sup>1</sup> G. S. Barrett, *The Earliest Christian Hymn*, 27.

And therefore the phrase, "manifested in the flesh," would be inappropriate and absurd as applied to an ordinary infant at its birth. We might just as well speak of a house being "manifested" in stone or brick when it is built, or of a railway embankment being "manifested" when it is thrown up. Manifestation implies the previous existence of the thing or person manifested; it marks a point in the history of the thing or person, at which it passes out of hidden, into public and visible, life. If, then, the text speaks of a manifestation in the flesh, whether it describes the person so manifested as "God" or not, it must at least mean that He existed before this manifestation took place, or, in other words, before His birth. And apart from all that follows in the later clauses of the quotation, and which at every step rivets and intensifies the argument, this description can be true only of Him who alone in Scripture is said to have existed before His birth into this world. Scripture knows nothing of any Indian doctrine of the transmigration of souls. But He who was before, and therefore greater than, St. John the Baptist; He whose glory Isaiah saw, not merely by anticipation, but in actual vision; He who already exists before Abraham was; He who was in the beginning, and with God, and by whom all things were made—He did at length, by "being made of a woman, made under the law," make Himself manifest to the senses of man. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

2. What were the limits, what the nature, of this manifestation? It is true, for instance, to say that God is manifested in nature; His attributes shine through His works. Again and more strikingly, He is manifested in the human conscience. That sense of right and wrong which every man finds within his soul, whether it be well-informed and educated or not, speaks of an Author. Once more, God is manifested in the course of events, in history. The action of His attributes may be traced, through slow transitions and developments, from one polity to another, one ascendancy to another, one civilization to another.

But the manifestation spoken of in the text is clearly distinct from God's self-manifestation in nature, in conscience, and in

history. It is "in the flesh." That expression ties it down to human nature as the medium of the manifestation, and identifies it not merely with the spiritual but with the bodily part of man's composite being. It is a question here, not of a voice in conscience, still less of inferences, however legitimate or irresistible, drawn from nature and history, but of a revelation clothed in flesh and blood, and addressed to sense. The text does not itself say that this manifestation was exhibited in a single life—the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet the rest of the passage makes it certain that this was the writer's meaning. Unless the whole race of man was "justified in the spirit, believed on in the world, and received up in glory," it is impossible to avoid restricting this manifestation in the flesh to the human nature, the body and soul of Jesus of Nazareth. The Apostle means that God was manifested in this one member of the human family (we may truly so speak of Him) as in no other. Others had illustrated and reflected some one or more rays of the Perfection of God; His lovingkindness, or His justice, or His veracity. In Jesus God's moral life was manifested, not partially or in piecemeal, but in its integrity and completeness. The whole range of the Divine attributes was there; and when our Lord acted and spoke, God, in His perfect nature, became manifest to those who witnessed Him. Instead of saying that in Christ the intelligence or thought of God was pre-eminently embodied, it being implied that other elements of the Divine life were not equally so, St. Paul says that in Christ dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Instead of saying, "He that hath seen Me must have learnt something of what God's mercy is, or something about His truth," Christ our Lord says absolutely, and without any limitations or reserve, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

¶ Soon after he had announced to his family his decision to take orders, he wrote to a cousin:—

"What are the little things we fight for,' says Archbishop Leighton, 'compared with the great things of God?' There is so much to do in the Church about which no one could doubt, that it little matters differing on points which concern no man's relation to his Maker. There is no point I feel stronger on than the divinity of Christ, being convinced that with it Christianity must live or perish. If the Saviour of men were not identical

with their Creator, I see no help in the Cross for the suffering millions of the world. The doctrine of doctrines that men need to learn and take to heart is this—that the only thing that alienates them from God is sin—that each man among us has a right, by his brotherhood with Christ, to claim his position as a child of God—and that there is nothing but his own disobedience that keeps him from his true position.”<sup>1</sup>

## II.

### “Justified in the spirit.”

“Spirit” in the phrase “justified in the spirit,” does not mean the Holy Spirit, as the Authorized Version would lead us to suppose. “In spirit” in this clause is in obvious contrast to “in flesh” in the previous clause. And if “flesh” means the material part of Christ’s nature, “spirit” means the immaterial part of His nature, and the higher portion of it. His flesh was the sphere of His manifestation: His spirit was the sphere of His justification. Thus much seems to be clear. But what are we to understand by His justification? And how did it take place in His spirit? These are questions to which a great variety of answers have been given; and it would be rash to assert of any one of them that it is so satisfactory as to be conclusive. Christ’s human nature consisted, as ours does, of three elements—body, soul, and spirit. The body is the flesh spoken of in the first clause. The soul as distinct from the spirit is the seat of the natural affections and desires. The spirit is the seat of the religious emotions; it is the highest, innermost part of man’s nature; the sanctuary of the temple. It was in His spirit that Christ was affected when the presence of moral evil distressed Him. This spiritual part of His nature, which was the sphere of His most intense suffering, was also the sphere of His most intense joy and satisfaction. As moral evil distressed His spirit, so moral innocence delighted it. In a way that none of us can measure, Jesus Christ knew the joy of a good conscience. The challenge which He made to the Jews, “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” was one which He could make to His own conscience.

<sup>1</sup> Edith Sichel, *The Life and Letters of Alfred Ainger*, 78.

It had nothing against Him and could never accuse Him. He was *justified* when it spoke, and clear when it judged. Perfect Man though He was, and manifested in weak and suffering flesh, He was nevertheless "justified in the spirit."

That is, confessedly, a unique fact, for flesh and spirit in man have not kept pace. The more nobly a man conceives of the uses of life the farther is he from self-approval. The savage who has brought down a deer, and lies at night beside his fire with appetite extinguished, has little more to ask for, because his inner life has scarcely begun. There are men amongst ourselves whose mind is like a shut-up house; they never go into themselves, but live out of doors, and are content if their companions are pleased. But when a man is alive, and the world is great about him, and the sense of God is deep, he gets such views of what life was meant to be that all he attains looks paltry. He sees how every common task might grow to be a true Divine service, how speech might be a means of grace and cheer; but when thought is turned to fact the glamour has all gone. Thus it is that, judging by any worthy standard, no man was ever able to justify himself in spirit; for that would mean that he had answered in every particular to God's thought of him; that, without diminution, he had conveyed the very influence he was meant to convey; that no sloth of his nature, no negligence, no shadow of inconsistency or pretence had hindered the just effect of his life. So we are bound to pause with reverent amazement before the great fact which this clause expresses. In the depth of Christ's spirit, where He realized the reason of His being in the world and all that hung upon Him, He was *justified*. He had no superficial standards, yet with the fullest apprehension of all He had to do, He declared that He had done it; in clear sight of all the Christ must be, He professed that He was the Christ of God. The flesh which, in other men, has lagged behind the swift sights and desires of the spirit was in Him a fitting ally.

¶ No one has yet discovered the word Jesus ought not to have said, none suggested the better word He might have said. No action of His has shocked our moral sense; none has fallen short of the ideal. He is full of surprises, but they are all the surprises of perfection. You are never amazed, one day by His greatness, the next by His littleness. You are ever amazed that

He is incomparably better than you could have expected. He is tender without being weak, strong without being coarse, lowly without being servile. He has conviction without intolerance, enthusiasm without fanaticism, holiness without Pharisaism, passion without prejudice. This man alone never made a false step, never struck a jarring note. His life alone moved on those high levels where local limitations are transcended and the absolute Law of Moral Beauty prevails. It was life at its highest.<sup>1</sup>

¶ It is a singular picture the evangelic portraiture of Jesus, and the first peculiarity which arrests our attention is this—that it portrays *a sinless man*. The evangelic Jesus is completely human, sharing all our common infirmities and restrictions. He suffers weariness, hunger and thirst, and pain. His knowledge is limited, and He confesses its limitations. Yet He is never worsted in the moral conflict. He passes through the daily ordeal stainless and blameless. The marvel of this representation is twofold. On the one hand, Jesus claimed to be sinless. Searched by a multitude of curious and critical eyes, He issues His confident challenge: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" He often felt the pang of hunger, but never the sting of remorse; He was often weary, but He was never burdened by guilt; He abounded in prayer, but in His prayers there was no contrition, no confession, no cry for pardon. Not only before the world but before God He maintained His rectitude unfalteringly to the last. This is a unique representation. A lively and keen sense of sin is a constant characteristic of the saints. . . . No word of self-condemnation ever passed His lips, no lamentation over indwelling corruption, no sigh for a closer walk with God. It was not that He closed His eyes to the presence of sin or made light of its guilt. Renan, being asked what he made of sin, answered airily: "I suppress it!" but that was not the manner of Jesus. No soul has ever been so sensitive as His to the taint of impurity; no heart has ever been so oppressed by the burden of the world's guilt. His presence was a rebuke and an inspiration; and to this hour the very thought of Him has the value of an external conscience. His spotless life is a revelation at once of the beauty of holiness and of the hideousness of sin. And not only does the evangelic Jesus claim to be sinless, but His claim was universally allowed. His enemies in the days of His flesh would fain have found some fault in Him, and they searched Him as with a lighted candle; yet they discovered only one offence which they might lay to His charge; and they did not perceive that it was in truth a striking testimony to His perfect holiness. They saw Him

<sup>1</sup> John Watson, *The Mind of the Master*.

mingling freely with social outcasts, conversing with them and going to their houses and their tables; and they exclaimed: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them!" It would have been no surprise to those Scribes and Pharisees had He associated with sinners, being Himself a sinner. Their astonishment was that He should do this, being Himself apparently so pure; and their outcry was a covert suggestion that, for all His seeming holiness, He must be a sinner at heart. The fault, however, lay not with Him but with themselves. They did not understand that true holiness is nothing else than a great compassion. Such was the holiness of Jesus, and it was a new thing on the earth, an ideal which the human heart had never conceived. It is very significant that our Lord's claim to sinlessness should have been thus allowed and unwittingly attested by those who were bent upon disproving it. Bronson Alcott once said to Carlyle that he could honestly use the words of Jesus, "I and the Father are one." "Yes," was the crushing rejoinder, "but Jesus got the world to believe Him."<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### "Seen of angels."

We now come to the third clause, "seen of angels," and it is only natural to suppose that it, too, must have some connexion with and direct relation to what has gone before. The central theme of the verse is the incarnation, and we must interpret these words in the light of the incarnation. "Seen of angels" must have been one of the great results and purposes of the manifestation of the Son of God "in the flesh." Proceeding a step further, let us notice the word translated "seen" in this clause. It is a remarkable word, for it is the same word as we find often used in the Gospels of the appearances of our Lord after His resurrection from the dead, as, for instance, in Luke xxiv. 34, where we read: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath *appeared* to Simon." The word occurs some twenty-three times in the New Testament and, as Bishop Ellicott says, it is used "nearly always with reference to the self-exhibition of the subject," that is, it implies more than the mere act of seeing, which may be wholly independent of the person or the object seen, for it involves a

<sup>1</sup> David Smith, *The Historic Jesus*, 65.

voluntary manifestation of the person to whom it refers. "Shewed Himself to angels" would not be a correct translation, but would be a true paraphrase of the meaning of the words.

Fresh light now begins to shine on these familiar words. They tell us not merely that during the earthly life of Jesus He was "seen of angels," but that the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh was a revelation to angels as well as to men. The "mystery of godliness," great as it is, becomes even greater and more wonderful if we regard the incarnation as not only the unveiling of the Son of God to man, but also as the revealing of Him to the angelic world. It may, perhaps, be that when that Divine Babe lay in Mary's lap at Bethlehem, when that perfect child lived as a boy at Nazareth, when He reached His holy and spotless manhood, and spent His days in going about "doing good," it may be that in all the scenes and events of that wondrous life, in the unutterable loveliness of His character, in the words such as "never man spake," in those miracles of love and pity and power that He wrought, in His bitter anguish and sorrow in Gethsemane, in the awful shame and ignominy of His cross, in His glorious resurrection from the dead, angels as well as men for the first time beheld the face of their Creator and Lord, and that a thrill of wonder and of adoration ran through all the courts of heaven as the Mystery of all mysteries was "manifested in the flesh," and was "seen of angels."

Had the angels ever seen God before? "To stand within God's searching sight and shrink not, but with calm delight, to live, and look on Him!" Had the angels ever done this? Do we not read of the seraphim, with their six wings, covering their faces therewith, abashed at the presence of Deity? To see God! May not this have been the lawful ambition of the angels? May not this account for the tremendous interest which the incarnation seems to have caused in their ranks, which makes another Apostle say, "Which things the angels desire to look into," and which also leads St. Paul here to record, as one of the great parts of the incarnation mystery, that "he was seen of angels"?

¶ The stainless sons of light, the high intelligences, the swift ministers of the will of God, had some new message borne in upon them by the Incarnation. If we think in the forms of the New Testament, we may boldly say that the angels could not know the

glory of being humbled, or the new power that would be gained by laying power aside. When the Son of God emptied Himself and became a servant, what a mystery there was! and when He returned as a Captain of salvation, bringing with Him the first of a new world of ransomed men, how that mystery was justified!<sup>1</sup>

## IV.

“Preached among the nations.”

1. The revelation of God that was made to angels by seeing Christ is made to the world by the preaching of Christ. What they learnt by the eye “the nations” learn by the ear, by the hearing of faith. Indeed, there was no other way of making Christ known to the nations of the world at the time St. Paul wrote these words than by preaching Him. When this First Epistle to Timothy was written, the New Testament, as we possess it, was not in existence; a few only of the earlier Epistles, and possibly one or two of the Gospels, had been written, and were in circulation within a limited area in the Christian Church, but these were all. The great mass of the Gentile world knew nothing of either Gospels or Epistles, and in the absence of any written record of the revelation God had made of Himself in His Son, there remained only the spoken word as the messenger of the incarnation and the cross. This accounts, in part at all events, for the high place preaching held in the primitive Church and among the Apostles of Jesus Christ. They set supreme value on their work as preachers, that is, on their proclaiming—for this is what the word “preaching” really means—Christ as His heralds, going before Him and announcing everywhere His cross and His coming Kingdom.

2. But stress is laid upon the universal reference of the preaching. Christ was preached, not to one nation, but among the nations (Jews included), without distinction. This was being realized as historical fact. He was being proclaimed without respect to national distinction, without respect to social condition, without respect to culture, with respect simply to the fact that all were sinners and in need of salvation. Following upon His

<sup>1</sup> W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 235.

having taken the common nature, and His having wrought out the common salvation, the message of salvation was being conveyed with the utmost impartiality. This was part of the mystery which was then being disclosed, and which the unprejudiced agreed in calling great. It was impressive to the early Church to witness the proclamation of a world-wide salvation.

Before the coming of the Messiah the Gentiles and Jews were two peoples; a wall of partition kept them apart; and the Jews imagined that the Gentiles were excluded from the covenant mercies of Jehovah, that they were for ever to remain "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." By the gospel, however, this Jewish prejudice was shown to be unfounded, and men of every nation were invited to participate in its inestimable blessings equally with the Jew. At the death of the Redeemer the wall of partition which separated the two nations was broken down, and henceforth the Jew was to have no peculiar advantage over the Gentile, all men were to be addressed simply as sinners, and to all men everywhere the gospel was to carry the glad tidings of pardon through the blood of the cross.

3. These words suggest also the one and only theme of Christian preaching. It is Christ, as we have seen, who alone is the subject of this verse. "He who was manifested in the flesh," who was crucified and "died for our sins," who rose again from the dead and ascended on high, who is exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour" to "give repentance" and "remission of sins," who is the "King of kings, and Lord of lords," "upholding all things by the word of his power," who will come again to judge the quick and the dead—it is this Jesus, Son of God, and Son of man, Saviour, Brother, Master, Lord; it is He, and He alone, who is the "mystery of godliness" that we are to declare unto men. Christ is the gospel, and to preach the gospel we must preach Christ.

¶ Christ, and Christ alone—in all the glory of His Person, in all the fulness of His redeeming work, in all the greatness of His love, is the message of the Christian preacher. If Christ be left out of that message, it is not a sermon, but a speech. It may be an original and eloquent speech, but it has no power to touch the

deepest things in the heart of man. It is like a richly chased and jewelled vase, without one drop of water in it, held to the parched lips of the dying man, powerless to quench his thirst. But if Christ be in the sermon, its central theme, if the Incarnation, and the Atonement, and the Mediation, and the Reign of Jesus light up every word the preacher speaks, then even the humblest servant of Christ, who has but a poor earthen cup to use, will have it filled to the brim with the water of life, and weary and sinful men and women will drink of that water, and never thirst again.<sup>1</sup>

¶ "Nobody," it has been said, "has any right to preach who has not mighty affirmations to make concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ—affirmations in which there is no ambiguity and which no questioning can reach." They are strong and confident words, the words of a man who is given to saying strong and confident things; there is in them, too, something of the ring of a challenge. But the confidence is justified, and the challenge is one which no Christian preacher can refuse. To make mighty affirmations concerning Jesus Christ—this is our business, this is what we are preachers for. We may make affirmations, many and mighty, concerning other matters, and gain for ourselves great glory as lecturers, or politicians, or social reformers; but if we falter here we have lost the right to call ourselves preachers. . . . We desire to win men's faith for Christ. There is one way, and there is only one way, in which we can do it: we must set forth Christ Himself. Theological propositions concerning Him will avail us nothing. Christ must make His own appeal—the appeal of His words and works, of His life and death. If faith is not won by these it will never be coerced by the propositions of the Creeds. The only confession of Christ as Divine that has virtue in it is that which follows His work upon us, the intellectual interpretation of our own personal, spiritual relations to Him. Men must know themselves His debtors for salvation; they must throne Him as Lord, Lord of the will, Lord of the conscience, Lord of the affections; then when the voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him," all that is within them will leap forth to speak its great, glad, consenting "Amen."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. S. Barrett, *The Earliest Christian Hymn*, 145.

<sup>2</sup> G. Jackson, *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*, 187.

## V.

“Believed on in the world.”

What reception ensued on this presentation of Christ? He was “believed on in the world.” The preaching was not vain. He was received in the character and for the purposes which were proclaimed. In the world, from which His presence was withdrawn, men ventured their all on what He had done for their souls, and committed the keeping of their souls to His hands; and they found peace, and power, and life in Him, who, though gone into heaven, yet dwelt in their hearts by faith.

When it is considered that Christianity was a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek; that, instead of pandering to the lusts and passions of men, it waged eternal war against them; and that at its introduction it was opposed to the religious views and customs of the whole civilized and barbarous world, we may well wonder that it should have been received by any considerable number of men among the nations of the earth. And the fact that Christ was “believed on in the world” may well be mentioned by the Apostle in the passage before us; for this also proves His Messiahship. If the gospel had not been from God it must have perished from the earth. It prevailed among men because God was with it; He stamped its divinity by enabling His Apostles to perform wonders, and signs, and mighty deeds among the people. The weapons of their warfare were “not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

¶ Last night read Carlyle’s *Niagara*, and after that heard James Calvert of Fiji tell an unvarnished tale of what simple faith in Christ had *done* among men-eaters and murderers. It is pleasant to be catholic and give honour to whom honour is due. Still it is right to be just to our own judgment. I see nothing in Carlyle that I don’t see much better said in the New Testament, and with the unspeakable advantage of an infallible recipe for doing it. A friend of mine writes, “The advantage of the Gospel is that it enables the humblest man to do what only the hero can do without it.” Carlyle’s Drill—all the world marching and wheeling

and getting ready to fight! Whereas the fisherman Peter lays bonds and yokes on men which drill a man from within, and he fears God and honours the King, and knows his place, and doesn't put sham work into his harness or his buildings. I know such men by scores and hundreds, and feel sure that there are tens of thousands. We don't want eloquent howling to show man "what is good," or to do justice, or love mercy, or walk humbly with God and man. I will back James Calvert of Fiji against a troop of Carlyles for the actual accomplishment of the chief good.<sup>1</sup>

## VI.

## "Received up in glory."

1. These words are a reference, beyond all doubt, to the ascension of our Lord, and as such they fitly close this verse; for the ascension is the crown and completion of the incarnation. The most superficial reader of the Gospels must have felt the wonderful harmony of this ending of our Lord's life on earth with all that had gone before. The one perfect and Divine life, the life of the God-man, begins with the angel's song of "Glory to God in the highest," and ends with the ascension into glory. It is impossible even to imagine such a life as the life of Jesus closing in the shame and darkness of the crucifixion. Death could not be the end of "the mystery of godliness manifested in the flesh." "It was not possible," as St. Peter said on the day of Pentecost, "that he should be holden of it." We cannot even think that the resurrection, glorious as it was, the triumph of the Lord of Life over death, could be the termination of the mission of Jesus Christ on earth. For Him to have conquered death by rising from the tomb, and then again to have succumbed to its power and to "have seen corruption" would have been as great a miracle of darkness as Christ's miracles were miracles of light. Something still remained, after He had risen from the dead, without which the life of Jesus would have lost its perfect and radiant symmetry of loveliness and power. One last step had yet to be taken: for the Divine Son had to regain the crown He had laid aside at the incarnation. "He who was manifested in the flesh," who had descended from the royalty and glory of heaven to

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Smetham*, 295.

the humiliation and suffering of earth, who had "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant," must again ascend to the throne of universal dominion, passing in solemn and glorious state from the tears and shadows and sin of earth to the light and joy and victory of heaven.

¶ In the biographies of great men we are told of one achievement gained after another, of one honour conferred after another. But, however long and glorious the scroll which can be shown, it has to end with their bidding a long farewell to all their greatness. And, though monuments are raised to their memory, it cannot take away the essential ingloriousness of the termination to their career. With Christ it is at the earthly termination that to outward appearance He becomes great. He had indeed, like others and more than others, to undergo the ingloriousness of dying, and of being laid in the tomb. But the ingloriousness was completely reversed by His resurrection. He lingered long enough on earth for history to attest the fact that He was indeed risen. And then He made His triumphal entry into heaven.<sup>1</sup>

2. The ascension was, so to speak, the last sacrament of Christ's life on earth. It closed by completing the manifestation of the Son of God. Hitherto the disciples had walked with Jesus, had talked with Him, had seen Him, had touched Him, and the visible and personal presence of Christ had been ever with them; henceforth the invisible and spiritual and universal presence of the same Lord is to take the place of the visible and local and temporal. They lost the human Jesus only to gain the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence it is that the ascension ends the gospel and begins the Acts of the Apostles, which are rather the Acts of the Holy Ghost in the Church. The last revelation of Christ is the first word in the life of His Church. The same act that closed the gospel of Jesus began the gospel of the Holy Ghost. That promise of power, that command of service, those hands lifted in blessing, that slowly disappearing Form—these were the beginning of the new life of the Church on earth. The life of Christ on earth and the life of the Church are inseparably bound together. The ascension ends the first only to begin the second.

¶ The more we contemplate "the inner life" of the historical Jesus, the more shall we realize the inner life of the living Christ within us. Paul concentrated his attention on the Crucifixion

<sup>1</sup> R. Finlayson.

and Resurrection, and found those events spiritually reproduced in himself in separation from sin and dedication unto God. These events must continue to be the centre of our interest also, but we may extend Paul's method to the whole life of Jesus. This, and this only, is salvation, to be one in spirit with the Saviour, to have that mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus, that grace which exchanged riches for poverty to enrich the poor. Evangelicalism has sometimes been ethically unimpressive and uninfluential, because it substituted belief in a plan of salvation for union with the living Christ as Saviour, and because when it conceived the living Christ it was as a theological abstraction, and not as the concrete personality of the Jesus of history. The full meaning and the whole worth of the gospel of the grace of God can be discovered only in the Gospels, in the "Inner Life" of Jesus, which is not merely a past event but a present experience to all to whom Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God unto salvation.<sup>1</sup>

He is gone—we heard Him say,  
 "Good that I should go away."  
 Gone is that dear Form and Face,  
 But not gone His present grace;  
 Though Himself no more we see,  
 Comfortless we cannot be:  
 No, His Spirit still is ours,  
 Quickening, freshening all our powers.

He is gone—towards their goal,  
 World and Church must onwards roll:  
 Far behind we leave the past;  
 Forwards are our glances cast;  
 Still His words before us range  
 Through the ages, as they change:  
 Wheresoe'er the Truth shall lead,  
 He will give whate'er we need.

He is gone—but we once more  
 Shall behold Him as before:  
 In the Heaven of Heavens the same,  
 As on earth He went and came.  
 In the many mansions there,  
 Place for us will He prepare:  
 In that world, unseen, unknown,  
 He and we may yet be one.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Garvie, *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus*, 466.

<sup>2</sup> Dean Stanley.



THE VALUE OF GODLINESS.

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## THE VALUE OF GODLINESS.

Bodily exercise is profitable for a little ; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.—1 Tim. iv. 8.

THE figure here employed is a favourite one with St. Paul. It is that of the gymnasium, the athletic contest, that physical training which played so large a part in the education of Greece. Sometimes it is the race; sometimes the wrestling or boxing match. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." "Every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." In these and many other passages, St. Paul would have us learn that life must be taken seriously and in earnest. It is a fight for the mastery, a race for a crown. In this passage he teaches by a contrast—the contrast between "bodily exercise" and "exercise unto godliness." The one is profitable "for a little," the other "for all things." The one has a promise for this life, the other both for this life and for that which is to come. We can see at once that over against what is at best but partial, the Apostle places that which is complete and eternal.

Bodily exercise, St. Paul says, profiteth somewhat, or rather (as R.V.) is profitable for a little. It is as if an old man were writing to a young man to-day, and should begin by saying: "Do not neglect your bodily health; take exercise daily; go to the gymnasium." But spiritual exercise, this writer goes on, has this superior quality, that it is good for both worlds, both for that which now is and for that which is to come. Therefore, "exercise unto godliness." "Take up those forms of spiritual athletics which develop and discipline the soul. Keep your soul in training. Be sure that you are in good spiritual condition, ready for the strain and effort which life is sure to demand."

## I.

## THE VALUE OF BODILY EXERCISE.

“Bodily exercise is profitable for a little.”

1. Two views have been held as to the meaning of the words “bodily exercise.” Many refer it exclusively to those ascetic practices the excess of which St. Paul so severely condemns, such as forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats. If we take that meaning, then we learn that “bodily exercise,” in the sense of the discipline of the flesh, has its use and its proper place in every Christian life. We cannot do without it. It is “profitable—for a little.” That is to say, it is useful within narrow limits; but it is only a means to an end, a part of a much larger whole; the great thing is “exercise unto godliness.” This is undoubtedly part of the lesson, but it can hardly be the exclusive meaning. To those to whom St. Paul wrote, the words “bodily exercise” would convey just the same meaning as they convey to us, viz., that exercise which is necessary for our bodies, which helps to develop our physical powers for useful ends.

In ancient times training of the body formed a larger part of general education. To excel in the gymnasium or to win the prizes at the games was to some men the highest ambition. Such an ambition, St. Paul tells us, is excellent in its way. It “is profitable for a little.” It has its use. But it is not everything. There is a higher aim than this, one which does not exclude this lower one, but which dignifies it, regulates it, and places it in its right relation to all other aims and ideals. The aim of all aims is godliness. For that let us exercise ourselves, and then bodily exercise will fall into rank along with the exercise of mind, of conscience, of spirit, taking its noble part in enabling us to present the entire man, all his complex powers and energies, as a whole burnt-offering to be consumed in the service of God.

¶ In old days the masters of an English public school concerned themselves with the work of the boys only, and did not trouble their heads about how the boys amused themselves out of school. Vigorous boys organized games for themselves, and indolent boys loafed. Then it came home to school authorities that there was a good deal of danger in the method; that lack of

employment was an undesirable thing. Thereupon work was increased, and, at the same time, the masters laid hands upon athletics and organized them. Side by side with this came a great increase of wealth and leisure in England, and there sprang up that astonishing and disproportionate interest in athletic matters which is nowadays a real problem for all sensible men. But the result of it all has been that there has grown up a stereotyped code among the boys as to what is the right thing to do. They are far less wilful and undisciplined than they used to be; they submit to work, as a necessary evil, far more cheerfully than they used to do; and they base their ideas of social success entirely on athletics. And no wonder! They find plenty of masters who are just as serious about games as they are themselves; who spend all their spare time in looking on at games, and discuss the athletic prospects of particular boys in a tone of perfectly unaffected seriousness.<sup>1</sup>

2. "Bodily exercise is profitable for a little." Therefore, as it is profitable, it must not be forgotten. "A sound mind in a sound body": there is no really sound and satisfactory thinking to be got from those whose bodily health is depressed by neglect or asceticism; a good constitution is a great endowment to be able to place at the disposal of the Master. Therefore we may make our very bodily exercise part of a sacred curriculum. Nothing is more sorrowful, it is true, than to see a man who is only a well-developed animal; nothing is more delightful than to see a man who combines with enjoyment of every healthy pursuit of recreation and physical training a noble ambition to be possessed of a well-disciplined and fully-developed soul. For "godliness is profitable for all things." We are building an eternal fabric. We are perfecting that which, when the house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, will inhabit "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The word here translated "exercise" is the word for gymnastic training. A man is to grow strong and sound and agile by spiritual athletics. He is to exercise his spirit. He is to practise godliness. He is to practise self-denial, for instance. He is to habituate himself to pray and to think. He is to cultivate his gifts in the sacred service. He is not to let his talents rust, not to bury them, but to employ them profitably. There is about this

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Benson, *The Upton Letters*, 42.

advice all the suggestion of real, thorough, steady discipline. This is no game to be played at. The training will be severe and exacting. The moral fibres are to be firmly knit; the relaxed will is to be braced and invigorated; the weakly, sentimental, emotional nature is to be strengthened and toned. The mind and the heart alike are to receive a sturdy and masculine development, until the Christian man is formed, as a very spiritual athlete, capable of fighting the good fight of faith and the battle of life, and coming out more than conqueror through Christ.

¶ "Bodily exercise" may stand for all disciplines of man and his actions, in the name of religion, that are of an outward kind. Of course, in our current sense of the words, bodily exercise is a very good thing; and so, in the above sense, is it good if it be a godly exercise; if the end be not mere restraint, nor mere outward regulation, in the complex exactitude of which we find a satisfaction because of its parade, and because it occupies an else weary leisure.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Some have begun to think that in English schools and universities too much time is given to athletic sports, and that they absorb too largely the thoughts and interests of the English youth. Edward Bowen, however, attached the utmost value to games as a training in character. He used to descant upon the qualities of discipline, good-fellowship, good-humour, mutual help, and postponement of self which they are calculated to foster. Though some of his friends thought that his own intense and unabated fondness for these games—for he played cricket and football up to the end of his life—might have biassed his judgment, they could not deny that the games ought to develop the qualities aforesaid. "Consider," he writes, "the habit of being in public, the forbearance, the subordination of the one to the many, the exercise of judgment, the sense of personal dignity. Think again of the organizing faculty that our games develop. Where can you get command and obedience, choice with responsibility, criticism with discipline, in any degree remotely approaching that in which our social games supply them? Think of the partly moral, partly physical side of it, temper, of course, dignity, courtesy. . . . When the match has really begun, there is education, there is enlargement of horizon, self sinks, the common good is the only good, the bodily faculties exhilarate in functional development, and the make-believe ambition is glorified into a sort of ideality. Here is boyhood at its best, or very nearly at its best.

<sup>1</sup> T. T. Lynch, *Three Months' Ministry*, 27.

Sursum crura! . . . When you have a lot of human beings, in highest social union and perfect organic action, developing the law of their race and falling in unconsciously with its best inherited traditions of brotherhood and common action, you are not far from getting a glimpse of one side of the highest good.”<sup>1</sup>

## II.

## THE SUPERIOR VALUE OF GODLINESS.

“Godliness is profitable for all things.”

1. The beginnings of agnosticism were accompanied by a very widespread tendency towards profitless and more or less baseless religious speculation. St. Paul is quite sure that there are a great many things that we cannot know, and into which it is profitless to inquire. He would restrain the attention of Christians and fix it upon those things which are certainly disclosed and certainly profitable. And what he means by godliness, especially in this Epistle to Timothy, is what we can best call practical religion, which is profitable, he declares, for two things. Having promise of the life which now is, it is able in infinite ways to redeem it, consecrate it, enrich it, and fill it with new and high hopes and joys and a sense of power. And it has also the promise of the life which is to come: not that this other-worldliness was to reduce to insignificance the things of here and now, but, on the contrary, that the sense of the infinite extension of the forces of good and evil which are at work amongst us in our present experience should give to Christians both an infinite awe and an infinite hope, a sense that it was worth while to do our best because the value of life was raised to infinite power by infinite possibilities.

¶ It is not the things of life that make life; it is life itself—its action, the doing of things. Healthy, physical, intellectual, and spiritual energy is life indeed, and not what you and I possess. These might be shut off from us, and we could still worship and work in enjoyment without them. There is a line of poetry I often repeat to myself, because I think it conveys one of Christ’s finest truths—“How good is life, the mere living!” The mere exercise of function is ample enjoyment; the doing of things that

<sup>1</sup> J. Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, 351.

give pleasure to others will yet be found sufficient. One would not want anything else to live for in a world filled with such action. It would be sufficient happiness. Christ saw that men were smothered under the incidents of life; that they had hidden its real meaning and use; that, instead of rejoicing in heroic, brave, clean lives, men were crushed down under the abundance of the things they possessed. Their interests were so many, life itself—not only the future life, but this life here—had lost its meaning for them. They had lost the joy, the health, the spontaneity of true life—the grandest things a man could possess. As He said, “they had lost their own souls.” We mistake position, rank, wealth, connexions, and honours—all incidents—for life. We are in bondage; and you know how often our Saviour uses the expression, and promises us freedom by the truth. He says the truth shall make you free—the truth about life, the reality of that, shall free you from the bondage of these incidents, shall make all of them take their proper places, and possess their proper proportions.<sup>1</sup>

2. This is the goal to which all exercise in godliness must tend—godly habits, a godlike character, and a fitness for the work which God has for us to do. It was for this that Jesus Christ lived and died. It was to redeem us from all iniquity, to bring us to God, to conform us to His own likeness. We must live much in the life of Jesus Christ; we must meditate more often on His character and work; we must stay our souls more constantly on His great sacrifice for us, and let the love of His atonement melt and warm our hearts. We shall then find in such contact with Him a new motive and a new power, and we shall need both if we are to succeed. For the best of efforts, the most noble self-denial, will be in vain unless we are in touch with Jesus Christ as the sole source of power. Then only will the “promise” spoken of in the text be fulfilled; then only shall we secure in this world what life promises to man. Everything in existence lives for some use; that use is its promise to the world. The sun is fashioned to give light by day, and it promises light. The world is formed to be the habitation of God’s children; it is adorned as a king’s palace, and all the resources of wealth and pleasure which it is capable of affording it promises to man. All things give their promises according to the faculty that is in them; and as they

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of William Denny*, 317.

redeem their promises they manifest the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord. A worldly state of mind and spirit limits the range of our faculties and finally destroys them, while it dissolves the harmony which God has established between us and all things around us—in a word, sin robs life of its promise. A godly state of mind secures the promise, makes life joyful, and cements the harmony of souls. Godliness is to a man's spirit, even in this life, what the warm bright air of a summer morning is to the birds and flowers. This is the atmosphere in which they can most freely expand themselves, which moves and tunes their songs of praise. We know what the glow of health is in the body. To enjoy this life truly, there must be a glow in the soul. Godliness sets the vivid blood rushing through its channels, and makes every act and utterance musical with joy.

¶ The old language in which the Gospel comes to us, the formality of the antique phrasing, the natural tendency to make it dignified and hieratic, disguise from us how utterly natural and simple it all is. I do not think that reverence and tradition and awe have done us any more grievous injury than the fact that we have made the Saviour into a figure with whom frank communication, eager, impulsive talk, would seem to be impossible. One thinks of Him, from pictures and from books, as grave, abstracted, chiding, precise, mournfully kind, solemnly considerate. I believe it in my heart to have been wholly otherwise, and I think of Him as one with whom any simple and affectionate person, man, woman, or child would have been entirely and instantly at ease. Like all idealistic and poetical natures, He had little use, I think, for laughter; those who are deeply interested in life and its issues care more for the beauty than the humour of life. But one sees a flash of humour here and there, as in the story of the unjust judge, and of the children in the market-place; and that He was disconcerting or cast a shadow upon natural talk and merriment I do not for an instant believe. I think that the Christian has no right to be ashamed of light-heartedness; indeed I believe that he ought to cultivate and feed it in every possible way. He ought to be so unaffected, that he can change without the least incongruity from laughter to tears, sympathizing with, entering into, developing the moods of those about him. He must be charming, attractive, genial, everywhere; if he affects his company at all, it must be as innocent and beautiful girlhood affects a circle, by its guilelessness, its sweetness, its appeal. I have known Christians like this, wise, beloved, simple, gentle people,

whose presence did not bring constraint but rather a perfect ease, and was an evocation of all that was best and finest in those near them.<sup>1</sup>

3. Now exercise means effort, often painful effort. No athlete is crowned unless he strives; and he that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. As Charles Simeon, whose influence was so great at Cambridge in the early years of the nineteenth century, quaintly put it: "My dear young friends, you can't go to heaven in an arm-chair." For exercise unto godliness means effort. It means self-denial, the practice of self-discipline. Every athlete, we know, goes into training. So must the man who will exercise himself unto godliness. There are many things which are harmless, and at times even useful, but the man in training avoids them that he may win the prize. He keeps under the body and is temperate in all things. We have, it is true, come to appreciate exercise so far as concerns the body, and any healthy-minded young man to-day is almost ashamed of himself if he has not a well-developed body, the ready servant of an active will. We have even begun to appreciate the analogy of body and mind, and to perceive that the exercise and discipline of the mind, like that of the body, reproduces its power. And yet it remains true that a great many people fancy that the soul can be left without exercise; that indeed it is a sort of invalid, which needs to be sheltered from exposure and kept in-doors in a sort of limp, shut-in condition. Now the apostolic doctrine is this: "You do not grow strong in body or in mind without discipline and exercise. The same athletic demand is made on your soul." All through the writings of this vigorous, masculine, robust adviser of young men, we find him taking the athletic position. Now he is a boxer: "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air." Now he is a runner, looking not to the things that are behind, but to the things before, and running, not in one sharp dash, but, with patience, the race set before him. It is just as athletic a performance, he thinks, to wrestle with the princes of the darkness of this world as to wrestle with a champion. It needs just as rigorous a training to pull against circumstances as to pull against time. It appears to him at least not unreasonable that

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Benson, *Joyous Gard* (1913), 200.

the supreme interest of an immortal soul should have from a man as much attention and development as a man gives to his legs, or his muscle, or his wind.

¶ Another name which is exceedingly precious to me, I cannot forbear to mention here—that, namely, of Philip Edward Pusey—Dr. Pusey's only son. Disabled from taking Holy Orders by reason of his grievous infirmities (he was deaf and a cripple), his prevailing anxiety was to render God service in any way that remained to him; and, by his father's advice, he undertook to edit the works of Cyril of Alexandria. In quest of MSS., he visited with indomitable energy every principal library—in France, Spain, Italy,—Russia, Germany, Turkey,—Greece, Palestine, Syria. At the Convent of S. Catharine at the foot of Sinai, the monks remembered him well. They asked me (March 1862) if I knew him. “And how is Philippos?” inquired the monks of Mount Athos of their next Oxford visitor. With equal truth and tenderness Dean Liddell (preaching on the occasion of his death) recalls “the pleasant smile with which he greeted his friends; his brave cheerfulness under life-long suffering; his delight in children; his awe and reverence for Almighty God. Most of you must have seen that small emaciated form, swinging itself through the quadrangle, up the steps, or along the street, with such energy and activity as might surprise healthy men. But few of you could know what gentleness and what courage dwelt in that frail tenement. In pursuing his studies, he shrank from no journey, however toilsome; and everywhere won hearts by his simple engaging manner, combined with his helpfulness and his bravery. To such an one death could have no terror: death could not find him unprepared.”<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### THE PECULIAR PROFIT OF GODLINESS.

“Having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.”

1. “Having promise of the life which now is.” That does not mean that the godly man is invariably the successful man. Looking only to the individual life of men, it would be absurd to maintain that there is any invariable connexion between religion and outward prosperity and happiness, or that prosperous infamy and goodness crushed by poverty and mis-

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, i. p. xv.

fortune are sights seldom or never seen. It is easy to adduce innumerable instances in which health, wealth, worldly success, all the gifts of fortune seem to be showered on the selfish and the base, and the life of the best and noblest is embittered by ill-health or grinding poverty, or darkened by care, anxiety, and disappointment. But the answer is that, in judging of the ameliorating influences of religion, it is impossible to test its inherent power by looking only to the lives of individual men. For no individual, however good and holy, can isolate himself from others, or keep off from himself those outward ills that are the fruit not of his own but of other men's sins. If we take not individual instances but the general experience of mankind, we shall find that from all the constituents and surroundings of human life a higher and richer profit is to be extracted than that which pertains to our outward welfare and happiness. And that profit has not only relation to a future world and our preparation for it; it is to be got here and now. It is a harvest of inestimable good which is to be reaped from and amidst the life that now is. It is the good or godly men who make the most of life—who extract the richest profit out of life.

¶ In the early part of 1868, a Christian business man wrote to me for advice in his peculiarly difficult business affairs. His letter showed that he had a desire to walk in the ways of the Lord, and to carry on his business to the glory of God; but his circumstances were of the most trying character. I therefore wrote to him to come to Bristol, that I might be able to advise him. Accordingly he undertook the long journey, and I had an interview with him, through which I saw his most trying position in business. Having fully conversed with him I gave him the following counsels:—

(1) That he should day by day, expressly for that purpose, retire with his Christian wife that they might unitedly spread their business difficulties before God in prayer, and do this, if possible, twice a day.

(2) That he should look out for answers to his prayers, and expect that God would help him.

(3) That he should avoid all business trickeries, such as exposing for sale two or three articles marked below cost price, for the sake of attracting customers, because of its unbecoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus to use such artifices: and that if he did so, he could not reckon on the blessing of God.

(4) I advised him, further, to set apart out of his profits week by week a certain proportion for the work of God, whether his income was much or little, and use this income faithfully for the Lord.

(5) Lastly, I asked him to let me know month after month how the Lord dealt with him.

The reader will feel interested to learn that from that time the Lord was pleased to prosper the business of this dear Christian brother, so that his returns from the 1st March 1868, up to 1st March 1869, were £9138, 13s. 5d., while during the same period the previous year they had been only £6609. 18s. 3d.<sup>1</sup>

2. But to induce a man to become religious out of regard to the ulterior advantages of religion would be to base religion on a motive which destroys it. No man is even at the threshold of the religious life so long as he has an eye to anything to be gained or got by religion—indeed we may even say, till there is nothing else he would not be ready to sacrifice rather than renounce or prove faithless to it. Integrity, purity, justice, goodness are things we should choose, even if no pleasure or profit come of them, even at the cost and sacrifice of all the pleasant things of life. A conscientious man is not one who does his duty because, or so long as, it promotes his interests. There are innumerable things in the world he may dearly prize; but when these and duty clash, when it comes to be a question whether he shall give up these or be a liar or a knave, can he retain the faintest title to the name of a good man if he be not prepared to sacrifice all the world holds dear rather than be betrayed into baseness and dishonour? And if godliness or religion means love to God, reverence and devotion to the infinite Truth and Righteousness, love and loyalty to Him who was its highest manifestation on earth—must not this, above all others, be a principle which needs no prop of external profit to secure its dominion over the soul?

¶ There is no resource for it, but to get into that interminable ravelment of Reward and Approval, virtue being its own reward; and assert louder and louder,—contrary to the stern experiences of all men, from the Divine Man, expiring with agony of bloody sweat on the accursed tree, down to us two, O reader (if we have ever done one Duty),—that virtue is synonymous with Pleasure.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of George Müller, the Modern Apostle of Faith*, 190.

Alas! was Paul, an Apostle of the Gentiles, virtuous; and was virtue its own reward, when *his* approving conscience told him that he was "the chief of sinners," and if bounded to this life alone, "of all men the most miserable"?<sup>1</sup>

¶ My dear friends, dwell in humility; and take heed that no views of outward gain get too deep hold of you, that so your eyes being single to the Lord, you may be preserved in the way of safety. Where people let loose their minds after the love of outward things, and are more engaged in pursuing the profits and seeking the friendships of this world than to be inwardly acquainted with the way of true peace, they walk in a vain shadow, while the true comfort of life is wanting. Their examples are often hurtful to others; and their treasures thus collected do many times prove dangerous snares to their children. But where people are sincerely devoted to follow Christ, and dwell under the influence of His Holy Spirit, their stability and firmness, through a Divine blessing, is at times like dew on the tender plants round about them, and the weightiness of their spirits secretly works on the minds of others. And though we may meet with opposition from another spirit, yet, as there is a dwelling in meekness, feeling our spirits subject, and moving only in the gentle, peaceable wisdom, the inward reward of quietness will be greater than all our difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

3. "That which is to come." The promise of heaven does not throw the interest of life wholly into the future; it rather brings the future to us than tells us coldly to tarry for the future. "Heavenly things" are of the highest secular value. For as health lightens labour and makes pleasure keener, so a cheerful goodness, which thinks of the end often while on the way; counts love the chief treasure in the midst of any abundance; likes to have a neighbour, to help him, and to be helped by him—this cheerful goodness will be the most patient and prosperous worker, and relish most its reward. It is obvious that the will of God, when regarded by us with true confidence, must infuse both temperance and vigour into our action; obvious that peace with God, and a thankful acknowledgment of Him, must sweeten pleasure; and obvious, yet again, that submission to His will, as not only firm but good, must

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Miscellanies* (Essay on Diderot).

<sup>2</sup> *The Journal of John Woolman.*

alleviate present distress. When, anxiously, we watch by the bed-side, and listen for a breath, and wonder whether the scarcely-moving tide of life will ebb utterly away, or return once more, with the prayer "Thy will be done" there is mingled a sense that, if that Will ordain death, it will conduct through death into life. Thus, when the promise can no more affect the life of one departing, in giving a hope for the future, it gives, too, a benefit for the life of those who must yet remain here awhile. In last hours, in lowest fortunes, in loud confused scenes, in unwitnessed privations, in the strong man's battle with his foes, and the weak man's battle with his infirmities—it is a fact, that faith in God has been, not only the alleviator of distress, but its conqueror. The love that comprehends and transcends all earthly love, the supreme motive of self-surrendering, self-abnegating love and devotion to God in Christ, lends a consecration to the humblest, lowliest life on earth, and sheds an invisible glory over all the acts that spring from it, so that all the world and all life is a field from which love is for ever reaping its golden harvest of profit.

¶ "The Will of God!" Let us, to animate and endear every thought of it, remind ourselves often of its blissful purposes. True, it is sovereign; let us bow low before its sovereignty, its irresponsible and unknown ways. But in all its infinite range it is the will of Him whom we know in Jesus Christ, and who has told us such gracious things about it through Jesus Christ. If it wills for us immediately toil and trial, contradictions, disappointments, tears—as it sometimes does, as it once did for our Lord and Life—what does it always will ultimately, and with infinite skill and power to attain its end? It wills, He wills, "that not one of his little ones should perish." He wills, "that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him should have everlasting life, and be raised up again by Christ Jesus at the last day." He wills "our sanctification." He wills, as His Son wills, that they whom He has "given" to His Son should "be with him where he is, to behold his glory." In belonging to such a God, for every part and detail of our lives, is there not both peace and glory? In accepting, loving, bearing, doing, the will of such a God, is there not a blissful light upon every step of our road home? That road, even step by step, was trodden before us by the Son of Man, who took on Him the form of a bond-servant, of a slave—the Apostle boldly uses the word—the slave of the will of His Father. As

He came down to tread it, He said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." As He trod it, He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Not my will but thine be done." And it is He who by His Spirit dwells in us, and we in Him. Lord Jesus Christ, who thus workest in me, work on and evermore, work now, both to will and to do; to will now not my choice but Thine; to do now Thy will from the soul. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

Author of man's mystic lot,  
 God, Thy ways as ours are not:  
 Thou hast destined us to be  
 Seized by death, yet safe in Thee:  
 Love Immortal casting out  
 Feverish fear, and freezing doubt.

In the spaces of the night,  
 In the depths of dim affright,  
 Jesus, with our trials tried,  
 Do not Thou forsake my side!  
 Childlike on Thy faithful breast  
 Hold my heart, and bid me rest.

Like a sword above my head  
 Death is hanging by a thread;  
 Yet, O gracious Lord on high,  
 Surely Thou wilt hear my cry,  
 By Thy life laid down for me  
 Turning death to victory!

Only this can light the grave,  
 Thou hast died:—and Thou wilt save:—  
 Thou by lying low in earth  
 Hast assured our second birth,  
 Bidding in the sunless tomb  
 Amaranthine roses bloom.

If the spirit shivering shrink  
 From annihilation's brink,  
 Through the soul like sunshine come,  
 "Death is but another womb:  
 Born through woe to human breath,  
 Ye are born to God through death."

<sup>1</sup> H. C. G. Moule, *All in Christ*, 62.

Nearer than the nearest by,  
Be beside me when I die!  
With Thy strength my weakness nerve  
Ne'er through fear from faith to swerve;  
So, Death's storm-vex'd portal past,  
Safe in Thee to sleep at last.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. T. Palgrave, *Amenophis and Other Poems*.



THE LOVE OF MONEY.

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## THE LOVE OF MONEY.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil : which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.—1 Tim. vi. 10.

It is with no uncertain voice that Scripture speaks of the sin of avarice. There, as in these words of St. Paul, or as in those of Christ our Lord, "Take heed and beware of covetousness," we are warned with all plainness of speech against it; even as we are again and again reminded of other sins and further dangers which this sin draws after it. Nor is the warning of Scripture given by earnest words only; it is given also by terrible examples. What a dread procession of souls, which, losing heaven, very often did not win that earth for which they were content to lose it, is made there to pass before us: Achan, who thought to enrich himself with that wedge of gold and that Babylonish garment, and for whom that wedge of gold served but as it were to cleave his soul asunder, while that Babylonish garment proved to him no better than a winding sheet: Gehazi, with two talents of silver and the five changes of raiment, which he obtained by a lie from Naaman—Gehazi who did not take account of the garment which he should never change, of that robe of leprosy which should cling to him and to his children for ever: and Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but who took no gain of money, though he had made shipwreck of all in order that he might take it. There, too, is the betrayer, who purchased "the field of blood" with the reward of iniquity, being himself the first to handsel that field with his own. These are but a few of the beacon lights which in Scripture have been kindled towards us from the rocks and quicksands on which so many have perished.

The Apostle's warning is a solemn one, and the words of the text are indeed terrible words. They set before us what may be the perilous results to a Christian man of his giving way to the

desire and determination to be rich. They are spoken of *Christians*—for some of the evils enumerated could occur only in the case of such.

¶ In Brailsford's book, *The Spiritual Sense in Sacred Legend*, we are told that Noah had a vision of coming calamity and that he and Methuselah went to Enoch for an explanation. Enoch detailed the sins that had deserved the flood, and among others mentioned the forging into weapons of war of the metals which had been discovered, and the moulding of them into coinage, and the finding of jewels and polishing them, from pride and luxury. We are told later that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, but it is strange to hear that the prolific root was planted so early.<sup>1</sup>

## I.

### THE LOVE OF MONEY.

1. "The love of money," says the Apostle, "is a root of all kinds of evil." That is to say, a germ of all evil lies in one with the love of money, and there is no kind of evil to which a man may not be led through an absorbing greed for gold. It is a root sin, for it leads to care, fear, malice, deceit, oppression, envy, bribery, perjury, contentiousness. It is of course not the only root sin. Pride and lust, the world and the flesh, are roots of evil quite as really as the love of money, and have their own evil offshoots as well. But there is no evil, St. Paul would say, which may not spring from avarice.

¶ For money, men, alike rich and poor, have been ready to make all their lives a lie to themselves and a fraud upon their neighbours. For gold men have betrayed their country, their friends, their God, their immortal souls. For gold they steal, and rob, and break open houses, and commit assaults and murders, and become the terrors and scourges of society. For gold men forge and cheat and start bubble companies and tamper with securities, and snatch the support of the widow, and steal the bread of the fatherless. For gold they live by trades and manufactures which are the curse and destruction of mankind. For gold they involve whole countries in the horrors and crimes of war. For gold they soil the honour of their sons, and sell their daughters into gilded misery, and poison the world with stagnant gossip, and stab noble

<sup>1</sup> Archibald Alexander.

reputations in the dark. For gold they defraud the hireling of his wages, and grind the faces of the poor, and wring the means of personal luxury from rotting houses or infamous pursuits. Gold corrupts trades and professions into that commercial standard which is often little better than systematized dishonesty. Gold can condemn the innocent and shield the guilty.

Plate sin with gold,  
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
Clothe it with rags, a tiny straw will pierce it.

Look into the history of any civilized nation, analyse with reference to this one cause of crime and misery the lives and thoughts of their nobles, priests, merchants, and men of luxurious life. The sin of the whole world is essentially the sin of Judas. Men do not disbelieve in Christ, but they sell Him.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Twenty-fifth of ninth month, 1764.—At our Yearly Meeting at Philadelphia this day, John Smith of Marlborough, aged upwards of eighty years, a faithful minister, though not eloquent, stood up in our meeting of ministers and elders and, appearing to be under a great exercise of spirit, informed Friends in substance as follows: "That he had been a member of our Society upwards of sixty years, and he well remembered that, in those early times, Friends were a plain, lowly-minded people, and that there was much tenderness and contrition in their meetings. That, at twenty years from that time, the Society, increasing in wealth, and in some degree conforming to the fashions of the world, true humility was less apparent, and their meetings in general were not so lively and edifying. That at the end of forty years many of them were grown very rich, and many of the Society made a specious appearance in the world: that wearing fine costly garments, and using silver and other watches, became customary with them, their sons, and their daughters. These marks of outward wealth and greatness appeared on some in our meetings of ministers and elders; and, as such things became more prevalent, so the powerful overshadowings of the Holy Ghost were less manifest in the Society. That there had been a continued increase in such ways of life, even until the present time; and that the weakness which hath now overspread the Society and the barrenness manifest among us is matter of much sorrow."

Friends were incited to constancy in supporting the testimony of truth, and reminded of the necessity which the disciples of Christ are under to attend principally to His business as He is pleased to open it to us, and to be particularly careful to have our

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Farrar, *Social and Present-Day Questions*, 110.

minds redeemed from the love of wealth, and our outward affairs in as little room as may be, that no temporal concerns may entangle our affections or hinder us from diligently following the dictates of truth in labouring to promote the pure spirit of meekness and heavenly-mindedness amongst the children of men.<sup>1</sup>

Silver and gold! The snowdrop white  
And yellow-blossomed aconite,

Waking from winter's slumber cold,  
Their hoarded treasures now unfold,  
And scatter them to left and right.  
Ah, with how much more rare delight  
Upon my sense their colours smite  
Than if my fingers were to hold  
Silver and gold.

They bear the superscription bright  
Of the great King of love and might,  
Who stamped such beauty there of old  
That men might learn, as ages rolled,  
To trust in God, nor worship quite  
Silver and gold.<sup>2</sup>

2. We must remember that it is *love* of money the Apostle condemns, not money itself. For although avarice is a sin, although the love of money for its own sake is the parent of innumerable evils, yet money, in itself and for the good that we can do with it—either for ourselves, or for those who are immediately dependent on us, or for an ever-widening circle, in proportion as we have the wealth and the opportunity—money thus viewed is not a bad thing but a good thing, and men who daily give the sweat of their brow or the force of their brains to obtain it, and to obtain more of it than they are getting at present, are, generally speaking, not only committing no sin, but simply doing their duty. Their honest industry and application to business is only praiseworthy in God's sight.

¶ Everyone of us who turns to the pages of the New Testament is constantly brought face to face with the fact that all through Christ regards money as a sacred trust. The accent of Christ is always upon stewardship. He never condemns private property; He assumes it. Indeed, He goes so far as to recognize the duty of accumulation. The man with whom He quarrels is the man

<sup>1</sup> *The Journal of John Woolman.*

<sup>2</sup> Richard Wilton.

who puts his talent in the earth, and does not entrust it to the bank where it may bear its reasonable interest. He recognizes that money is, as the writer of the Ecclesiastes says, a "defence"; and he recognizes at the same time that what it is to the individual or to the society, or to the nations, depends upon the character that is behind it, and the use that is made of these tremendous responsibilities.<sup>1</sup>

¶ He never disparaged wealth, or slighted the qualities by which it is acquired. He did not tell men that it is a sin to make money, or to take pleasure in making it. He knew how strong a force wealth exerts; how it fascinates and enthralls; how the passion for it, if left uncontrolled, takes possession of a man's whole being. To expel an instinct so deeply rooted in human nature is impossible; the attempt to expel it savours of Manicheism. But, though not expelled, the instinct may be held in check; and if so restrained, it can be only by some force of even greater power. Such a force, such a motive, Christian faith and Christian loyalty can supply. The man who consecrates the hours of business as truly as the hours of prayer, who carries on his secular calling as the servant of Christ, is safeguarded against the incitements to evil that beset other men; and there is no sure defence beside this. For such a victory over impulse from within and temptation from without, it is useless to rely on a negative and prohibitive code; even positive law is not enough; a man must have that personal devotion which brings with it the strength and the inspiration that enable him to keep the law.<sup>2</sup>

## II.

## THE LOVER OF MONEY.

1. The text gives us a life-like portrait of the avaricious and covetous man. There are two phrases in which his primary features are described. He loves money; he reaches out after it. He is possessed by a fierce and burning passion for wealth. He loves money as some folk love their children. He loves money as some saints love their God. It glows and burns within him, a hot, fierce, insatiable affection. To craving he adds determination. To the ardour of desire he engages the energy of his will. The executive forces of his life are all enlisted in the gratification of

<sup>1</sup> C. Silvester Horne.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of R. W. Dale of Birmingham*, by his Son, 145.

the one passion, in the tireless pursuit of wealth. He "reaches after" it!—that is a tremendous, living word; it is pregnant with the profoundest significance. There is all the suggestiveness about it of trembling strain. It is the reaching out of the racer who is nearly at the goal. Every muscle on the stretch! He reaches out after it! Such is the portrait of the man described in the text. He burns with the passion for money. The energy of his life is engaged to satisfy the craving. All the powers of body and mind and soul are reaching after it, if, perchance, the coveted inheritance may be gained.

¶ A great living physician told me how once he was attending the death-bed of a rich man who seemed as if he could not die; for, with aimless and nervous restlessness, his hands kept moving and opening and shutting over the counterpane. "What is the matter?" asked the physician. "I know," answered the son for his speechless father. "Every night, before he went to sleep, my father liked to feel and handle some of his bank-notes." The son slipped a £10 note into the old man's hand, and, feeling, handling, and clutching it, he died. Ah me! that £10 note grasped in his trembling hand—how much would it avail him before the awful bar of God? Yet how many men die, and have nothing better to show to God than that!<sup>1</sup>

2. Notice that this money-lover is not necessarily a rich man. When we speak of the dangers of covetousness, the great mass of persons who are not rich are apt to think that the warning applies only to the wealthy. It is a great mistake. The old woman who hoards her few shillings and tells lies about them in a back street, the needy clerk secretly longing for the death of some one who may leave him £20, the mechanic fraudulently trying to make bad work pass for good, the begging-letter impostor, the hulking idler, the anarchist indulging in senseless ravings to persuade men that luck will come to them by the ruin of tens of thousands more worthy than themselves—all these are as ardent money lovers and money seekers as the man who greedily accumulates his millions.

¶ Have not men, shut up in solitary imprisonment, found an interest in marking the moments by straight strokes of a certain length on the wall, until the growth of the sum of straight strokes,

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Farrar, *Social and Present-Day Questions*, 113.

arranged in triangles, has become a mastering purpose? Do we not waste away moments of inanity or fatigued waiting by repeating some trivial movement or sound, until the repetition has bred a want, which is incipient habit? That will help us to understand how the love of accumulating money grows an absorbing passion in men whose imaginations, even in the very beginning of their hoard, showed them no purpose beyond it.<sup>1</sup>

¶ That silver mine of Demas was a mine for pilgrims, and, as this, it still stands here unexhausted by the side of the way. The abounding ambition among us, after all, is not that we may be wise, and not that we may be good, but that we may be rich. Professing Christians beyond reckoning, from motives more or less plausible, and sometimes in themselves even praiseworthy, have set their hearts upon wealth as their absorbing pursuit. Between this and "the love of money"—the sacrificing of all that is spiritual, and of much that is moral, in presence of a likelihood of "richly providing for ourselves"—there is only a narrow and precarious interval. The man that "will be rich," whether or not he succeeds, is in peril of falling into the mean idolatry of covetousness as the years advance. It is a miserable probability. Our regrets would not waste themselves upon men of the By-ends stamp, to whom the mine of Demas is but a picturesque completion of all that they ever have been, or were ever likely to become. But our regrets must linger over the men who have tasted of better things, and are capable of nobler interests, yet have permitted themselves to be mocked into a keen-eyed scramble for the particles of silver which sparkle among the sinking rubbish of the world's caverns, while the sun is shining on the neighbouring road that it may light them to the land of eternal wealth. Within our churches there are many, in all the stages of this temptation, and perhaps not witting of their personal peril, who would do well to take to heart this impressive picture which Bunyan draws of the fiendish showman and his treacherous show, so hard by the road to the heavenly City.<sup>2</sup>

### III.

#### THE FRUIT OF THE LOVE OF MONEY.

1. Wherever the consuming love of wealth is allowed to dwell, *men become alienated from their God*. They are "led astray from the faith." That is always the first thing that happens. When

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, *Silas Marner*.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Kerr Bain, *The People of the Pilgrimage*, ii. 379.

we enter into sin it is always the most delicate things that are first destroyed. When a man begins to drink, to become a drunkard, he may go on for years and we see no witness of it in his face. The flesh may be the last thing to be touched; but we have a tremendously wide range in our endowments, and we go from flesh right up to the most delicate feelers that perceive God. And when men enter into sin, into any kind of unholy fellowship, the first thing to suffer is the most exquisite, the feeler after God. "They are led astray from the faith." The first thing to go is spiritual sensitiveness. They come to have broken communion with God, and then an interrupted sense of the Lord's presence, until at length God becomes an absentee; and as soon as ever men obtain an absentee God they enthrone something else in His place. When I enter into sin, the first thing to be consumed is the topmost part of my life. The first thing to go is not the basement; the first thing to go is the skylight. When I enter into sin it is not the kitchen in my life that is first destroyed, but the oratory, where I commune with my God. When this more delicate thing has been destroyed, I come to have broken and interrupted communion with my Lord, and then at length I cease to have communion at all.

¶ In Southern France, where attar of roses is distilled, a very curious ailment imperils the workers. The very abundance of the rose-leaves induces a sort of sleeping sickness. And surely it is even so in the abundances that are sometimes given to man. They are prone to sink him into the sleep of spiritual forgetfulness. A man's devotion is apt to dwindle as he becomes more successful. Our piety does not keep pace with our purse. Absorption in bounty makes us forgetful of the Giver. We can be so concerned in the pasturage that the Shepherd is forgotten. Our very fulness is apt to become our foe. Our clearest visions are given us in the winter-time when nature is scanty and poor. The fulness of the leaf blocks the outlook and the distance is hid. And the summer-time of life, when leaves and flowers are plentiful, is apt to bring a veil. And the very plentifulness impedes our communion.<sup>1</sup>

2. With this loss of spiritual consciousness there comes a *weaker faith*. For what is faith? Faith is a man's inclination towards the Eternal. We do not give that as a definition; we

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Jowett, *Things That Matter Most* (1913), 34.

give it as a description. Faith is a man's inclination towards the Eternal; faith is a man's pose towards the Infinite; faith is a man's receptiveness towards his God. A love of money annihilates that; the faculty shrivels up into a small self-dependence, and an uncertain waiting upon the ministry of chance. A lost consciousness of God, a weakened faith, and surely a dulled apprehension of immortality! He loses the very taste of "the powers of the life to come." The hereafter has no existence as an efficient and operative factor in his life. He has no correspondences with the world to come; they are destroyed.

¶ Does it matter *what* a man believes? It matters greatly in the shaping of his character if it be a living belief and not a mere tradition or convention. But it matters not less, perhaps more, whether he retains the believing spirit at all, an uncorrupted sense of the goodness and wonder and moral meaning of human experience, an upper realm of light and faith in some form or other, with an eye for some celestial truth and a heart prepared to trust and rejoice according to that truth. Is there any calamity more deadly than the decay and death of the very capacity of the heart for believing high things? <sup>1</sup>

Upon the white sea-sand  
 There sat a pilgrim band  
 Telling the losses that their lives had known,  
 While evening waned away  
 From breezy cliff and bay,  
 And the strong tides went out with weary moan.

There were who mourned their youth  
 With a most loving ruth,  
 For its brave hopes and memories ever green;  
 And one upon the West  
 Turned an eye that would not rest  
 For far-off hills whereon its joy had been.

Some talked of vanished gold,  
 Some of proud honours told,  
 Some spake of friends that were their trust no more;  
 And one of a green grave  
 Beside a foreign wave,  
 That made him sit so lonely on the shore.

<sup>1</sup> R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 221.

But when their tales were done,  
 There spake among them one,  
 A stranger, seeming from all sorrow free:—  
 “Sad losses have ye met,  
 But mine is heavier yet,  
 For a believing heart hath gone from me.”

“Alas!” these pilgrims said,  
 “For the living and the dead,  
 For fortune’s cruelty, for love’s sure cross,  
 For the wrecks of land and sea!  
 But, howe’er it came to thee,  
 Thine, stranger, is life’s last and heaviest loss,  
 For the believing heart has gone from thee—  
 Ah, the believing heart has gone from thee.”<sup>1</sup>

3. Another result is that avarice issues *in moral degeneracy* of every kind. In one of Turner’s pictures, a great symbolic picture, he paints the demon of covetousness, and he puts him into the shape of a dragon. But Turner makes the back of that dragon wear the appearance of a glacier. It has all the suggestiveness of ice, the coldness of ice, without its fragility. Do you see the purpose of that? Wherever the demon of covetousness makes his abode, he freezes the genial currents of the soul. The suggestion of that glacier back is that, wherever the demon of covetousness exercises his tyranny, the moral sense begins to be petrified; the moral sense, which ought to be sensitive to even the faintest approaches of evil, becomes congealed into ice. The dragon congeals into hardness and benumbment something that ought to be soft and responsive. And then when a man’s moral sense begins to be petrified he begins to engage in all manner of casuistry, excuses, pleas, reasons, equivocations, ambiguities. Why, a man frames for himself a new vocabulary, and in the soft and cushioned significance of his own language he finds his ease. And then out of the casuistry and equivocation there comes the whole black, hellish brood of falsehood, unfairness, injustice, and fraud.

¶ There is no vice more deadening to every noble and tender feeling than avarice. It is capable of extinguishing all mercy, all pity, all natural affection. It can make the claims of the suffering

<sup>1</sup> Frances Browne.

and sorrowful, even when they are combined with those of an old friend, or a wife, or a child, fall on deaf ears. It can banish from the heart not only all love, but all shame and self-respect. What does the miser care for the execrations of outraged society, so long as he can keep his gold? There is no heartless or mean act, and very often no deed of fraud or violence, from which he will shrink in order to augment or preserve his hoards. Every criminal who wants an accomplice can have the avaricious man as his helper, if he only bids high enough.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Avarice is represented as an old woman with a veil over her forehead, and a bag of money in each hand. A figure very marvellous for power of expression. The throat is all made up of sinews with skinny channels deep between them, strained as by anxiety, and wasted by famine; the features hunger-bitten, the eyes hollow, the look glaring and intense, yet without the slightest caricature. Inscribed in the Renaissance copy "Avaritia Impletor," Spenser's Avarice (the vice) is much feebler than this; but the god Mammon and his kingdom have been described by him with his usual power. Note the position of the house of Richesse:

Betwixt them both was but a little stride,  
That did the House of Richesse from Hell-mouth divide.

It is curious that most moralists confuse avarice with covetousness, although they are vices totally different in their operation on the human heart and on the frame of society. The love of money, the sin of Judas and Ananias, is indeed the root of all evil in the hardening of the heart; but "covetousness, which is idolatry," the sin of Ahab, that is, the inordinate desire of some seen or recognized good,—thus destroying peace of mind,—is probably productive of much more misery in heart, and error in conduct, than avarice, itself, only covetousness is not so inconsistent with Christianity: for covetousness may partly proceed from vividness of the affections and hopes, as in David, and be consistent with much charity; not so avarice.<sup>2</sup>

4. Last of all, the issues of this passion of greed are described in the concluding clause of the text in these words: "And they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Avarice *poisons the wells of joy*. Those inner pools in the life, which ought to provide sweetness and rest, become ministers of bitterness and

<sup>1</sup> A. Plummer, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 196.

<sup>2</sup> Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, ii. § 90 (*Works*, x. 403).

grief. The money-lover is pierced through and through with many sorrows. Dante in his great Vision of Hell, in the fourth circle of hell, comes upon the avaricious and the covetous, and he describes to us the punishment which is theirs. "Then I beheld a crowd more dense than all, and on this side and on that with howling cries, each rolling with his chest a ponderous ball." In hell they rolled their ball with their chest, and met others who were rolling theirs, and they clashed and they turned, rolling their ball back, and turned again, and so on and so on in ever restless, unsatisfying movements. We do not know what awaits the ungodly in worlds to be, but we say that the avaricious man knows that kind of hell here and now. He rolls his ball in ever-shifting movement and never finds a rest. In the life of the money-lover there are restlessness, disappointment, the stings of a low remorse, a painful sense of emptiness; the life is pierced through and through with many sorrows.

¶ After all, what is wealth? My noble and severe parent had it in goodly quantity, but it cannot be said that it made him happy. He was far from being a happy man. And so it is with many people. I remember when I was a youth at Lū-chow that riches and promotions seemed as very gifts of the Celestial Regions. But I have found that neither great wealth nor distinguished decorations, nor both put together, will guarantee a man against unrest of mind or turmoil of soul. How great and honourable is the Peacock's Feather of the Throne, yet how much casier rests the head on goose feathers!<sup>1</sup>

¶ Riches are truly thorns, as the Gospel teaches us. They prick us with a thousand troubles in acquiring them, with more cares in preserving them, and with yet more anxieties in spending them; and, most of all, with vexations in losing them. I know very well how to spend what I have; but if I had more I should be in difficulty as to what to do with it. Am I not happy to live like a child without care? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. The more any one has to manage the longer the account he has to render. We must make use of this world as though we were making no use of it at all. We must possess riches as though we had them not, and deal with the things of earth like the dogs on the banks of the Nile, who, for fear of the crocodiles, lap up the water of the river as they run along its banks. If, as the wise man tells us, he that addeth knowledge addeth also

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*, 210.

labour, much more is this the case with the man who heaps up riches. He is like the giants in the fable who piled up mountains, and then buried themselves under them.<sup>1</sup>

## IV.

## DELIVERANCE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY.

1. Let a greater love expel a less, a nobler affection supersede a meaner. Consider often the great things for which we were made, the unsearchable riches of which we have been made partakers in Christ; for covetousness, the desire of having, and of having ever more and more, sin as it is, is yet the degeneration of something which is not a sin. Man was made for the infinite, with infinite longings, infinite cravings and desires. He was intended to find the satisfaction of all these longings, all these desires, in God; ordained by the primal law of his creation to hunger and thirst for God, and to be satisfied only with Him. But averting himself from God, the hunger and the thirst still remain, the sense of emptiness, the yearning after something which he has not got, the desire of having, of filling that immense void within him; and now, because he has refused to fill it with the fulness of God, he seeks to fill it with the fulness of the creature, with ever more and more of this; which, however, do what he will, leaves him dissatisfied and yearning still; for none are truly filled save those whom God satisfies, and satisfies with Himself.

¶ A person who made much profession of living a devout life, was overtaken by sudden misfortune, which deprived her of almost all her wealth and left her plunged in grief. Her distress of mind was so inconsolable that it led her to complain of the Providence of God, who appeared, she said, to have forgotten her. Blessed Francis, anxious to turn her thoughts from the contemplation of herself and of earthly things, to fix them on God, asked her if He was not more to her than anything; nay, if, in fact, God was not Himself everything to her; and if, having loved Him when He had given her many things, she was not now ready to love Him, though she received nothing from Him. She, however, replying that such language was more speculative than practical, and easier to speak than to carry into effect, he wound up by

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, 131.

saying with St. Augustine: "Too avaricious is that heart to which God does not suffice." "Assuredly, he who is not satisfied with God is covetous indeed." This word covetous produced a powerful effect upon the heart of one who, in the days of her prosperity, had always hated avarice. It seemed as if suddenly the eyes of her soul were opened, and she saw how admirable, how infinitely worthy of love God ever remained, whether with those things she had possessed or without them. So, by degrees, she forgot herself and her crosses; grace prevailed, and she knew and confessed that God was all in all to her.<sup>1</sup>

2. Let us share our money with others. The habit of large and liberal giving is a great remedy against covetousness. We do not mean lazy and promiscuous almsgiving, with no pains taken to know whether our gifts are well bestowed—emptying our seed-corn out of the sack's mouth, instead of carefully scattering it with the hand; for this can do nothing except harm. What we mean is a wise and deliberate dedication to God of a portion of that which came from God. And this portion, if it is really to help us in mortifying the corrupt affection of covetousness, must not be a very small and niggardly one. It must not be that paltry residue which, in most cases, is all that is likely to remain, if indeed anything at all will remain, after every taste, every fancy, every desire of our hearts has been gratified.

Our charities, the offerings which we offer to God, too often cost us nothing, and therefore, as a consequence, they profit us nothing; they help us little or not at all in the way to heaven; nay, rather, in their littleness serve only as an acknowledgment that we recognize a duty which yet we are refusing to fulfil. Some perhaps will say, Better then to withhold this little, if it shall thus prove a witness against us. They may say this; but they cannot in their hearts believe that any true help is here. That help can lie only in so multiplying this little that it may witness not against us but for us; that, like the alms of Cornelius, which, as you will remember, were "much alms," it may come up for a memorial before God.

¶ On every coin in your possession you may read the letters "D.G.," by the grace of God. Every coin is yours as the gift of God; as much so as if He had literally placed it on your open

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, 49.

palm. If our money is really His, by His gift originally to us, and by our subsequent dedication to Him, surely He ought to have a voice in its expenditure. And the concession of that right to Him would speedily make our consecration real. . . . Though I do not plead that consecrated Christians should give all away, I do insist upon it, that they should regard all their money as Christ's, and spend every penny of it beneath His direction, and in harmony with His will. Do not we use the bulk of our Lord's money for ourselves, giving to Him and His work the chance coins which we may be able to spare, or the subscriptions which we are obliged to give, to maintain a character amongst our fellows? <sup>1</sup>

¶ Giving is an essential part of the Christian religion. This position needs no special argument. In support of it the whole New Testament cries aloud. The system of redemption is, from first to last, one prodigious process of gift. God loved the world, and gave His only-begotten Son. The Son loved us, and gave Himself to death for us all. This giving does not rest at the point of bounty, but passes on to that of inconceivable sacrifice. Every man on whose spirit the true light of redemption breaks, finds himself heir to a heritage of givings, which began on the eve of time, and will keep pace with the course of eternity. To giving he owes his all; in giving he sees the most substantial evidence he can offer, that he is a grateful debtor; and the self-sacrifice of Him in whom he trusts says, far more pathetically than words could say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. B. Meyer.

<sup>2</sup> William Arthur.



LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

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## LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality (R.V. incorruption) to light through the gospel.—2 Tim. i. 10.

1. It was during the whirlwind of the French Revolution, when it seemed as if all religious beliefs and restraints were to be cast off and thrown away, that the leading men, alarmed at what seemed to them a most dangerous menace to their political projects, made a concerted and remarkable appeal in support of the two great ideas, of a Supreme Being and of the immortality of the soul. These ideas, they said, are social and democratic. The denial or rejection of them is aristocratic, subversive of justice, order, and liberty; and Robespierre uttered his memorable sentence: "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him." If vice and virtue issue alike in nothingness, if the martyr and his murderer share the same fate, what foundation of justice remains? In this wholesale and common extinction all moral distinctions are confounded. All the higher motives and ideals of life are destroyed. There is no longer any security for human rights or human freedom. So forcibly they argued this matter that the National Convention proclaimed by acclamation the following decree: "The French people recognize the existence of a Supreme Being and the Immortality of the Soul."

¶ Tennyson said once to Bishop Lightfoot—"The cardinal point of Christianity is the life after death." Certainly this is the cardinal point of Tennyson's own faith. He believed no less strongly than Browning in the powerlessness of death to dissolve human personality. "I can hardly understand how any great imaginative man who has deeply lived, suffered, thought and wrought, can doubt of the soul's continuous progress in the after-life." Tennyson is supremely the poet of Immortality; and the "intimations of immortality" were ever with him. This is his master-thought, and it was natural that he should approach Jesus Christ from this point. I think Paul's words, "Jesus Christ who

brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel," summarize pretty accurately Tennyson's view of the mission of Christ. Unlike Browning, who believed that the soul discovers "a new truth" in Christ, Tennyson held that Jesus Christ brought into the perfect light those truths concerning God and man of which we all have dim intuitions.

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,  
 Deep-seated in our mystic frame,  
 We yield all blessing to the name  
 Of Him that made them current coin;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,  
 Where truth in closest words shall fail,  
 When truth embodied in a tale  
 Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
 With human hands the creed of creeds  
 In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
 More strong than all poetic thought;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf  
 Or builds the house, or digs the grave,  
 And those wild eyes that watch the wave  
 In roarings round the coral reef.

"Truth embodied in a tale" must surely refer to the historical manifestation of the Incarnate Word—"the revelation of the eternal thought of the universe." And since God does reveal Himself to men, and men dimly and feebly apprehend the revelation, the Incarnate Word must fully and completely bring to light all that range of intuitions in which we recognize the self-communication of the Divine nature to our souls. We are to find our intuitions interpreted in the Incarnate Word—not, mark, in Christ's teaching so much as in His life, His character, His person, for He wrought the "creed of creeds" "in loveliness of perfect deeds." What Christ does for us is to interpret us to ourselves. He brings, by His own life, "life and incorruption to light."<sup>1</sup>

2. At first sight the words of the text seem to express more than they can fairly be supposed to mean. The two statements made, taken absolutely, are contradicted—the first, by a fact in

<sup>1</sup> Richard Roberts, *The Meaning of Christ*, 81.

providence, daily before our eyes ; the second, by a fact in history, apprehended by our understanding. Death is not "abolished" since the appearance of Christ ; and the doctrine of "immortality" did not remain to be "brought to light" by His advent. Among both Jews and Gentiles, previous to His coming, there was the belief in a future, immortal life ; and since His resurrection, death still reigns over the whole race, just as it reigned "from Adam to Moses," or from Moses to Malachi. It is obvious, therefore, that the text must mean something less than it seems to say, or something different from its literal or conventional import. Now (1) the word which, in the passage before us, is rendered "abolished," is rendered "destroyed" in the 14th verse of the second chapter of Hebrews. It is there said that Christ "took flesh and blood," that, "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." We cannot be far wrong in inferring from this that Christ has "abolished" death in some sense similar to that in which He has "destroyed" the devil ; that is to say, that, without literally annihilating either, He has so wrought against, and so far weakened and subdued them, as to restrain them from hurting those that are His. (2) Again, the word rendered "brought to light" does not so much mean to discover, or make known, as a new thing,—which is the ordinary meaning of the English phrase,—as to illustrate, clear up, or cast light upon a thing ; it thus assumes the previous existence of that which is illustrated, but it asserts the fact of its fuller manifestation. Thus explained, the meaning of the text would amount to this, or may be thus paraphrased: / Previous to the coming of Christ, the idea of immortal life stood before the human, or the Hebrew, mind like some vast object in the morning twilight ; it was dimly descried and imperfectly apprehended, through the mist and clouds that hung upon or invested it. In like manner, Death, seen through that same darkness (for "the light was as darkness"), was something that appeared "very terrible," and made many "all their lifetime subject to bondage." The advent of the Messiah, including the whole of His teaching and work—the "appearing" of our Lord Jesus Christ, as "the light of the world," and "the sun of righteousness"—was, to these spiritual objects, like the rising,

on the natural world, of that luminary whose power and splendour symbolized His glory in prophetic song. To those who received Him, whose reason and heart He alike illuminated, the outward became clear and the inward calm; the shadows departed and fear was subdued; objective truth had light cast upon it that made it manifest, and "the king of terrors," seen in the sunlight, was discovered to have an aspect that did not terrify.

## I.

## LIFE AND IMMORTALITY BEFORE CHRIST.

1. *Among the Gentiles.*—It does not need any wide or minute survey of the religions of the ancient world to show that the doctrine of immortality was in sad need of reconstruction, and that the reconstruction could come only through a radical improvement in the world's ideas concerning God. The primeval belief had assumed grotesque and extravagant forms which distressed the imagination and at the same time involved sinister reflections upon the supreme power and goodness of God.

¶ The form in which we best remember the words of the text is that which is found in the Authorized Version, not "life and incorruption," which is undoubtedly the true rendering of the word, and is consonant with other passages in Holy Scripture, but "life and immortality," life and an endurance of that life onward for ever. In this latter form the thought rests more on the duration of the life; in the form which we have in the Revised Version, attention is directed more to the essential nature of the life—life in which there can be no element of death, because it is a life that is indissoluble and incorruptible.<sup>1</sup>

(1) In ancient Egypt the immortality of the soul and its reunion with the body in a future resurrection were made contingent upon the preservation of the fleshly form from corruption by the art of the embalmer. Personal immortality was not thought of as the immediate gift of an infinite Being, from whose fiat life in all its types and gradations issued, but as conditioned in part by the skill of the physician, whose work preserved skin and bone from dissolution. The

<sup>1</sup> C. J. Ellicott, *Sermons at Gloucester*, 154.

primitive races of the Nile valley must have held in some rough, crude way the theory of the modern materialist, that all thought and feeling depend upon physical structures and that mind is disabled, if not annihilated, when sundered from the material form through which it has been accustomed to operate. If the bodily shape is lost, the "Ka," or spirit, with which it has been identified, must pass into final oblivion.

(2) The Assyriologist tells us that amongst the earliest populations of the Mesopotamian plains, the state of the dead was conceived of in pictures which were full of gloom and profound distress. For virtuous and degraded alike the underworld was wrapped about in thick darkness and dominated by universal pain. The possibility of reaching a state of spiritual beatitude there had scarcely entered into the dream of the men who founded those imposing civilizations. Perhaps the ruthless warriors who moulded the strong, primitive empires transferred to this mysterious hereafter the shadow of their own misdoing upon earth. Men of blood, drunk with the fanaticism of the sword, made many and cruel gods after their own likeness, and the most implacable of these truculent, blight-breathing gods swayed sceptres of dominion in the underworld. Neither the Semitic nor any other branch of the human race could have a right conception of the life beyond the grave until they had learned to worship a holy, a righteous, a humane God, who swayed His sceptre of dominion over all worlds. Such affrighting ideas received their death-blow when St. John saw in the hands of the gracious and triumphant Son of Man the keys of the grave and the underworld.

(3) In subsequent centuries this weird Babylonian view of immortality projected its gloom into the religions of India and the Far East, as well as into those of Greece and Rome. The doctrine of the transmigration of souls, with many purgatories interposed between each rebirth, spread far and near, filling the popular imagination with endless appalling dramas of changing destiny. In the absence of a benign, personal, supreme God the scheme of retribution became a rigid revolving mechanism of steel, from which all possibilities of pity and forgiveness were excluded. To a solitary hero or moralist once in a century death might mean gain, if the doctrine of reward and punishment should

prove to be true; but for the many there was no outlook from death towards a land of promise but the descent into inevitable woe.

¶ But the Greeks, though they dreaded the vagueness and shadowiness of the under world, which always seemed to them bereft of sunlight and concrete form, both dear to the Hellenic spirit, yet in their happier moments had a vivid conception of heaven as the abode of the departed heroes who had deserved well of God and men. What could be lovelier and simpler than Homer's childlike faith? This is the promise to the hero Menelaus:—

But thee into plains Elysian, which lie at the world's far end,  
The seat of the judge Rhadamanthus, the immortal gods shall  
send.

Ah! there is a life for mortals which knoweth not any pain,  
Where comes no snow, nor winter, nor down-rush of the rain;  
But the Zephyr bloweth gently, where the kindly Ocean rolls,  
And sends his breath to quicken those happy human souls.

(*Odys.* iv. 563-568).<sup>1</sup>

2. *In modern speculation.*—On the afternoon of October 30, 1793, twenty-one gentlemen of France, condemned to death, were confined in the Conciergerie prison in Paris. They were the Girondist leaders, the flower of the land. Their average age was twenty-two and a half years. All were guillotined next morning. That evening they had their last supper together and spoke of many things, now seriously, now gaily. Finally, as it grew late, Vergniaud, their chief orator, called them to order and said: "The only question which now remains to be considered is the immortality of the soul." According to Nodier (who solemnly affirms the substantial correctness of his report) one of their number said: "The solution of that question is traceable in the heart of every honest man whose virtues have been sacrificed on earth. In God's creation there is no imperfection, and if righteousness persecuted and innocence trampled under foot have no point of appeal before Him, the morality of this sublime creation is a chimera." Another said: "The solution is indicated by nature in the intelligent instincts of the only organized being who conceives the need and desire of living again. That which nature has promised me, in giving me a presentiment of it, will be

<sup>1</sup> R. F. Horton.

mine." Another, Brissot, said: "It is traced by the reasonings of philosophy in the writings of Plato, and reason has never reached a higher point. That which philosophy has promised in the name of the great Architect of the worlds, I am going to find." There was a Christian priest among them, and he said: "It is traced for the Christian by his faith, wiser than all philosophy, and that which faith has given me in the name of the Lord, I am going to possess in heaven." These expressions constitute a résumé of the chief arguments which men have employed in support of the doctrine of personal immortality. Each of the first three—the moral, the psychological, the philosophical—has weight. Taken together, and strengthened by the argument from analogy, they have proved sound and strong enough to sustain many souls in some degree of faith and hope. The reasonings and sentiments which Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates at his last interview with his friends are most impressive and affecting. The *Phaedo* of Plato is a kind of prolegomenon to the gospel of the resurrection. But that Christian priest's declaration is distinctly different in kind from the preceding arguments. It has no speculation in it. It rests on a belief that immortality has been brought to light in the gospel. If this be true, it confirms, completes, and crowns all other arguments.

3. *In the Old Testament.*—The ordinary belief on the subject of a future life shared by the ancient Hebrews was not that the spirit after death ceased to exist, but that it passed into the underworld, Sheol, the "meeting-place," as Job describes it, "for all living,"—as well for the tyrant king of Babylon, at whose downfall the earth rejoiced, as for Jacob, or Samuel, or David,—where it entered upon a shadowy, half-conscious existence, devoid of interest and occupation, and not worthy of the name of "life": "For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy faithfulness." But the darkness which thus shrouded man's hereafter was not unbroken in the Old Testament; and there are three lines along which the way is prepared for the fuller revelation brought by the gospel. There is, firstly, the limitation of the power of death set forth by the prophets, in their visions of a glorified, but yet earthly, Zion of the future: "for as the days of a tree shall be

the days of my people, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands." There is, secondly, the conviction uttered by individual Psalmists, that their close fellowship with God implies and demands that they will themselves personally be superior to death: "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And, thirdly, we meet with the idea of a resurrection, though at first as a hope rather than as a dogma, and with the limitation that it is restricted to Israel. "Let thy dead live! let my dead bodies arise!" cries the dwindled nation in its extremity; and the prophet forthwith utters the jubilant response: "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of lights, and the earth shall cast forth the Shades." But the hope thus triumphantly expressed is limited by the context to Israel; and the same limitation is apparent in the vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel xxxvii. Even in Daniel xii. 2, the passage which speaks most distinctly, and teaches also a resurrection of the wicked, the terms are still not universal: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." But this verse adds, for the first time, the idea of a future retribution, which also may be signified by the "judgment" to which the Preacher, in Ecclesiastes, more than once solemnly alludes. Such is the point at which the Old Testament leaves the doctrine of a future life.

¶ "Sheol," in general conception, corresponds to the Greek Hades, and must be carefully distinguished from "the grave." The distinction is rightly preserved in the Revised Version. It is true there are particular phrases, as "to go down to Sheol," the general sense of which is sufficiently represented by the English idiomatic expression "to go down to the grave"; and this has accordingly been retained in the Revised Version: but "Sheol" in such cases stands on the margin (*e.g.*, 1 Sam. ii. 6, Isa. xxxviii. 10), and elsewhere it is used in the text. Occasionally "hell" has been retained from the Authorized Version (Isa. v. 14, xiv. 9, 15); this, it need scarcely be said, is used (as in the Creed) in the old sense of the term, and not in that of a place of torment. The ordinary Hebrew belief was conscious of no distinction in the future lot of the righteous and the wicked. The impossibility of a return, or resurrection, from Sheol was also strongly felt (Job vii. 9 f., xiv. 7-12, Jer. li. 39, 57, Isa. xxvii. 14): the possibility

of another life entrances Job (Job xiv. 14 f., R.V.), but he rejects it as incredible.<sup>1</sup>

4. *Among the Jews at the time of Christ.*—The Gospels open by revealing to us the Hebrew world and church previous to the infusion of the Christian element; and from them we learn that a future life, and even a resurrection of the dead, had then become a part of the prevalent and popular creed. There was a learned sect, indeed, distinguished by denying them. The Sadducees believed in nothing beyond the present life and material forms; they said “there was no resurrection,” or separate state—“angel or spirit”; but then there was another class, equally learned and more numerous, and having far greater influence with the people, who believed and taught “both” and all. The sister of Lazarus was not indebted to the teachings of Jesus, but to her previous creed, for the promptness with which she replied to His assurance that her brother should rise again, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” And this, there can be little doubt, was the general belief of the Jewish people (with the exception referred to), at, and immediately before, the coming of Christ. We find St. Paul, some years afterwards, not only referring to it as such, but describing it as the result of the revelations given through the prophets. “I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. . . . Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” I believe “all things which are written in the law and in the prophets; and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

The popular belief of the Jews at the time of Christ regarding the life to come was largely taken from certain Apocalyptic books, of which by far the most important was the Book of Enoch. Now in its eschatology, as in its Christology, the Book of Enoch is based essentially upon the Old Testament; it is an imaginative development and elaboration of elements derived thence. Of distinctively Christian truth, of the truths, that is, which centre in, or radiate from, the doctrine of the Incarnation, it does not ex-

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Driver, *Sermons on the Old Testament*, 95.

hibit a trace. Its resemblance to the writings of the New Testament is limited to externals. The utmost that can be said of it, in this respect, is that it may have lent to the Apostles, perhaps even to our Lord, certain figures and expressions in which they could suitably and conveniently clothe their ideas. But this is no more than what happened in numberless other instances, in which the teaching of both Christ and His disciples is cast in the mould of contemporary Jewish thought. Even where the resemblance appears to be closest, a careful comparison will disclose significant features of difference. The originality of the fundamental conceptions of Christianity is not impaired by the acknowledgment that Jewish thought, reflecting upon the Old Testament, may have provided symbols for their expression, or, in the case of less distinctive ideas, may even have reached them in anticipation. It remains that, in its full significance, the doctrine of a future life was first enunciated in the gospel; and that it was He who "abolished death," who also was the first to bring "life and incorruption to light."

## II.

### THE DIFFERENCE WHICH CHRIST MADE.

1. There are three benefits which Christ brought in bringing life and incorruption.

(1) *He gave certainty to the hope of life everlasting.*—The sombre death-scene is changed by the revelation of Christ through the gospel. The best of the patriarchs never rose to a higher temper than that of placid, solemn resignation to the will of God. They died without the sense of triumph. Their gaze turned to the coming fortunes of their children in the Land of Promise rather than towards the dim realms into which they were passing. Stephen, Paul, and the generation which caught their spirit, anticipated the time of departure with joy and eager hope. A different atmosphere had been created, and over the riot of violence and brutality the Lover of human souls hovered, stretching out His arms to receive disciples into the fellowship of His immortal reign. The kindling of these new hopes had made a revolution. It is true saints sometimes suffer, and in their last days

pass through moods of fierce depression, but He who holds the keys is in the shadows of the background and the desolation passes as His footsteps are heard moving in the dread silences. So has Jesus changed the outlook for all who accept His message and rest upon His work. He cannot betray our hope.

¶ Near a small Norman town there is a stream which local superstition has invested with magic virtue. It is said that whoever drinks of its waters will come back to end his life at Gisors. Many a conscript, on his last night at home, has bowed to take a deep draught from the stream and has then been hurried away to fight in wars of which he had little understanding. It is needless to say that amid the fevers of the tropics and on the fire-swept battlefield he has enjoyed no greater security from death than his comrades of other provinces. As the writer who gives the tradition says, "How often must these smiling waters have broken faith!" Jesus who abolishes death and destroys its power is no preacher of vain hopes. He does not beguile us with a pathetic romance. He knows the sure foundations upon which immortality rests, and He has verified His own message in those inscrutable realms from which we shrink back. "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, it shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life."<sup>1</sup>

¶ A striking proof of the different outlook produced by the coming of Christ may be found in the contrast between the epitaphs of the early Christians and those of their pagan contemporaries. In place of hopeless resignation and grief there is glad confidence in the continued life of the departed, and in their safety and well-being. "Live in peace and pray for us." "Pray for us because we know thou art in Christ." "Thy spirit rest in God." "In contrast to the pagan custom, even the noblest of the Christians recounted none of the honours of their offices and rank, except that the initials V. C. (*vir clarissimus*) C. F. (*clarissima femina*) were not uncommonly inscribed to indicate membership in the senatorial order. The Christian attitude was that of looking forward beyond the tomb rather than back over the course of earthly honour and success; *recessit a saeculo* became a familiar formula in the fourth century."<sup>2</sup>

(2) *He made it applicable to practical life.*—All the powerful and invigorating motives brought to operate on the Christian mind, to animate and to purify it, are drawn from the views given

<sup>1</sup> T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, 244.

<sup>2</sup> W. Lowrie, *Christian Art and Archaeology*, 67.

by Christ of the future world, and from Himself as connected with it—as securing it by His passion, preparing it by His power, adorning it with His presence, and filling it with His glory. In the Old Testament, motives for action are drawn from the grave—from its silence and darkness, its weary solitude, its lying beyond the region of “device” and “knowledge,” “wisdom” and “work.” The “fear that hath torment” and that drives to duty predominates over the love that enlarges the heart and makes obedience a joy. In the New Testament, the grave is almost lost in the vision of “the glory that is about to be revealed”; that glory breaks forth, gleams, and gushes over the path of the faithful, compelling them, as it were, to keep looking to the place where their Lord lives, and to rejoice in the prospect of living with Him. The resurrection of the dead; the transfiguration of the living; the “vile body” changed into the likeness of Christ’s “glorious body”; the earthy and corruptible image of the first man giving place to that of the second, “the Lord from heaven”; “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”; “the grace that is to be brought unto us,” when “we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”; “our gathering together unto him”—these things, and such as these, are the constant burden (or the ceaseless joy, rather) of apostolic pens; the themes with which the writers glow and burn, to which they are continually referring with delight, and by which they endeavour to diffuse throughout the Church the atmosphere of spiritual health—the conservative element of practical obedience.

¶ There is an old legend that after the crucifixion Peter went away, alone, and sat apart in utter misery. After that first outburst of bitter weeping outside Caiaphas’ palace, he had not shed a tear. His heart was full of the horror of his shame. At midnight of Saturday John came to Mary and said, “Mother Mary, I am afraid for Peter. He sits alone in the dark and will not speak, nor eat, nor weep, and his soul seems dead within him.” Then Mary took the seamless robe which the centurion had kindly given her, and said, “Take this to Peter.” So John took it and went back to Peter, whose room was then a little lighted by the coming dawn, and put the garment in his hands, simply saying, “It is His robe.” And after a little Peter buried his face in the well-known garment and wept like a child, penitently now, now bitterly. And, says the legend, it was at that same moment

that the resurrection of Jesus took place! This legend enshrines a precious truth.<sup>1</sup>

(3) *He gave it forth to the world.*—So far as the Jewish belief rested upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament, it had something of a local and national aspect; Christ broke the fetters that bound the Book to the Jewish territory and the Hebrew people, and sent it forth as the inheritance of the world. So far as the belief sprang from general reasoning and logical probabilities, it was the same as any of the theories of the Gentiles—a thing that required Divine confirmation in order to its being invested with regal authority. By His utterances, whose words were “with power,” who “spake as never man spake,” who “gave himself a ransom for all,” and who came to be “the light of the world,” the doctrine He adopted, enlarged, and ratified was stamped with the character of universality, and was commanded to be carried to Jew and Gentile alike.

¶ Whatever Christianity has done, or failed to do, this at least we need not fear to claim for it: that it has availed to plant the belief of our immortality among the deepest and most general convictions of our race: that it has borne even into the least imaginative hearts the unfailing hope of a pure and glorious life beyond the death of the body: that it has shot through our language, our literature, our customs, and our moral ideas the searching light of a judgment to come and the quickening glory of a promised Heaven; that it has sustained and intensified this hope through countless changes of thought and feeling in centuries of quickest intellectual development: and that it is now impossible to conceive the force which could dislodge from so many million hearts the axiom which they have learned from the gospel of the resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

¶ Professor Ed. Gasc Desfosses writes: “A reason for believing in personal immortality to which a certain number of philosophers only accord a very limited credit, but which in my opinion is very important, is the argument furnished by moral anthropology, which may be termed an ethnographic (race) argument. Amongst all people, at all epochs of history (even at prehistoric times), from the rudest and least civilized tribes to those of the highest intellectual development, the belief in an after-existence is everywhere; often this belief is clothed in the most primitive forms,

<sup>1</sup> E. P. Parker, in *The Hartford Seminary Record*, xxiii. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Francis Paget.

the most materialistic, if we may so express it. But after allowing for the special guidance which philosophical or religious systems, whatever they may be, can give to these beliefs, I think one can say that it is an indication of the existence of an instinct of a high order which is one of the characteristics of humanity. This is what the old traditional philosopher called 'the proof of universal consent.' If the name of science is given especially to all research based on facts, it can be said that this argument in favour of the immortality of the soul has a scientific value, as all its strength lies in establishing a fact which is universally human."<sup>1</sup>

2. What were the means used by Christ to make life and incorruption part of His gospel? How did He accomplish it?

(1) *By His words.*—It is not that Christ dwells upon the delights of Heaven, thus fixing or stimulating the imagination, as has been done by founders of other religions. It is a striking fact, indeed, that our Lord never seemed ready to satisfy mere curiosity. It has been truly said that He alone could, if He would, have told us all, and yet that He refused to do so. He knew all; He knew also how much we could safely hear, how much it was good for us to know. But He did teach us of God, of His character, of His justice and holiness and mercy. He did teach us of man, of his value, his opportunity, the infinite reach and consequences of his actions. And both these teachings would be meaningless unless man were immortal. He did more; He placed before men an ideal of their life, an ideal to which conscience and the higher spiritual nature at once and involuntarily in every true soul responds—an ideal wholly inconsistent with the theory of man's nothingness beyond the grave. He went further. Incidentally, but plainly, upon suitable occasions He referred in actual terms to our interest in an eternal world. God "is not a God of the dead," He said, "but of the living: for all live unto him"; "In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you"; "Father, I will," He prayed, "that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am"; and other passages. Certainly for the Christian such teachings—and they might be almost indefinitely multiplied—leave no room for question but that we are immortal, that this life is but preliminary to another.

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Thompson, *Proofs of Life after Death*, 206.

¶ Jesus has two ways of teaching. There is His ethical teaching which every man and every woman can take and test for themselves and see if it is true. He has also His speculative teaching, the great beliefs that He has left us and to which He has pledged His word, and He practically says to us: "You can prove that part of My teaching and find it true. Very well, now you have to believe the part that you cannot prove to be true: you have to take a certain part upon My word."<sup>1</sup>

(2) *By His deeds.*—He gave proof that He held the "keys of death" by unlocking its portals and summoning back to human fellowship those who had passed beyond the reach of the voices of kindred. When He touched the bier at the gate of Nain and said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise," and the dead man "sat up and began to speak"; or when to the man that had been dead four days He "cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth," and "he that was dead came forth," Jesus demonstrated that "those other living, whom we call the dead," have not really ceased to live.

¶ There is no one who can afford to look at the scene [the raising of Lazarus] with indifference. We have all to die, to sink in utter weakness past all strength of our own, past all friendly help of those around us. It must always remain a trying thing to die. In the time of our health we may say—

Since Nature's works be good, and Death doth serve  
As Nature's work, why should we fear to die?

but no argument should make us indifferent to the question whether at death we are to be extinguished or to live on in happier, fuller life. If a man dies in thoughtlessness, with no forecasting or foreboding of what is to follow, he can give no stronger proof of thoughtlessness. If a man faces death cheerfully through natural courage, he can furnish no stronger evidence of courage; if he dies calmly and hopefully through faith, this is faith's highest expression. And if it is really true that Jesus did raise Lazarus, then a world of depression and fear and grief is lifted off the heart of man. That very assurance is given to us which we most of all need. And, so far as I can see, it is our own imbecility of mind that prevents us from accepting this assurance and living in the joy and strength it brings. If Christ raised Lazarus He has a power to which we can safely trust; and life is a thing of permanence and joy. And if a man cannot determine for himself whether this did actually happen or not, he must, I think, feel that the fault is his, and that he is defrauding himself

<sup>1</sup> C. Silvester Horne.

of one of the clearest guiding lights and most powerful determining influences we have.<sup>1</sup>

(3) *By His death.*—Christ Himself died; He too suffered as all the sons of men must suffer, the dark and sore abasement of death. And the sacred writers, not content with the simple statement of the fact, set it forth under a great variety of phrase, as if to impress upon us that in this, as in all things else, Christ was made like unto His brethren. He not only died, He “tasted death,” He became “obedient unto death,” death had “dominion over him.” For a time “death reigned” even over Him; the Lord of life bowed down before the lord of death. So, on the one hand, is it written. On the other hand we find language of quite another sort. Christ died, but “death no more hath dominion over him”; He died, but it was that “through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” “The last enemy that shall be abolished is death”; but he *shall* be abolished, for Christ must reign “till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.” Nay, says the Apostle, death is abolished; already death has surrendered to Christ the keys of Hades and joined the procession of His triumph.

There underlay His death and posture in death a threefold conviction. In the first place He was quite certain that death could not touch His personal existence. “Thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” It was absolutely clear to His human spirit that in that moment when He bowed His head, and His spirit passed from His body, and His body lay a lifeless thing upon the cross, He would be living on. And the same conviction is borne in upon His disciples. “Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

The second thought that comes to us is this, His absolute conviction that not only did it not touch His personality, but it could not touch His union with God. Whatever is involved in the changed conditions of life, one change there is not: as I live in my Father’s hands here, I shall live in my Father’s hands there. God will be to me then, only in a fuller sense than He is now, a supreme reality. “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

And, thirdly, there is this conviction, that the life into which

<sup>1</sup> M. Dods, *The Gospel of St. John*. i. 363.

He is passing will be a life of peace and rest. "Thou shalt be with me in paradise." With Me in paradise! What paradise means we cannot entirely grasp while we are still here in the body; and while all our knowledge comes to us as it does through the channels of this body, we cannot get a definite realization of what life is there. But we can get to this—that under those changed conditions the life of the Christian is the life of rest.

¶ Those who die in the fear of God, and in the faith of Christ, do not really taste death; to them there is no death, but only a change of place, a change of state: they pass at once, and instantly, into some new life, with all their powers, all their feelings, unchanged—purified doubtless from earthly stains, but still the same living, thinking, active beings which they were here on earth. I say active. The Bible says nothing about their sleeping till the Day of Judgment, as some have fancied. Rest they may; rest they will if they need rest. But what is the true rest? Not idleness, but peace of mind. To rest from sin, from sorrow, from fear, from doubt, from care—this is the true rest. Above all, to rest from the worst weariness of all—knowing one's duty, and yet not being able to do it. That is true rest; the rest of God, who works for ever, and yet is at rest for ever; as the stars over our heads move for ever, thousands of miles each day, and yet are at perfect rest, because they move orderly, harmoniously, fulfilling the law which God has given them. Perfect rest, in perfect work; that surely is the rest of blessed spirits, till the final consummation of all things, when Christ shall have made up the number of His elect.<sup>1</sup>

#### The flocks of God

Not only nothing lacked but knew that now  
 They nevermore could lack. The wolves of want  
 And Fear-to-Want might never leap the fence  
 Of those Elysian folds. No sheep need check  
 His venturous feet on whatsoever path  
 Invited him, for now no hireling, but  
 Their very David, shepherd, priest, and king  
 Protected them. Against their foes his rod  
 Of power might not fail, nor for themselves  
 His mercy's crook. Therefore abiding joy  
 Was theirs, inherent as the noble calm  
 Of forest depths, of mountain-girded lakes  
 Or plains that have no fencing save the sky—

<sup>1</sup> Charles Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, 36.

Joy like the barley loaves of Galilee  
 Most bless'd in being shared, increased by each  
 Participant until one separate heart  
 Might out-rejoice the throbbing universe.<sup>1</sup>

(4) *By His resurrection.*—Our hope of immortality hangs on the risen Christ. One, and only one, do we know who has died whom yet death has been powerless to hold. Christ died, as our loved ones die; but while they come back to us no more, neither speak nor give us any sign, He broke the bonds of death, and showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs. If Christ has not risen, if the gospel story ends with the cross, and Easter Day be struck out of our calendar, death's cruel sway is still unbroken, the lord of life is death itself. But if Christ be risen, that iron reign is shattered, the risen Christ is lord of life and death alike. Apart from Him, man's hope of immortality grows every day more faint and tremulous; with Him it is a hope both sure and steadfast, the anchor of the soul. For, be it remembered, Christ's resurrection is no solitary incident. "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Christ is "the firstborn from the dead," "the firstfruits of them that are asleep"; and all who put their trust in Him shall share with Him His triumph.

The evidence for the eternal life, as that is revealed to us in Christ, is not to be found in considerations such as ancient and modern philosophy adduced from the nature of the soul, its immortality, its indivisibility, etc.; nor is convincing proof to be found in a bare authoritative message, nor in cases of alleged survival, nor even in the survival of Jesus of Nazareth; for if He had on the third day been resuscitated merely as Lazarus was, and had only shown Himself alive, there had been no thought, no proof, of the eternal life as He Himself explained it to us. The relevant evidence lies in the light shed by His resurrection life, by the character of that life, upon our life here, its aspirations, its incompleteness, its promise, and its hopes—there is, that is to say, a certain congruity between the eternal life as Christ is now declared to be living it and certain elements of our present life here. And when these are properly understood we begin to

<sup>1</sup> A. Bunston, *The Porch of Paradise*, 18.

see in them the seeds of a great tree; and we take courage to believe that, though it be with us still only the day of small things, we are already in certain experiences within the eternal order.

In the risen Christ, as the evangelists have drawn the portraiture with the profound unconsciousness which makes their inspiration a reality to the student, we can faintly understand how the corruptible puts on incorruption; and how the mortal puts on immortality without ceasing to be what it has been hitherto. There is no anxiety on their part to reconcile the sharp contrasts which they record; there is no inclination to emphasize or to set forth the truths which they indicate, but when we compare and combine and ponder the scattered details of their narrative, every fragment is found to grow significant. Now in this trait and now in that, Christ is revealed wholly changed and wholly the same. In Him, the Representative of humanity, we see that the perfection of earthly life is undiminished by death, we see that what seems to be dissolution is only transfiguration; we see that all that belongs to the essence of manhood can exist under new conditions; we see that whatever be the unknown glories and the unimaginable endowments of the after life, nothing is cast off which rightly claims our affection and our reverence in this.

¶ As to the evidential value of the Resurrection with regard to *immortality*, the relation here is, indeed, more vital than at first appears. The Christian hope is not merely that of an "immortality of the soul," nor is "eternal life" simply the indefinite prolongation of existence in a future state of being. Keeping, however, at present to the general question of the possibility and reality of a life beyond the grave, it is to be asked what bearing the Resurrection of Jesus has as evidence on this. None whatever, a writer like Professor Lake will reply, for the physical Resurrection is an incredibility, and can prove nothing. Apparitional manifestations are possible, but even these can only be admitted if, first of all, proof is given of the survival of the soul by the help of such phenomena as the Society for Psychical Research furnishes. Others base on the natural grounds for belief in a future life supplied by the constitution of the human soul, eked out, in the case of recent able writers, by appeal to the same class of psychical phenomena. On a more spiritual plane, Herrmann and Harnack would argue that immortality is given as

a "thought of faith" in the direct contemplation of Christ's life in God. A soul of such purity, elevation, and devotion to the Father as was Christ's cannot be thought of as extinguished in death.

Christ's earthly history does not end as an optimistic faith would expect. Rather, it closes in seeming defeat and disaster. The forces of evil—the powers of dissolution that devour on every side—seem to have prevailed over Him also. Is this the last word? If so, how shall faith support itself? "We hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel." Is not the darkness deeper than before when even He seems to go down in the struggle? Will it be doubted that, as for the first disciples, so for myriads since, the Resurrection has dispelled these doubts, and given them an assurance which nothing can overthrow that death is conquered and that, because Jesus lives, they shall live also? Jesus, who came from God and went to God, has shed a flood of light into that unseen world which has vanquished its terrors, and made it the bright home of every spiritual and eternal hope. It is open to any one to reject this consolation, grounded in sure historical fact, or to prefer to it the starlight—if even such it can be named—of dubious psychical phenomena. But will it be denied that for those who, on what they judge the best of grounds, *believe* the resurrection, there is opened up a "sure and certain hope" of immortality which nothing else in time can give?<sup>1</sup>

(5) *By imparting new life to the believer.*—The words spoken to Martha were spoken for us: "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." The resurrection life is begun already in the believer. A moral and spiritual resurrection has taken place—a rising out of the death of sin into the life of righteousness—which is the pledge of the bodily resurrection. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you." In this case, therefore, death is "abolished." The physical death must come in the order of nature; but it is a beginning rather than an ending, a process of life rather than of death. It is the folding up of the shifting tent that we may take up our abode in the enduring mansion. It is the doffing of the beggar's rags that we may don the princely robes. It

<sup>1</sup> J. Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 271.

is the shuffling off of the mortal coil of flesh that the life within may have room to expand and may receive from God a "spiritual body" which may be a fit organ for the renewed spirit.

¶ Grant that a precious memory may be longer and deeper and stronger than time, still when I think what that furious persecutor of Christ and that weak repudiator of his Master became in the course of their Christian experience,—and they are types of innumerable transformations of character since,—I feel sure that the change was not wrought in them by the power of the sacred memory of a dear, dead friend,—Paul had no such memory of Jesus,—but by their close touch and communion with the quickening spirit of a risen and living Lord. Pressing nearer, coming closer to Him, opening our inmost selves to His sweet influence, suffering Him to make His own impression upon us, who can say what He might work in us and make of us? What newness of life? What hope of glory?

Long time ago and far away,  
 One Easter morn at break of day,  
 Friar Francisco, strolling round  
 The monastery garden, found  
 Among the rose leaves at his feet  
 A clod of earth surpassing sweet.  
 Amazed to find a common bit  
 Of sod so sweet, he questioned it:  
 "Whence, then, or how hast thou," he cried,  
 Such fragrance?" and the clod replied:  
 "I was a piece of common clay  
 Until God willed that where I lay  
 A lovely rose should bud and bloom.  
 I breathed and drank in its perfume.  
 If any fragrance I disclose  
 It is the sweetness of His rose."  
 Francisco meekly bowed his head  
 And mused awhile: then knelt and said:  
 "O Thou whose love embraces all  
 Thy works and creatures, great and small,  
 I am the clod! the Rose is He  
 Who loved and gave Himself for me.  
 By that immortal Flower of Thine  
 Breathe on this barren soul of mine;  
 Bestow its fragrance upon me,  
 The fragrance of its purity."

Then, as responsive to his prayer,  
 Came, wafted on the morning air,  
 The music of the minster bell,  
 Of joyous choirs and organ's swell  
 Francisco raised in glad surprise,  
 His radiant face and streaming eyes;  
 Rose from his knees and went his way,  
 The gladdest of glad souls that day,—  
 Risen with Christ! as he would say.

3. Last of all notice three great gains that come to us through faith in Him who brought life and incorruption to light.

(1) *We obtain deliverance from the fear of death.*—To all of us death has its aspect of terror. May we not say that to many of us it has its attitude of intense repulsion? We shrink from dying, and even if we do not our hearts fail us in the thought of what lies beyond. But our acquaintance with death, as we have stood at the death-bed of some of our dear ones, makes us shrink from dying. We sometimes feel that if the drawing of that last breath were with us, as with Christ, a willing act, we should never dare to draw that last breath, it is so awful. But with many there is not only this shrinking from dying, but also a shrinking from what lies beyond.

Now see what Christ has done for us. He has destroyed death and destroyed him who has the power of death. What does this mean? The word in the original does not mean that Christ has made death not to be. That is not true. What it means is this, that Christ has so dealt with death that He has taken out of it all its sting, all its power; men are not influenced by it as they were of old. They look upon it with new eyes; they see death transformed.

(2) *We rise above the stoical or agnostic indifference to death.*—The preacher of a secular ethic asserts that death is a part of the natural order and ought to be faced with fortitude. And sometimes a man, not in anywise imbruted by sin, meets it without a misgiving, and at the same time confesses no obligation to Jesus the Redeemer. We wonder at the calmness and good-humour with which Socrates drank his cup of hemlock and at the high mettle with which some men, not distinctly religious in spirit, face the end of life. We are amazed at the impassivity with

which tens of thousands of Japanese throw away their lives in an outburst of loyalty and patriotism. Perhaps the courage of the man who is without a formulated Christian faith may be inspired by a vague sense of the benignity of the cosmic order. But sin puts a new aspect upon death and invests it with a portentous fatality in human fortunes. If unfallen man had been destined to pass through changes corresponding to physical death, his normal consciousness of God might have made such a crisis into a translation. A vague sense of sin bred the gloom and shrouding, terror-haunted shadows of the Babylonian underworld, and sin arms death with a noxious sting wherever a soul becomes burdened by a sense of demerit and transgression. Man might have died without any sign of trepidation or foreboding if his animal sleep had continued unbroken. When rational beings find out how far they have gone in a downward path, the terror of death starts up within them, and is in no sense a creation of theology. The heir of immortality trembles at the thought of his inalienable heritage. But in redeeming us Jesus took away the power of death. The cross declared the truth of man's immortality; for if man had been one with the grass of the field Jesus would not have set Himself, at such a cost, to remove a blight on the bloom of the hour. His holy Passion inscribed a new value on human life. By destroying sin He changed a dark, soul-withering, wrathful underworld into a realm filled with peace, forgiveness, goodwill, and the fruits of righteousness.

Christ abolished death. It is so that the Apostles always speak concerning death. It is so always that they bear themselves in the presence of death. They will not crouch before it as a tyrant; neither are they content to stand erect before it, as in the presence of an equal; rather do they exult and triumph over it, as a conqueror over a crushed and broken foe.

(3) *We gain new and vastly grander views of life.*—Christ rescued the soul from the neglect and contempt that it received from the current Sadducaic teachers, who regarded it as a perishable property. He gave the world the faith which was destined to emancipate the slave, to overthrow feudalism, and to become an ever-living force in the raising and ennobling of mankind. And that faith was not only faith in God, but faith in *man*—faith in the dignity of man's own nature, faith in the greatness of his

origin and the sublimity of his destiny. It was this faith that begat a new note of earnestness in human affairs. The old heart of this world asked with wonder and hesitation: "If a man die shall he live again?" There were motives that should have bidden him live well even though he answered that question for himself with "an everlasting No." But this truth remains. Teach a man that he came from God and to God he must return, and he will strive to be worthy of his ancestry and his destiny alike. Teach a man that he comes from dust, that he is but the product of matter, and must return whence he came—

Be blown about the desert dust,  
Or sealed within the iron hills,—

and you must not wonder if his life is as low as its origin, and his thoughts do not rise above his circumstances. For the secret of the world's highest endeavour has been the truth that Christ Jesus brought to light—

Life is real! life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

¶ There is a beautiful passage in "Marius the Epicurean," in which Walter Pater pictures a Pagan in the early days becoming accustomed to a Christian household, and a little gathering of people who formed one of the Christian Churches, and one thing that impressed itself upon his mind was this: There was the slave sitting beside the others, but the slave had a dignity in the Christian Church that the slave never had out of it, because the slave had laid hold of a great idea. He had received the keys of immortality, he was clothed with a new dignity, he realized the greatness of manhood, and those who were associated with the slave in the same church gave even to the slave the reverence and the respect which such manhood ought to command.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Louis XVI. and his beautiful and unfortunate queen died on the scaffold in the Place de la Revolution. The boy who ought to have inherited the throne of France, and who in fact, though he never reigned, has been numbered as Louis XVII. in the roll of monarchs, was left a prisoner. Evil had brought forth evil, as ever. An oppressed people had been roused to a spirit of devilish revenge. The child, it is said, was not only to be kept a

<sup>1</sup>C. Silvester Horne.

prisoner and deprived of whatever rights he might be supposed to possess to the throne of his father, but all that was good in his nature was to be, if possible, destroyed. Evil men placed round him were to train his mind to evil thoughts, his heart to evil feelings, his lips to unlovely words. Naturally he suffered. But now and again, it is said, as his tormentors seemed to go beyond the limits of his endurance, or when God's voice prevailed in his young soul against them, the unhappy boy would waken up to higher things, and exclaim in anguish, "I can't say it, I can't do it, for I was born to be a king!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. J. Knox Little, *Sunlight and Shadow in the Christian Life*, 53.



THE PRACTICE OF ASSURANCE.

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## THE PRACTICE OF ASSURANCE.

I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day.—2 Tim. i. 12.

1. THESE words are a splendid declaration of St. Paul's unflinching confidence in the Redeemer. They were spoken in full view of his approaching end. Earth, with its manifold openings of an eternal purposefulness, with its trials and temptations, its long courses of anxiety and sorrow, of suffering and pain, was already a closed book to the Apostle. The fight for Christ and holiness had been fought, the end had come, the course was finished, the faith had been kept. And now he is ready to be "poured out a libation on God's altar in agonies and energies for his fellow-men." The flash of the gleaming axe would be the signal for his manumission from the bondage of corruption into the longed-for presence of his Beloved Lord. Suffering for such a man, aged, weak, solitary, was no doubt exquisite and acute, but it was also ecstatic. Through it all, and in spite of all, his soul was stayed by the solace of his Lord. His venture of faith had not been miscalculated. "I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2. Of some things—Apostle though he was, Divinely inspired man though he was—St. Paul frankly confesses himself ignorant. "For we know in part," he writes in that incomparable 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, "and we prophesy in part." And a little farther on he repeats his confession of ignorance in slightly different words, saying, "Now we see in a glass darkly." But it was not all ignorance with him. It was not all doubt, and perplexity, and mystery with him. There were certain things of which he was absolutely sure, of which he was as certain as he was of his own existence. And it was these certainties of the

soul that made him the preacher he was. St. Paul never would have travelled as he did; he would never have toiled as he did; he would never have submitted to persecutions as he did, if all he had to give to men had been doubts, and criticisms and negations. There is nothing in negations to beget enthusiasm. Agnosticism breeds no missionaries or martyrs. St. Paul was impelled to preach, to travel from land to land to preach, to face any and every hardship in preaching, because he knew certain positive truths which it was of vital concern that all men should know. The "I know's" of St. Paul make up a glorious list, and the "I know" of this text is one of the most glorious.

¶ Archdeacon Farrar, it is said, once asked Robert Browning whether there were any lines in all the wide range of his poetry which most completely expressed what was fundamental in his thought and life. "Yes," replied the poet, "and they are these:—

He at least believed in soul,  
Was very sure of God."

My father also was very sure of God, and was convinced that every man might enjoy a similar certainty if he really wanted to, and if he would tread the common road, beaten by the feet of generations of the pilgrims of faith, by which it may be reached.

This religious certainty, which I do not think was ever disturbed by intellectual doubt, was of course of inexpressible value to him in his ministry of the Gospel. Confirmed as it was by his own daily experience of the Grace and Power of God in Christ Jesus, it naturally imparted to his utterances that flaming intensity of conviction which so deeply impressed his hearers everywhere, and which was assuredly one great element in his evangelistic success. "Here is a man," they felt, "who thoroughly believes every word he says. To him at least, the things he is speaking of are things that matter—matter supremely, matter infinitely. No other things compare with them for their practical importance. It is life and salvation to receive them; it is death and destruction to reject them." There was never any hesitancy, or misgiving, or reserve, or qualification in his delivery of the momentous message given him to proclaim. He spoke as one entirely sure that he was telling men the absolute truth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Henry Varley's Life-Story*, 242.

“Not ours,” say some, “the thought of Death to dread;  
 Asking no Heaven, we fear no fabled Hell:  
 Life is a feast, and we have banqueted,  
 Shall not the worms as well?”

Ah, but the Apparition—the dumb sign—  
 The beckoning finger bidding me forego  
 The fellowship, the converse, and the wine,  
 The songs, the festal glow!

And ah, to know not, while with friends I sit,  
 And while the purple joy is passed about,  
 Whether 'tis ampler day divinelier lit  
 Or homeless night without:

And whether, stepping forth, my soul shall see  
 New prospects, or fall sheer—a blinded thing!  
*There* is, O grave, thy hourly victory,  
 And there, O death, thy sting.<sup>1</sup>

3. The very ordering of the phrasing of the text is suggestive of the truth it contains. The text breaks up into three distinctive and primary parts: “I know him” . . . “whom I have believed” . . . “and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day.” The middle term is explanatory of the two extremes; say rather that the middle term is the cause, of which the two extremes are the effects; that the middle is the germ, of which the extremes are the fruits. We begin with belief, and we pass to knowledge and persuasion: we begin with faith, and we advance to experience and assurance. “I know him” is a fruit: “I am persuaded” is a fruit: “whom I have believed” is the seed from which they have their birth.

## I.

## ST. PAUL'S FAITH.

“Him whom I have believed.”

1. The Object of St. Paul's faith was not a thing, but a Person. It was a belief, not in a religion, but in a Redeemer; a faith, not

<sup>1</sup> William Watson, *Collected Poems*, 81.

in Christianity, but in Christ; a trust, not in a plan of salvation, but in a Saviour; not in a creed, but in a Christ; and not a Christ only, but *the* Christ, the Christ of actual fact, the Christ of Scripture, the "God Man," as set forth in the gospel, incarnate, atoning, risen, ascended, glorified. It was faith in Christ as a person; a trust of himself as a being to Christ as a Being. And hence he does not here say, "I know what I have believed," but he says, "I know him whom I have believed." And he does not even say as he might, "in whom," but directly "whom."

¶ You may tear out the person of Mahomet from Mahometanism; and even from Buddhism—in spite of the great extent to which Buddhists have deified the master—you may tear out the person of the Buddha, and the religion remains intact; here the teaching is everything, the person of the teacher nothing, or next to nothing. But tear out the person of Christ from Christianity, and what have you left? Certainly nothing that we can recognize as Christianity. Christianity is not, like its rivals, a mere body of doctrine about God and human duty, which would be just the same whoever had first preached it, or if nothing were known as to the way in which it came into the world. Christian faith is the personal knowledge of a personal Saviour.<sup>1</sup>

¶ An anecdote I have heard of Bengel's last hours, illustrating his microscopic way of observing the very words of his Greek Testament, makes one almost smile. When he was dying, he quoted those well-known words of the apostle, in the immediate prospect of his death by Nero, "I know whom I have believed," etc., and then said to the bystanders, "The apostle (you see) wouldn't let even a preposition come in between himself and his Lord; for he doesn't say, 'I know upon whom' (*εις ὃν*), but 'I know whom I have believed' (*οἶδα γὰρ ᾧ πεπίστευκα*)—the eye of his faith resting on the glorious object to whom he had ever trusted his all."<sup>2</sup>

¶ I remember a simple story that twined its clinging tendrils about my heart. It was of a woman whose years had ripened her hair, and sapped her strength. She was a true saint in her long life of devotion to God. She knew the Bible by heart, and would repeat long passages from memory. But as the years came the strength went, and with it the memory gradually went too, to her grief. She seemed to have lost almost wholly the power to recall at will what had been stored away. But one

<sup>1</sup> N. E. Swann, *New Lights on the Old Faith*, 60.

<sup>2</sup> W. G. Blaikie, *David Brown, D.D., LL.D.*, 147.

precious bit still stayed. She would sit by the big sunny window of the sitting-room in her home, repeating over that one bit, as though chewing a delicious titbit, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." By and by part of that seemed to slip its hold, and she would quietly be repeating, "that which I have committed to him." The last few weeks, as the ripened old saint hovered about the borderland between this and the spirit world, her feebleness increased. Her loved ones would notice her lips moving, and thinking she might be needing some creature comfort, they would go over and bend down to listen for her request. And time and again they found the old saint repeating over to herself one word, over and over again, the same one word, "Him—Him—Him." She had lost the whole Bible but one word. But she had the whole Bible in that one word.<sup>1</sup>

2. "Him whom I have *believed*," says St. Paul. What is belief? What is it to believe Him? Christ Jesus makes certain claims. He claims to bring the secret key to every life. He claims that every life discovers itself in Him, and finds its completeness in Him. He claims that He supplies to every man the requisite light and atmosphere for the individual task. He claims that He reveals the face of the Eternal. He claims that He incarnates the love and goodness of the Godhead. He claims that by the love revealed in His humiliation He redeems from guilt and sin and moral impotence, and that He endows life with the strength and quietness of an immortal hope. These are the Master's claims. What, then, is belief? Belief is just the willingness to receive the claims as a great hypothesis, and to subject them to the proof of actual life. Faith in religion is somewhat equivalent to experiment in science. Faith is not the heedless and thoughtless swallowing of dogma, but the reverent testing of a profession. Faith is not the blinding of the judgment, it is rather the application of the judgment to the superlative work of proving the "bona fides" of the Lord. Faith is not the laying of the powers to sleep; it is rather the arousing of the powers to the greatest task to which they can ever be addressed. Faith is not credulity; it is experiment. "Prove me now, saith the Lord."

<sup>1</sup> S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 78.

¶ Hall Caine tells us that Rossetti was not an atheist, but simply one with a suspended judgment; in face of death his attitude was one of *waiting*, he did not *know*. Now the great work of Jesus Christ touching the doctrine of immortality was to convert it from a speculation into a certainty. The evidence for His resurrection, which carries with it the doctrine of our incorruptibility and immortality, is overwhelming; as one has said, it is the best authenticated fact in history. The Christian is one who *knows*. The Spirit of God has so opened up to our consciousness the truth of Christ's teaching, the fact of His resurrection, that we are as satisfied of our continued and permanent existence as we are that we exist at all. The nearer we live to Christ, the more deeply we drink into His Spirit, the more the assurance of eternal life grows upon us.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

## ST. PAUL'S EXPERIENCE.

“I know him whom I have believed.”

1. St. Paul has made and is making the experiment. He has confided, ventured, believed, and he has staked his all upon the test, “Whom I have believed.” And with what result? “I know him!” There emerges a certain experience. “I know him!” It is a wealthy word, “I know!” It implies, in the first place, a faint perception of the outlines of things; “men as trees walking.” The impenetrable mist begins to yield something, and we discern outlines, and movements, little glimpses of road, a suggestion of sky-line, and some sense of gracious law and order. “I have believed.” “I know.” “Now I know in part.” Ah, but it is much more than dim perception of outline, it is the recognition of a Person. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” That is it. The experiment which begins in trembling tests issues in a warm and loving companionship. Let the experiment be continued, and the recognition ripens into intimacy, into a holy and familiar friendship that nothing can dissolve.

¶ Our knowledge of Christ is somewhat like climbing one of our Welsh mountains. When you are at the base you see but

<sup>1</sup> W. L. Watkinson.

little; the mountain itself appears to be but one half as high as it really is. Confined in a little valley you discover scarcely anything but the rippling brooks as they descend into the stream at the base of the mountain. Climb the first rising knoll, and the valley lengthens and widens beneath your feet. Go up higher, and higher still, till you stand upon the summit of one of the great roots that start out as spurs from the sides of the mountain, you see the county, perhaps very many miles around, and you are delighted with the widening prospect. But go onward, and onward, and how the scene enlarges till at last when you are on the summit, and look east, west, north, and south, you see almost all England lying before you. Now, the Christian life is of the same order. When we first believe in Christ we see but little of Him. The higher we climb, the more we discover of His excellencies and His beauties.<sup>1</sup>

2. Thus the ultimate ground of Christian certainty lies in the positive facts of Christian experience. We all know the value and authority of experience in other directions. No certainty is so absolute as that which comes in this way. The sights I have seen with my own eyes; the words I have heard with my own ears; the thoughts which have passed through my own brain; the pains and pleasures, the joys and sorrows which I have felt in my own heart—these facts to me are certain, as no other facts can be. And, in the realm of religion, experience brings with it the same certainty as it brings in any other sphere. There are some persons who try to disparage the value of experience in religious matters. They admit its importance in the ordinary regions of science, for ever since the days of Lord Bacon experiment has been the acknowledged test of truth. But, unlike Lord Bacon himself, they appear to think that it has no value, and no authority when we come to speak of spiritual things. And so, when a Christian appeals to his own experience, they smile at his childishness, as if he ought to know that experience really has nothing to do with the matter. But surely that is a very unscientific way of dealing with that great body of human experience which is furnished by the history of Christianity. The expert in chemistry or biology will not allow an outsider to criticize facts of which personally he knows nothing; and in like manner the man who knows nothing by experience of Jesus

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon.

Christ and Christianity is really out of court—he has no proper claim to pronounce an opinion as to the facts. In the one case, as in the other, the principle holds good, *Experto crede*: Listen to the experts; let those speak who have had the experience. We claim, then, that Christian experience is an authentic fact; and that it is upon the solid ground of Christian experience that Christian certainty is built. How does a man know whom he has believed? How is he fully persuaded of Christ's power to save him and to keep him? He knows, we answer, and is persuaded, by the experiences of his own heart and life.

¶ The lesson of these uncertainties seems to be that Christ denies Himself to the man who seeks Him with the intellect only, but to those who search for Him with submissive wills and open hearts He grants spiritual illumination, and in the New Testament reveals Himself as the Saviour they need. Committing themselves to Him in utter obedience and trust, they find rest and peace, and in a bright experience have a clearer and more abiding evidence of the Risen Christ than the best attested document could give. "Even so, Father," etc. Experience in the face of assaults from geology, biology, psychology, evolution—experience is and always will be the convincing evidence of Christianity. Amid the things that are shaken this remains.<sup>1</sup>

Lift up thine eyes to seek the invisible:

Stir up thy heart to choose the still unseen:

Strain up thy hope in glad perpetual green  
To scale the exceeding height where all saints dwell.  
Saints, is it well with you?—Yea, it is well.—

Where they have reaped, by faith kneel thou to glean:

Because they stooped so low to reap, they lean  
Now over golden harps unspeakable.—

But thou purblind and deafened, knowest thou  
Those glorious beauties unexperienced

By ear or eye or by heart hitherto?—

I know Whom I have trusted: wherefore now

All amiable, accessible tho' fenced,

Golden Jerusalem floats full in view.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *John Brash: Memorials and Correspondence*, 261.

<sup>2</sup> Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 158.

## III.

## ST. PAUL'S PERSUASION.

"I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day."

1. What has St. Paul committed to God? The Greek word means *my deposit*—"I am persuaded that he is able to guard my deposit." The figure is, of course, obvious—a deposit put into the hands of a depositary with what appears to be sufficient security, a trust placed with an absolutely trustworthy trustee. What has been committed which he is sure will be carefully and safely kept? Some give elaborate reasons why it should be interpreted to mean his soul, or faith in immortality, or salvation, or the care of the Churches, or his converts who were a burden of love on his heart, and suchlike particular precious things for which St. Paul trusts God. But it does not mean any of those things, though it includes them all. The phrase is vague, and it is meant to be vague. "My deposit"—it means that St. Paul had committed to Him everything, and was persuaded that He was able to keep it all. The emphasis is not on what the deposit was, but on the fact that the deposit is safe. If you want one word for the deposit, the one word is *himself*. The deposit includes all that St. Paul had trusted God for. He trusts God for his soul, but no more than he trusts Him for his body. He trusts God for salvation hereafter, but no more than he trusts Him for his life here. He trusts Him for the converts and Churches, as he trusts Him for all personal cares. The word has no definite limits, and was not meant to have limits—"my deposit," that which I have committed unto Him. The force of the sentence is in the fact that the deposit is safe where it is. It is in the right hands, and he need be neither afraid nor ashamed. It is the Guarantor he is thinking of, not the special things that have been guaranteed; the Trustee, not the different items of the trust.

¶ You and I have one treasure, whatever else we may have or not have; and that is ourselves. The most precious of our possessions is our own individual being. We cannot "keep" that. There are dangers all round us. We are like men laden with gold and precious stones, travelling in a land full of pickpockets and

highwaymen. On every side there are enemies that seek to rob us of that which is our true treasure—our own souls. We cannot keep ourselves. Slippery paths and weak feet go ill together. The tow in our hearts and the fiery sparks of temptation that are flying all round about us are sure to come together and make a blaze. We shall certainly come to ruin if we seek to get through life, to do its work, to face its difficulties, to cope with its struggles, to master its temptations, in our own poor, puny strength. So we must look for trusty hands and lodge our treasure there, where it is safe.<sup>1</sup>

¶ “I had been thinking,” Brownlow North says, “probably for hours, about the plainly revealed but unexplained mysteries of God, and was no wiser; they still remained unrevealed and still unexplained, and all the fruit of my thinking seemed a headache.” After a time he began to think again, and said aloud to himself, “Brownlow North, do you think by your own reason or deep thinking you can find out God or know Christ better than the Bible can teach you to know Him? If you do not, why are you perplexing your brains with worse than useless speculations? Why are you not learning and holding on by what you learn from the Scriptures? You are shut up to one of two things, you must either make a god and a religion for yourself, and stand or fall eternally by it, or you must take the religion of Jesus Christ as revealed to you in His Word. You cannot receive a little of God’s teaching and a little of your own, you cannot believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and the wisdom of your own heart at the same time. Choose, then, now and for ever, by which you stand or fall.” He then struck his hand forcibly upon his open Bible, and said, “God helping me, I will stand or fall by the Lord Jesus Christ. I will put my trust in His truth, and in His teaching as I find it in the written Word of God; and doing that, so sure as the Lord Jesus Christ is the truth, I must be forgiven and saved.” After that he tells us he ceased to try to reconcile apparently opposing doctrines of Scripture, or those that were above his reason, submitting his intellect like a little child to the teaching of God’s Word and Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

2. Now such a committal involves a definite act. Everything is handed over to the Lord. The body is presented to Him as a living sacrifice. Henceforth “to live is Christ and to die is gain.” All the keys of the life are handed over to Him; every room of the personality is at His disposal. A new sense of proprietorship

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

Moody Stuart, *Brownlow North*, 36.

is awakened. I am not my own, I am bought with a price; I am His poem—His workmanship; all my faculties, feelings, passions, powers, opportunities are not really mine; they are His, although entrusted to my care.

¶ We can—within certain limits, at any rate—answer each one of us for himself the question, “What shall I do with my life?” And the many answers which are given to that question resolve themselves, in principle, into three. The first is something to this effect: “I will do nothing in particular with it. I will let matters drift. I have no distinct object; and all effort is unwelcome. If nothing is done, all may, after all, come right.” A second answer runs thus: “While I have it I will make the best of it. It gives me many opportunities of present enjoyment; I will turn them to account. I will extract from the moments as they pass as many pleasurable sensations as they can be made to yield. There will be an end to this, I know; pleasure soon palls, and time passes with relentless speed. But I will do as the old pagan bids; I will snatch joyfully the gifts which the present hour offers me, and will leave stern questions about the future to take care of themselves.” A third answer to the question, What shall I do with my life? is this: “I will give it to God.” This is the investment which a Christian makes. St. Paul made it at his conversion. St. Paul’s question, “What wilt thou have me to do?” addressed to our Lord Jesus Christ, marks the first step in this great change; and when St. Paul had begun, it was not the way of an intense and thorough character like his to do things by halves; he gave himself to God’s guidance and disposal without reserve. He felt that he was not his own; he was bought with a price. He felt that Christ had died for all, with this purpose among others, “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them.”<sup>1</sup>

3. The first act of committal in the hour of awakened faith is only the blessed beginning of a still more blessed lifelong habit of never-failing trust. The truly believing soul goes on believing and committing, until that day when the final settlement takes place. And then, when that day has come, and every man receives his own at the hand of the Righteous Judge, it is that it may be laid again, with all the increase it has gained, at the feet of Jesus, to be kept by Him, and used by Him, and be His only and wholly—to whom all is due—for all eternity.

<sup>1</sup> H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of St. Paul*, 279.

¶ Madame Guyon, the author of *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*, died in 1717, at the age of sixty-nine. Her long life had been one of unceasing trust and communion with God, through many vicissitudes and persecutions in the dark age of Louis XIV. In one of her poems she wrote—

Yield to the Lord with simple heart  
 All that thou hast, and all thou art;  
 Renounce all strength but strength Divine;  
 And peace shall be for ever thine;  
 Behold the path which I have trod—  
 My path till I go home to God.

A short time before her death she wrote a will, from which the following passage is an extract. It is an affecting evidence of the depth of her piety, and that she relied on Jesus Christ alone:—

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

“This is my last will and testament, which I request my executors, who are named within, to see executed.

“It is to Thee, O Lord God, that I owe all things; and it is to Thee, that I now surrender up all that I am. Do with me, O my God, whatsoever Thou pleasest. To Thee, in an act of irrevocable donation, I give up both my body and my soul to be disposed of according to Thy will. Thou seest my nakedness and misery without Thee. Thou knowest that there is nothing in heaven, or in earth, that I desire but Thee alone. Within Thy hands, O God, I leave my soul, not relying for my salvation on any good that is in me, but solely on Thy mercies, and the merits and sufferings of my Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

4. A quiet committal of ourselves to God is the only thing that will give us quiet hearts amidst the dangers and disappointments and difficulties and conflicts which we have all to encounter in this world. That trust in Him will bring, in the measure of its own depth and constancy, a proportionately deep and constant calm in our hearts.

¶ We boarded a liner at Liverpool and were soon in the midst of a throng of strangers. We were travelling steerage and our bunks and belongings were open to all below, and this gave us some anxiety as we had no safe place to keep what little money we had—when we came on deck we were continually worried thinking that it might be stolen. The wide open sea and the

<sup>1</sup> T. C. Upham, *Life of Madame Guyon*, 498.

pleasures of the deck we could not enjoy, and every now and again one of us would be going down below to see that all was safe. This anxiety continued for four days, and then we heard that the purser took care of valuables left with him, so we decided to ask him to take charge of our money. He told us we were late, and that people usually came to him at the start of the voyage. We said we were sorry to be late, but we thought better now than not at all. So he took our money and locked it in the great safe, telling us to come to him and get it again before we landed. He spoke kindly and sent us away with light hearts. The rest of the voyage we were able to enjoy to the full, entering into everything with never a care or worry. Life was altogether different, its joy had returned again, and all because we had confidence in the purser. We knew whom we had trusted, and were persuaded that he was able to keep that which we had committed unto him against the day of our landing in the new country at the port of Quebec.<sup>1</sup>

5. "I am persuaded." The original word is stronger than "persuaded" has come to be with us. It implies an irrefragable conviction. "I am absolutely certain that He is able to keep my deposit"—what I have put into His hands—"and to keep it against that day." "I am persuaded!" The experiment has succeeded, and the initial trembling has passed into final calm. The loose uncertainty has consolidated into firm assurance, and the Apostle now quietly confronts the massed and mighty antagonists of the night with unflinching courage and cheer. "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." "I am persuaded!" The quiet, fruitful, glorious confidence of it! The Apostle had risked his all upon the venture; he had committed everything to the proof! "I am persuaded that he is able to guard my deposit," "that which I have committed unto him against that day."

¶ Her soul was enveloped in thick darkness, and her temptations against Faith, ever conquered but ever returning, were there to rob her of all feeling of happiness at the thought of her approaching death. "Were it not for this trial, which is impossible to understand," she would say, "I think I should die of joy at the prospect of soon leaving this earth." By this trial

<sup>1</sup> James Whillans.

the Divine Master wished to put the finishing touches to her purification, and thus enable her not only to walk with rapid steps, but to run in her little way of confidence and abandonment. Her words repeatedly proved this. "I desire neither death, nor life. Were Our Lord to offer me my choice, I would not choose. I only will what He wills; it is what He does that I love. I do not fear the last struggle, nor any pains—however great—my illness may bring. God has always been my help. He has led me by the hand from my earliest childhood, and on Him I rely. My agony may reach the furthest limits, but I am convinced He will never forsake me."<sup>1</sup>

6. And of what is he persuaded? That "he is able to guard (A.V. keep) that which I have committed unto him against that day." The word rendered in the A.V. to *keep* is often used for guarding as armed men do. God, as it were, mounts guard on what we put into His hands. He comes to us in no mere metaphor, but in the deepest reality of the spiritual life, to guard us, to deliver us from our own evil and from outward evils, to be a wall of fire around us, and to keep us "against that day," with all its mysteries and terrors. Our hearts and anticipations go beyond the dark end of life; and we think of all the mysteries which, though they be magnificences, strike a chill of strangeness into our hearts, and we wonder what is to befall us out yonder in the darkness where we have never been before and about which we know little except that the throne is to be set, and the books opened. St. Paul says to us, "He is able to keep against that day." So guarded in life, shielded from all real evil, preserved from temptation and from snares, brought unharmed through the hurtling of the pitiless storm of death, and shepherded in the fold beyond the flood, the soul that is committed to Him is safe. In that act of giving ourselves utterly up to God, lie the secret of blessedness and the guarantee of immortality. He is not going to lose the treasures committed to His charge. He prizes them too much. His hand will not let the deposit entrusted to Him slip, and He will say at the last what Christ said in the Upper Room, only with a diverse application, "That which thou hast given me I have kept, and none of it is lost," and our souls will be safe in His hands.

<sup>1</sup> *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, 204.

¶ What was it that Duncan Mathieson once proposed that they should write upon his tombstone when he died? It was the one word "Kept." When the grey hairs came on him, and he looked backward over the road he had trod, it was not his prayers, his tears, his toils, that shone conspicuous, though all were there; it was the keeping power of God. There had been fears within and fightings without; there had been war unceasing with principalities and powers; dark foes unseen had thronged him and had tempted him, and had sought his overthrow. But he was more than conqueror in Christ who loved him. When a young man he had given himself to Christ. Right onward from that hour he had been kept.<sup>1</sup>

Now wilt me take for Jesus' sake,  
 Nor cast me out at all;  
 I shall not fear the foe awake,  
 Saved by Thy City wall;  
 But in the night with no affright  
 Shall hear him steal without,  
 Who may not scale Thy wall of might,  
 Thy Bastion, nor redoubt.

Full well I know that to the foe  
 Wilt yield me not for aye,  
 Unless mine own hand should undo  
 The gates that are my stay;  
 My folly and pride should open wide  
 Thy doors and set me free  
 'Mid tigers striped and panthers pied  
 Far from Thy liberty.

Unless by debt myself I set  
 Outside Thy loving ken,  
 And yield myself by weight of debt  
 Unto my fellow-men.  
 Deal with my guilt Thou as Thou wilt,  
 And "hold" I shall not cry,  
 So I be Thine in storm and shine,  
 Thine only till I die.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. H. Morrison, *The Oldest Trade in the World*, 56.

<sup>2</sup> Katharine Tynan.



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## THE USE OF SCRIPTURE.

But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness : that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.—2 Tim. iii. 14-17.

1. THERE is scarcely any passage of Scripture over which fiercer, more dusty, and more profitless battle has waged than over this. And yet it is a very simple affirmation ; certainly not intended by its writer for polemical purposes, but resting upon indisputable experience, and intended for practical uses. The Apostle is addressing a practical exhortation to Timothy, a young preacher of Christianity. He urges him to give no heed to evil men and seducers, who, deceiving and being deceived, would wax worse and worse. He is to continue steadfast in the Christian things which he has been taught, and of the truth of which he has been convinced, especially remembering of whom he had learned them ; referring possibly to himself as having been Timothy's Apostolic instructor, but more probably to Timothy's mother, Lois, and his grandmother, Eunice. That the tender memories of his education in childhood are thus invoked seems to be indicated by the words that follow : " From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The great profit to Timothy of this early instruction in the Scriptures is further affirmed by a statement of the general value of the Scriptures in the nurture of the spiritual life. So the object of the writer is simply to affirm the value or profitableness of Scripture in the religious culture of the life. The Scriptures will instruct him, and discipline him, and perfect his qualification for living a godly life.

2. The words apply primarily to the Old Testament. This appears not only from the fact that at the time when they were written the New Testament was still incomplete, and the writings which existed could hardly have acquired the recognized authority implied in this connexion by the term "scripture" (*γραφῆ*), but also from considerations arising out of the context. The Scriptures which Timothy, "the son of a Jewess which believed," whom Paul "took and circumcised" at Lystra, had known from a babe could only have been those of the Old Covenant.

3. The changes introduced by the Revisers in this passage have provoked some sharp criticism. They have been assailed not merely as pedantic and unnecessary, but as indicative of unsoundness in the faith. But in truth, it may be fairly argued that the Revisers' rendering goes beyond, rather than falls short of, the Authorized Version, in its assertion of the inspiration of Scripture. "Every Scripture inspired of God" refers plainly to the collection of sacred books of which St. Paul had already said that Timothy was acquainted with them from his earliest childhood. Every one of these sacred writings, he continues, each portion of that Divine library, as being full of the breath of God, has its purpose in teaching, controlling, or guiding, or disciplining the life, that the man of God, the Christian prophet, may be thoroughly equipped unto all good works.

4. There is the assertion, then, that the Scriptures are inspired, and there are two reasons given for their Inspiration—first, that they may make us wise unto salvation, and second, that they may make the man of God complete—in other words, the Scriptures are profitable for Redemption and for Sanctification. So we have—

I. Inspiration.

II. Redemption.

III. Sanctification.

## I.

## INSPIRATION.

“Every scripture inspired of God.”

1. By inspiration we are to understand that influence of the Spirit of God upon the writers of the Old Testament, by which they were empowered to teach such spiritual truths, and in such measure as was necessary for the religious welfare of those whom they addressed. Inspiration does not imply that the writers were lifted altogether above the level of their contemporaries in matters of plainly secular import. Marvellous as is their historical accuracy, it does not imply supernatural infusion of knowledge on subjects lying within their own observation. They were the faithful witnesses and recorders of the things which they themselves had seen and heard.

¶ Without pretending to define inspiration, or to determine the mystery of its operation, we may, I suppose, say that what we mean by it is an influence which gave to those who received it a unique and extraordinary spiritual insight, enabling them thereby, without superseding or suppressing the human faculties, but rather using them as its instruments, to declare in different degrees, and in accordance with the needs or circumstances of particular ages or particular occasions, the mind and purpose of God.<sup>1</sup>

2. Every true and noble thought of man is indeed, in a sense, inspired of God; but with the Biblical writers the purifying and illuminating Spirit must have been present in some special and exceptional measure. Nevertheless, in the words of the prophet, or other inspired writer, there is a human element, not less than a Divine element, and neither of these must be ignored.

(1) The Divine element in Scripture is manifest to all. The “heavenliness of the matter”—to use the expressive phrase of the Westminster Confession—speaks in it with a clearness which none can mistake, and strikes a responsive chord in every heart that is open to receive a message from above. In the Old Testament we read how God awakened in His ancient people of Israel the consciousness of Himself; and we hear one writer after

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Driver, *Sermons on the Old Testament*, 146.

another unfolding different aspects of His nature, and disclosing with increasing distinctness His gracious purposes towards man. In the pages of the prophets there shine forth, with ineffaceable lustre, those sublime declarations of truth and righteousness and judgment which have impressed all readers, to whatever age or clime or creed they have belonged. In the Psalms we hear the meditations of the believing soul, contemplating with adoring wonder the manifold operations of Providence, or pouring forth its emotions in converse with God. The historians set before us, from different points of view, the successive stages in the Divine education of the race. They show us how its natural tendencies to polytheism were gradually overcome. They show us how Israel was more and more separated from its neighbours, in order to be the effectual witness and keeper of Divine truth. Sin is indeed so deeply rooted in human nature that its extirpation upon this earth is not to be expected; but the writers of the Old Testament explain to us how the ordinances of Israel were adapted to counteract its influence, and to maintain a right attitude of the heart towards God. And they interpret further their nation's history: they show us how a providential purpose dominates it; how it is subservient to God's aims; how the past leads on to better possibilities in the future. And the crown and consummation of Israel's long and chequered past is set before us in the pages of the New Testament. In order to realize what the Bible is, we have but to imagine what the literature of Israel would have been, had not those to whom we owe it been illumined in some special measure by the light from heaven; even though its external history had been approximately the same, its historians, its statesmen, its essayists, its poets, would assuredly have written in a very different strain.

(2) But though the greatness and the spiritual importance of the Divine element in Scripture has often and rightly engrossed men's attention, still, in order properly to estimate the character of the book which is termed inspired, or the revelation as we actually possess it, the human element must not be overlooked. Not only is Divine truth always presented through the human organ, and thus, so to say, coloured by the individuality of the inspired agent by whom it is enunciated, but it is impossible to close our eyes to the fact that its enunciations are sometimes relative rather than

absolute; they are adapted to the circumstances of particular ages, they may even be limited by the spiritual capacity of the particular writer, or, in the case of his being a historian, by the materials or sources of information which he had at his disposal. The revelation of the Old Testament is avowedly progressive; the teaching in its earlier parts may naturally therefore be expected to be imperfect as compared with that which is given in its later parts, or which is to be found in the New Testament. We cannot take at random a passage from the inspired volume and say, without qualification or comparison with other passages, that it is absolute truth, or the pure word of God, or an infallible guide to conduct or character.

¶ The relativity of inspiration is observable very noticeably in the Book of Ecclesiastes. The melancholy conclusion to which the author's moralizings lead him is that life under all its aspects is dissatisfying and disappointing; the best that can be done with it is to enjoy, while it lasts, such pleasures as it brings with it. "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour." How strangely these words fall upon our ears! How unlike the soaring aspirations of the Psalmists, or the spirit of generous philanthropy which breathes so often in the discourses of the great prophets or the exhortations of the law! The teaching of Ecclesiastes, if followed consistently, could only result in paralysing human effort, and stifling every impulse of an ennobling or unselfish kind. The author's theory of life is imperfect; untoward and depressing circumstances, as it seems, embittered his spirit, and concealed from him a fuller and more satisfying view of the sphere of human activity. His conclusions possess only a relative value. It is upon life not absolutely, but as he witnessed and experienced it, that he passes his relentless verdict, "All is vanity." It was the particular age with which he was himself acquainted that prompted him to judge as he did of the uselessness of human endeavour; and his maxims, at least so far as they possess a negative aspect, cannot be applied to a different age without material qualification and reserve.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Of his early acquaintance with the Bible, Thompson writes: "The Bible as an influence from the literary standpoint has a late but important date in my life. As a child I read it, but for its historical interest. Nevertheless, even then I was greatly, though vaguely, impressed by the mysterious imagery, the cloudy grand-

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Driver, *Sermons on the Old Testament*, 150.

eurs, of the Apocalypse. Deeply uncomprehended, it was, of course, the pageantry of an appalling dream; insurgent darkness, with wild lights flashing through it; terrible phantasms insupportably revealed against profound light, and in a moment no more; on the earth hurrying to and fro, like insects of the earth at a sudden candle; unknown voices uttering out of darkness darkened and disastrous speech; and all this is in motion and turmoil, like the sands of a fretted pool. Such is the Apocalypse as it inscribes itself on the verges of my childish memories. In early youth it again drew me to itself, giving to my mind a permanent and shaping direction. In maturer years Ecclesiastes (casually opened during a week of solitude in the Fens) masterfully affected a temperament in key with its basic melancholy. But not till quite later years did the Bible as a whole become an influence. Then, however, it came with decisive power. But not as it had influenced most writers. My style, being already formed, could receive no evident impress from it: its vocabulary had come to me through the great writers of our language. In the first place its influence was mystical; it revealed to me a whole scheme of existence, and lit up life like a lantern.”<sup>1</sup>

3. Observe a threefold effect of inspiration—the revelation of truth, intensity of feeling, and abiding power in the words.

(1) First, the inspired man was a “seer”; the veil was turned aside, and he was permitted to look into the sanctuary of truth. Think of the Hebrew prophets to whose writings the text refers. The unity, personality, and spirituality of God were revealed to them. They beheld His glory as others did not, and therefore spoke of it in sublime and incomparable language. He is “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.” “All nations are before him as nothing.” “The heavens are not clean in his sight.” He is “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.” They are conscious also of His loving-kindness and tender mercies, so that while they feared His great and awful name, they put their trust under the shadow of His wings. They recognized His active presence in the world, saw His hand in the rise and fall of nations, and history was to them the unfolding of His purpose. The future was opened to some of them, and they foresaw the coming of Him who is the Saviour of men, to “set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed.” The result of inspiration was the

<sup>1</sup> E. Meynell, *The Life of Francis Thompson* (1913), 172.

same in the minds of the Apostles. There were things in the teaching of Christ which they could not comprehend, others they misunderstood, and others were in the course of time entirely forgotten. But when the Spirit was given He brought all things to their remembrance; they were able to recall the past, and to enter into the meaning of the wonderful words.

¶ A man standing in a large room in the faint twilight of evening can distinguish the objects nearest to him; those farther removed are indistinct and confused, and the most distant are completely lost to his view; but fill the place with light and all things are made manifest. This illustrates the influence of inspiration upon the minds of prophets and apostles: old truths became more important when seen in the new and brighter light; truths imperfectly understood appeared clear and well defined, and things which the unaided reason could not discover were revealed.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Secondly, their mental illumination was accompanied by deep and intense feeling. Their spirits were "moved"—they felt the burden of "the word of the Lord"—the truth was in their heart "as a burning fire." Therefore speech became a necessity, for by speaking they lightened the burden that oppressed them and gave out the fire that burned in their bosoms. When they had messages of peace and good tidings to deliver, their "doctrine dropped as the rain, their speech distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb." But when the sins of the nation and the judgments of Heaven were their themes they cried aloud, and their language was as terrible as a midnight alarm. Sometimes there is a wail of sorrow in the words they utter; at others they endeavour in vain to express the workings in their spirit, and their broken sentences resemble the mutterings of a storm that fails to open into loud resounding thunder.

¶ Before a man is justified in using the same language and style of speaking and writing as the prophets, he must possess their insight into the truth and the agonizing feeling which they experienced. To use their terrible language without their inspiration is false. Our words and the manner of using them should correspond with the clearness of our mental vision and the depth of our spiritual emotion. If the word of the Lord weighs heavily upon your heart, if the sacred fire burns within you, if your spirit is in anguish because of the sins of your people,

<sup>1</sup> T. Jones, *The Divine Order*, 86.

then speak as the Hebrew seer spoke. Blow the trumpet in Israel, sound the lamentation, walk through the length and breadth of the land, and cry aloud, "Woe, woe unto thee, saith the Lord God"; but if not, then you had better speak calmly and reason with men, and suggest the truth, and persuade and attract as a friend—nothing more. No good can come of unreality; mimic thunder causes no alarm, and painted fire gives forth no heat. Loud stormy words which are out of all harmony with the convictions and feelings of the mind from which they proceed are worthless as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. Falling upon the speaker's own ears, they sound hollow, and in his deepest heart he knows they have no meaning. The hearers also in due time will instinctively discover the truth of the matter, and see plainly enough that what he says is said because speaking is his profession; and then will follow this most natural consequence—the alienation of the people from the institutions of religion. The first thing for us all is to be true and honest. To speak as the prophets spoke we also must be enlightened and "moved" by the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup>

(3) Thirdly, observe the abiding power in the words. The Scriptures have been regarded as records of inspiration. This is true as far as it goes. The wave-marks on the sand make known how high the tide rose. And we have evidence in the words of inspired men how profoundly they were moved by the Divine afflatus that came upon them; but here the comparison ends. We are not to think of the word of God as a dry sea-beach from which the waters have receded, or a forsaken channel through which a river once flowed. A man who has the power of true genius writes a book, it may be a "Paradise Lost," a "Pilgrim's Progress," a "Purgatory," or an "Inferno." He has seen visions, his whole nature has been moved by their power, and he speaks in a kind of inspired language. The truth he beheld is in the book; but this is not all, for much of himself is in it also—his thoughts concerning what he saw, his feelings, his passion, and the real energy of his mind. His anger frowns upon the page, his love trembles in the words, his sorrow sighs and sobs in the sentences, and his power fills the book; and in reading it you not only come into contact with the truth it reaches, but you have also communion with the spirit and mind of the author. It is this abiding human spirit in great books that makes them

<sup>1</sup> T. Jones, *The Divine Order*, 88.

immortal, and gives them power to command the admiration, the love, the smiles, and the tears of many generations. So also of the utterances of holy men under the inspiration of God. "The Lord God, merciful and gracious." "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." "Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." These words and the like of them contain the highest truths, but that is not all; they are instinct with the love, the pity, the sympathy, and the power of the Divine mind. "They are spirit, and they are life." The ancient sacred fire that descended from heaven continues to burn on the altar of the Bible.

¶ On 28th February 1899 the Bishop addressed the Durham Junior Clergy Society in the Chapter-house on "The Study of the Bible." In this address he indicated some characteristics of the study of Scripture which he had found to be of primary importance. He mentioned seven: "The study must be systematic, thorough, wide, historical, patient, reverent, vital." On these characteristics he enlarged, and afterwards in his concluding words said:—

"I charge you to prize and to use your peculiar spiritual heritage which was most solemnly committed to you at your ordination. Our English Church represents in its origin and in its growth the study of the Bible. In the study of the Bible lies the hope of its future. For the study of the Bible in the sense in which I have indicated is of momentous importance at the present time, and it is rare; there is much discussion about the Bible, but, as I fear, little knowledge of it. We are curious to inquire—and it is a reasonable curiosity—when this book and that was written; but we are contented to be ignorant of what this book or that contains. We remain blind to the magnificent course of the Divine education of the world; and still less do we dwell upon the separate phrases of 'friends of God and prophets,' and question them and refuse to let them go till they have given us some message of warning or comfort or instruction. Such failures, such neglect, seal the very springs of life. They deprive us of the remedies for our urgent distresses. Who does not know them? We are troubled on all sides by wars and rumours of

wars, by the restlessness and anxiety of nations and classes; we ask impatiently if this wild confusion is the adequate result of eighteen centuries of the Gospel of Peace? We ask impatiently, and the Bible offers us an interpretation of a history and life not unlike our own, and helps us to see how the counsel of God goes forward through all the vicissitudes of human fortunes and human wilfulness. Our hearts again constantly fail us for fear of the things which are coming on the world. The Bible inspires us with an unfailing hope. We are yet further perplexed by conflicts of reasoning, by novelties of doctrines, by strange conclusions of bold controversialists. The Bible provides us with a sure touchstone of truth, while

The intellectual power, through words and things,  
Goes sounding on, a dim and perilous way,

and brings us back to a living fellowship with Him who is the Truth." <sup>1</sup>

Gallery of sacred pictures manifold,  
A minster rich in holy effigies,  
And bearing on entablature and frieze  
The hieroglyphic oracles of old.  
Along its transept aureoled martyrs sit;  
And the low chancel side-lights half acquaint  
The eye with shrines of prophet, bard, and saint,  
Their golden tablets traced in Holy Writ!  
But only when on form and word obscure  
Falls from above the white supernal light,  
We read the mystic characters aright,  
And light informs the silent portraiture,  
Until we pause at last awe-held before  
The One ineffable Face, love, wonder, and adore.<sup>2</sup>

## II.

### REDEMPTION.

“The sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus: that the man of God may be complete.”

The whole meaning of the Old Testament may be summed up in two words—*redemption* and *sanctification*. On the one hand, it is one vast prophetic testimony to Christ, to His person, to His

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, ii. 267.

<sup>2</sup> J. G. Whittier.

work, to His kingdom; on the other hand, it is the Divine method of teaching man through the facts of history and the various circumstances of life how to subdue the evil within him, and to become conformed in very truth to that image of God in which he was originally created. Whereas we are sometimes told that to insist upon any correspondence between prediction and fulfilment in the Old Testament is to degrade the ancient prophets to the level of the soothsayer or the gipsy fortune-teller, it would be much truer to say that the whole Old Testament is one vast prediction from its first page to its last. It is occupied with one glorious hope. This is its mark and peculiar characteristic. No Jewish legislator, prophet, or singer ever looks back to the past with fond regret. Each looks forward with ardent longing for the advent of the coming Deliverer. This is the golden thread which runs through that marvellous, diversified web of law and history, of song and fable, of proverb and allegory by which the Old Testament is marked. Christ is the sum and substance of all its law, its poetry, its ritual, its prophecies. The lives and devout aspirations of all holy men of old point to Him. Without Him these ancient writings, as St. Augustine says, have no point or meaning, but are flat, stale, and unprofitable. Behold Him in them all, and they become at once instinct with life and beauty; or, as the same Father profoundly says, the New Testament is latent in the Old, the Old patent in the New.

1. The first of the characters ascribed to the sacred writings is that they are the appointed means of grace. God Himself is the only Saviour: no power but His own is able to do this work. He might, if He had so pleased, have accomplished it simply by the direct and inclusive exertion of His own will and power, without requiring the concurrent action of any other being, or the employment of any concurrent instrumental means. If He chooses to adopt the latter scheme, He has the right to prescribe the means or instruments to be used, and to assign whatever function or effect He may see fit to each appointed ordinance. He may so condition the exercise of His own and only efficacious power on the instrumental means that the use of the instrument will infallibly carry the employment of the power. Or He may appoint the use of the instrument to be simply concurrent

with the use of His own power, but as in no way so conditioning His power as to subject it to the will of the human user of the means and remove it from His own absolute control. But whatever function may be assigned to the appointed ordinance, the appointment of such ordinance and the positive requirement of its use for ever settles both the question in regard to the ordinance itself and the question as to who is to use it. Any interference on the part of any one, either to change an ordinance or to qualify the persons who are entitled to employ it, is the presumption and the inconceivable guilt of interfering with the legislative authority of the Almighty God Himself. Now the Scriptures say of themselves that "these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." They say that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." Believers are exhorted to "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." These testimonials are clear, positive, and peremptory. Their meaning is so plain that it cannot be made plainer. They teach that inasmuch as salvation is by faith, and faith must be based upon truth, the Word of God, which contains all His testimony, is one of the chiefest of the means of grace. They teach that as faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, it is at the peril of faith, and consequently at the peril of salvation, that we refuse the use of the Scriptures. To neglect them is to assume the responsibility of neglecting a necessary means of life.

¶ The reader will do well to keep in mind what is the one object we set before him in the present inquiry: to enjoy the Bible and to turn it to his benefit. Whatever else he may propose to himself in dealing with the Bible, this remains his one proper object. In another order of interest, the poetry of Homer supplies here a useful illustration for us. Elaborate inquiries have been raised as to the date, authorship, and mode of com-

position of the Homeric Poems. Some writers have held, too, and have laboriously sought to prove, that there is a hidden, mystical sense running all through them. All this sort of disquisition, or at any rate some department of it, is nearly sure to catch at one time or another the attention of the reader of Homer, and to tempt and excite him. But, after all, the proper object for the reader of the Homeric poems remains this: to enjoy Homer, and to turn him to his benefit. In dealing even with Homer, we say, this is found true and very needful to be borne in mind;—with an object where yet the main interest is properly intellectual. How much more does it hold true of the Bible! where the main interest is properly not intellectual, but practical.<sup>1</sup>

(1) The Scriptures *show us our need of being saved*. They describe how our first parents were created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of God Himself, and give us a bright picture of the blessedness of their first estate, but then they show us how Adam and Eve fell, and how the race fell with them. They describe how corruption and wickedness spread and prevailed on the earth, the imagination of men's hearts being evil and that continually, and how God brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. They show us how wickedness prevailed again, its cry going up to heaven, and how such cities as Sodom and Gomorrah brought down the consuming fire of the Divine wrath. They show us how in aftertimes, even among the people chosen to be the people of the Lord, there was ever present, as a reason for lamentation, grievous backsliding and sin. Even of them the Lord says: "It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways."

(2) But the Scriptures exhibit to us thus the sinfulness and the misery of our state *with a view to awaken us*, and rouse us to put the question, What shall we do that we may be delivered and saved? And while they rouse and move us thus, they come to us expressly as the message of salvation from the Lord Himself. While they exhibit the whole of the Divine character, testifying to God's perfect righteousness, they are especially the witness to and the glorious revelation of the exceeding riches of His grace.

(3) The Scriptures *guide us to salvation by leading us to Jesus Christ*. The Old Testament pointed from the beginning to the coming of Jesus the Saviour. Salvation was promised immediately

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 99.

after the Fall, and the promise was contained in the announcement of the appearing of Him who should bruise the head of the enemy, who should destroy the works of the devil. And the announcement was made with ever-increasing distinctness and definiteness from generation to generation during the ages that followed. The prophets in that long line stretching from Moses to Malachi pointed to the coming great atoning redemption work and to Him, through whom, by whom it should be accomplished. The Scriptures led believers in ancient times to wait for Christ, and they found salvation looking forward to His Coming, and trusting in Him. When He appeared the Scriptures testified concerning Him, pointed Him out, led the inquiring to Him, to find their salvation in Him. Timothy was made wise unto salvation, being led by the Scriptures to Christ Himself.

Here is the paramount meaning of the Old Testament. It is a preparation, long drawn out, manifold and many-sided, for Jesus Christ. This is how the Apostles and the first Evangelists looked upon it, and this is how, we may reverently add, they were taught to look upon it by our Lord Himself. For was it not the Lord Jesus Himself who said to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory"? Was it not the Saviour Himself who said that "all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me"; and who, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"? Was it not Christ Himself who said of the Old Testament Scriptures, "These are they which testify of me"? who said in view of His Passion, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be"? The roots, then, of the Christian religion are to be found in the Old Testament. The Redemption postulates the Fall of man. We read the Old Testament, and find that Christ is the Key of it.

¶ I do not mean to say that the Old Testament has no value apart from the historical Jesus; and that a Jew may not be warned and corrected, and instructed in righteousness thereby. Far from it. But this is certain, that men fed and nourished on the law and the prophets, and on them only, will remain children of Israel still; and the work of God in the education of the world

for the last nineteen centuries will reach them only in a very enfeebled and ineffective way. It is Christ who gives universal meaning to the contents, and sanctifying power to the truths and hopes, and triumphant energy to the redemptive idea of the Old Testament. He is the Light of the Word as well as of the world; and even the Jew will reach his ideal only through that greatest Jew, Christ Jesus. The Scriptures are able to make men wise unto salvation; but it is through faith which is in Him.<sup>1</sup>

¶ There is a splendid recklessness in the use which the Apostles make of the Old Testament, penetrating to the very core of its spiritual meaning in the power of a new fact, the fact of the crucified and risen Jesus. That ancient code, which under the authority of those who sat in Moses' seat had well-nigh become a barren and unprofitable absurdity, lived again in the great conviction that to the believer the end of the law is Christ. The Christian re-read his Bible not in the rabbinic schools of Jerusalem or Galilee, but by the empty sepulchre where the body of Jesus had lain. It is the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Romans which crown and consummate the prophets, not the puerile pedantries of the Talmud. Well has it been said that it is the atoning death of Christ which is the true guarantee that every Scripture is inspired of God.<sup>2</sup>

¶ The "thoroughly evangelical" note of Stanton's preaching which struck Bishop Wilberforce no one would deny. It was sounded all the time. That love for the Bible which comes of knowing what it contains and is kept alive by close and intimate study of the sacred Scriptures—for with most of us only when we leave off reading the Bible do we cease to care for it, and the same thing is true, of course, of the writings of many profane authors—was a great factor in Stanton's ministerial life, and mightily affected his preaching. The "music of the Gospel" was ever leading him home, and he must needs bring all who would give ear within sound of the brave song. It was this love for the Bible, with the Evangelicalism that dwelt so constantly on the Personal Saviour, that endeared Stanton's preaching to many old-fashioned, earnest-minded Protestants, both Nonconformist and Church of England, whom the "higher criticism" and the "new theology," and the general incursion of rationalist modernism, had driven from their accustomed places of worship. . . . For him the Bible was indeed the Book of books, containing the priceless words of truth and life, and wealth of treasure that not all the rest of the books ever written could match. A lady once asked

<sup>1</sup> John Clifford.

<sup>2</sup> J. G. Simpson, *Christian Ideals*, 134.

Stanton what book he would advise her to read during Lent. "I told her," said Stanton, "why not read the Bible?"<sup>1</sup>

2. "Through faith which is in Christ Jesus." St. Paul speaks of this as the condition of our knowing the real power of the Old Testament. We may learn from him, surely, a great lesson in regard to an anxiety felt by many in the present day. There is no better course by which each one of us may strengthen his position in regard to the Old Testament than by using every means to make more real and sure his union with Christ. It is hard for us to do justice to that which St. Paul meant by "faith which is in Christ Jesus," the word "faith" has been dragged through so many controversies, and thrust so often into false antitheses. But we can see that he meant not less than this—the surrender of one's life to Christ, to be conformed to His example, guided by the daily disclosure of His will, informed and strengthened by His grace; the conviction that for His sake, and by the power of His perfect sacrifice, we can be set free from the sins that hinder and defile us, and know the miracle of God's forgiveness; the growing certainty that He Himself, our Blessed Lord, vouchsafes to come and dwell within us, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, giving us His own life, and making us strong to be true, and humble, and patient, and unselfish; strict with ourselves, as knowing how much need we have of strictness; gentle, and making large allowances for others, as never knowing how sorely they are tried; enabling us, in spite of all that is past, to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life.

¶ When he read his Bible, he knew that he was travelling through beautiful country—he kept his eyes open for fair visions and his ears for heavenly songs—it was his book of wonder and surprise, of song and of love. He was of opinion that it should be bound in red because it is the book of Red Romance. It never became an "old" book to him—for it was always more modern to him than the daily paper. I have many pictures in my mind of his reading the Word, but the one which is most vivid is that of the way in which he read the story of the Crucifixion. When he read it in public the under-refrain of it all was, How could they do it? How could men reject and crucify Love? The mystery of the Cross was to him not only in Love dying for others (he knew something of that), but also in men scourging and hissing and

<sup>1</sup> J. Clayton, *Father Stanton*, 131.

hounding Love out of the world. That was indeed a mystery to this lover. When one went to see him towards Good Friday, one would note that his reading was in the story of the Cross as told by the Evangelists. He read it then and always—to use John Bunyan's phrase—"with the water standing in his eyes" and also with wonder and glad surprise. If his prayers were like the drawing up of Robinson Crusoe's ladder, I think his Bible-reading was akin to the hunting of that well-known adventurer. He yearned to find food for the day's tasks, to fill the storehouse of his life with the plenty of God's Word. He caught his venison and roasted it. His Bible gave him his daily banquet.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### SANCTIFICATION.

"Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for instruction which is in righteousness."

The Apostle singles out four ways in which the Scriptures may become profitable in our sanctification.

1. They are "profitable for doctrine" or for *teaching*. The Bible is pre-eminently a religious book. The substance of the Decalogue is love to God and man. The sacrifices and ceremonies of the law instituted by Moses were visible emblems of moral and spiritual truths. The great lesson of the Book of Job is the duty of trusting God in the darkest, stormiest day. In the historical books we behold the Divine providence in the affairs of men, and learn the vast importance of true principles in statesmanship, and right conduct in life. The psalms are poetic expressions of human wants—faith, prayer, and worship. The prophets enforce with marvellous eloquence the necessity of obedience to God. Solomon ended his teaching thus: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." The sayings of our Saviour are "the words of eternal life." The writings of the Apostles explain the doctrines, duties, hopes, and joys of religion. The Book of Revelation exhibits the triumph of knowledge, faith, right, and holiness over ignorance, infidelity, wrong and sin. The questions

<sup>1</sup> *Love and Life: The Story of J. Denholm Brash*, 64.

to ask with regard to the Scriptures are these: Is the religion they offer adapted to the wants of man? Do they teach a true spiritual philosophy? If men receive their doctrines and obey their precepts, will they become wiser, truer, and more holy than by rejecting them? These questions are answered in the affirmative by the experience of thousands. They know that the Scriptures are what they profess to be, "profitable for doctrine" and "able to make men wise unto salvation," and therefore none of the difficulties which criticism may raise can shake their faith in the Word of God. There may be spots on the sun, but it is, notwithstanding, the great fountain of light to this and other worlds.

¶ Oh, that we would all read our Bible with more teachable hearts, with more determined will to find out what it has to say to us about our calling here, our destiny hereafter, that we would store up its precepts in our memory, to be our strength in the moment of temptation, its examples in our imagination, to be the pattern and model of our daily lives! Do not think that having a Bible, or reading a Bible, is any good, except so far as we live by the Bible. The Bible is the rule of life as well as of faith, of what we are to do, as well as of what we are to believe.<sup>1</sup>

2. Akin to this there is another thought that follows. The Scriptures are profitable for *correction*. Some read to criticize. They cannot admire the great opening poem of the Book of Genesis, in which the inspired muse sings the creative power of the Almighty in notes "harmonious with the morning stars," because it does not speak with scientific precision. It is quite right to point out whatever inaccuracies may be discovered in the history of the deliverance from Egypt and the sojourn in the wilderness, but one cannot help remarking that that is a peculiar state of mind in which a man can read through the wonderful story without being once struck with its spirit, its grandeur, and its awfulness. Others turn the sacred pages to find support for the systems they have formed. This is the same as if a man constructed a theory of nature, and afterwards went in search of the facts whereby its truth must be proved. Others, again, read for comfort. They have been disappointed by the world in which they placed too much trust; or death has broken in upon their

<sup>1</sup> *Bishop Fraser's Lancashire Life*, 35.

charmed circle and filled their hearts with sorrow; or their health is failing, and there are indications that the end is not distant; or their sin has been a burden from which they seek rest. Well, let them read for comfort, for the Bible is the book of sorrowful people. Its deep impressions of Divine love, sympathy, and tenderness have in them a power to heal the broken heart. But we should also know that the Scriptures are given for our "correction." He is the wise reader of God's Word who tries his opinion, beliefs, principles, life, and character by the Divine standard, and is willing to have them corrected.

¶ The Bible is, indeed, simple enough for the simple, but it is also unfathomably deep. No book takes such an entire sweep of all that affects and interests man. No book begins so low or ends so high. The most tainted being, whose face is one plague-spot from brow to chin, gets a new knowledge of himself here, not with the contaminating knowledge of curiosity, but with the healing and hallowing knowledge of repentance. And the most holy saint, the face that seems to its fellows already radiant with the beatific vision, looks in and says, "Hush! for I see something higher, holier still."<sup>1</sup>

3. Again, the Bible is profitable for *instruction* which is in righteousness. In the Bible we have a record of a growing insight into the meaning of righteousness. The earlier teachers had not risen to the level of the great Teacher in the Sermon on the Mount. Like all God's works, the Bible is characterized by growth. The stage reached by many of the Old Testament teachers ought long ago to have been passed by the Christian Church. Yet is the Bible, in the parts that belong to the immature youth of the Hebrew nation, as well as in the later parts, the world's lesson-book of righteousness. "If you want to know plastic art," says a modern Biblical critic, "if you want to know plastic art, you go to the Greeks. If you want to know science, you go to the Aryan genius. And why? Because they have the speciality for these things, for making us feel what they are, and giving us an enthusiasm for them. Well, so has Israel and the Bible a speciality for righteousness; for making us feel what it is, and giving us an enthusiasm for it." Righteousness is the stuff of which character is formed, its basal element. This is

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 18.

the speciality of the Bible, the burden of its pages, the passion of its writers. At the beginning of it there might be written for motto or text, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

4. This brings us to the high purpose for which the Scriptures were given to us, namely, to impart "instruction in righteousness, *that the man of God may be complete*"—right in every respect, in thought, feeling, character, and therefore right in state and condition; right in himself, right in his relation to his fellows, and right before God. The aim of the husbandman in the tree he plants and cultivates is to have fruit; but nature is as careful of the blossoms and the foliage as of the fruit, for her purpose is a perfect tree. Men cultivate parts of their nature. Some educate and develop their physical nature, and not much else. Others pay attention to the sensuous soul—they love music, art, eloquence, and light literature. There are persons who are mere thinkers; the cultivation of the intellectual powers is the one important thing in their estimation. Some spend their lives in small activities—things that are good in themselves, but which become harmful when done to the neglect of more important duties. There is good in all of these; but none of them aims high enough. The Divine purpose is not physical perfection, or intellectual strength, or refinement of taste, not even morality and devotion, but the full development of the whole nature, "that the man of God may be complete."

¶ From the cradle I was brought up in a religious atmosphere. All my relations on my father's side have for ages been known as eminent for their piety. Some of them were giants in stature, and still more so in spiritual attainments. I have even now very vivid recollections of the prayers offered up at the Saturday evening prayer-meetings by Uncles David and Rees. How they used to pour out their souls before God! How they would wrestle with God! Each of them presented to my imagination a living picture of wrestling Jacob. All these godly men took the deepest interest in me. How much I owe to their prayers and loving counsel is known to God only. Then there was the Sunday School, with all its hallowed influences. In those days the Sunday School in Wales was a grand institution for imbuing the child's mind with Biblical knowledge and Christian principles. I

seem to have been born and brought up in the House of God, and among God's people. It may be truly said of me, as it was said of Timothy, "And from a babe thou hast known the Holy Scriptures."<sup>1</sup>

¶ De Quincey divided all literature into two kinds, the literature of knowledge—such as hand-books of science, and all books of mere information—and the literature of power—books which sway the spirits of men and build up their character. In the literature of power the Bible takes a first place, for it is instinct with power of the highest kind; spiritual power, power to touch the noblest springs of action, to develop the highest faculties, to form the truest manhood—power to influence men's lives to the grandest issues. And if we consider how the literature of power in general produces its effects, we shall discover how the Bible is to become for us a source of spiritual profit. A poem of Wordsworth, a chapter of Ruskin, or an essay of Carlyle are lost upon us unless they, in some measure, lift us into the spirit of the writers when they wrote. That is the use of the literature of power—to make us sharers in its power, its visions, its aspirations, its sympathies, its enthusiasms. So the Bible is to exercise power over us by lifting us up into the spiritual life of the writers, out of which its words have come. It is not enough to receive its doctrine into our heads, and to busy ourselves with the knowledge it conveys. What is needed is that we become inspired with the Spirit which inspired the sacred writers, and share their spiritual vision. It is so that the Bible has worked upon men like St. Augustine, Thomas à Kempis, and John Bunyan. They were full of the Holy Ghost. The spirit of the Scriptures breathed in their works, and has made the *Confessions*, the *Imitation of Christ*, and the *Pilgrim's Progress* a noble part of the literature of spiritual power. The Scriptures have imparted to them something of their own genius.<sup>2</sup>

¶ If you put this Book into the hands of your children directly they have left the cradle and are learning to read; and if you give them a sufficiently good education to enable them to read the Book and to understand it as they understand other books; and if you should tell them that they should try to use this Book very much as a soldier uses his book of regulations, to learn how to behave himself in the army, in the battle, in the face of the foe; if you teach your children that this is the purpose of the Bible, for instruction or education in righteousness, your children will find

<sup>1</sup> *Griffith John: The Story of Fifty Years in China*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> D. M. Ross.

their way to Jesus Christ, they will find salvation, the righteousness that is in Him. And not only will they find Jesus Christ, but in the process of finding Him they will have become men and women, and not mere babes under tuition. You will find that there has been produced in them a strength of mind and of conscience which will make them different from other people who have been taught in easier but less effectual ways.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. F. Horton, *England's Danger*, 106.

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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## THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.—2 Tim. iv. 6-8.

THESE are among St. Paul's last words, and they are bathed in unutterable pathos. The old man, his hair whitened with age, his face furrowed with care, his body worn with disease and damaged by brutal persecution, is a captive in a miserable dungeon in Nero's Rome; and although his speech breathes the calm of heaven, yet the wretchedness of his imprisonment makes him regret that he left "a cloak at Troas" that would have warmed him in the winter's biting cold, or shielded him from the dungeon's perilous damp. Still more keenly does he regret that he has to face his loneliness without the tender solace of his son Timothy's presence, and the cheering companionship of his "books and papers." It is a hard lot for the aged Crusader; but he is a hardy and chivalrous knight, who has braved a thousand perils in love for his Divine Leader, and therefore he is not cast down.

### I.

#### ST. PAUL'S PRESENT STATE.

"I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come."

1. Notice, first, the quiet courage which looks death full in the face without a tremor. The language implies that St. Paul knows his death hour is all but here. "I am already being offered"—the process is begun, his sufferings at the moment are, as it were, the initial steps of his sacrifice—"and the time of my departure is come." The tone in which he tells Timothy this is

very noticeable. There is no sign of excitement, no tremor of emotion, no affectation of stoicism in the simple sentences. He is not playing up to a part or pretending to be anything which he is not. If ever language sounded perfectly simple and genuine, this does. With an unforced courage St. Paul fronts his fate and looks death in the eyes. The anticipation does not dull his interest in God's work in the world, as witness the warnings and exhortations of the context. It does not withdraw his sympathies from his companions. It does not hinder him from continuing his studies and pursuits, or from providing for small matters of daily convenience. If ever a man was free from any taint of fanaticism or morbid enthusiasm, it is this man waiting so calmly in his prison for his death.

¶ Perhaps nothing in the memory of this generation has touched the hearts of the English-speaking race, and indeed of the whole world, like the pathos and the courage of those last letters of Captain Scott's, written in the Antarctic solitudes, with Death at his very elbow. The world has been thrilled to see how nobly and splendidly an Englishman can die. "We did intend to finish ourselves when things proved like this, but we have decided to die naturally in the track." It is fine. But this is finer: "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."<sup>1</sup>

¶ St. Paul had looked too often into death's dark face to be afraid of it now. Yet, after all, that is but a little thing to say. There are many to whom death is no longer "the shadow feared of man," who have not St. Paul's high hope. Some there are, indeed, who welcome death; it is for them the one door of escape from the unutterable pain and weariness of life. St. Paul welcomed death because he saw beyond death. "There is the Mainstream," writes James Payn, "the Backwater and the Weir, and there ends the River of Life." What is after that he does not know; with him it is from death to dark. But with St. Paul it was from death to day. "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day. . . . The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom." What are Nero's judgment-seat and the executioner's flashing brand to the man who holds that faith?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Archibald Alexander.

<sup>2</sup> G. Jackson, *The Table-Talk of Jesus*, 248.

¶ I had a friend very ill. For three days his life hung in doubt with his physician. When he began to recover, he said to me: "Death came and looked me in the face; but, thank God! I could look him in the face without fear." Here stands a man face to face with the last enemy in a far more terrible form. To die as a public criminal at the hand of the executioner is very different from lying down to sleep one's self into another world—very different even from falling in the field fighting for all that is dearest to the patriotic heart. Yet the Apostle speaks of his fate as calmly as if he were only about to set out on a journey or embark for a voyage.<sup>1</sup>

2. There is great beauty and force in the metaphors which St. Paul here uses for death.

(1) We have, first, that of an offering or, more particularly, of a drink-offering or libation: "I am already being poured out." No doubt the special reason for the selection of this figure here is St. Paul's anticipation of a violent death. The shedding of his blood was to be an offering poured out like some costly wine upon the altar. But the power of the figure reaches far beyond that special application of it. We may all make our deaths a sacrifice, an offering to God, for we may yield up our will to God's will, and so turn that last struggle into an act of worship and self-surrender. When we recognize His hand, when we submit our wills to His purposes, when "we live unto the Lord," if we live, and "die unto Him," if we die, then death will lose all its terror and most of its pain, and will become for us what it was to St. Paul, a true offering up of self in thankful worship. We may even say that so we shall, in a certain subordinate sense, be "made conformable unto his death" who committed His spirit into His Father's hands, and laid down His life, of His own will. The essential character and far-reaching effects of this sacrifice we cannot imitate, but we can so yield up our wills to God and leave life so willingly and trustfully that death shall make our sacrifice complete.

(2) Another more familiar and equally striking figure is used when St. Paul speaks of the time of his "departure." The thought is found in most tongues. Death is a going away. But the well-worn image received new depth and sharpness of

<sup>1</sup> J. Cross, *Old Wine and New*, 142.

outline in Christianity. To those who have learned the meaning of Christ's resurrection, and who feed their souls on the hopes which it warrants, death is merely a change of place or state, an accident affecting locality, and little more. We have had plenty of changes before. Life has been one long series of departures. This is different from the others, mainly in that it is the last, and that to go away from this visible and fleeting show, where we wander aliens among things which have no true kindred with us, is to go home, where there will be no more pulling up of the tent-pegs, and toiling across the deserts in monotonous change.

How strong is the conviction, spoken in this name for death, that the essential life lasts on quite unaltered through it all! How slight the else formidable thing is made! We may change climates, and for the stormy bleakness of life may have the long still days of heaven, but we do not change ourselves. We lose nothing worth keeping when we leave behind the body, as a dress not fitted for home, where we are going. We but travel one more stage, though it be the last, and part of it be in pitchy darkness. Some pass over it as in a fiery chariot, like St. Paul and many a martyr. Some have to toil through it with slow steps and bleeding feet and fainting heart; but all may have a Brother with them, and, holding His hand, may find that the journey is not so hard as they feared, and the home from which they shall remove no more better than they hoped when they hoped the most.

¶ In my schooldays I often put my head under the blankets and sobbed bitterly because I thought that death would some day come and snatch my father from me. Life to me then—so I dreamed—could only speak disaster, for I thought of Death as a foe who dealt out devastating blows. But the thoughts and dreams of boyhood were false. Death came not as a foe, but as a friend; and his mystic message was Life. We said, not, "God's finger touched him and he slept," but, "and he lives." For that is what his passing taught us. In the days of his flesh this eager and active soul had a way of standing before you in unlikely spots and in unexpected moments. This is just what he still does, for after his soul had flown out through the window of his bedroom it came in through the front door. He had kept his biggest surprise to the end.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Love and Life: The Story of J. Denholm Brash*, by his Son, 204.

¶ To the aged, the world beyond is no strange place. Its door has opened so often to admit now one, now another of their friends that the passage has grown familiar to them. Professor Jowett, writing to Lady (then Mrs.) Tennyson to suggest, as a subject for the Laureate's muse, old age, quotes the words of an old lady to himself: "The spirits of my children always seem to hover about me!" Tennyson, his son tells us, had heard the saying before, and it was the germ of his poem, "The Grandmother." It will be remembered how the aged heroine of that poem, hearing of the death of her eldest-born, stays her tears with the reflection, "What time have I to be vexed?— . . . how can I weep for Willy, he has but gone for an hour. Gone for a minute, my son, from this room into the next; I too shall go in a minute."<sup>1</sup>

## II.

### ST. PAUL'S PAST ACHIEVEMENT.

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

Surprise has been expressed in some quarters that St. Paul should write of himself in what seems to be a self-righteous and boastful strain; and some textual critics have seized on this passage as furnishing some sort of suggestion or proof that this letter is not genuine, but that it was written by some admirer of St. Paul's in the second century. Well, even if there were this self-congratulatory note we must remember that we have here a man who is always writing about himself (he is the most sublime egoist in the New Testament), because he is to himself the most amazing example of what the grace and power of God can do; also, that the letter is to a dear personal friend, and not a letter to a church, which would naturally become public property. This is probably a letter which the writer never dreamt would be preserved or seen by anybody but Timothy, to whom he is accustomed to pour out his most intimate thoughts, and to whom in a previous letter he has described himself as the chief of sinners. But when we come to look into the words, all that seems self-righteous is not there. St. Paul is not saying, "I have been a

<sup>1</sup> P. W. Roose, *The Book of The Future Life*, 125.

good man." He is not even saying, "I have made a good fight of it." The Revisers have properly put in the definite article, and have thus rather shifted the centre of thought from the Apostle to the nature of life he has lived and the ministry he has fulfilled; which, mark you, is the life and ministry he wants Timothy to fulfil. The situation is most natural. There is the old warrior, laying aside his weapons, putting off his armour, going to his reward. Here is the younger man, needing a heartening and bracing word. And this is the word that comes to him from one who would pass on the leadership, if possible, to his hands.

1. "I have fought the good fight," says the Apostle. He is speaking in the language of the Olympian Games, and is referring to the athletic contests of the arena. "I have fought the good fight." The term ought not to surprise us. We are continually talking of the struggle for existence, of the fight for position, the battle of life. And when we come to the highest life that man can live, the life of mastery of sin and of the world, it ought not to surprise us that it can fittingly be described only under the term fight.

(1) Where does the fight begin? Where did it begin with St. Paul? Within. Here are his words: "I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that ye may not do the thing that ye would." Here and there we come upon a passage that surprises and comforts us in the flashes of autobiography that light up St. Paul's writings, as: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." We hardly knew that he had a body; he seemed a man composed of mind and spirit; but we see by the light of that passage a man at war with that which is seeking to be master, and which must be kept in the place of a servant, if life is not to be entirely spoilt. It may not have been that he was in danger of yielding to those coarser cravings which belong to the flesh, but rather that his body cried out for rest and ease and comfort, and against the labour and hardship which his spirit demanded; and what we have is a man who realizes that no outward victory could be won worthy of the name unless and until the inner

victory was achieved. The Christian life is not the passive, reclining, restful experience that some have thought, sitting at Jesus' feet, leaning on His breast. There is that side; but the battle is to get there, and to keep there. "Believe me," wrote Samuel Rutherford to the Earl of Lothian, "I find it hard wrestling, to play fair with Christ and to maintain a course of daily communion with Him." It takes the whole of a man the whole of his time to be a Christian. The world, the flesh, and the devil are all real enough to the earnest soul, and must be faced and fought in the pathway to spiritual success. The New Testament does not deceive anybody on this score. The strait gate, the narrow way, the much tribulation, the cross of which it speaks, as well as the hosts of darkness—all point to a strenuous conflict as the very condition of Christian life.

(2) And although the battle must begin within, it by no means ends there. There is a cause of Christ in the earth as well as in a man's own heart; and if we take St. Paul as a model in any way, we see him the champion of truth and purity and liberty. Fighting against legalism in the Galatian letter, against impurity and sectarianism in the Corinthian letter, against idleness in the Thessalonian letter, and much more; till we find him in the Ephesian letter, the letter of the heavenlies, charging people to take unto them the whole armour of God, that they may stand and withstand in the Christian life. Of course, men can avoid the battle by making terms with the enemy both as far as the inward strife is concerned and the great moral struggles that are going on in the world. They can say, "These are no concern of mine, and I will not adventure myself in them." But that is not living the Christian life as St. Paul understood it. It is rather the way in which a man loses his soul.

¶ In some quarters it is taught that there is not now the same opportunity for arduous action and painful sacrifice in the cause of personal and public righteousness as existed in primitive days. Lecky writes: "The more society is organized and civilized, the greater is the scope for the amiable and the less for the heroic qualities." We cannot think so. Our age is indeed different from that of St. Paul, but it does not less demand heroic qualities. Only as we strive and suffer for right and purity as against the baser elements have we any part or lot in the glory of the future.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. L. Watkinson, *Themes for Hours of Meditation*, 202.

(3) But the fight, be it within or without, is pre-eminently a *good* fight. If we will let the Apostle give us the full meaning of this word in English, he will tell us that it is a noble, a beautiful contest. Timothy may be shrinking from it; Demas has given it up; but it is the one fight in the world worth waging. Everybody is fighting, some for wealth, some for place and power. Many a pitiful contest is being waged in the world. Here is the one noble conflict in which the honest warrior will ultimately triumph, and in which completest satisfaction will be his. Never is man so noble in the sight of God and His holy angels as when he is fighting against the base within him and without, striving for goodness, purity, truth, and love, fighting the good fight of faith, striving to lay hold on eternal life.

¶ She went on to develop this idea of God as Law in relation to human fate, and to those problems of "free will and necessity" which Milton thought to be inscrutable mysteries, and around which metaphysicians and logicians have for ages disputed. She found her ultimate solution in a hypothesis which Mr. Mill told her that he had at one time tried but abandoned—the hypothesis of "a Being who, willing only good, leaves evil in the world solely in order to stimulate human faculties by an unremitting struggle against every form of it"; a Perfect Being who created a Perfectible one, and so ordered the world that its course should be a constant struggle towards perfection. Miss Nightingale did not blink the fact that her hypothesis left mysteries unexplained. "It is evident," she wrote, "that creation is a mystery, but God's end and object (in creating) need not be a mystery. Everybody tells us that the existence of evil is incomprehensible, whereas I believe it is much more difficult—it is impossible—to conceive the existence of God (or even of a good man) without evil." Good and evil are relative terms, and neither is intelligible without the other.<sup>1</sup>

¶ It is a poor life that never stands above itself in some supreme moment of aspiration. But to live a life of aspiration—to stay on the lofty level, to breathe the keen air of the upper heights habitually—this is the strain of life. It is learned only by constant effort, and by many failures. But if we persevere, there is an end which will fulfil all our hopes and aspirations. In Watts's "Happy Warrior" [the companion picture to "Aspiration"] we see what that triumphant end is. He is pictured as slain in battle. He has fallen in the thickest of the fight. Like the greatest Life ever lived, he failed as the world counts

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 481.

failure. But he succeeded in achieving the high end which he had set before him, beyond the range of most men's touch and sight. And out of his saddest experiences had come the purest joy known to humanity. And now in the article of death, the pain vanishes, the darkness disappears, the fear subsides. There is a great calm in his soul. His helmet falls back from his head; and an angelic form, the fair symbol of his aspiration, as the shining heaven above him opens to receive his parting spirit, bends over him and imprints the kiss of everlasting peace upon his brow.<sup>1</sup>

2. But the Christian life is also represented as a Race. "I have finished the course." There is a little difference here; for while St. Paul is still thinking of the Olympian Games, and therefore of strenuous and contested effort, there is something more definite and personal. We must place beside the text other words of St. Paul, spoken to the elders of the Ephesian Church; in the pathetic farewell interview recorded in Acts xx., when, speaking of the sufferings awaiting him, he said: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus." A course indicates not only strenuous running, but running over a marked-out and well-defined track. "If a man strive in the games, he is not crowned except he has striven lawfully." So the words mean more than that he had run his natural earthly course: they mean that he had fulfilled his God-appointed destiny. "He has held the course, he has kept the line God bade him go." We know his cherished ambition—to apprehend that for which also he had been apprehended by Christ Jesus; to have a life governed absolutely by the will and plan of his Master. And in Acts xvi. 6-10 we have a man who is searching for the track, and who, when he has found it, goes along it without any question. Nothing else mattered. It was a very inglorious course that he had run, from the point of view of the man of the world; but to the man who ran it, it was full of glory. It was God's course for him, and in that assurance he found infinite peace.

One step more, and the race is ended;  
 One word more, and the lesson's done;  
 One toil more, and a long rest follows  
 At set of sun.

<sup>1</sup> H. Macmillan, *The Life-Work of G. F. Watts*, 185.

Who would fail, for one step witholden?  
 Who would fail, for one word unsaid?  
 Who would fail, for a pause too early?  
 Sound sleep the dead.

One step more, and the goal receives us;  
 One word more, and life's task is done;  
 One toil more, and the Cross is earned  
 And sets the sun.<sup>1</sup>

3. In the third place St. Paul thinks of his past life as a Stewardship. "I have kept the faith." He has kept the faith (whether by that word we are to understand the body of truth believed or the act of believing) as a sacred deposit committed to him, of which he has been a good steward, and which he is now ready to return to his Lord. There is much in these letters to Timothy about keeping treasures entrusted to one's care. Timothy is bidden "keep that good thing which is committed to thee," as St. Paul here declares that he has done. Nor is such guarding of a precious deposit confined to us stewards on earth; the Apostle is sure that his loving Lord, to whom he has entrusted himself, will with like tenderness and carefulness keep that which he has committed unto Him against that day. The confidence in that faithful Keeper made it possible for St. Paul to be faithful to his trust, as a steward who was bound by all ties to his Lord, to guard His possessions and administer His affairs. Life was full of voices urging him to give up the faith. Bribes and threats, and his own sense-bound nature, and the constant whispers of the world had tempted him all along the road to fling it away as a worthless thing, but he had kept it safe; and now, nearing the end and the account, he can put his hand on the secret place near his heart where it lies, and feel that it is there, ready to be restored to his Lord, with the thankful confession, "Thy pound hath gained ten pounds."

(1) What is meant by a sincere and loyal keeping of the faith? It is, for one thing, to hold it in trust for the benefit of others and to always give it out. To keep the faith is to defend it, if we are able, by force of argument against all that assail it. But, above all things, to keep the faith is to live it, to exemplify

<sup>1</sup> Christina G. Rossetti, *Some Feasts and Fasts*.

it in one's thought and speech and actions. We all know people who keep their religious creed very much as they keep their insurance policies. They have got them signed and sealed and locked up in a safe. There is no need to look at them again; they are of use only at death. You may possibly keep religious creeds in that way. You cannot keep the faith in that way. There is a beautiful old legend which tells us how two crosses were given to two young men to carry through life. One of them fastened the cross upon his breast and wore it in the open light every day before the whole world. That cross became luminous in the hour of death, and lighted his way across the dark river. The other took his cross and hid it away somewhere, and did not bring it out again until the hour of death, and that cross was just a bit of common wood and gave no light.

(2) The faith which a man has kept up to the end of his life must be one that has opened with his growth and constantly won new colour and reality from his changing experience. The old man does believe what the child believed; but how different it is, though still the same. The joy of his life has enriched his belief, his sorrow has deepened it, his doubts have sobered it, his enthusiasms have fired it, his labour has purified it. This is the work that life does upon faith. This is the beauty of an old man's religion. His doctrines are like the house that he has lived in, rich with associations which make it certain that he will never move out of it. His doctrines have been illustrated and strengthened and endeared by the good help they have given his life; and no doctrine that has not done this can really be held up to the end with any such vital grasp as will enable us to carry it with us through the river and enter with it into the new life beyond.

¶ Another friend, amongst other things refers to a strange and beautiful trait in my father's character—he had no age-consciousness. He could speed down the years so as to be able to be of the same age as a young lad, and if he had met Methuselah he would have felt no disparity in years betwixt himself and this primeval ancient. He was quite young enough to say of many a student's preaching, "He greatly blessed me," and quite old enough to listen with glowing joy to the rich sermon of a patriarch. For this "youth who refused to grow up" had all that is most beautiful in joyous age and happy youth, and loved

both, for he knew that Eternal Life folds both within its warm embrace. The same friend writes: "It cannot be an easy thing as a rule for an older man to bridge the gulf of about thirty years, and put himself alongside a younger generation. It never occurs to most men to try, and they have no idea how remote and inaccessible they are. I can't say that your father bridged the gulf. It simply wasn't there; he waved his wand and it was gone. I understood better afterwards where the secret was. Strictly speaking, he did not grow old. If there was a stale thought in his mind, he never showed it. He never acquired that look of superhuman wisdom which makes many ministers so depressing, and he had no disillusioned tones. If I wanted to maintain that selfishness is always a deadening thing—slow suicide—and that love is always a vitalizing thing, I should think of your father as my shining instance of the second proposition."<sup>1</sup>

Old,—we are growing old:  
 Going on through a beautiful road,  
 Finding earth a more blessed abode;  
 Nobler work by our hearts to be wrought,  
 Freer paths for our hope and our thought:  
 Because of the beauty the years unfold,  
 We are cheerfully growing old!

Old,—we are growing old:  
 Going up where the sunshine is clear;  
 Watching grander horizons appear  
 Out of clouds that enveloped our youth;  
 Standing firm on the mountains of truth;  
 Because of the glory the years unfold,  
 We are joyfully growing old.

Old,—we are growing old:  
 Going in to the gardens of rest,  
 That glow through the gold of the west,  
 Where the rose and the amaranth blend,  
 And each path is the way to a friend:  
 Because of the peace that the years unfold,  
 We are thankfully growing old.

Old,—are we growing old?  
 Life blooms as we travel on  
 Up the hills, into fresh, lovely dawn;

<sup>1</sup> *Love and Life: The Story of J. Denholm Brash*, 174.

We are children, who do but begin  
 The sweetness of living to win:  
 Because heaven is in us, to bud and unfold,  
 We are younger, for growing old.<sup>1</sup>

## III.

## ST. PAUL'S FUTURE CERTAINTY.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing."

The climax of all is the triumphant look forward. "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness." In harmony with the images of the conflict and the race, the crown here is the emblem, not of sovereignty, but of victory, as indeed is almost without exception the case in the New Testament. The idea of the royal dignity of Christians in the future is set forth rather under the emblem of association with Christ on His throne while the wreath on their brows is the coronal of laurel, "meed of mighty conquerors," or the twine of leaves given to him who, panting, touched the goal. The reward, then, which is meant by the emblem, whatever be its essence, comes through effort and conflict. "A man is not crowned, except he strive."

¶ It is recorded in history that Bernadotte, one of the generals of Napoleon, became a Lutheran in order that he might become King of Sweden. A fellow-officer of Bernadotte's became a Christian, and some of his companion soldiers began to tease him on account of his change. He answered, "I have done no more than Bernadotte, who has become a Lutheran." "Yes," they replied, "but he became so to obtain a crown." "My motive is the same," said the officer, "we differ only as to the place. The object of Bernadotte was to obtain a crown in Sweden; mine is to obtain a crown in heaven."<sup>2</sup>

1. "The crown of righteousness!" Does St. Paul mean that it is righteousness which is crowned, or that righteousness is the material of which the crown is made? There are two similar expressions in the New Testament to describe the reward of the blessed; they are "the crown of life," and "the crown of glory."

<sup>1</sup> Lucy Larcom.

<sup>2</sup> J. Aitchison, *A Bag with Holes*, 191.

In these it is plain that what is meant is, not that life is crowned, but that the crown of the blessed is life; not that glory is crowned, but that the crown of the blessed is glory. Life, glory, these are—if the word were not too rude—the very material and substance of the heavenly crown. And so it is with righteousness. “The crown of righteousness” is a crown of which righteousness is the material; this crown is of the same fabric and texture as that which it should decorate; it is a crown whose beauty is moral beauty; the beauty, not of gold and precious stones, but of those more precious, nay, priceless, things which gold and gems can but suggest to us; the beauty of justice, truthfulness, purity, charity, humility, carried to a point of refinement and high excellence of which here and now we have no experience. Once, and only once, was such a crown as this worn upon earth; and, to the eyes of men, it was a Crown of Thorns.

¶ In December 1844, Mrs. Long, wife of an old shepherd living in Graffham, came to me and said that her husband had taken to his bed, and that his deafness, always great, was so much worse that they could hardly make him hear. I gave her a print of the Good Shepherd, and said, “Give him this book from me.” She said, “He can’t read.” I said “I knew that, but give it to him from me.” I went that afternoon and found the print on his bed. I took it up; he reached out after it, and said, “That’s mine.” I said, “Do you know what it is?” He said, “Yes, yes—the lost sheep—that’s me.” I put my hand round my head to signify the crown of thorns. He said, “Yes, the crown of thorns,” and turned his head over on the pillow and sobbed. Some days after he said to me, “I hope I shall just walk in,” that is, to the fold. Another day he took it up, and pointing to the crown of thorns said, “That’s what cuts me most of all,” and turned over and sobbed. I went to him in the January following to administer the Holy Sacrament. As I gave him the paten I saw something on his neck or throat. At last I saw it was the print. After the Holy Sacrament I asked his wife when he had asked for it. She said, “As soon as it was light.” I took it up, and he said, “I haves it most days.” He then said, “I hope He will have me like that,”—the sheep on His shoulders. I said, “He has you like that. ‘Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’ He does not wait for the lost sheep to come to Him, but He goes out to seek till He finds it.” He said, “No, no, He don’t wait for he to come to He, but He goes after he;

and I hope I shall not give Him much trouble." Long had been a shepherd on the South Downs all his life; and had had trouble enough in seeking the sheep that wandered and were lost. He then took up the print and said, "I shall be glad to see that Man." That night he died.<sup>1</sup>

2. Now, the crown being itself righteousness, how striking is the Apostle's assurance! "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness." St. Paul did not always write thus. In earlier years he felt and expressed anxiety lest by any means, when he had preached unto others, he himself should be a castaway. And long after he "counted not himself to have apprehended"; he could only forget those things that were behind, and reach forward unto those things that were before; he was still pressing forward to the mark of the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. But now he has no misgivings; now all is clear; "henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness." And why? Is it not because, in the solitariness of his last trial, he has an assurance from on high which was withheld before; which was vouchsafed only when all human aid and human sympathy had failed him, and when he was thrown, without any reserve whatever, upon his hope in the Unseen and the Future? And even now, not seldom, they who fashion their lives as did St. Paul, by faith in an Unseen Saviour, do learn to know that there is for them a morally assured future of happiness in the World of Light. It is not an arrogant confidence, it is a humble yet well-grounded hope; it is a hope which grows in strength as the solitudes of the advancing years press with more and more gloom upon the natural spirits, and when, in the absence of departed or of alienated friends, the majesty and consolation of one sacred, overpowering Presence makes itself increasingly felt.

¶ On the subject of religion George made no sign, as the years went by, resembling his brother Phillips in the reserve with which he guarded himself. After his enlistment, and just before he joined his regiment, he was confirmed at Trinity Church, September 28, 1862. That event counted with his mother for more than the victories or defeats of armies. After his confirmation, the veil of reserve removed, George spoke freely of his

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Cardinal Manning*, i. 291.

religious experience. The change to him had been momentous and thorough. His religious life was deepened by the events of the Civil War. In his company, a prayer-meeting was held daily morning and evening, conducted by the captain. "He told me," said the chaplain of his company, "that he had never had full assurance of his pardon and acceptance till he became a soldier; that in the battle of Kingston, under the terrible fire of the enemy, his Saviour came to him as never before, declared His presence, revealed His love, and held his soul in His hands."<sup>1</sup>

3. And observe who bestows the crown—"which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day." It is only right that a princely hand should bestow princely gifts, and that a Divine hand should bestow immortal gifts. It is a righteous Judge that bestows a righteous crown. He will distribute the rewards of eternity justly. The rewards of heaven will not be distributed as the rewards of earth too often are. The highest rewards of earth are at times given to the undeserving and worthless. It will not be so in that day. No one undeserving will obtain a prize, and no one deserving will be without one. The judge who awarded the prize to the victor at the Grecian games might decide unjustly, whether through culpable partiality or from involuntary error; but "the Lord, the righteous judge," is no respecter of persons, and His perfect knowledge and infallible wisdom render mistakes with Him impossible. St. Paul's imperial judge was the very incarnation of iniquity; but Christ "shall judge the world in righteousness," and "reward every man according to his works."

¶ The heathen knew that life brought its contest, but they expected from it also the crown of all contest: No proud one! no jewelled circlet flaming through Heaven above the height of the unmerited throne; only some few leaves of wild olive, cool to the tired brow, through a few years of peace. The wreath was to be of *wild* olive, mark you;—the tree that grows carelessly, tufting the rocks with no vivid bloom, no verdure of branch; only with soft snow of blossom, and scarcely fulfilled fruit, mixed with grey leaf and thorn-set stem; no fastening of diadem for you but with such sharp embroidery! But this, such as it is, you may win while yet you live; type of grey honour and sweet rest. Free-heartedness, and graciousness, and undisturbed

<sup>1</sup> *Phillips Brooks: Memories of His Life*, 140.

trust, and requited love, and the sight of the peace of others, and the ministry to their pain; these,—and the blue sky above you and the sweet waters and flowers of the earth beneath; and mysteries and presences, innumerable, of living things,—may yet be here your riches; untormenting and divine: serviceable for the life that now is; nor, it may be, without promise of that which is to come.<sup>1</sup>

4. The crown is given at a time called by St. Paul “at that day,” which is not the near day of his martyrdom, but that of his Lord’s appearing. He does not speak of the fulness of the reward as being ready for him at death, but as being henceforth laid up for him in heaven. So he looks forward beyond the grave. The immediate future after death was to his view a period of blessedness indeed but not yet full. The state of the dead in Christ was a state of consciousness, a state of rest, a state of felicity, but also a state of expectation, for they wait for “the redemption of the body,” in the reception of which, “at that day,” their life will be filled up to a yet fuller measure, and gleam with a more lustrous “glory.” Now they rest and wait. Then shall they be crowned.

The crown was not conferred as soon as the racer reached the goal or the gladiator gave the fatal thrust, but was reserved till the contests were all over and ended, and the claims of the several candidates were carefully canvassed and adjudicated. So the “crown of righteousness” is “laid up” to be given “at that day,” when the Lord Jesus shall come to be glorified in His saints. One says, “we must die first”; St. Paul tells us we must rise first. Blessed, indeed, are the dead in Christ; but their blessedness cannot be consummated till their Lord return from heaven and they appear with Him in glory.

5. It is no solitary blessedness to which St. Paul looked forward. Alone in his dungeon, alone before his judge when “no man stood by” him, soon to be alone in his martyrdom, he leaps up in spirit at the thought of the mighty crowd among whom he will stand in that day, on every head a crown, in every heart the same love to the Lord whose life is in them all and makes them all one. So we may cherish the hope of a social heaven. Man’s

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive* (Introduction, § 16).

course begins in a garden, but it ends in a city. The final condition will be the perfection of human society. There all who love Christ will be drawn together, and old ties, broken for a little while here, will be reknit in yet holier form, never to be sundered more.

“Who have loved and do love his appearing.” That is the full force of the Greek perfect, which expresses the present and permanent result of past action; and therein lies the test whereby to try the temper of our Christianity. St. Paul, who had long yearned to depart and be with Christ, could not easily have given a more simple or sure method of finding out who those are that have a right to believe that the Lord has a crown of righteousness in store for them. Are we among the number? In order to answer this question we must ask ourselves another: Are our lives such that we are longing for Christ’s return? Or are we dreading it because we know that we are not fit to meet Him, and are making no attempt to become so? The Bible sets before us the crown of righteousness which fadeth not away, and the worm which never dieth. Leaning upon God’s unfailing love, let us learn to long for the coming of the one; and then we shall have no need to dread, or even to ask the meaning of, the other.

He is coming; and the tidings  
Are rolling wide and far;  
As light flows out in gladness,  
From yon fair morning-star.

He is coming; and the tidings  
Sweep through the willing air,  
With hope that ends for ever  
Time’s ages of despair.

Old earth from dreams and slumber  
Wakes up and says, Amen;  
Land and ocean bid Him welcome,  
Flood and forest join the strain.

He is coming; and the mountains  
Of Judæa ring again;  
Jerusalem awakens,  
And shouts her glad Amen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Horatius Bonar.

SAVING AND INSTRUCTING GRACE.

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## SAVING AND INSTRUCTING GRACE.

For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.—Titus ii. 11, 12.

1. To this important statement the Apostle is led up by the consideration of certain very homely and practical duties which fall to the lot of Christians in various walks of life, and these matters he refers to as “the things pertaining to sound doctrine.” He has a word of practical counsel for several distinct classes of persons; for he knows the wisdom of being definite. He speaks to elder men and elder women, to young men and to servants; and it is from inculcating upon these last the first principles of common honesty that he passes with one of his characteristic “for’s” to enunciate the sublime truths which the text contains.

2. St. Paul always had a tremendous reason for the simplest duty; his motives are always great and far-reaching. This is not only Pauline, but Christian; great reasons for doing little things; high motives for all conduct; every act linked to some eternal purpose—this is the distinctive feature of Christianity. It appears in the text. He would have Titus teach the Cretans to be sober and righteous and godly, but he prefaces it by a statement of the great *gospel*—a word which is itself full of beauty, a sweet, melodious word: “For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.” It sounds like a strain caught from an angel’s hymn. It is that, and it is also solid truth. All Christian injunctions and precepts rest on that truth—God’s grace appearing and bringing salvation to all men. That fact is the ground on which we stand; it is the atmosphere about us; it is motive, path, end. God’s gracious love, not sought or deduced, but appearing by its own spontaneous will, moved by its own yearning heart, bringing salvation to all men, so that it is here, an already

accomplished fact, food to eat, air to breathe, shelter to cover us—a great investing fact or condition, changing our whole life and giving direction to it.

3. The arrangement of words in the Authorized Version, “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” is not what St. Paul means. These last words, “to all men,” should be connected with the previous ones, “that bringeth salvation.” It is not part of his purpose to declare, what was not in fact true then and is not true now, that the grace of God has appeared to all men; but it was part of his purpose to declare that that grace brings salvation to all men, however the present range of its manifestation may historically be contracted.

## I.

### SAVING GRACE.

“The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.”

1. What is salvation? What is it to be saved?

(1) First of all, it is to be forgiven. If we have ever done a wrong, if ever an estrangement between us and one whom we love dearly has cast a shadow over our life, we know what forgiveness, even from human love, means to us; how the estrangement ceases, how the burden is lifted, and love once more is joy and not pain to us. Now, let us remember that, as long as we are in the bondage of sin, we are estranged from God. We know God is holy and hates sin. So long as we cleave to our sin we cannot be at home with God. Even God’s love is pain to us, because we know our sin is grieving that love, is hindering our enjoyment of the blessing that that love might bring to us. To be forgiven of God, to have Jesus Christ coming to us in the name and from the very heart of God, and saying, “Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace”—what an immeasurable blessing that is! Now that forgiveness is not only God’s word, it is God’s deed. It comes to us through the love that suffered for us, and as we look upon the cross, and see God’s love in the self-sacrifice there, we must know that the love that would so suffer for us is a love that will not let us go. It is love that claims us for itself. It is

love that will restore us when we have been estranged from and distrustful of God.

(2) But not only do we want forgiveness, and to be put right with God. We want the power of sin to be broken in us. Jesus Christ offers us that strength. He offers to break the fetters of sin so that they shall no longer bind us. He offers us the strength that shall come into our weakness and give us victory, making us more than conquerors amid all the evils that are in the world. Why, we have something like it, even in human life. Take a companion, a strong, wise, loving companion. If that companion be beside the tempted, the weak, the companionship gives strength. We have known men who have been under the power of strong drink, and who have been saved by some good man who gave them friendship, help, and counsel when they were assailed by temptation at the end of their day's work. His strength passed into their weakness. Now something far more wonderful, far more certain, is offered to us in Jesus Christ. He is with us in all the fulness of His Divine power and pity. He is with the drunkard who is struggling to pass the public-house door. He is with the selfish man when he is trying to be a little more thoughtful for others. If there is only trust in Him, if there is only faith that will claim His grace, strength will be given, victory will be secured.

¶ Successful resistance of temptation seems to consist of three fairly distinct movements of the mind. The first step is obviously, and always, of the nature of a recoil. The mind starts back from the evil suggestion at least so far as to plant itself more firmly down in the attitude of resistance. The next step in resistance is obviously the reaching for and grasping one's weapon. First the mind recoils, next the mind recalls. Opposite the alluring suggestion it places the steadying word from the mind of God. "Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?" said our tempted Lord. But His recoiling mind recalls, "For this cause came I unto this hour." Now, what shall *we* recall? For us all the mind of God is gathered up in Christ; the full glory of that mind shines in the face of Christ. In a moment we may recall the loving-kindness, holy purity, strong sympathy, and present grace of the Supreme. For the Christian man who believes in the ubiquitous, ready presence of "grace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," the claim of goodness is instantaneously recalled, the help of Divine strength instantaneously summoned, by one single gesture of the spirit. Thirdly, to work for its

translation into redeemed lives of men and redeemed nature—that is the last part of successful resistance of temptation. It is the hardest bit of all, for it means thinking of others' needs as much as of one's own. Yet it is notorious that for real healing a man must come forth and step out into sympathy with others, and in that kindly preoccupation discover the secret of a quiet spirit. So it is in temptation: the field of victory is the field of battle for others' good.<sup>1</sup>

2. Salvation is ours by "the grace of God." What is the grace of God? It is the forth-putting of His power for the good of mankind, the motive of which is mercy born of love. It is God Himself, moved by a deep, tender compassion, which has its source and support in His own infinite affection, coming down to the fallen race, and, departing from the strict ground of justice and retribution, dealing with it not according to its sins, but according to His mercy. Divine grace, we may say, is the child of love, and the parent of mercy. It is because God is Love that He is disposed to assume a favourable attitude towards those whose sins have merited His wrath, and must ever of necessity be contemplated by Him with disfavour. The essential love of the great Father's heart takes definite form, and accommodates itself to our need; reveals itself in facts and presents itself for our acceptance; and then we call it grace.

¶ That word "grace" played a much larger part in the thoughts of our fathers than it does in ours; and I am not sure that many things are more needed by the ordinary Christian of this generation than that he should rediscover the amplitude and the majesty of that old-fashioned and unfashionable word. For what does "grace" mean? It means a self-originated love. Grace is love that has no motive but itself. Grace is a self-motived love that is in full energetic exercise. Grace is a self-motived, ever-acting love that delights to impart. Grace is a self-motived, ever-acting communicating love which bends in tenderness over and floods with gifts those that stand far beneath itself. Grace is a self-motived, ever-acting, communicating, and stooping love which brings in its hands the gift of forgiveness, and deals with those on whom it lavishes this tenderness, not according to their merits, but according to the pulsations of its own heart. And thus grace is the shorthand word for the self-motived, ever-acting, communicating, stooping, and pardoning

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Johnston Ross, in *Youth and Life*, 175.

mercy which has its very home and throne in the heart of God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

3. The grace of God "hath appeared." St. Paul does not say it awoke or sprang into existence, but it appeared, it was made manifest. Grace for sinners dwelt in the heart of God from the beginning, but it was a secret hidden from the world. The nations of the earth walked in ignorance, without the knowledge of God's grace; in Israel alone did God shed forth rays of His grace in the promises of the prophets and the manifold types of the Levitical law. The fathers lived in the dawn; they had to sigh and did sigh for the breaking of the day; but when God's time had come the day did break and His grace appeared in all its fulness and glory. When, where, how? Here is the fountain of our Christmas joy. The grace of God appeared in its fulness when the Virgin gave birth and the angels chanted over the fields of Bethlehem. "In this," says St. John, "was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." In the birth of Jesus Christ it is become manifest, clear as the noonday, that God is graciously minded towards men, because this Infant is the own and only begotten Son of the Father.

¶ The same word is used in telling of the stormy darkness when "neither sun nor stars" had for many days "*appeared*," and then at last a rift came in the thick cloud, and the blue was seen, and the blessed sunshine poured down on the damp and desolate world. So, by some historical manifestation, this mighty thing, the love of God, has been put into concrete shape, embodied and made a visibility to men. What can that point to except the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His life and death, the cradle and the cross, with all that lay between, and all that has come after? The mission of a Saviour, in whom the Unseen has drawn near to human sense; in whom the love of God, like sunbeams caught in a cloud, has been diffused, encircled with a revealing because a veiling medium, is what Paul points to. The Man Christ Jesus, in the sweetness of His life, in the sacred mystery of His death, in the power of His indwelling Spirit, stands before us, the embodiment of the love of the unseen God. Scientists can make sounds visible by the symmetrical lines into which heaps of sand upon a bit of paper are cast by the vibration of a string. God

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

has made invisible love plain to the sight of all men, because He has sent us His Son, and now we can say, "That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands have handled of the Word of life, that declare we unto you."<sup>1</sup>

4. The grace of God hath appeared "bringing salvation to all men."

(1) The grace brings *salvation* to all men, because all men need that more than anything else. In the notion of salvation there lie the two ideas of danger and of disease. It is healing and it is safety; therefore, if it be offered to all, it is because all men are sick of a sore disease, and stand in imminent and deadly peril. That is the only theory of men's deepest need which is true to the facts of human existence. There are plenty of shallower diagnoses of what is the matter with mankind, and therefore of less radical and drastic cures offered. In their places, and for the purposes to which they may wisely be confined, they are good and wholesome for mankind. But we want to dig far deeper than the shallow husbandry of agriculturists who have no tools but education, culture, reformation of manners, and alteration of the conditions of society can ever reach.

(2) The grace of God brings salvation *to all men*. It is a wonderful assertion; but, on reflection, we see that it does not state too much. Wide and strong as the affirmation undoubtedly is, it is only commensurate with the fact. Yes, God's free favour, manifested in the Person of His own blessed Son, is designed to produce saving effects upon all. God makes no exception, excludes none. He has not sent a message down to the world, that He purposes to take the case of a certain number of persons into consideration, and leave the rest to perish. St. Paul simply could not have used this expression if that had been his view of God's mind and will; but it is stated in the strongest possible terms that to every man this revelation has been made, and for every man this grace has been exhibited; and that, as the result of this, obviously every man, if he only will, is in a position to become the recipient of the salvation which the grace of God has brought within his reach.

(3) But when the Apostle says that this grace brings salvation unto all, he does not say that all receive the salvation which is

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

brought to them. There is a whole world of difference between the two expressions. And the word that he employs—for it is *one* word in the original which is rendered in our Version by the three “that bringeth salvation”—describes not an actuality, but a potentiality and a possibility. The aim and purpose, not the realized effect, is what is pointed out in this great word of the text.

For there is a condition necessary from the very nature of the case. If God could save all men, be sure that He would do it; the love that thus takes its rise in the counsels of Eternity, and flows on for ever through the waste and barren ages of human history, and is ever waiting to bestow itself, in its tenderness and in its liberality upon all men, is not made less universal, but it is conditioned by the nature of the gifts that it brings. Salvation cannot be flung broadcast and indiscriminately upon all men of all sorts, whatever their relation to God. If it could, be sure that it would be. But just because it is a deep and inward thing, affecting men’s moral and religious state, and not only their position in regard to some future hell, it cannot be given thus broadcast, it must be sown in the fitting places. The one thing that is requisite, and it is indispensably requisite, is that we shall trust Him who brings salvation, and, trusting Him, shall take it out of His hand. If the medicine stands on the shelf, in the bottle with the stopper in, the sick man will not be cured. That is not the fault of the medicine; it is a panacea, but no remedy can work where it is not applied. This great ocean of the Divine love goes, as it were, feeling along the black cliffs that front it, for some cranny into which it may pour itself, but the obstinate rock can fling it all back in impotent spray. Though the whole Atlantic surges against the cliff, it is dry an inch inwards. Thus the universality of the gift, the universal potency of the gift, is not in the slightest degree affected by the fact that, where it is not taken, its benefits are not realized.

¶ Miss Nightingale, on this and her later visits to the Crimea, saw and heard of many deeds of heroism which she loved to tell. “I remember,” she wrote, “a sergeant, who was on picket, the rest of the picket killed, and himself battered about the head, stumbled back to camp, and on his way picked up a wounded man, and brought him in on his shoulders to the lines, where he fell down insensible. When, after many hours, he recovered his

senses, I believe after trepanning, his first words were to ask after his comrade, 'Is he alive?' 'Comrade, indeed! yes, he's alive, it is the General.' At that moment the General, though badly wounded, appeared at the bedside. 'Oh, General, it's you, is it, I brought in? I'm so glad. I didn't know your honour, but if I'd known it was you, I'd have saved you all the same.' This is the true soldier's spirit."<sup>1</sup>

## II.

### INSTRUCTING GRACE.

"Instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world."

1. The grace of God not only saves us but also trains us. This is a lifelong work, a work that will be concluded only when grace ends in glory. Now, obviously, if this work is to be done as it should be done, the soul must, first of all, be in a position to receive teaching. The last person that we should regard as open to instruction is one whose mind is so taken up and preoccupied with considerations relating to his own personal safety that he can scarcely be expected to afford a thought to any other subject. For purposes of instruction you need that the mind of the person to be instructed should be at leisure. As long as our mind is occupied, it is scarcely conceivable that we should be in a position to bestow that amount of attention upon the instruction communicated to us which might render the lesson of any considerable service. If grace is really to undertake our training, and to teach us such lessons as only grace can teach, surely she must first of all put us at our ease, so to speak—still our inward anxieties, calm the tumultuous misgivings which fill our hearts; and until grace has done this for us, how can she instruct us?

¶ Go into yonder prison, and set that wretched felon in the condemned cell to undertake some literary work, if he is a literary man. Put the pen into his hand, place the ink and the paper before him. He flings down the pen in disgust. How can he set to work to write a history or to compose a romance,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 257.

however talented or gifted he may be by nature, so long as the hangman's rope is over his head, and the prospect of a coming execution staring him in the face? Obviously the man's thoughts are all in another direction—the question of his own personal safety preoccupies his mind. Give him that pen and paper to write letters which he thinks may influence persons in high quarters with a view to obtaining a reprieve, and his pen will move quickly enough. I can understand his filling up reams of paper on that subject, but not on any other.<sup>1</sup>

2. There is plenty of first-rate teaching in the world, without Jesus Christ and His grace. If men and nations go to the devil their own wicked, wilful way, it is not for want of teaching. But to try and cure the world's evils by teaching, in that narrow sense of the expression, is something like trying to put a fire out by reading the Riot Act to the flames. You want fire engines, and not paper proclamations, in order to stay their devouring course. But it is to be noticed that the expression here, in the original, means a great deal more than that kind of teaching. It means *correcting*, or chastening. It is the same word that is employed, for instance, in the well-known phrase, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and when Christ from Heaven says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." It implies the notion of correction, generally by pain, at all events of discipline, of something done, and not merely something said, of a process brought to bear on the sensitive nature. And such a work of correcting and chastening is a worthy work for "the grace that appears."

Jesus Christ comes to us and brings the external means of communicating instruction in the record of His life in this Book. And He comes to us, also, doing what no other teacher can do, for He passes into our spirits, and communicates not only instruction but the Spirit which teaches them in whom it abides, and guides them with gentle illumination into "all truth" concerning God, Christ, and themselves, which it is needful for them to know.

¶ "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared disciplining us," for this purpose, that "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Christ and His

<sup>1</sup> W. H. M. H. Aitken, *The School of Grace*, 26.

love; Christ and His life; Christ and His death; Christ and His Spirit; in these are new hopes, motives, powers, which avail to do the thing that no man can do. An infant's finger cannot reverse the motion of some great engine. But the hand that made it can touch some little tap or lever, and the mighty masses of polished iron begin to move the other way. And so God, and God only, can make it possible for us to deny ourselves ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to "live soberly, righteously, godly, in this present world." He, that Jesus who comes to us to mould our hearts into hitherto unfelt love, by reason of His own great love, and who gives to us His own Spirit to be the life of our lives, gives us by these gifts new motives, new powers, new tastes, new affections. He puts the reins into our hands, and enables us to control and master our unruly tempers and inclinations. If you want to clear out a tube of any sort, the way to do it is to insert some solid substance, and push, and that drives out the clogging matter. Christ's love coming into the heart expels the evil, just as the sap rising in the trees pushes off the old leaves that have hung there withered all winter. As Luther used to say, "You cannot clean out the stable with barrows and shovels. Turn the Elbe into it." Let that great flood of life pour into our hearts, and it will not be hard to "live soberly."<sup>1</sup>

3. The first lesson taught by grace is a negative lesson. Before teaching us what to do, she teaches us what we are to have done with; before introducing us into the positive blessedness of the new life, she first of all separates our connexion with the old. This negation of the old must always come before the possession of the new; and unless our experience follows this order, we shall find that what we mistake for the new is not God's new at all, but simply Satan's travesty of God's new creation. Ungodliness must be denied before we can walk with God, and worldly lusts must be denied before we can live as citizens of the New Jerusalem.

When our Lord came up to Jerusalem that by His death He might rend the veil of the Temple in twain, and open up for us a way into the holiest of all, His first care was to cleanse the outer courts of that Temple from the presence of the traders and the money-changers who defiled it. In this He signified that the first object of the manifestation of His saving grace is to cleanse those whom He would consecrate as temples of the Holy Ghost

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

from the ungodliness and worldly lusts by which they are defiled, that, having cleansed them thus, He may lead them on to the practice of those positive duties of the Christian life to which He has called them, so that they shall bear His image and reflect His glory as holy temples of the Lord.

¶ Let us not fail to observe that the Apostle here speaks of our "*denying* ungodliness." He does not speak of our combating ungodliness, or of our gradually progressing from a state of ungodliness into a state of godliness. There is no description here of any such process, although I am persuaded that such a process is very generally believed in by large numbers of professing Christians.<sup>1</sup>

(1) *Ungodliness*.—This sounds a very strong word, and at first most people are disposed to affirm that they cannot be charged with this, whatever else they may be guilty of. But we must endeavour to find out what ungodliness is. This is certainly important, because unless we understand what it is, it is impossible to deny it. Now ungodliness is the cardinal and root-sin of the world. It was the first sin committed in the history of the world, and it was the parent of all other sins; and it is usually the first sin in the life of each individual, and equally the parent of all the sins that follow. Ungodliness, in one form or another, has been at the root of them all, and the deadly growth from this evil root has cast its baleful shadow over universal history. As our eye wanders down through the annals of mankind, we find therein a long, weary, tragic record of ungodliness and its fruits. The false step taken by Adam, and by him no doubt deeply lamented, becomes a law of life to his son—that first murderer, Cain. Of him we read that after his judgment and condemnation he went forth from the presence of God. It is now an object with the man to escape from all thought of God, and to lose all sense of His presence. His course lies in the land of wandering; for is he not already "a wandering star"? And there he seeks to find substitutes for the God whom he has forsaken, in the material objects of a transient world, and the thronging interests of domestic and political life. God is now in none of his thoughts.

¶ The form which the infidelity of England, especially, has taken, is one hitherto unheard of in human history. No nation

<sup>1</sup> W. H. M. H. Aitken, *The School of Grace*, 97.

ever before declared boldly, by print and word of mouth, that its religion was good for show, but "would not work." Over and over again it has happened that nations have denied their gods, but they denied them bravely. The Greeks in their decline jested at their religion, and frittered it away in flatteries and fine arts; the French refused theirs fiercely, tore down their altars and brake their carven images. The question about God with both these nations was still, even in their decline, fairly put, though falsely answered. "Either there is or is not a Supreme Ruler; we consider of it, declare there is not, and proceed accordingly." But we English have put the matter in an entirely new light: "There *is* a Supreme Ruler, no question of it, only He cannot rule. His orders won't work. He will be quite satisfied with euphonious and respectful repetition of them. Execution would be too dangerous under existing circumstances, which He certainly never contemplated." . . . The entire naïveté and undisturbed imbecility with which I found persons declare that the laws of the Devil were the only practicable ones, and that the laws of God were merely a form of poetical language, passed all that I had ever before heard or read of mortal infidelity. I knew the fool had often said in his heart, there was *no* God; but to hear him say clearly out with his lips, "There is a foolish God," was something which my art studies had not prepared me for. The French had indeed, for a considerable time, hinted much of the meaning in the delicate and compassionate blasphemy of their phrase "*le bon Dieu*," but had never ventured to put it into more precise terms.<sup>1</sup>

(2) *Worldly lusts*.—The word "lusts" here has not the carnal associations cleaving to it which have gradually accrued to it in the changes of language since our translation was made; it implies simply desires, longings, of however refined and incorporeal a sort, which attach themselves to the fleeting things of this life. Pride, ambition, and all the more refined and less sensual desires are as much included as the grossest animalism in which any man can wallow. *Worldly lusts* are desires which say to earth, and to what earth can give, in any of its forms, "Thou art my god, and having thee I am satisfied."

Now the Apostle affirms that we have denied worldly lust as well as ungodliness. We have renounced and repudiated it for ever. But here rises the question, How have the world and worldly lust been thus denied? or how are we to deny it? and

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, v. ch. xii. § 5 (*Works*, vii. 445).

how are we to be freed from it? Various answers to this inquiry meet us from different quarters.

(a) "Turn your back upon the world," says the ascetic. "Wander into the depths of the desert. Shut yourself up in a hermit's cave, or hide yourself within a monastic enclosure." But even so, how shall I be sure that I may not carry a little world of my own along with me? And is there not a possibility that that little world of my own may be just as opposed to God, and just as tyrannous and exacting, as the bigger world that I have run away from? Am I quite sure that monastery walls will shut the world out? Or is the world so subtle that perhaps its spirit may find its way through bricks and mortar? Yes, even within the enclosures of a monastery there may be just as much of real essential worldliness as in the hubbub of a great city.

(b) "Despise it," says the cynic. "Be indifferent to all considerations of pain and pleasure. Never mind what the world thinks of you. Rejoice in being peculiar. Abstain from doing what men generally do, just because they generally do it. And do things that no one else would think of doing, just because no one else does them. The more peculiar and extraordinary you make yourself, the more you will issue a kind of protest against conventional life; and thereby you will gradually train and educate yourself to a position of independence, and will be ready to tell your Alexander to stand out of your sunshine." Yes, that sounds very sublime; but is it really so? May not our Diogenes be creating for himself a greater conqueror, or a greater tyrant, in his own inflated self-consciousness, than ever was an Alexander or a Xerxes?

(c) I am living in the world. I am surrounded by the influences of the world. How am I to be lifted up above them? We shall ask a certain tent-maker whether he can throw any light, such as neither mediæval ascetic nor cynic philosopher can throw, upon this great and all-important problem. And we hear him reply, "God, far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." That is his answer; and if we would ask him, "Who taught you that lesson?" we have not to wait long for a reply. Grace had taught St. Paul that lesson. He learned it, not on Sinai, but at Calvary. As he gazed on the cross

of the Lord Jesus Christ, grace had drawn aside the curtain of mystery and explained to him the great sight; and she has a similar lesson for all who learn at her school.

¶ Christ came. The soul the most full of love, the most sacredly virtuous, the most deeply inspired by God and the future, that men have yet seen on earth—Jesus. He bent over the corpse of the dead world, and whispered a word of faith. Over the clay that had lost all of man but the movement and the form, He uttered words until then unknown—love, sacrifice, a heavenly origin. And the dead arose. A new life circulated through the clay, which philosophy had tried in vain to reanimate. From that corpse arose the Christian world, the world of liberty and equality. From that clay arose the true man, the image of God, the precursor of Humanity. Christ expired. All He had asked of mankind wherewith to save them—says Lamennais—was a cross whereon to die. But ere He died He had announced the glad tidings to the people. To those who asked of Him whence He had received it, He answered: From God, the Father. From the height of His cross He had invoked Him twice. Therefore upon the cross did His victory begin and still does it endure. Have faith, then, O you who suffer for the noble cause—apostles of a truth which the world of to-day comprehends not—warriors in the sacred fight whom it yet stigmatizes with the name of rebels! To-morrow, perhaps, this world, now incredulous or indifferent, will bow down before you in holy enthusiasm. To-morrow victory will bless the banner of your crusade. Walk in faith, and fear not. That which Christ has done, humanity may do. Believe and you will conquer.<sup>1</sup>

4. Hitherto we have been occupied in considering the negative teaching of grace, by which her pupils are trained to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. But while this negation and repudiation must necessarily come first, no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that the teaching of grace is merely or mainly negative, or that it aims simply at repressing that which is recognized as evil. On the contrary, this is one of the most prominent points in which grace stands in contrast with law. The demands of law are, not exclusively perhaps but mainly, negative. The claims of grace are principally positive.

Much is being said now in regard to different types of Christianity—an Oriental type and an Occidental type, a first-

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*, iii. 143.

century type, a mediæval type, and a modern type; and we hear also of a possible Japanese and Hindu type. There is some truth in such distinctions, but, after all, there is but one type of true life. No matter when a man lived, there was but one way to live—a sober, righteous, and godly way. No matter what type of Christian life may be developed in Japan or India, it must be a sober, righteous, and godly type.

(1) *Soberly*.—The word “soberly” has by no means the narrow signification which the besetting vice of England has given to it now—viz., abstinence from, or a very restrained use of, intoxicating liquors, nor even the wider one of a curbing of the desires of sense. The meaning may be better represented by *self-control* than by any other rendering. Now, if there were no men in the world but myself, and if I had no thought or knowledge of God, and if there were no other standard to which I ought to conform, I should have had, in my own nature, with its crowd of desires, tastes, inclinations, and faculties, plain indication that self-government was essential. For we all carry with us desires, inclinations, appetites—some of them directly connected with our physical frame, and some of them a little more refined—which are mere blind inclinations to a given specific good, and will be stirred up, apart altogether from the question of whether it is expedient or right to gratify them.

¶ Of how few who [like Mr. Gladstone] have lived for more than sixty years in the full sight of their countrymen, and have been as party leaders exposed to angry and sometimes spiteful criticism can it be said that there stands on record against them no malignant word and no vindictive act! This was due not perhaps entirely to natural sweetness of disposition, but rather to self-control and to a certain largeness of soul which would not condescend to anything mean or petty. Pride, though it may be a sin, is to most of us a useful, to some an indispensable, buttress of virtue. Nor should it be forgotten that the perfectly happy life which he led at home, cared for in everything by a devoted wife, kept far from him those domestic troubles which have soured the temper and embittered the judgments of not a few famous men. Reviewing his whole career, and summing up the concurrent impressions and recollections of those who knew him best, this dignity is the feature which dwells most in the mind as the outline of some majestic Alp thrills one from afar when all the lesser beauties of glen and wood, of crag and glacier, have

faded in the distance. As elevation was the note of his oratory, so was magnanimity the note of his character.<sup>1</sup>

(2) **Righteously.**—The idea of righteousness springs from the recognition of right. There are certain rights which have their origin in the nature of our relations with others, which they are justified in claiming that we should respect, and from which we cannot escape, and the recognition of these rights and the fulfilment of these claims is that which we understand by “righteousness.” We are under certain obligations in the first instance to God, and God has certain rights in us which He cannot for a moment ignore or decline to assert and enforce. In recognizing these rights, and in responding to these claims, we fulfil the law of righteousness so far as God is concerned. Further, there are certain rights which our fellow-men have in us, which we are not less bound to respect. This is the righteousness which the Apostle has in mind.

Now “righteousness” in reference to our fellows demands mercy. The common antithesis which is drawn between a kindly man and a just man, who will give everybody what he deserves and not one scrap more or less if he can help it, is erroneous, because every man has a claim upon every other man for lenient judgment and undeserved help. He may not deserve it, being such a man as he is; but he has a right to it, being a man at all. And no man is righteous who is not merciful. We do not fulfil the prophet’s exhortation, “do justly,” unless we fulfil his other, “love mercy.” For mercy is the right of all men.

This is something far more than observance of the common maxims of honesty and fairness and justice; it is righteousness, with God behind it, and with God’s very process of gracious love and righteousness going on around us. It makes a great difference whether we live a righteous life out of a sense of *this* world, or out of a sense of the *eternal* world; because the laws require it, or because God requires it; that is, whether we act from the greater or the lesser motive. It is the *motive* that gives tone and force to character. Conduct is secondary; motive is first. God is the only true motive for human conduct.

¶ The sublimest lines in English poetry perhaps are those translated by Dr. Johnson from Boëthius:—

<sup>1</sup> J. Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, 477.

From Thee, great God, we spring; to Thee we tend;  
 Path, *Motive*, Guide, Original, and End.

God the way, the motive, the guide, the beginning and end of all conduct—this is what is meant.<sup>1</sup>

(3) *Godly*.—This is the crowning characteristic of the new life and grandest lesson that grace essays to teach. All her other lessons, however important in themselves, are designed to lead up to godliness; and unless this lesson is learnt, all others must remain incomplete; for this word brings before us the true end of man. Man was not called into existence in order that an inward harmony might be established within his being, and that he might know the calm and serenity of the sober life. Nor was he sent into the world merely to do his duty to others by whom he might be surrounded, to abstain from violence and wrong, and to cultivate and exercise benevolence. The true end of man is to be attained in his own personality; it is in the proper development and education of the highest and most spiritual faculties of his nature, and in the concentration of these upon their proper object, that man rises to his true destiny and fulfils the great purpose of his being. That object is God; and in the development of those faculties which have God for their proper object, and in their concentration upon Him, consists the state or habit of godliness, while the education and training of these faculties is the work of grace.

¶ Only the godly man, the man who lives in habitual communion with God, who walks humbly with Him, who earnestly seeks His help and rests upon His grace, is able in any worthy manner to discharge personal and relative duties. One might as well attempt to build some Tadmor in the wilderness, without leading to it the streams by which life springs up in the midst of death, and the barren land is made to yield fruits of increase, as attempt to produce in the wastes of our fallen humanity the goodly fruits of a truly sober and truly righteous life without first establishing a living relation to the living God.<sup>2</sup>

¶ You cannot sliver up the unity of life into little sections and say, "This deed has to be done soberly, and that one righteously, and this one godly," but godliness must cover the whole life, and be the power of self-control and of righteousness. "All

<sup>1</sup> T. T. Munger, *Character Through Inspiration*, 65.

<sup>2</sup> James Brown, *Sermons with Memoir*, 121.

in all or not at all." Godliness must be uniform and universal. Lacking their supreme beauty are the lives of all who endeavour to keep these other two departments of duty and forget this third. There are many men punctiliously trying to control their natures, and to live righteously; but all their thoughts run along the low levels, and they are absolutely blind and deaf to voices and sights from heaven. They are like some of those truncated pyramids, broad-based upon the solid earth, and springing with firm lines to a certain height, and then coming to a dead stop, and so being but stumps, which leave a sense of incompleteness, because all the firm lines have not gathered themselves up into the sky-piercing point which aspires still higher than it has reached. "Soberly," that is much; "righteously," that is more; "godly," that is, not *most* but *all*.<sup>1</sup>

It is not heaven alone,  
Which godliness attains;  
It makes as much its own  
The best of worldly gains:  
Since out of all on earth it draws  
The ore which of its worth is cause.

From godliness there flows  
A current of content:  
And ill to blessing grows,  
By thought of blessing meant:  
Each lot as sent by God it holds;  
And each a bounty straight unfolds.

It keeps the mind from wrong,  
And so of peace secure;  
It keeps the body strong,  
Because it keeps it pure:  
And hath enough, on which to wait  
The heirship of a large estate.

And thus a double bliss  
To godliness pertains:  
The world which present is,  
And that to come it gains:  
The earthly good is heaven's begun;  
The promise rolls the two in one.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Kinloch, *Time's Treasure*, 28.

5. "In this present world." St. Paul has told us how to live. It is the question of questions—how to live in this world, with what spirit, and for what end. It is not so simple a matter as it seems, nor are men agreed upon it. It is the question that earnest minds are all the while asking; it underlies education; parents ask it anxiously for their children; every young man comes to a parting of the ways when he asks what path he shall take. There are vast numbers who do not know how to live in the world. It is one of the mysteries of human life that we should not know how to live it. It is the strange and pathetic thing about life that it is all we have to do, and we do not know how to do it. We come as near finding a true plan of living in these words as can be found anywhere—"denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

The Christian life lies between the first and the second coming of Christ. We confess this whenever we sit down at the Lord's Table. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." We look backward in memorial and forward in anticipation—backward to that death by which our salvation is secured, and forward to that coming by which our redemption shall be completed. Our life here lies between the two. It is nourished by the memorials of the past, and by the pledges of the future. It may be lowly and commonplace in itself, but we can never fail to realize its dignity as long as we remember that from which it begins and that toward which it tends. It may be compared to a highway between two great capitals. The road may be dull and unromantic, leading up toilsome heights and down into cheerless villages, or stretching for weary miles across featureless wastes. It may be dry and dusty and rugged, with nothing to distinguish it from any other highway of the world; but from time to time we come to the milestones on which we read the names of the great city whence we came, and the great city whither it is leading us. And when, as we rest by the wayside of our Christian pilgrimage, and call up by the Vision of Faith the old Jerusalem with its place called Calvary, where He died amid rending rocks, its empty sepulchre whence He rose in glory, its Olivet from which He ascended into heaven, and its upper room where the Spirit descended; and

when we call up by the Vision of Hope the new Jerusalem with its walls of jasper, its gates of pearl, and its streets of gold, whence He shall come to receive His ransomed people, and whither He shall lead them, that where He is there they may be also—then we feel that the way of our Christian life that stretches out between these two is a royal way indeed, lighted by heavenly light, and guarded by the angels of God.

¶ Do you know that as I live I become more and more impressed by one word, and that word is “now.” Between twilight and sunrise at Peniel Jacob went through what he could never recall. “What saidst thou, O Jacob, in that night-long contest?” Jacob could not have remembered that except in its main lines. The veerings of hope and passion and doubt and fear and intense stringent resolution passed as the rolling night clouds passed, melting into flecks and streaks of morning light.

It is the now that makes the sinner;

It is the now that makes the saint.

Satan has great power over the past and over the future; he has less power over the Now. He has terrified me many a time, as if to the gate of death, by his power over the past, to make it lurid and terrible and inexpiable. He has made heart and flesh fail with the thought of all that lies before me. But he has far less power over the Now. Here I am more truly myself. I can dip my pen and go on writing, and he can't compel me to do nothing or to do wrong. Oh that I “could sport the oak” between the past and the future very frequently and dwell in the shrine of the present, forgetting the things that are behind as far as they cloud the great work of the Now!<sup>1</sup>

Live well to-day, to-day is thine alone;

To-morrow is not, and may never be;

And yesterday no longer is thine own;

But *now* belongs to thee.

Then take the task that's nearest to thy hand,

And do it earnestly with all thy might;

Though men may cavil or misunderstand,

Heed not their blame or slight.

What though the common lot of toil be thine,

Thy task the meanest drudgery under heaven,

Thou may'st transform and make it all divine,

If love thy labour leaven.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Smetham, 193.*

Work is the daily worship of thy hands,  
The service thou dost render to mankind  
Must be the measure of thy worth; it stands  
The index of thy mind.

Arise, go forth, thy growing powers employ  
In helping those who need, their load to bear;  
And thus thy life shall be a growing joy,  
Freed from all self and care.

Thus live each day, and so thy lowly life  
Shall be to all around a beacon bright,  
Whose beams shall lead men upward through the strife,  
To heaven's pure joy and light.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> David Lawton.



PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.

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## PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.—Heb. i. 1, 2.

No one can read this Epistle without perceiving that the writer belongs to the Pauline school; in other words, that he has more sympathy with the new age which is coming than with the old age which is going. Yet, if we look more closely, we shall find that there is a conservative element amidst his sympathies. His heart is with the future, but the future which claims his heart is one which will absorb rather than divorce the past. He sees clearly that the forms of Judaism were in their very nature transitory and perishable, and that no conjunction of circumstances could ever have made them permanent. But he sees not less clearly that they typified that which could not perish; that they were not illusions, much less delusions, but the shadows of things to come, whose glory all along had been the forecast of the substance which they prefigured. He is prepared to see them fade, but not to fade into nothingness. When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part is done away; yet all the parts exist in the completed whole. So to the eye of this writer the shadows of Judaism only fade in that light which gave them birth, and yield their borrowed glory to the coming substance which they foreshadowed. He repudiates the notion that he is proclaiming a new system of the universe; he will not even admit that a new voice is speaking. He maintains that from the beginning there has been a continuity of Divine revelation: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us." The voice has never been broken; the accents have never been interrupted; there has simply been a change in tone and modulation, as the ear of the listener developed from the organ of a child into the organ of a mature man.

But, having conceded so much to the spirit of Judaism, the writer of this Epistle proceeds to exhibit the vast advance which the last stage of the revelation has made upon its earlier stages. He goes on to enumerate the different points in which the Divine voice in Christianity is distinguished from the Divine voice in Judaism, and in every one of these points he finds the advantage on the side of the former.

Let us notice:—

- I. The One Authentic Voice.
- II. The Two Dispensations.
- III. The Culmination in Christ

## I.

### THE ONE AUTHENTIC VOICE.

1. The first truth which the author of this Epistle emphasizes is that God has spoken. God has been speaking to our world. Human nature has suffered many degradations, but it has never utterly lost the capacity for seeing the presence and hearing the voice of the Father in heaven. And to that capacity—abused, degraded, but never quite destroyed—God has ever been making His appeal. Now He has flashed forth His glory in the pomp of the sunset, and made the majesty of silent stars to speak His greatness. Now He has called forth, from a solitude which none could penetrate, a holy man into whose very spirit He has inwrought His mind and heart, and has set him to utter His thought and manifest His name. And now He has wrought in the very eyes of the people, vindicating the right and crushing the wrong, making paths through trackless wastes and solid walls of mobile waters, lifting a veil here and speaking a tone there. But everywhere and at all times and in all ways it has been the same God, revealing His life, declaring His will, manifesting His glory, calling to His children. The light was ever adapted to the eye, the revelation to the capacity, the ideal to the spirit. Bit by bit the veil has been lifted, the disclosure made, the glory flashed out, that men might be prepared for the complete vision, the final discovery, the full manifestation.

¶ I think I ought to tell you that of late the consciousness of the necessity and reliability of revelation has greatly deepened within me. I hardly know how best to convey to others what I mean. Perhaps the best way of putting it would be to say that, although one has always believed in revelation, as every Christian must, it is only comparatively recently that the realization of its outstanding importance has broken upon my mind. You all know how, as children, we take home for granted, as it were; we observe that our elders come and go, possess a certain authority over us, and appear to be concerned with matters too great for our young apprehension; but, being children, we do not realize that the home itself is maintained by what is brought into it from an outside world by the labours and sacrifices of the breadwinner. We may know it, may often have been told it, may be very grateful for it at special times when it takes forms exceptionally agreeable to our childish intelligence; but it is only as we grow older that we really come to understand it. To some the knowledge comes gradually and simply; to others suddenly and painfully. But, in whatever way it comes, it changes one's whole perspective of life in greater or less degree. Of course, I am not suggesting that my religious experience has been as profoundly affected as this by the realization to which I refer; it has not; but you will all readily admit that to see an essential thing plainly, which before you took for granted, but only saw dimly, must make considerable difference to the way in which you visualize your experience. What I see, then, is this: that at intervals throughout all human history God has been disclosing Himself to His children in exceptional ways over and above all that unaided human faculty could discover for itself; that flashes and intimations have come through to the natural from the supernatural world, to the temporal from the eternal; and that in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ especially we have a Divine self-impartment to man such as cannot be explained in terms of our earthly knowledge, and yet is the most precious thing we possess. This does not sound much to say, but there is more in it than appears. Once admit it and it will carry you far. There is no greater question before us at the present hour than the question of the nature, limits, and trustworthiness of Divine revelation.<sup>1</sup>

2. The voice of God is its own witness. There is something in the voice of God which, to an uncorrupt mind, in proportion as it is uncorrupt, is unmistakable. The words of Amos evidently express the main reason why the voices of God in the Bible

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Campbell, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, April 9, 1913, p. 489.

demand belief and submission. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" If a man's heart be not hardened, the word of God, the voice of God will bespeak the awful Being from whom it proceeds, just as our voices may betray our characters, or as the lion's roar bespeaks a mighty force. Dryden has, to some extent, expressed this in the following lines:—

Majestic and Divine,  
It speaks no less than God in every line,  
Commanding words, whose force is still the same  
As the first fiat that produced our frame.

¶ Some time ago I was one of a small party which was engaged in exploring some curious winding caves under the guidance of a person well acquainted with their formation. Each of us carried a candle, which was the only light we had, and at some points during our subterranean progress the illumination produced by the reflection of the rays of our candles from the rock crystals and stalactites above and around us was strikingly beautiful. All at once I noticed another party some distance ahead of us and coming toward us, and as the persons composing it passed one by one under a certain spot we could see their faces plainly. A full, soft light fell upon them from somewhere above. It was a light quite different from that of the candles they carried, and if I had never seen the upper world before, if I had known nothing about it except by hearsay, I should instantly have felt convinced there was such a place because of that light, for it was the light of the sun itself. In like manner I feel convinced that the spiritual, the eternal, the Divine, the home of our souls, is at least what I have described because of the light which breaks through from it, the light that is other and brighter than the candle of reason, the light that never was on sea or land, but which we can see shining on the faces of the saints.<sup>1</sup>

3. God's voice is ever the same although it has not always been heard with the same distinctness. The Old Testament is a record of religious evolution—not of the whole of it, but of a particular section of it, a section of it which is of peculiar and exceptional importance to the world for two reasons. It is a history of the process by which a certain little Syrian tribe with a primitive religion, originally not very different from that of

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Campbell.

surrounding tribes, gradually came to see in their tribal Deity Jehovah the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, the one only true God, a God perfectly righteous, and delighting in righteousness. And that is a process absolutely unique in the history of the world. Isolated thinkers elsewhere had glimpses of the truth, but the Jews were the first great monotheistic people. That fact alone must for ever give to the Old Testament a unique and imperishable predominance among the religious literatures of the ancient world for all who believe in God, though we shall do well at the same time to insist very strongly on the fact that it is the ultimate result of the development, rather than its earliest stages, that differentiates it so strongly from other collections of sacred books.

¶ Every part of the universe interlocks by subtle and delicate links with every other part. You cannot disturb the balance anywhere without sending a shock of disturbance through the whole system. Just as in some majestic Gothic minster the same idea repeats itself in bolder or slighter forms, so do the same great thoughts recur in tree and flower, in molecule and planet, in diatom and man. And all this because, if you penetrate to Nature's heart, you meet God. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." The unity that pervades Nature's temple is the result of its having originated from one mind, and having been effected by one hand—the mind and hand of God. This holds true of Scripture. What else could have led mankind to look upon these sixty-six tractlets as being so unmistakably related to each other, that they must be bound up together under a common cover? There has been something so unique in these books that they have always stood and fallen together. To disintegrate one had been to loose them all. Belief in one has led to belief in all. Their hands are linked and locked so tightly that where one goes all must follow. And though wise and clever men have tried their best, they have never been able to produce a single treatise containing that undefinable quality which gives these their mysterious oneness; and to lack which is fatal to the claims of any book to be included with them, or to demand the special veneration and homage of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Do I value the locket less because I know it is a human handiwork? It is not the locket I care for. It is the picture of the beloved that is in the locket. It is not the frame and form

<sup>1</sup> F. B. Meyer, *The Way into the Holiest*, 10.

and structure of the book, but it is the God who dwells in the book that makes it dear to me—dwelling in Moses, in David, in Isaiah, manifesting Himself through their lives, in fragmentary ways, imperfect in conduct, imperfect in experience, imperfect in expression; at last to show Himself in Jesus Christ our Lord, the only perfect Life, the only perfect Teacher, the only perfect manifestation of God, in either word or deed. He that did speak in fragmentary forms and utterances through the prophets hath spoken in these last days by His Son. Christ in the Bible makes the Bible sacred.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

### THE TWO DISPENSATIONS.

This nameless Apostle is addressing men who have been expecting the visible triumph of Christ as the long-looked-for Messiah, and who now find that they are suddenly called upon instead to sacrifice many of the traditions from which they and their country had drawn the best that was in them. The Scriptures which they had loved and studied, the cherished worship of the Temple, the ancient priesthood, the glorious ritual, the institutions which they could not but feel to have been divinely appointed—all these they were now for ever to resign; and who can wonder if some of them seemed to falter at this terrible breach with their past life? But here begins the consolation of the Epistle. The past revelation, the writer tells them, was imperfect; it grew and varied in its fulness, but it never reached perfection; now it was made perfect in Christ. Christ had superseded the past because all that was good in it was also, with much else, to be found in Him. Indeed, the highest value of that past as viewed from the standpoint of the present, lay in the fact that it had been the introduction to a new order of things. In Judaism every institution—the priesthood, the ritual, the Psalms, the Temple—had been rooted in an unfulfilled Christianity: in Judaism the day had been slowly dawning; in Christ it had come. The day-star had risen in men's hearts, and those many night-stars of varying brightness were needed no longer.

<sup>1</sup> L. Abbott, *Signs of Promise*, 271.

1. A contrast is drawn between the fragmentariness of the Old Testament dispensation, and the full-orbed revelation of the New. "By divers portions." The single word that is rendered "at sundry times" properly means "in numerous parts" or "parcels," which, however, were no doubt given at "sundry times"; so that the rendering in the Authorized Version, though imperfect, is legitimate. The idea is that God did not at once open up the fulness of His mind, and unfold to view the treasures of His grace. His plan proceeded on the principle of "here a little" and "there a little." His revelation was given piecemeal. It came bit by bit, as the fathers might be able to receive it.

¶ Mahometanism has but a single prophet. Its sacred book is the work of one man. Its doctrines were all proclaimed at one time. Its theology was built up from beginning to end in the course of a single life. It had no period of preparation. It came into the world as an adult system; at least its maturity was reached so rapidly that it might be described as adult. I am not of course speaking of Mahometanism as a historical phenomenon. Historically it has its antecedents, and those antecedents can be explained and traced; but as a prophet Mahomet had no precursors. He brought his own credentials; he delivered his own message; he left that message in a form which he intended to be final, and to need no supplementing by others. In all these respects the faith of Christ and that of Mahomet stand in marked contrast. Mahomet, indeed, had Christianity and Judaism to build upon, or he would never have reached the height that he did. He himself to some extent recognized his obligations. But when we think of Mahometanism, we think of a religion promulgated once for all as a whole. And the difference when we turn to our own Bibles helps us to realize what is meant by "divers portions."<sup>1</sup>

2. A second contrast is drawn between the diversity of means used for disclosing truth in old times and the one majestic disclosure that eclipsed them all. The old revelation was not only "in numerous parts," or "portions"; it was given "in divers manners." The reference is to the various forms which the subject-matter of the communications was made to assume, as it passed on *through* the prophets to the people at large. There

<sup>1</sup> W. Sanday, *The Oracles of God*, 2.

were commandments. There were promises. There was history. There were exhortations, expostulations, invitations, warnings, pleadings, threatenings. There were predictions and types, parables and proverbs, psalms and songs. God spoke, as Cardinal Cajetan observes, "to the intellect, to the imagination, to the senses." He addressed at one time the principle of hope, at another the principle of gratitude, at another still the principle of competition and rivalry, then perhaps the principle of fear, or the nobler principle of conscience, and of the consciousness of a certain Divine imperative speaking in authoritative tones within the conscience. Thus, "in manifold fashion," did God reveal His mind to "the fathers."

¶ God is at work in all history and in the life of every man. It is He who gives to each his daily bread; He leadeth men by ways they know not. But from most of them His activity is hidden as by thick veils, so that they see only the human part in all that happens, whilst in the Old Testament we have history with the veils removed, history meditated and brooded over until it has given up its secret, and God's part is seen. It would be a great calamity if we consented to regard that older story as a Divine exception, floating vaguely in high heaven, in strong contrast to the laws and possibilities of our life to-day. "These things were written for our *learning*," says St. Paul, and we cannot learn from what is of a different kind from our own. What is written about Israel corresponds to the view which faith takes of the life of any man to-day; however blank and common that may seem to those who see it from outside, it is a life beset by Divine kindness, appealed to and shepherded by God, and some day becoming aware of God. To faith it is clear that every blessing which reaches us, the light of the sun, and the sweet airs, and all that quickens life in men, comes because God means it so. There is nothing insignificant, and if we understood life better we should feel its wonder more; for to watch the movement of events, to see the grace that follows and encompasses men, and offers itself, and continually is rejected—that brings us near to adoration of the miracle of God's patience.<sup>1</sup>

3. There is a further contrast between "the prophets" and "the Son." The author says nothing about rites, institutions, dispensations, and laws. The reason apparently is that he wishes to compare with the revelation in Christ the highest, purest, and

<sup>1</sup> W. M. Macgregor, *Some of God's Ministries*, 237.

fullest revelation given before; and the most complete revelation vouchsafed to men, before the Son came to declare the Father, is to be found, not in sacrifices but in the words of promise, not in the institutions but in holy men, who were sent, time after time, to quicken the institutions into new life or to preach new truths. The prophets were seers and poets. Nature's highest gift is imagination, whether it "makes" a world that transcends nature or "sees" what in nature is hidden from the eyes of ordinary men. This faculty of the true poet, elevated, purified, taken possession of by God's Holy Spirit, became the best instrument of revelation, until the word of prophecy was made more sure through the still better gift of the Son.

¶ A glance at the Maréchale's well-used Bible suffices to prove that for her the heart of the Old Testament is in Hosea, the prophet of love, and Isaiah, the prophet of atonement; while the heart of the New Testament is in the story of the returning prodigal or the penitent Magdalene. If there were parts of the much-loved Book from which she could not preach, she was here, too, guided by her instincts. One day she was reading to her youngest children the story of Daniel in the lion's den. All went well till she came to the words, "And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of the lions, them, their children and their wives; and the lions had the mastery over them, and brake all their bones in pieces." At this point Evelyn, a blue-eyed maid of six, whose face had suddenly become very grave, said, "*C'est assez; ferme le livre!*" (That's enough; shut the book!) Her Christian instinct would not accept the death of innocent women and children. Sir Walter Scott's little friend, Pet Marjorie, commented on a similar passage in the Book of Esther, "But Jesus was not then come to teach us to be merciful." It is written: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."<sup>1</sup>

¶ There is something to us very striking in Arthur Hallam's words, "Revelation is a *voluntary* approximation of the Infinite Being to the ways and thoughts of finite humanity." This states the case with an accuracy and a distinctness not at all common among either the opponents or the apologists of revealed religion in the ordinary sense of the expression. In one sense God is for ever revealing Himself. His heavens are for ever telling His glory, and the firmament showing His handiwork; day unto day

<sup>1</sup> J. Strahan, *The Maréchale* (1913), 267.

is uttering speech, and night unto night is showing knowledge concerning Him. But in the word of the truth of the gospel, God draws near to His creatures; He bows His heavens, and comes down:

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,  
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,

He lays aside. The Word dwelt with men. "Come then, let *us* reason together;"—"Waiting to be gracious;"—"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man open to me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." It is the father seeing his son while yet a great way off, and having compassion, and running to him and falling on his neck and kissing him; for "it was meet for us to rejoice, for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found."<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### THE CULMINATION IN CHRIST.

1. In the fulness of time God has spoken in His Son. The long, painful discipline is ended. The revelation in types and symbols, here in this manner and there in that part, has been consummated. The pale stars that jewelled and relieved the night have been quenched in the overmastering glory of the mid-day sun. The whole life of Jesus, so exquisite in beauty, so sovereign in power, is a strong accent of the voice of God. He is the final and absolute revelation, at once the tenderest and the most authentic appeal of the Lord. All others who had spoken in His name and declared His will were but messengers who by preliminary disciplines should prepare men's hearts for this final revelation. Jesus is the unveiling of the Father's full glory, the manifestation of His high and holy name, the laying bare of the opulent love of His heart. He who in an intimacy of mind and heart which was complete dwelt in the excellent glory of God, came forth into the world to unveil before the eyes of men the purity and pity, the solicitude and sympathy, the love and the sacrifice of God. That is the fine glory of Jesus. All the scattered rays of light are focussed in Him. They shine as they

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Brown, *Horæ Subsecivæ*, ii. 469.

reflect His glory. He is the world's Sun, lighting every man that ever came into the world, but in these last days standing out in acknowledged and radiant glory, the unique and lonely Revealer of the Father. The very voice of the Lord God hath spoken unto us in Jesus our Saviour.

Prophets and seers had caught flashes of light that penetrated the darkness. Poets and singers had imprisoned strains of lovely music which had been heard by their souls. Lofty and pure spirits had seen tracings of His thought, suggestions of the work of an unseen Mind. Men had stood in reverent awe before what they felt was the movement of His hand and arm. Bit by bit, like the piecing together of a beautiful mosaic, they had reverently striven to put together their different parts, and to complete the picture of the Most High God. That is the pathos of man's quest, that the deeper pathos of all early history. But at the last He came, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person. Forth from the bosom of God and in infinite glory of heaven, He stepped into our world. He gathered together every ray of light, every touch of beauty, every suggestion of the infinite which had ever visited man and set them all in their proper place. By word and deed and life He unveiled the mystery, interpreted the character, manifested the name. And as men gazed at the completed picture, behold! it was the face of a Father.

¶ What and who is Jesus Christ? In reverence and humility let us give our answer. He is the meeting of the Divine and human—the presence of God in humanity, the perfection of humanity in God; the Divine made human, the human shown to be capable of union with the Divine; the utterance, therefore, of the nearness and the love of God, and of the possibility of man. Once in the ages came the wondrous life, once in the stretch of history the face of Jesus shone in Palestine, and His feet left their blessed impress upon earth; but what that life made manifest had been for ever true. Its truth was timeless, the truth of all eternity. The love of God, the possibility of man,—these two which made the Christhood,—these two, not two but one, had been the element in which all life was lived, all knowledge known, all growth attained. Oh, how little men have made it, and how great it is! Around all life which ever has been lived there has been poured for ever the life of the loving Deity and the ideal humanity. All partial excellence, all learning, all brotherhood, all hope, has been bosomed on this changeless, this unchanging Being which

has stretched from the forgotten beginning to the unguessed end.<sup>1</sup>

2. God in Christ still speaks to us. While criticism has been raging round the letter of the gospel narrative, the voice of the Son of God has been calmly speaking in that narrative, in unearthly tones, with supernatural and supreme authority, and has been extorting from human thoughts and consciences the old exclamation, "Truly this was the Son of God!" His words provoke allegiance and obedience by their own inherent force; they too, by His gracious condescension, are supported by all the mass of past miracle and present fulfilment of prophecy and manifest grace which here have an overwhelming corroboration. He has put His seal on all the utterances of God in the past, has reaffirmed all the great revelations they declare, has shown us His Father, and has brought the Father home to us by word and deed; and in His word we are brought into direct communication with His Father and our Father, with His God and our God, and so our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

¶ You never get to the end of Christ's words. There is something always behind. They pass into proverbs, they pass into laws, they pass into doctrine, they pass into consolation; but they never pass away, and after all the use that is made of them, they are still not exhausted.<sup>2</sup>

¶ At first one's conceptions of Christ are abstract to a great extent; they ought to become more and more concrete. To find ourselves any nearer the belief that we *have* an High Priest, once a man, now passed into the heavens, and whom the heavens will contain till the restitution of all things, ought to be a glad thought. We feel His workings, His efficacies. I thought to-day, when I was weary, of His saying, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." We feel it. Say not in thine heart, "Who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down from above? Behold, the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." This to me has always been a marvellous explication of the mystery of faith—the incarnate Word, the truth, the life, the syllable, and the essence.

Whate'er we hope, by faith we have  
Future and past subsisting now.

<sup>1</sup> *Phillips Brooks : Memories of His Life*, 481.

<sup>2</sup> Dean Stanley.

But as experience advances we ought to get nearer to the realization of "Whom, not having seen, we love; and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Should we not be able to speak of Him, and feel towards Him something as certainly as of a living friend whom we knew to be in the next room? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Smetham, 85.*



THE CROWNED CHRIST.

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## THE CROWNED CHRIST.

But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man.—Heb. ii. 8, 9.

WE have a comparison in this chapter between humanity uncrowned and humanity in Jesus Christ crowned. Humanity is a tender and beautiful plant, but it is flowerless apart from Jesus Christ. All the strength, the grace, and the beauty of the race express themselves once for all in Christ who is the flower of the race. And we see the meaning, the purpose and the sovereignty of the human race when we see Jesus crowned.

Following the writer's thought, let us consider,

I. Man's unrealized Destiny.

II. His Sovereignty secured in Christ.

### I.

#### MAN'S UNREALIZED DESTINY.

“But now we see not yet all things subjected to him.”

1. That man was made for sovereignty was declared by the Psalmist whom the writer quotes. “Thou hast made him”—that is, man—“a little lower than the angels. Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” And this is not a doctrine peculiar to the Psalmist; it is not merely the excitement and rapture of genius that affirm it. Read the earliest pages of the Jewish Scriptures, and you will discover that in the record of creation it is said that man was made in the image of God, was appointed to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the

cattle, and over all the earth; and he was charged by God to subdue the earth, which had been made his kingdom.

¶ Readers of Tennyson will remember the magic Hall of Camelot, with its four great zones or belts of sculpture. On the lowest belt were represented beasts slaying men. On the next higher, men are slaying beasts, on the third are warriors, perfect men, while on the highest are men with growing wings; and over all the ideal man beckoning upward to those beneath. A wonderful parable of the advancing man. To the writer of the 8th Psalm man had already tamed the beast, tamed its passions. He had made the ox the slave of agriculture. He had harnessed the fury of the fire, and found a way for his commerce in the seas. But while he thus felt how great was his place in the universe, nothing impressed him so much as that God thought about him and visited him. The greatest thing one can say is that man can hold communion with his God, that man can walk with the Eternal and have the atmosphere of heaven.<sup>1</sup>

(1) *Man's sovereignty extends over the material universe.*—Man is infinitely more than the last and the highest result of operations entirely within the material. He is the last and the highest result of such operations, in certain senses; but he did not become man by such operations and processes. He became man by an act of God, distinct from all other acts; an act by which He did, in the mystery of His wisdom and the operations of His might, differentiate by infinite distance between man and everything that lay beneath him in the scale of creation. God's place for this man in the earth is that of dominion. He made him to have dominion over the whole earth; over all that the earth yields in the mystery of its life; over all that dwells upon the earth, having sentient life. Over all these He placed man, that he might have dominion over them. All beneath man is imperfect without him, and can be perfected only as he exercises his dominion.

¶ I refuse to be reduced to the same rank, to be placed in the same order, as the cattle that browse on the hills, or the fish that people the sea. I assert my supremacy. I believe that I have received from the hand of God crown and sceptre, and that although other designs may be accomplished by the existence of the material and living things around me, they are intended to serve *me*. The sun shines that I may

<sup>1</sup> J. E. Rattenbury.

see the mountains and the woods and the flashing streams, and that I may do the work by which I live. For me the rain falls and the dews silently distil—to cherish the corn which grows for my food, to soften the air I breathe, and to keep the beauty of the world fresh and bright on which I rejoice to look. The music of the birds is for me, and the perfume of flowers. For me it was that forests grew in ancient times and have since been hardened into coal; for me there are veins of iron and of silver penetrating the solid earth; and for me there are rivers whose sands are gold. The beasts of the earth were meant to do my work; sheep and oxen are given me for food. Fire and hail and the stormy wind were meant to serve me. I have authority to compel the lightning to be the messenger of my thought, and the servant of my will. Man is placed over the works of God's hands; for those works were meant to minister to man's life, man's culture, and man's happiness.<sup>1</sup>

(2) *Man bears "the image of God."*—In the creation which surrounds us, there are marvellous manifestations of the Divine attributes. A power to which we can give no other name than omnipotence, a knowledge which we cannot but call infinite, a wisdom whose depths are unfathomable, and an inexhaustible goodness, are revealed in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. But in man, God has given existence to a creature in whom we recognize not merely the operations of the Divine attributes, but the attributes themselves, though in a less noble form and an inferior degree. There is the manifestation of wisdom, of power, and of love, in the other works of God; but in man there is wisdom itself, love itself.

¶ The preparation of the Declaratory Act, to remove difficulties and scruples felt by some in reference to the declaration of belief required from persons who receive office or are admitted to office in the Free Church, was undertaken with great care. At the Assembly of 1891, Principal Rainy was able to bring up the document which the Committee proposed to be adopted. The fourth section read as follows: "That in holding and teaching, according to the Confession of Faith, the corruption of man's whole nature as fallen, this Church also maintains that there remain tokens of his greatness as created in the image of God; that he possesses a knowledge of God and of duty; that he is responsible for compliance with the moral law and with the Gospel; and that, although unable without the aid of the Holy Spirit to

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Dale, *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church*, 49.

return to God, he is yet capable of affections and actions which in themselves are virtuous and praiseworthy."<sup>1</sup>

(3) *Man is endowed with freedom.*—He is like God in this, that he possesses freedom to choose the objects of his life, and the means by which he will secure them. Let the iron hand of necessity control all things besides,—the eagle in her daring flight, the tumult of the ocean, the dance of the spray, the rush of the winds, the fury of the storm,—the will of man stands erect, confronting and defying all authority and all power. No outward force can compel it; no inward necessity bind it. The foundations of that throne on which the human will has been placed by the hand of the Creator cannot be shaken by the tremendous energies which rend asunder the everlasting hills. A solitary man can stand against a million; they may torture his physical frame till he cries aloud in his agony, but the whole force of a great empire has been met and mastered by the will of a quiet scholar and of a feeble woman. God has given to the human will the power of refusing to bow before His own greatness, and of disobeying His own commands. This imperial faculty it is, beyond all others, which stamps man as the rightful master of the world. He alone has this indispensable attribute of sovereignty. All creatures besides are in bondage to irresistible law; he alone has received the gift of freedom. "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

But it exceeds man's thought to think how high  
 God hath raised man, since God a man became;  
 The angels do admire this mystery,  
 And are astonished when they view the same.

Nor hath he given these blessings for a day,  
 Nor made them on the body's life depend.  
 The soul, though made in time, survives for aye;  
 And though it hath beginning, sees no end.<sup>2</sup>

2. Man's sovereignty, conferred on him originally by the appointment of his Creator, has not been fully realized. How

<sup>1</sup> P. C. Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, ii. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Davies.

miserably he has come short of it has been shown by the condition of all nations and of all ages. His freedom has been manifested in his violation of the most solemn and imperative obligations. The image of God has been so defaced that it has almost disappeared. The intellect of man has sunk into a chaos of ignorance and error, and, instead of rightly understanding the universe, he has constructed a thousand monstrous theories concerning its origin, concerning the very structure of material things, concerning his own nature and destiny. The commonest laws of the external world remained hidden from him for thousands of years, and remain hidden even now from the immense majority of his race. Instead of being the master of the inferior creation, he has been—and to a large extent, continues still—its unhappy victim. His life is destroyed by the poison of reptiles, and by the brute strength of beasts of prey. The vineyards he has laboriously cultivated he cannot protect from blight. The harvests he is ready to reap are wasted by destructive rains. On the land, his cities perish by earthquakes: on the sea, his ships go down in the storm. His health is ruined and his moral nature corrupted by the strong temptations of the outward world, which betray him into sensual excesses. He has come to be so humiliated and degraded that he has looked up to the moon and stars which were made to serve him, and has called them his gods; he has placed four-footed beasts and creeping things in the shrine of his temples, and has implored them to avert the calamities he dreaded, and to bestow on him the blessings for which he longed. The traces of his kingship have not disappeared; slowly and painfully in one province of his dominions after another, especially since Christ came, and in the lands of Christendom, he has been winning back the authority he had lost; but his hand is too feeble to hold the sceptre, and on all sides the subject creation is in open revolt—revolt which he seems often unable even to check, and is quite unable to subdue. “We see not yet all things put under him.”

If that psalm be God's thought of man, the plan that He hangs up for us, His workmen, to build by, what a wretched thing my copy of it has turned out to be! Is this a picture of me? How seldom I am conscious of the visits of God; how full I am of weaknesses and imperfections, the solemn voice within

me tells me at intervals when I listen to its tones. On my brow there gleams no diadem; from my life, alas! there shines at the best but a fitful splendour of purity, all striped with solid masses of blackness. And as for dominion over creatures, how superficial my rule over them, how real their rule over me! I can tame animals or slay them; I can use the forces of nature for my purposes. I can make machinery, and bid the lightning do my errands, and carry messages, the burden of which is mostly money, or power, or sorrow. But all these things do not signify that man has the dominion over God's creation. That consists in using all for God, and for our own growth in wisdom, strength, and goodness; and he only is master of all things who is servant of God. "All are yours, and ye are Christ's." If so, what are most of us but servants, not lords, of earth and its goods? We fasten our very lives on them, we tremble at the bare thought of losing them, we give our best efforts to get them; we say to the fine gold, "Thou art my confidence." We do not possess them, they possess us, though materially we may have conquered the earth (and wonderfully proud of it we are now), spiritually, which is the same as to say *really*, the earth has conquered us.

¶ The sense I had of the state of the churches brought a weight of distress upon me. The gold to me appeared dim, and the fine gold changed, and though this is the case too generally, yet the sense of it in these parts hath in a particular manner borne heavy upon me. It appeared to me that through the prevailing of the spirit of this world the minds of many were brought to an inward desolation, and instead of the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and heavenly wisdom, which are the necessary companions of the true sheep of Christ, a spirit of fierceness and the love of dominion too generally prevailed. From small beginnings in error great buildings by degrees are raised, and from one age to another are more and more strengthened by the general concurrence of the people; and as men obtain reputation by their profession of the truth, their virtues are mentioned as arguments in favour of general error; and those of less note, to justify themselves, say, such and good men did the like.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Journal of John Woolman.*

## ) II.

## SOVEREIGNTY SECURED IN CHRIST.

“But we behold him . . . even Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour.”

The writer of the Epistle has quoted the 8th Psalm as an illustration of his thesis that Christ, and we in Christ, are exalted above angels, and then he proceeds to admit that, as a matter of fact, men are not what the Psalmist describes them as being. But the psalm is not, therefore, an exaggeration, or a dream, or a mere ideal of the imagination. True, as a matter of fact, men are not all this. But, as a matter of fact, Jesus Christ is, and in His possession of all that the psalm painted our possession is commenced and certified. It *is* an ideal picture, but it is realized in Jesus, and, having been so in Him, we have ground to believe that it will be so in us. We see not yet all things put under man—alas, no—but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour; and as He tasted death for every man, so in His exaltation He is prophecy and pledge that the grand old words shall one day be fulfilled in all their height and depth.

1. Christ's sovereignty was won through humiliation and suffering.

(1) *He was content to be “made a little lower than the angels.”*—Wherein was Jesus set under the angels? Not simply in that He became man; for His manhood is as truly the ground of His exaltation as of His humiliation. It is to man as man that the psalm ascribes the coronet of glory and honour—the exaltation over all creatures into which Jesus has entered. With Jesus, as with man in general, the inferiority to the angels is one of dispensation, not of nature. To be subordinated to the angelic dispensation is the same thing as to be “made under the law.” Jesus shared man's humiliation, to win, not for Himself only, but for men, His brethren, the destined glory. God brings many sons to glory along with Him, inasmuch as He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one piece. Thus the blessings of the psalm do, in the world to come, fall to man. But they are

earned for him by the man Christ Jesus who, tasting death for all, delivers us from the fear of death and so from bondage. And this blessing of deliverance from the bondage of the Old Covenant belongs even now to Christians, who have already tasted the powers of the world to come, who are regarded as dissociated from the earthly theocracy and living in view of that which is to come. "The world to come" is in fact the equivalent of the Kingdom of God in the gospel—already present among men, though hitherto as an object of faith, not of sight.

(2) *He endured the suffering of death.*—There are many ways of winning a crown. Here, and in these great chapters of Revelation (v., vi.), we see Jesus greeted with unspeakable acclaim because He has suffered. Because of the suffering of death which He bore, because of the way in which He bore it, and because He bore it to such limits of endurance as are possible on earth, He was raised from the cross of shame to the throne of God. If we see truly, He changed the cross of shame into a throne of glory. Because it was He who was crucified, and because of the manner and spirit in which He bore the suffering of death, He Himself transformed and transfigured the shameful cross, until to-day it is the throne from which this universe is ruled.

(3) *Because He wears the crown He still drinks man's cup.*—"That by the grace of God he should taste death for every man." Jesus did not finish His suffering on Calvary. We have to recall the thought which John taught us when he showed us the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne, as though it had been slain—the thought that Calvary was but the revelation of the suffering of God which was from the foundation of the world, and shall be until earth and heaven are brought to peace and righteousness. So here we have this thought in a new and wondrous form. The crown of Christ and the glory which was awarded Him were like no other crown or glory ever awarded to man. We speak in our poor fashion of Christ's suffering being followed by glory, and we mean a glory according to the fleshly heart of man. We speak of His exchanging the cross for the crown, not knowing that the crown is ever the crown of thorns. This writer tells us that the glory with which He was crowned was the glory of tasting death for every man. That was the glory He won by suffering so supremely on Golgotha. That was the glory He attained to

because He was very faithful on that narrow cross, even as far as death.

¶ The Cross of Calvary was taken into the very heart of the Eternal. From earth there went One who, by the experience of earth, was fitted to regain His place in the fellowship of God. That is the thought that places us at the very heart of what we generally mean by the Atonement. The Saviour who bears the sin of this world to-day is a living crucified Saviour to-day. Wherever there is sin, there is He crucified. So much of it as was possible out of the venom and malice of those Jewish foes fell upon Him in Jerusalem, but to-day He is free from the limits of mortal flesh, and has entered into the eternal Spirit of God once again; and wherever there is sin, there is Christ crucified. As He died that day for those who then lived, He tastes death in every ruined life, He is crucified in every lustful heart; His heart is broken in every ruined home, and smitten with pain by our coldness, and failure, and disobedience.<sup>1</sup>

2. Christ's crown is the prophecy and pledge of man's dominion. He is the pattern of human nature. From Christ comes the power by which the prophecy is fulfilled and the pattern reproduced in all who love Him. Whosoever is joined to Him receives into his soul that spirit of life in Christ which unfolds and grows according to its own law, and has for its issue and last result the entire conformity between the believing soul and the Saviour by whom it lives. It were a poor consolation to point to Christ and say, "Look what man has become, and may become," unless we could also say, "A real and living oneness exists between Him and all who cleave to Him, so that their characters are changed, their natures cleansed, their future altered, their immortal beauty secured." He is more than pattern, He is power; more than specimen, He is source; more than example, He is Redeemer. He has been made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that we may be in the likeness of His body of glory. He has been made "sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

¶ The hopes for the future lie around us as flowers in some fair garden where we walk in the night, their petals closed and their leaves asleep, but here and there a whiter bloom gleams out, and sweet faint odours from unseen sources steal through the

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Lewis, *The Work of Christ*, 86.

dewy darkness. We can understand but little of what this majestic promise of sovereign manhood may mean. But the fragrance, if not the sight, of that gorgeous blossom is wafted to us. We know that "the upright shall have dominion in the morning." We know that to His servants authority over ten cities will be given. We know that we shall be "kings and priests to God." The fact we know, the contents of the fact we wait to prove. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Enough that we shall reign with Him, and that in the kingdom of the heavens dominion means service, and the least is the greatest.<sup>1</sup>

(1) "For every man." The virtue of Christ's cross is for all. Criminals may put themselves outside the pale of human sympathy easily enough. Their misdeeds may slay the sentiment of pity for them even in the heart of the most pitiful. Society, horrified and revolted by their evil doing, may with one voice demand the full penalty of the law. Yes, and even a mother's love, the divinest thing on earth, may not be deep enough to condone the evil. Man by his sin may put himself outside the circumference of the tenderest human affection, beyond the range of the most pitiful human compassion. But no sinner can outrange the infinite love of God. His compassions flow beyond the widest and wildest wanderings of man's transgressions. His tender love is deeper than the lowest depths of vice and wickedness. And the death of the Crucified One is gloriously sufficient to atone for the sins of every member of our sinful race.

¶ I do find the love of God is the only power in the universe to accomplish *any* result. All must be the Devil's, if it were not at work. Shall it not in some way or other vindicate all to itself? I wish to think awfully on the question, confessing with trembling that there is an unspeakable power of resistance in our wills to God's love—a resistance quite beyond my understanding or any understanding to explain—and not denying that this resistance may be final, but still feeling myself obliged when I trust God thoroughly to think that there is a depth in His love below all other depths; a bottomless pit of charity deeper than the bottomless pit of evil. And I answer that to lead people to feel that this is a ground for them to stand upon is the great way of teaching them to stand. They are not made to hang poised in the air, which is the position I fear of a good many religious people, in a perpetual

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, ii. 185.

land of mist and cloud, never seeing the serene heaven, nor feeling the solid earth. "God is in the midst of us, therefore we cannot be moved." What might there is in these words!<sup>1</sup>

(2) Christ's crown and ours are in the last resort the fruits of grace. This was granted to Him—this awful eminence, this sole right and power to taste death for every man, was granted to Him "by the grace of God." It was by God's gracious act and permission that He was welcomed back into the eternal Sonship. He had lived with the Father in eternity before He came to earth, and He went back not only Son of God but Son of Man. He went back the Head of our race. He went back our Brother. He went back, as He is called in this letter, the Leader whose followers we are. We have gained a place in the fellowship of the eternal suffering; our blood is there shed, mingled indistinguishably with the blood of God. We see not yet all things won and conquered, but we see this: that from our cradle, and our weakness, and our frailty, and our strife, Jesus has gone into the perfect suffering of God our Saviour, and man with God is on that awful throne. By the grace of God it has been granted. We have been taken into the veriest Divinity, for there is no Divinity ever imagined by man comparable with the Divinity that is revealed in the suffering of God; and we in Jesus Christ have been united with the very heart of the mystery of God Himself. Many things—all good things—come from the grace of God, which giveth all; and St. Paul tells us it has been "granted" to us not only to believe, but also to suffer (Phil. i. 29). The word there is the same as the word here—the word "grace." God's highest gift is not the gift of all enjoyment, it is not the gift of all peace and blessedness; the highest gift of God is the gift of the fellowship of suffering, whereby we are raised into the society and friendship and likeness of no less an One than the Eternal God, who thereby becomes, as He never was before, our Father; thereby we become, as never before, His children.

¶ I have so much cause for wonder at the human as well as the Divine love which has been poured out upon me. No one ever deserved it less. I am sure if I do not know what free grace means, or use the expression as a mere cant one, I am more to

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 528.

blame than all. It seems to me, from the highest to the lowest, from the manner of God's redemption to the kind look and obedience of a servant, all is grace; all are parts of one living chain which is let down upon me and which is meant to draw me up.<sup>1</sup>

Seven vials hold Thy wrath: but what can hold  
 Thy mercy save Thine own Infinitude,  
 Boundlessly overflowing with all good,  
 All loving kindness, all delights untold?  
 Thy Love, of each created love the mould;  
 Thyself, of all the empty plenitude;  
 Heard of at Ephrata, found in the Wood,  
 For ever One, the Same, and Manifold.  
 Lord, give us grace to tremble with that dove  
 Which Ark-bound winged its solitary way  
 And overpast the Deluge in a day,  
 Whom Noah's hand pulled in and comforted:  
 For we who much more hang upon Thy Love  
 Behold its shadow in the deed he did.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 527.

<sup>2</sup> Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 264.

PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS.

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## PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.—Heb. ii. 10.

1. WHEN we read a biography, when we study the plot of a novel or a play, or when we try to understand a character in history, the question we put to ourselves is—Is it true to life? Is this the man as he really was and lived? Does he fit together as a living whole? The profit and the pleasure of such books, and certainly the moral interest, lie largely in their setting forth a vital unity, in their assuring us of the reality and the individuality of the man or woman whom we are studying and giving us the assurance that we are following the true story of a human soul. Every great life comes to us as something of a surprise: perhaps the greater the life the greater the surprises are apt to be. We begin by saying to ourselves, "He could never have acted so. Why should he have taken that course? why risk that venture? why court that reverse? Now, if I had been he," we say, and begin to reconstruct conduct upon the lines of instinct and of motive most familiar to ourselves. And then we turn back to our text and penetrate a little deeper into the secret springs of character, and incidents arrest us that do not square with our assumptions, and lights flash unexpectedly from words or acts which show that he was not the manner of man that we supposed, that after all it was humility not pride, it was courage not cowardice, it was simplicity not cunning, it was unselfishness not self-seeking, that made him act as he did. Little by little we discern a unity that was not there before, that removes inward contradictions, that makes the hero a consistent and intelligible whole, made up not of conflicting fragments but of a living and coherent self. And when we return to our first little criticisms and surprises, they look thin and hollow in presence of the truth, and we say to ourselves, "Now

I know better ; I understand more clearly what he was, by what lights he lived. Being what he was, he could not have said, done, acted otherwise. I have caught the secret ; I hold the clue ; I feel quite certain of the truth ; all fits so perfectly that I must have hold of the right interpretation. It becomes him in a way that no other explanation does or could."

2. The writer of this Epistle was addressing himself to Hebrew Christians, who had not yet quite reconciled themselves to a suffering Christ. They still shared in that Jewish conception of the Messiah which made the cross an offence. Why should the Anointed One, the chosen Messenger of God, pass through that wine-press of shame and agony instead of marching on in joyous triumph and planting His feet on the necks of His enemies ? Why all that weakness and yielding and intolerable suffering, if He was indeed the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased ? How could that awful and heartbreaking Calvary scene be the sign and seal of God's approval ? These questions, and questions like them, which are sometimes asked to-day, were answered in these words: "It became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The writer here expounds to us the Divine philosophy of suffering, and declares that only by a suffering Saviour could God's thought and purpose in redemption be expressed and fulfilled. It became Him. It was right and reasonable and necessary that He should take the way of suffering to reach His glorious end.

Two leading ideas emerge from this text:—

- I. Suffering as a Means to Perfection.
- II. The Necessity for the Sufferings of Christ.

## I.

### THE DISCIPLINE OF SUFFERING.

"Perfect through sufferings."

"Perfect through sufferings"—we have grown accustomed to the phrase, but to any one who heard it for the first time, how

strange it would sound! "Perfect through sufferings!" he would exclaim. Surely the writer must have made a mistake. He should have said perfect through joy. Suffering must be a sign and a cause of imperfection. Now, it is quite true that suffering is always a sign of *present* imperfection. But it may be the cause of future perfection, which could not be attained without it. On the assumption that the ultimate end of our existence is the development of a noble character, the necessity of suffering may be *proved*. For it can be shown that such a character could never be produced apart from the instrumentality of pain.

1. Suffering acts as a check upon our evil tendencies. Of course one may say that sin could have been prevented, and man saved from suffering. Yes, you can make a man of clay that cannot feel; you can forge a steel man that an avalanche cannot hurt. But when you have done, your men are only physical—not moral, not spiritual. They have no volition, no power of choice, no moral nature, no spiritual aspirations, and no functions that are fitting them for an eternal life of love. True, they have no capacity for joy either; and they are devoid of those higher attributes of sympathy and love that make God a Father and a Friend. Even so, if man had been intended to be only a physical being—a mere body, a machine driven by the resistless mandate of an overpowering will, God would doubtless have made him as hard and as unfeeling as the granite rock. But God's purpose was to make a *man*—a being who by choice and will and struggle should remake himself, and become as like his Maker in the whole round of his higher nature as it is possible for him to be. And this purpose, manifest in creation, and reaffirmed in redemption, alone explains the processes of life through which He is conducting us, and it teaches us that every trial and every pang of suffering, if regarded aright, may bear us ever nearer to God. Evil, then, being a necessary fact, some suffering is also a necessity. It is the desire for present enjoyment that leads men astray; and they can be brought back only by the counteractive influence of pain. So far as suffering fulfils this purpose, it is manifestly the outcome of love.

¶ God has His sanitary regulations as well as man. There are Divine cleansing forces at work, both in the material and in

the moral world. And just as the tempest scatters the diseases that have gathered themselves together for deadly work, rendering them harmless, so the sufferings that follow guilt, and the revolutions of pain that overthrow the tyranny of an evil nature, are methods for securing the moral health of the race, and act as preservatives of man's spiritual life. You have doubtless seen specimens of our English weaving machines. Those machines are so constructed and arranged as to let the machinist know when anything is wrong, and to call his attention to the fault in the piece that he is weaving, so that he may correct it before the whole fabric is spoiled. Constructed on a somewhat similar principle is God's mechanism of human nature. You put your hand into the fire and you suffer; the pain makes you draw your hand out of the flame, and thus saves the limb from being burnt off without your knowing it. Your course of conduct is injuring your moral life, and your aching head and palpitating heart tell you so. Surely, then, there is wisdom as well as love manifest in the law that makes our physical sufferings teach us our moral dangers, and thus save us from them.<sup>1</sup>

(1) Suffering often acts as an intellectual and spiritual stimulus. The world's greater teachers have usually been men of sorrow.

¶ When Dumas asked Reboul, "What made you a poet?" the answer was "Suffering." "If I had not been so great an invalid," said Darwin to a friend, "I should not have done nearly so much work." We do not know much about Shakespeare's life; but we do know, from his sonnets, that he had suffered vastly. His heart had been wrung till it almost broke. And in Tennyson we have another striking illustration of the educative effects of suffering. *In Memoriam* is by far his greatest poem; there are single stanzas in it worth almost all the rest of his works put together; and this poem was inspired by a great grief—the death of his friend Arthur Hallam.

(2) Suffering is necessary for the development in us of pity, mercy, and the spirit of self-sacrifice—the noblest of all our endowments. Only those who have experienced calamity themselves can understand what it means. And unless we know what it is, we cannot sympathize with it; nor are we likely to make any efforts towards averting it. No character can be perfect which has not acquired the capacity for pity; for in the acquisition of this capacity we receive our highest development, and realize most fully the solidarity of the race to which we belong.

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Binney.

¶ The Chili palm grows to a height of from forty to sixty feet, and bears numerous small edible, thick-shelled nuts, and yields after it is felled a syrup called palm honey. "This honey," Darwin tells us, "is a sort of treacle, and forms really the sap of the tree. A good tree will yield ninety gallons, though it looks dry and empty as a drum. The tree is felled, the crown of leaves lopped off, and then for months the vessels of the tree pour forth their stores, and every fresh slice shaved off exposes a fresh surface and yields a fresh supply." And have we not often found something akin to this in human experience? Have we not all known men apparently cold and hard, and utterly unfitted for the gentler and softer ministries of life, looking as sapless and empty as the Chili palm when standing in its native soil, but when they have been felled by some unforeseen trouble, and the cold iron has entered their souls, they have become even womanly in their capacity for consolation, yielding sympathy and love and helpfulness in measureless amount. Ah, yes; it often takes the sharp axe of suffering to open up in us the fountains of sympathy and healing love. Chili palm-like, some of us need to be felled and well sliced before the honey will flow; but—

Unto the hopes by sorrow crushed a noble faith succeeds,  
 And life by trials furrowed bears the fruit of loving deeds.  
 How rich, how sweet, how full of strength, our human spirits  
 are,  
 Baptized into the sanctities of suffering and of prayer.<sup>1</sup>

(3) Suffering appears necessary for the development in us of self-reliance, self-respect, and all that is implied in the expression "strength of character." And it is only saying the same thing in other words to maintain that, without suffering, we could not attain to the highest *happiness* of which we are capable. Just think of the advantages to be derived from the struggle for success in life, painful as that struggle must often of necessity be. We cannot be born successful, and it would be a great pity if we could. Good fortune and prosperity are worth most when they have been achieved in spite of hindrances and difficulties. The happiness that we have obtained by effort is far sweeter than that which we have inherited, or that which has come to us by chance; and the very effort we have made to acquire it has tended to our own self-development. And what is true of individuals is true of races. It would have been a grievous disadvantage had they been

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Binney.

created fully developed. The possibility of developing themselves is their grandest and noblest prerogative.

¶ John Stuart Mill argues in his *Posthumous Essays* that this would be a better world if the whole human race were already in possession of everything which it seems desirable they should have. But surely it is infinitely better for races to struggle up to material prosperity and to spiritual perfection than to have been created incapable of progress. In the latter case they might have been comfortable and satisfied: but their comfort and satisfaction would have been no higher than a brute's.<sup>1</sup>

I am one of those bright angels  
 Passing earthwards, to and fro,  
 Heavenly messengers to mortals,  
 Now of gladness, now of woe.

Might I bring from the Almighty,  
 Strength from Him who maketh strong;  
 Not as alms I drop the blessing,—  
 From my grasp it must be wrung.

Child of earth, I come to prove thee,  
 Hardly, sternly with thee deal;  
 To mould thee in the forge and furnace,  
 Make thine iron tempered steel.

Come, then, and in loving warfare  
 Let us wrestle, tug, and strain,  
 Till thy breath comes thick and panting,  
 And the sweat pours down like rain.

Man with angel thus contending,  
 Angel-like in strength shall grow,  
 And the might of the Immortal  
 Pass into the mortal so.

2. The virtue of suffering lies in the spirit of the sufferer. There is nothing in suffering itself that can bring a sense of its use or its nobility. It will strengthen the will, test the endurance, call out the pity, quicken the sympathy, serve the love of men only if men carry into it a conviction of the moral purpose with which it is fraught. Suffering itself, as we so often see, is unable to ennoble; suffering of itself often dulls, and blunts, and

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Momerie, *The Origin of Evil*, 22.

stuns, and exasperates the nature which suffers. What gives the power of suffering is not suffering itself, but the faith that discerns the purpose which lies behind it. So, then, if that faith were put to the strain and were lost, if anything were to happen to us that would make it reel when most we wanted it, then suffering alone might only cripple or overwhelm our characters. We want to know then where is the warrant for this faith that behind our suffering there is a purpose of the love of God. Where is the warrant? It is written in the cross of Jesus Christ. The sufferings of Jesus, we are prompted to think, went far beyond what was necessary as an acceptance of punishment of sin. It seems that He meant to go out into the very farthest reaches of human pain and to know and to understand them. It was part of that long self-sacrifice by which humanity in Jesus was learning to offer itself again in perfect obedience to the will of God. He was learning obedience through the things He was suffering, and not only accepting punishment of sin; He was perfecting His human life by the bearing of pain and sorrow. He was being made perfect through sufferings. Each pain of body or of mind was an offering of a Son's love to God, and of a Brother's sympathy to His fellow-men.

¶ The most useful agents in nature have sometimes the most deadly effects. The atmosphere, which is essential to life, is the chief source of putrefaction and decay. The sea, which bears one mariner safely to the desired haven, buries another in a watery grave. Electricity, which carries a message across the world at the bidding of one man, strikes another dead. So the very circumstances of which a good man makes stepping-stones to heaven, a bad man will turn into a pathway to hell. The responsibility for this, however, rests not with God, but with men.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Crosses are blessed to us only in so far as we give ourselves up to them unreservedly and forgetting self. Seek to forget yourself, else all suffering is useless. God does not lay suffering on us merely that we may suffer, but that we may die to self by dint of putting it aside under the most difficult of all circumstances, viz., pain.<sup>2</sup>

¶ Suffering borne in the Christian temper has often incidental effects upon character. For it induces tenderness, and strength,

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Momerie, *The Origin of Evil*, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Fénelon, *Spiritual Letters to Men*.

and spirituality of life. The man who has suffered much has a keener insight into the sufferings of others, and therefore a more appreciative sympathy for them. His very voice and glance and touch gain a magnetic power from his pain. Nor is this tenderness purchased at the cost of weakness, for suffering indurates and strengthens the entire person. Under all his apparent weakness, the man of sorrows is strong. And thus his own sorrow helps him to alleviate the sorrow of the world; while, besides thus enhancing his social efficiency, suffering refines and purifies the inner man, as a necessary consequence of the closer communion with the spiritual world to which it calls him.<sup>1</sup>

But if, impatient, thou let slip thy cross,  
 Thou wilt not find it in this world again,  
 Nor in another; here, and here alone,  
 Is given thee to *suffer* for God's sake.  
 In other worlds we shall more perfectly  
 Serve Him and love Him, praise Him, work for Him,  
 Grow near, and nearer Him with all delight;  
 But then we shall not any more be called  
 To suffer, which is our appointment here.  
 Canst thou not suffer then one hour, or two?

And while we suffer, let us set our souls  
 To suffer perfectly; since this alone,  
 The suffering, which is this world's special grace,  
 May here be perfected and left behind.<sup>2</sup>

## II.

### THE NECESSITY FOR CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

“It became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things.”

1. The phrase, “it became him,” speaks of a moral necessity lying upon God, a necessity springing from the requirements of the Divine nature and government. Of course the word is one of much broader application. We can speak of a comely face and of a becoming dress, as well as of “that which becometh saints.” There is a physical as well as a moral fitness. We may also say

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Illingworth.

<sup>2</sup> E. Hamilton King, *The Sermon in the Hospital*.

of anything that it becomes a man of wisdom, righteousness, truth—meaning by this only that it is not opposed to, though not absolutely required by, such a character. But, manifestly, that which in any circumstances is perfectly suited to the requirements of perfect wisdom and spotless rectitude is absolutely obligatory. To do anything else than this, while circumstances remain unchanged, would be folly and sin. Moral fitness runs speedily into moral obligation. Christian propriety is strictest law. How much more, then, Divine propriety—that which becometh God!

2. The statement here is not “it became God,” or “it became the Father,” but, with impressive emphasis, “It became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things.” The sufferings of man’s Saviour fit into the whole character of Jehovah and all His infinite perfections: they form an essential element of the Divine counsels and operations. Either the whole scheme of the Divine creation and government is loose and contingent, or the perfecting of the Captain of salvation is based on a Divine necessity of wisdom, righteousness, and love. The question has sometimes been put, whether or not sinners might have been saved in some other way than through the incarnation of the Eternal Word, and the atonement of the cross. Here we have an answer to the question, as direct as the occasion calls for: “It became” the All-Perfect, that the work should be accomplished even so.

3. The revelation of His Fatherhood required it. Humanity was His own child. Humanity was a child of many sorrows, familiar with tears, and the tears were, in part at least, of His own ordaining. Sin had enormously increased the sorrows; but apart from sin there were the pangs and travail of creation, there was everywhere the pain and struggle and bereavement, and the bleeding and breaking heart. How could He join Himself to humanity without sharing human tears? If He really loved and pitied His sad and guilty world, how could He send His saving message to us otherwise than through the life of a suffering one? How could He prove to men His Fatherhood except by bearing their infirmities? How could He become incarnate save as a Man of Sorrows?

4. The rôle of "Captain" which Jesus assumed necessitated suffering. The word translated "captain" in the Authorized Version, which occurs only four times in Scripture, means literally one who leads or begins any course or thing; hence it comes to mean a *commander* (or a *prince*, as it is twice translated); and then again, with a very easy transition from the notion of leading to that of origination, it comes to mean *cause* (or *author*, as it is once translated). The conception of author is the dominant one here, but the word is probably chosen as prolonging the metaphor in the previous clause. This great procession of sons up into glory, which is the object and aim of God's work, is under the leadership of Him who is the Captain, the foremost, the Originator, and, in a profound sense, the Cause, of their salvation. So, then, we have before us the thought that God brings, and yet Christ leads, and that God's bringing is effected through Christ's leadership.

This Captain needs to be made perfect through sufferings. We are not to suppose that the perfecting through sufferings which is here declared to take effect upon our Lord means the addition of anything to, or the purging away of anything from, His moral nature. *We* are refined by suffering, which purges out the dross if we take it rightly. We are ennobled by suffering, which adds to us, if we submissively accept it, that which without it we could never possess. But Christ's perfecting is not the perfecting of His moral character, but the completion of His equipment for His work as the Captain of our salvation. That is to say, He Himself, though He learned obedience by the things that He suffered, was morally perfect, ere yet one shadow of pain or conflict had passed across the calm depths of His pure spirit; but He was not ready for His function of Leader and Originator of our salvation until He had passed through the sufferings of life and the agonies of death. Thus the whole sweep of Christ's sufferings—both those which preceded the cross, and especially the cross itself—is included in the general expression of the text; and these equipped Him for His work.

¶ It may be that under other conditions the discipline of suffering would have been unnecessary. To be a perfect king of angels, for instance, there would have been no need for Christ to

suffer. To be the joy and bliss of unfallen spirits there would have been no need for Christ to suffer. To be the light and life of a sinless heaven there would have been no need for Christ to suffer. But to be a perfect leader for broken, stricken, sinful men, Christ had to suffer. To be able to emancipate them from their bondage and to lead them out of the prison-house, Christ had to suffer. To be an adequate Saviour and Redeemer, Christ had to suffer. The suffering was meant to fit Him for leadership. It was as the Leader of men's salvation that Christ was made perfect through sufferings.<sup>1</sup>

¶ It is recorded of Captain Hedley Vicars that he singularly won the hearts of the soldiers under his command. Whilst keeping his own position he put himself into theirs. An incident in connexion with his life in the Crimea will illustrate the verse before us. In those bitter winter nights, which even now we can hardly bear to think of, when our brave soldiers slept out in an almost Arctic cold, they naturally gave way to some murmurs; but when the men under Captain Vicars learned that he absolutely refused to avail himself of special protection and comfort so long as his men suffered, and that he preferred to share their trials, all murmurings ceased. How could they complain when their captain for their sakes volunteered to share their hardships! As regards his sympathy with and his relationship towards the men, their captain was "made perfect through sufferings."<sup>2</sup>

(1) *The Deliverer of man must be a Man.*—The leader must have no exemption from the hardships of the company. If He is to be a leader, He and those whom He leads must go by the same road. He must tramp along all the weary paths that they have to tread. He must experience all the conflicts and difficulties that they have to experience. He cannot lift us up into a share of His glory unless He stoops to the companionship of our grief. A man upon a higher level cannot raise one on a lower, except on condition of himself going down, with his hand at any rate, to the level from which he would lift. And no Christ will be able to accomplish the Father's design, except a Christ who knows the fellowship of our sufferings, and is made conformable unto our death. Therefore, because He "took not hold to help angels, but the seed of Abraham, it behoved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren." And when the soldiers are weary on the

<sup>1</sup> J. D. Jones, *The Unfettered Word*, 209.

<sup>2</sup> J. W. Bardsley.

march, footsore and tired, they may bethink themselves, "Head-quarters were here yesterday."

We can go through no darker rooms  
Than He went through before;

and where He has stretched Himself on the cold ground and bivouacked, we need not be ashamed or afraid to lie down. The Captain of our salvation has shared all our hardships, and plodded with bleeding feet over every inch of the ground over which He would lead us.

(2) *He must learn compassion in the midst of suffering.*— Before He suffers, He has the pity of a God; after He suffers, He has learnt the compassion of a man. And though in the fight the general seems to have gone up the hill, and left the army to struggle in the plain, He has gone, like Moses to the mount, to lift all-powerful hands of intercession, and bearing in His heart tender compassion, a fellow-feeling of our pains. No Christ is worth anything to us, suffering and bleeding and agonizing here, unless it be a Christ of whom we know that His heart is full of sympathy because He Himself has felt the same, and that He has learnt to haste to the help of the miserable, because He himself is not ignorant of misfortune.

¶ A German theologian finds the unparalleled power of Jesus in the unlimited range of His sympathies. He stands apart from and above all men in greatness. He is absolutely unique. He is, as Bushnell said, unclassifiable. But is not His uniqueness this, that He is not provincial, local, and narrow, but universal; that He knew what is in man as no other has known, and that He had power and sympathetic union with men and women of any nation and any religion? He whose uniqueness made Him the Son of God was He whose universality made Him the Son of man.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Every believer realizes by experience that Christ is the only perfect sympathizer. "I'm not perfectly understood," says everybody in fact. But if you are a believer you are perfectly understood. Christ is the only one who never expects you to be other than yourself, and He puts in abeyance towards you all but what is like you. He takes your view of things, and mentions no other. He takes the old woman's view of things by the wash-tub, and has a great interest in wash powder; Sir Isaac Newton's

<sup>1</sup> George Harris, *Inequality and Progress*, 147.

view of things, and wings among the stars with him; the artist's view, and feeds among the lilies; the lawyer's, and shares the justice of things. But He never plays the lawyer or the philosopher or the artist to the old woman. He is above that littleness.<sup>1</sup>

¶ It was the need of a Divine assurance that there is a heart of sympathy at the root of things which Christ came to satisfy. He not only declared the Divine sympathy, He entered the human struggle. It was not enough that God should declare the Divine sympathy in a word: He chose also to declare it in a Life. There can be no doubt of a sympathy which issues in self-sacrifice; and we see the Heart of God in the Cross of Jesus Christ. He who ordained the hard law of the Cross, Himself submitted to it, to prove by His self-sacrifice that it came from a will of love: and He transformed it by bidding us not only to take it, but to take it after Him. It is through the fellowship of the Cross that He comes most closely to us. When we see and greet Him there, supreme and calm, He gives us His own supremacy and calmness. We conquer our crosses by bearing them with Him.<sup>2</sup>

In Christ I feel the heart of God  
 Throbbing from heaven through earth;  
 Life stirs again within the clod,  
 Renewed in beauteous birth;  
 The soul springs up, a flower of prayer,  
 Breathing His breath out on the air.

In Christ I touch the hand of God,  
 From His pure height reached down,  
 By blessed ways before untrod,  
 To lift us to our crown;  
 Victory that only perfect is  
 Through loving sacrifice, like His.

Holding His hand, my steadied feet  
 May walk the air, the seas;  
 On life and death His smile falls sweet,  
 Lights up all mysteries:  
 Stranger nor exile can I be  
 In new worlds where He leadeth me.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Smetham*, 297.

<sup>2</sup> *Cosmo Gordon Lang, The Miracles of Jesus.*

Not my Christ only; He is ours;  
Humanity's close bond;  
Key to its vast, unopened powers,  
Dream of our dreams beyond.  
What yet we shall be none can tell:  
Now are we His, and all is well.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lucy Larcom.

THE SABBATH REST.

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## THE SABBATH REST.

There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his.—Heb. iv. 9, 10.

1. AMONG man's deepest feelings is a longing for rest. Not deeply felt in the freshness and ardour of early life, it recurs from time to time, and grows stronger with advancing years. Nothing in life fully satisfies this longing. Labours, distresses, disappointments, anxieties never allow the desired repose. Few there are whose hearts have not sometimes echoed the Psalmist's words, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest!" Many since Job have felt something of his longing to be where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Is there to be no satisfaction ever of this deep human craving? Holy Scripture meets it as it meets all others. It tells of a rest of God above creation from the beginning of time; it intimated man's part and interest in it by the weekly Sabbath which he was to keep with God. But this was, after all, but a symbol and earnest of something unattained. At length a fuller realization of the longed-for rest was held out to the chosen people, and the Promised Land was pictured beforehand in the colours of an earthly Paradise. Forfeited when first offered, through the people's unworthiness (representing by a historical parable the bar to man's entrance into the eternal rest), it was attained at last. But the true rest still came not. Canaan, like the Sabbath, proved but a symbol of something unattained. Yet the old longing for rest went on, and inspired men went on proclaiming it as attainable and still to come. The irrepressible craving, the suggestive symbols, the prophetic anticipations, are all fulfilled in Christ. He, when He had passed with us through this earthly scene of labour, entered, with our nature, into that eternal rest of God, to prepare a place for us, having by His atonement

removed the bar to human entrance. Through our faith in Him we are assured that our deep-seated craving for satisfaction as yet unattained, which we express by the term "rest," is a true inward prophecy, and that, though we find it not here, we may through Him, if we are faithful, confidently expect it there, where "beyond these voices there is peace."

2. The Hebrew Christians to whom this Epistle was addressed were familiar, as Gentiles could not be, with the observance of a weekly Sabbath or rest day: and the word "Sabbatism"—which is the exact expression of the passage—would at once suggest to them the enjoyment of a holy rest. They were also familiar, as Gentiles could not be, with the designation "People of God" as a title of Israel; and as Christians they had learned, though slowly and with difficulty, that under the New Dispensation of grace, not Israel after the flesh, but a holy people redeemed and called out of all nations, was made nigh to God in Christ Jesus. The people of God during the present "age" is the Church of God. As St. Paul puts it: "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

For this people "a Sabbatism remains." The word "remains" must be construed in harmony with the strain of the Epistle, which shows that many things of the Old Covenant had waxed old and were vanishing away, but better things remained for the people or Church of God in Christ Jesus. Shadows departed, but the substances remained, and among the "better things" of the new day which had dawned there was the entrance on a rest surpassing in its fulness and sacredness all that was reached in the old times of Moses and Joshua, and even of David.

The text is the climax of an argument which may be set out as follows:—

I. God gave the perfect pattern of rest when He rested from the work of Creation.

II. In Old Testament times man failed through unbelief to attain to the rest to which God called him.

III. Christ made good man's failure when He rested from Redemption as God did from Creation.

IV. The Gospel offers Christ's rest to believers.

## I.

## THE DIVINE PATTERN OF REST.

1. The term rendered "rest" means literally a keeping of a Sabbath. And this refers us at once to the rest of the seventh day. When we read in the Old Testament that, at the end of the creative act, God rested on the seventh day, and blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, the thing that comes into view is not a Divine nature wearied with toil and needing repose; it is a Divine nature which has fully accomplished its intent, expressed its purpose, done what it meant to do, and rests from its working because it has embodied its ideal in its work. It is the proclamation: "This creation of Mine is all that I meant it to be—finished and perfect"; not the acknowledgment of an exhaustion of the creative energy which needs to reinvigorate its strength by repose after its mighty effort. The rest of God is the expression of the perfect Divine complacency in the perfect Divine work.

2. The rest of God, so far from being inactivity, is full of work. When Christ was telling these Jews the principles of the Sabbath day, He said to them: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The creative act is finished and God rests; but God, in resting, works; even as God, in working, rests. Preservation is a continued creation. The energy of the Divine power is as mightily at work here now sustaining us in life as it was when He flung forth stars and systems like sparks from a forge, and willed the universe into being. God rests; and in His rest, up to the present hour and for ever, God works. True, He is not now sending forth, so far as we know, suns, or systems, or fresh types of being. But His power is ever at work, repairing, renewing, and sustaining the fabric of the vast machinery of the universe. No sparrow falls to the ground without Him. The cry of the young lion and the lowing of the oxen in the pastures attract His instant regard. "In Him all things consist."

3. God's rest is thus the pattern and pledge of man's rest. And when we turn to that marvellous apocalypse of the past which

in so many respects answers to the apocalypse of the future given us by the Apostle John, we find that, whereas we are expressly told of the evening and morning of each of the other days of creation, there is no reference to the dawn or close of God's rest-day; and we are left to infer that it is impervious to time, independent of duration, unlimited, and eternal; that the ages of human story are but hours in the rest-day of Jehovah; and that, in point of fact, we spend our years in the Sabbath-keeping of God. But, better than all, it would appear that we are invited to enter into it and share it; as a child living by the placid waters of a vast fresh-water lake may dip into them its cup, and drink and drink again, without making any appreciable diminution of its volume or ripple on its expanse.

It is true we cannot possess that changeless tranquillity which knows no variations of purpose or of desire, but we can possess the stable repose of that fixed nature which knows one object, and one alone. We cannot possess that energy which, after all work, is fresh and unbroken; but we can possess that tranquillity which in all toil is not troubled, and after all work is ready for double service. We cannot possess that unwavering fire of a Divine nature which burns in love without flickering, which knows without learning, which wills without irresolution and without the act of decision; but we can come to love deeply, tranquilly, perpetually; we can come to know without questioning, without doubts, without darkness, in firm confidence of stable assurance, and so know with something like the knowledge of Him who knows things as they are; and we can come to will and resolve so strongly, so fixedly, so wisely, that there shall be no change of purpose or any vacillation of desire. In these ways, in shadow and copy, we can be like even the apparently incommunicable tranquillity which, like an atmosphere that knows no tempests, belongs to and encircles the throne of God.

¶ I hear a troubled soul say, "Is it possible that I may be so delivered that the peace of God shall keep me amid sorrows, evils, and injustice?" Many of God's children do not know how much there is for them in the new covenant. There is a reserve in the trust of many—they trust their souls but not their bodies; for eternal safety but not for temporal things; for the past and for heaven. All their difficulty has reference to that short space

between. If they could only put in God's hands the piece that lies between! A wonderful deliverance! Sorrow and worry are found in two things,—not getting your own way, and fear of futurity. A man said he had in life suffered from many troubles, but most of them never came! We must have confidence in our Father's care and love. What a relief to your poor heart; no care, no worry! "He that believeth shall not make haste." Is it possible? Yes: you may have it; may now enter in. A little child is lost in a forest; at last his father finds him and takes him by the hand. He finds rest from anxiety before he gets home— anxiety about the way home. His mind is full of other things; he has rest from the moment he puts his hand in his father's. Put yours in *your* Father's, and you shall have rest—in difficulties, in trials, nothing, nothing can work evil for you.<sup>1</sup>

¶ The Apostle clearly and largely proves unto them: That it is the end of all ceremonies and shadows to direct them to Jesus Christ the substance, and that the rest of Sabbaths and Canaan should teach them to look for a further rest, which indeed is their happiness. My text is his conclusion after divers arguments to that end, a conclusion so useful to a believer, as containing the ground of all his comforts, the end of all his duty and sufferings, the life and sum of all Gospel promises and Christian privileges, that you may easily be satisfied why I have made it the subject of my present discourse. What more welcome to men under personal afflictions, tiring duty, successions of sufferings, than rest! What more welcome news to men under public calamities, unpleasing employments, plundering losses, sad tidings, etc. (which is the common case), than this of rest! Hearers, I pray God your attention, intention of spirit, entertainment and improvement of it, be but half answerable to the verity, necessity, and excellency of this subject: and then you will have cause to bless God while you live that ever you heard it; as I have, that ever I studied it.<sup>2</sup>

## II.

### ISRAEL'S FAILURE TO REACH REST.

The history of Israel from the beginning consists of continued renewals of the promise on the part of God and persistent rejections on the part of Israel, ending in the hardening of their

<sup>1</sup> *John Brash: Memorials and Correspondence*, 218.

<sup>2</sup> R. Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, chap. i.

hearts. Every time the promise is renewed, it is presented in a higher and more spiritual form. Every rejection inevitably leads to grosser views and more hopeless unbelief. So entirely false is the fable of the Sibyl! God does not burn some of the leaves when His promises have been rejected, and come back with fewer offers at a higher price. His method is to offer more and better on the same conditions. But it is the nature of unbelief to cause the heart to wax gross, to blind the spiritual vision, until in the end the rich spiritual promises of God and the earthly dark unbelief of the sinner stand in extremest contrast.

1. At first the promise is presented in the negative form of rest from labour. Even the Creator condescended thus to rest. But what such rest can be to God it were vain for man to try to conceive. We know that, as soon as the foundations of the world were laid and the work of creation was ended, God ceased from this form of activity. But when this negative rest had been attained, it was far from realizing God's idea of rest either for Himself or for man. For, though these works of God, the material universe, were finished from the laying of the world's foundations to the crowning of the edifice, God still speaks of another rest, and threatens to shut some men out for their unbelief. Our Lord told the Pharisees, whose notion of the Sabbath was the negative one, that He desired His sabbath-rest to be like that of His Father, who "worketh hitherto." The Jewish Sabbath, it appears, therefore, is the most elementary form of God's promised rest.

2. The promise is next presented as the rest of Canaan. This is a stage in advance in the development of the idea. It is not mere abstention from secular labour, and the consecration of inactivity. The rest now consists in the enjoyment of material prosperity, the proud consciousness of national power, the growth of a peculiar civilization, the rise of great men and eminent saints, and all this won by Israel under the leadership of Joshua (their Jesus, who was in this respect a type of ours). But even in this second garden of Eden, Israel did not attain to God's rest. Worldliness became their snare. But God still called to them by the mouth of the Psalmist, long after they had entered on the posses-

sion of Canaan. This only proves that the true rest was still unattained, and God's promise not yet fulfilled. The form which the rest of God now assumed is not expressly stated in this passage. But we have not far to go in search of it. The 1st Psalm, which is the introduction to all the Psalms, declares the blessedness of contemplation. The Sabbath is seldom mentioned by the Psalmist. Its place is taken by the sanctuary, in which rest of soul is found in meditating on God's law and beholding the Lord's beauty. The call has become urgent. "To-day!" It is the last invitation. It lingers in the ears in ever fainter voice of prophet after prophet, until the prophet's face turns towards the east to announce the break of dawn and the coming of the perfect rest in Jesus Christ.

3. God's promise was never fulfilled to the Israelites, because of their unbelief. But shall their unbelief make the faithfulness of God of none effect? God forbid. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The promise that has failed of fulfilment in the lower form must find its accomplishment in the higher. Even a prayer is the more heard for every delay. God's mill grinds slowly, but for that reason grinds small. What is the inference? Surely it is that the sabbath-rest still remains for the true people of God. This sabbath-rest St. Paul prayed that the true Israel, who glory, not in their circumcision but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, might receive: "Peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

¶ I have just returned from the "Morning Lands" of history. I have visited Rome, Athens, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Cairo, Memphis, and all these cities of the dead. Egypt is in ruins, Greece is in ruins, Rome is in ruins. Oh, what terrible evidence has passed before my own eyes, since the first of last January, that all human empires decay and die! These were the great cities of wealth, art, philosophy, commerce and empire, but they are now in ruins, which alone makes them objects of human interest to inquisitive pilgrims in these days. They all cry to me, "Your rest is not in these things, your rest is not here."<sup>1</sup>

¶ There is a way (which the vulture's eye hath not seen) in which a man may pursue what the pursuers of fame pursue, and yet find neither purgatory nor the worst alternative; but that

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Price Hughes.

secret path is the path of increased toil and dizzy climbing. The man who, while putting forth all his mental energy, wishes to find rest to his soul, must fight ten where the other fights only one. But with this difference, that he is sure to *win*. This is true. I believe some men have as truly vanquished fame, as others covetousness or pleasure. One is as hard as the other. One is as easy as the other. Religion can so lift a man up that the rain and floods can't shake his house. But even so much religion won't give a man leisure, though it gives him peace. The world can't understand the believer's life. With a worldling "drive" is either distraction or pain or oblivion. Not so with the believer. He may be "pressed out of measure beyond strength," but he is at *rest*. "Ye shall find rest unto your souls."<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### THE REST THAT CHRIST REALIZED.

1. Among the exegetes there is a division whether verse 10 is to be understood generically: "Whosoever has entered into his rest has ceased from his works," or specifically of Christ: "He who entered upon God's rest, Himself entered upon rest from His own works." Note (1) the definite phrase, "He who entered" (not as R.V., "he that is entered"); (2) the emphatic pronoun, "Himself"; (3) the historic tense, "entered upon rest" (not as R.V., "hath rested"); (4) the implied contrast with Joshua (v. 8); (5) that otherwise there is no mention of Jesus' experience or achievements between ch. iii. 1 and ch. iv. 14; and (6) that otherwise read the verse offers no logical support to verse 9, but interpreted thus supplies the ground on which the sabbath-rest is offered to Christ's followers. For these reasons it seems better to read the verse as stating that, just as after His work of creating the world was finished God rested from creative activity, so now that His work of redeeming the race is completed Jesus rests from redemptive activity.

After the creative act there came the Sabbath, when God ceased from His work, and pronounced it very good; so, after the redemptive act, there came the Sabbath to the Redeemer. He lay, during the seventh day, in the grave of Joseph, not because

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Smetham*, 166.

He was exhausted or inactive, but because redemption was finished, and there was no more for Him to do. He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High; and that majestic session is a symptom neither of fatigue nor of indolence. He ever liveth to make intercession; He works with His servants, confirming their words with signs; He walks amid the seven golden candlesticks. And yet He rests as a man may rest who has arisen from his ordinary life to effect some great deed of emancipation and deliverance; but having accomplished it, returns again to the ordinary routine of his former life, glad and satisfied in His heart.

2. The rest that Jesus realized was not for Himself alone, but for all who are identified with Him in mystic fellowship. He opened the way to all believers into that rest which the generations struggled after. He could stretch forth His hands and say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." It is this that distinguishes Christ among the teachers, philanthropists, and deliverers of the ages, that He gives men the blessings of life and rest which they need, rather than endless "prescriptions" as to how such are to be obtained. In other words, He offered them His own life and peace; and thus, by making them partakers of His Divine nature and subjects of His law, He taught them to be like Himself, meek and lowly in heart, and thus to find perfect rest unto their souls. Restlessness was the direct penalty of separation from God in the first place; rest is the direct outcome of re-union with God in the person of Jesus Christ.

¶ Yet let us draw a little nearer, and see more immediately from the pure fountain of the Scriptures what further excellences this Rest affordeth. And the Lord hide us in the clefts of the rock, and cover us with the hands of indulgent grace while we approach to take this view! And the Lord grant we may put off from our feet the shoes of unreverence and fleshly conceivings, while we stand upon this holy ground! And first, it is a most singular honour and ornament, in the style of the saints' rest, to be called the "purchased possession"; that it is the fruit of the blood of the Son of God; yea, the chief fruit: yea, the end and perfection of all the fruits and efficacy of that blood. Surely love is the most precious ingredient in the whole composition; and of

all the flowers that grow in the garden of love, can there be brought one more sweet and beautiful to the garland, than this blood? Greater love than this there is not, to lay down the life of the lover. And to have this our Redeemer ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense and freshest remembrance of that dying, bleeding love still upon our souls, oh, how will it fill our souls with perpetual ravishments!<sup>1</sup>

Canst thou not see  
That there remains another rest for thee?  
Not this alone  
Which comes to all His own—  
Which comes to all who hide  
Beneath the shadow of the Crucified.

There is a rest which still He waits to give—  
A rest wherein we all may daily live—  
The rest whereby,  
As in His death, by faith, we die,  
So He will live in us,  
And living thus  
Will change our death to life—a life no longer ours,  
But His, renewed with resurrection powers.

O now receive  
The calm, deep peace which comes as we believe  
That all the works, and zeal, and strife,  
With which we sometime sought to fill our life,  
Are vain and dead, at best:  
Thus shalt thou understand, and enter into rest.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV.

##### THE REST THAT REMAINETH.

1. This rest is an inward and present possession. The fundamental idea of the Sabbath is rest; and this is the idea which the Apostle makes most prominent in this place, because he uses "Sabbatism" interchangeably with a word which signifies "cessation" or "repose." But it can never be granted that mere physical or animal rest was the sole or even the chief thing

<sup>1</sup> R. Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, chap. vii.

<sup>2</sup> E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 106.

enjoined by the Sabbath law under any dispensation. It was the rest of man in God, a rest like that of God, a rest which in man's unfallen state was enjoyed by his working on the same plan and resting in the same spirit with God, and in his fallen state could be recovered only by his return in his whole being to harmony with God and rest in Him. The only Sabbath-keeping on earth that has ever deserved the name is release from the labours and burdens of the soul, and from the labours and burdens of the body as a help to the higher rest. The true Sabbath is entering into God's rest, into participation of His blessedness, and it draws with it the surmounting of every hindrance to this result. It is resting from everything that would hinder rest in God, and then it is the enjoying of this rest in Him.

Our experience here tells of its partial attainment. We have ourselves, not only in spiritual but in other matters, been conscious of approaching it. There have been times, rare but most enchanting, when heart and hand, thought and shaping of thought, conception and conquest, imagination and execution, have gone together, with swiftness, with splendid harmony, with joys as fresh, as young as morning. What has once been, though imperfect, in experience, may be an eternal and a perfect possession, and will be an eternal and perfect possession when we are made perfect. It is the rest of the children of God; and it is a rest which means, which indeed *is*, eternal work and perfect work, eternal loving and perfect loving.

¶ If the question were raised: Is man made for toil or for rest? the answer would be a mixed and qualified one. He is appointed to toil, he is destined to rest: one is his condition, the other is his end. If man is made in God's image, he is made to share in God's condition: and both Christian revelation and heathen conjecture unite in conceiving of Deity as in repose, eternally acting, yet in eternal rest.<sup>1</sup>

2. We enter into this rest by faith and obedience.

(1) The faith by which a man possesses himself of this is not the mere acknowledgment that God is addressing him and summoning him heavenward, but the practical, obedient, venturous trust by which he mixes (v. 2) the word which he hears with his personal conscious life in its inner springs first, and then in

<sup>1</sup> T. T. Munger.

its streams of conduct. By this trust the believer learns to desist from the fruitless labours which the guilt-stricken attempt in order to merit the pardon of their sins, to effect the cleansing of their souls, to attain to the ideal of restored character. He lives before God, and serves Him with calmer rest as his hallowed desires accord more fully with his sacred duties and these with the will of God.

Then grief expires, and pain and strife,  
'Tis nature all and all delight.

¶ It is in the life of faith, when a soul learns to trust God for victory over sin, and yields itself entirely, as to its circumstances and duties, to live just where and how He wills, that it enters the rest. It lives in the promise, in the will, in the power of God. This is the rest into which it enters, not through death, but through faith, or rather, not through the death of the body, but the death to self in the death of Christ through faith. For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they; but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with those that heard. The one reason why they did not enter Canaan was their unbelief. The land was waiting; the rest was provided; God Himself would bring them in and give them rest. One thing was lacking: they did not believe, and so did not yield themselves to God to do it for them what He had promised. Unbelief closes the heart against God, withdraws the life from God's power; in the very nature of things unbelief renders the word of promise of none effect. A gospel of rest is preached to us as it was to them. We have in Scripture the most precious assurances of a rest for the soul to be found under the yoke of Jesus, of a peace of God which passeth all understanding, of a peace and a joy in the soul which nothing can take away. But when they are not believed they cannot be enjoyed: faith is in its very nature a resting in the promise and the promiser until He fulfil it in us. Only faith can enter into rest. The fullness of faith enters into the full rest.<sup>1</sup>

(2) We must labour to enter into rest. We must will the will of God. So long as the will of God, whether in the Bible or in providence, is going in one direction and our will in another, rest is impossible. Can there be rest in an earthly household when the children are ever chafing against the regulations and control of their parents? How much less can we be at rest if we harbour

<sup>1</sup> A. Murray, *The Holiest of All*, 144.

an incessant spirit of insubordination and questioning, contradicting and resisting the will of God? That will must be done on earth as it is in heaven. None can stay His hand, or say, What doest Thou? It will be done with us, or in spite of us. If we resist it, the yoke against which we rebel will only rub a sore place on our skin; but we must still carry it. How much wiser, then, meekly to yield to it, and submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God, saying, "Not my will, but Thine be done!" The man who has learnt the secret of Christ in saying a perpetual "Yes" to the will of God; whose life is a strain of rich music to the theme, "Even so, Father"; whose will follows the current of the will of God, as the smoke from our chimneys permits itself to be wafted by the winds of autumn—that man may find rest unto his soul.

¶ Resignation sitteth down with the lowly in the dust; it saith, "I will be simple in myself, and understand, lest my understanding should exalt itself, and sin; I will lie down in the courts of my God at His feet, that I may serve my Lord in that which He commandeth me: I will know nothing myself, that the commandment of my Lord may lead and guide me, and that I may only do what God doth through me, and will have done by me: I will sleep in myself until the Lord awaken me with His Spirit, and if He will not, then will I cry out eternally in Him in silence and wait His commands."<sup>1</sup>

¶ One of her perplexities hitherto had been a doubt whether the "mountains of difficulties" were to be taken as occasions for submission to God's will, or whether they were piled up in order to try her patience and her resolve, and were to be surmounted by some initiative of her own. She now began to interpret God's will in the latter sense. "I must *take* some things," she wrote on Whitsunday 1851, "as few as I can, to enable me to live. I must *take* them, they will not be given me; take them in a true spirit of doing Thy will, not of snatching them for my own will. I must do without some things, as many as I can, which I could not have without causing more suffering than I am obliged to cause any way."<sup>2</sup>

3. This present rest of soul, realized through trust, conducts the diligent into the perfect rest wherein the Man and Leader,

<sup>1</sup> Jacob Behmen.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 107.

Christ, already dwells. This aspect of the Divine rest is exhibited in the word used first in verse 9, and rendered in the Revised Version by "sabbath rest." The Talmud records: "The Israelites said, Lord of all the world, show us a type of the world to come. God answered them, That type is the sabbath." Augustine notices that, in Genesis, to the seventh day, the day of God's rest, are set no limits of evening and morning. The sabbath-rest is to be perfect, endless, unchanging, indefeasible: the true and ideal rest which corresponds to what God designed for man and what man desires from God.

¶ *July 30th, 1892.*—Lord Northbrook, the Mondragones, and Mrs. Arkwright are with us. The first-named asked me after dinner whether I had ever heard the last words of Stonewall Jackson: "Let us cross the river and rest under the shade."<sup>1</sup>

¶ Those who die in the fear of God and in the faith of Christ do not really taste death; to them there is no death, but only a change of place, a change of state; they pass at once into some new life, with all their powers, all their feelings unchanged; still the same living, thinking, active beings, which they were here on earth. I say active. . . . Rest they may: rest they will, if they need rest. But what is the true rest? Not idleness, but peace of mind. To rest from sin, from sorrow, from fear, from doubt, from care; this is true rest. Above all, to rest from the worst weariness of all—knowing one's duty, and yet not being able to do it. That is true rest; the rest of God, who works for ever, and yet is at rest for ever; as the stars over our heads move for ever, thousands of miles a day, and yet are at perfect rest, because they move orderly, harmoniously, fulfilling the law which God has given them. Perfect rest, in perfect work; that surely is the rest of blessed spirits, till the final consummation of all things, when Christ shall have made up the number of His elect.<sup>2</sup>

4. Through Christ the heavenly rest is as sure as it is desirable. How dim, after all, was the conception of heaven among the prophets of the Old Testament, and how it seemed sometimes to meet, and sometimes to elude, the aspirations of the psalmist. But now the "sure and certain hope" of heaven is a commonplace of religion which every child can tell, and it is so

<sup>1</sup> M. E. Grant Duff, *Notes from a Diary, 1892-95*, i. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Charles Kingsley: Memorials and Letters*, ii. 355.

because we know of Christ in heaven in His true humanity, and we have His unmistakable promise, "I go to prepare a place for you." Surely this is enough. We cannot know what heaven is except as the perfection of that which we have upon earth. All that we need to know is that there shall be perfect peace—peace with self, peace with men, peace with God. If ever the human imagination has dared to go beyond this in painting heaven, either to the ear or to the eye, it has always materialized and degraded the very conception of heaven itself. No, it is enough for us to know that heaven is perfect happiness because Christ is there; and to know that in His many mansions He has a place for each one of us. In that foresight there is a wonderful rest amidst all the trials and the sorrows of life. It has given peace to the sufferer in the hour of his agony: to the penitent in the weariness of his struggle; to the soul which is athirst for light in its darkness and for righteousness in the face of evil. Man, as I have said, can never rest in the present. His whole life here, we grant, is a series of hopes and disenchantments. But what matters that if there is a sure and certain hope in the hereafter? and how can that hope fail if Christ in heaven is preparing a place for us?

O birds from out the east, O birds from out the west,  
Have you found that happy city in all your weary quest?  
Tell me, tell me, from earth's wanderings may the heart find  
glad surcease,

Can ye show me, as an earnest, any olive branch of peace?  
I am weary of life's troubles, of its sin and toil and care,  
I am faithless, crushing in my heart so many a fruitless  
prayer,

O birds from out the east, O birds from out the west,  
Can ye tell me of that city, the name of which is Rest?

O little birds fly east again—O little birds fly west:  
Ye have found no happy city in all your weary quest,  
Still shall ye find no spot of rest wherever ye may stray,  
And still like you the human soul must wing its weary way.  
There sleepeth no such city within the wide world's bound,  
Nor hath the dreaming fancy yet its blissful portals found,  
We are but children crying here upon a mother's breast,  
For life and peace and blessedness, and for eternal Rest.

Bless God, I hear a still small voice above life's clamorous  
din

Saying, "Faint not, O weary one, thou yet may'st enter in,  
That city is prepared for those who well do win the fight,  
Who tread the winepress till its blood hath washed their  
garments white.

Within it is no darkness, nor any baleful flower  
Shall there oppress thy weeping eyes with stupefying power,  
It lieth calm within the light of God's peace-giving breast,  
Its walks are called Salvation, the city's name is Rest."

THE THRONE OF GRACE.

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## THE THRONE OF GRACE.

Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.—Heb. iv. 16.

IN the closing sentences of this chapter the writer winds up the long exhortation to steadfastness by an inspiring allusion to the sympathy of the great High Priest, who has passed out of this time-world, through the veil of the visible heavens, into the celestial-world; and he takes care that his last word shall be of a cheering character, and also so manages that the conclusion of this hortatory section shall form a suitable introduction to the next part of his discourse. For the third time Christ is designated a High Priest and there are ascribed to Him, as such, attributes which are to form the theme of the next great division of the Epistle, wherein the priestly office of Christ is elaborately discussed. The writer re-invites the attention of his readers to the High Priest of their confession, and in doing so uses words every one of which contains an assertion which he means to prove or illustrate, and which being proved will serve the great end of the whole Epistle—the instruction and confirmation of the ignorant and tempted.

Then, when he has, by brief, pregnant phrase, hinted the thoughts he means to prove, the writer proceeds to address to his readers an exhortation, which is repeated at the close of the long discussion on the priesthood of Christ, to which these sentences are the prelude. In doing so, he gives prominence to that feature of Christ's priestly character of which alone he has as yet spoken explicitly—His power to sympathize, acquired and guaranteed by His experience of temptation. He presents Christ to view as the Sympathetic One in golden words which may be regarded as an inscription on the breast-plate of the High Priest of humanity. To this strong assertion of Christ's power to sympathize is fitly

appended the final exhortation : “ Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and grace for seasonable succour.”

## I.

## CONFIDENCE OF APPROACH.

“ Let us draw near with boldness.”

1. The word “ boldness ” is somewhat incongruous ; it neither conveys the original nor does it correspond to our sense of propriety. The thought would be far more beautifully and far more naturally represented by a more literal translation—“ Let us come with frank confidence ” to the throne of grace. The word literally means, if we go to the etymology of it, “ speaking everything.” You can easily understand how naturally that becomes an expression for the unembarrassed, unrestrained, full outpouring of a heart. You cannot pour out your heart in the fullest confidence to a person you do not respect, but if you are with some one you entirely trust, how swiftly the words flow, and how very easy it is to tell out the whole heart. Just so with this great word of the writer of this Epistle, descriptive of the temper and disposition with which men are to go to God—with confidence, full, cheerful, and unembarrassed, and expressing itself in full trust, exactly as we have it in one of the Psalms : “ Ye people, pour out your heart before him.” Yes, let it all flow out, just as you would do to husband or wife, or lover or friend, or the chosen companion to whom you can tell everything.

2. We need not, however, discard the familiar word “ boldness ” ; it is enough if we know what kind of boldness it is. Not the boldness of presumption ; for if we would “ serve God acceptably ” it must be “ with reverence and godly fear.” Not the boldness of self-will ; but ever praying—“ Father, Thy will.” Not the boldness of self-merit ; but saying, with Daniel, “ We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.” It is the boldness of reliance on God’s own nature and promise. He has bidden us pray, assured response, and promised help. He means what He says. So we may come with reliance,

though with reverence; with earnestness, though with submission; with confidence, though with penitence; with the boldness of a child telling all its griefs and wants to a pitying parent—the boldness Jesus encouraged in the parable of the importunate widow, and rewarded in the case of the Syrophenician mother.

¶ Prayer in the fullest sense—the prayer that is wrought in us by the Spirit and presented by the Christ of God; prayer that wins the King's ear—is the last triumph of the life of grace. Prayer in the noblest sense implies a concentration of all man's united energies. Coleridge shortly before his death said these words to a friend who has recorded them: "I do not account a solemn faith in God as a real object to be the most arduous act of the reason and the will. Oh, no, my dear sir, it is to pray with all my heart and strength, with the reason and with the will, to believe that God will listen to your voice through Christ, and verily do the thing He pleaseth thereupon. This is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare on earth. 'Teach us to pray, O Lord.' Here he burst into a flood of tears, and begged me to pray for him." The highest energy the human heart is capable of is to pray, like St. Paul, with the spirit and the understanding. But few may reach this victory, and it is deeply consoling to remember that it is a Throne of Grace before which we kneel, and that though our prayers may be marred and faultful, yet our Mediator interprets them in the ears of our loving Father, while the Spirit helps our infirmities and gives life and power to the failing, dying heart.<sup>1</sup>

¶ To come boldly, it is to come frequently. At morning, at noon, and at night will I pray. We use to count them bold beggars that come often to our door. To come boldly, it is to ask for great things when we come. That is the bold beggar, that will not only ask, but also choose the thing that he asketh.<sup>2</sup>

## II.

### THE THRONE OF GRACE.

"Let us draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace."

1. The word "throne" commonly suggests power, majesty, sovereignty, wealth; but God's throne is here described as one of grace. His generosity is as boundless as His wealth. He

<sup>1</sup> W. Robertson Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 339.

<sup>2</sup> Bunyan.

bestows blessing not upon the ground of desert or according to any measure of merit, but according to "the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." Having, in the fulness of His benevolence, not "spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," He stands ready with Him and through Him, "freely to give us all things." He is the God of love, the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort and consolation, who daily loadeth us with benefits, who preventeth us with the blessings of His goodness, and who in the riches of His grace hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. It is to give prominence to this aspect of the character of God that the writer represents Him here as seated on a throne of grace. Mercy no less belongs to Him than majesty. If He is the God of glory, He is also the God of all grace. The throne, therefore, on which He sits is represented as a throne of grace—a throne which rests on grace, which is upholden by mercy, and from which blessing flows forth in a free and plenteous stream to the unworthy, the wretched and the lost. The glory that surrounds God's throne, as He manifests Himself to His creatures, is a glory before which the highest of them veil their faces; they are unable to gaze on its exceeding lustre; but the form in which it arranges itself is that of a rainbow, the token of mercy and the pledge of blessing, so that even the guilty and the fallen can approach with confidence to ask of Him who sits on that throne mercy and favour.

¶ Mercy is that eternal principle of God's nature which leads Him, even at the cost of infinite self-sacrifice, to seek the temporal good and eternal salvation of those who have opposed themselves to His will. In the words of Martensen: "Viewed in relation to sin, eternal love is compassionate grace." God's continued impartation of natural life is a foreshadowing, in a lower sphere, of what He desires to do for His creatures in the higher sphere—the communication of spiritual and eternal life through Jesus Christ. When He bids us love our enemies, He only bids us follow His own example.<sup>1</sup>

2. And what is grace? Grace, of course, is the New Testament word for the undeserved favour and loving regard of God to man considered as weak, sinful, and unworthy; it is love which has its own motive, apart from any regard to worthiness in the object

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, i. 289.

upon which it falls. Grace is its own real impulse and motive, and grace is set in Scripture as the opposite of desert; it is of grace, not of works, and so forth. It is set as the antagonist of sin and unrighteousness and all evil, and so runs up to the idea that it expresses the unmerited, self-originated, loving regard of God to us poor miserable creatures, who, if dealt with on the ground of right and retribution, would receive something very different indeed. But this text says that the throne of grace is the throne of God. The throne is based and established, as it were, in grace, out of which this undeserved love flows in broad, full streams. Whatever else there may be in the Divine nature, the ruling sovereign element in Deity is unmerited love and mercy and kindly regard to us poor, ignorant, sinful creatures, which keeps pouring itself out over all the world. God is King, and the kingly thing in God is infinite grace. Then we can scarcely but bring into connexion with this grand idea the other phases which the Old Testament gives to the same thought. Read such words as these: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne"—"God sitteth on the throne of his holiness"—"The throne of thy glory." Yes, the throne of justice and of judgment. White and sparkling—cold and repellent. The throne of glory—flashing and dazzling, coruscating and blinding, glittering and shimmering, ready to smite the diseased eye. "The throne of his holiness." Yes, lofty, far up there, towering above us in its pure completeness, and we poor creatures, being ourselves blinded and dazed, and far away from Him, down amidst the lowlands and materialities, and all that majesty in the heavens—the justice and judgment, the holiness and glory—all that is only the envelope and wrappage; the living centre and heart of it is a pure, lambent glow of tenderness, and the throne is truly the throne of grace. The "throne" gives us all ideas of majesty, sovereignty, dominion, infinitude, greatness. The thought that it is "the throne of grace" sheathes all these in the softest, tenderest, most blessed folds of love—unmerited, free, spontaneous—simply because He is God, and not on account of any goodness in us.

¶ "Less and less, I think, grows the consciousness of seeking God. Greater and greater grows the certainty that He is seeking us and giving Himself to us to the complete measure of our

present capacity. That is Love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us. I am sure that we ought to dwell far more upon God's love for us than on our love for Him. There is such a thing as putting ourselves in the way of God's overflowing love and letting it break upon us till the response of love to Him comes, not by struggle, not even by deliberation, but by necessity, as the echo comes when the sound strikes the rock. And this, which must have been true wherever the soul of God and the soul of man have lived, is perfectly and finally manifest in the Christ-hood of which it is the heart and soul.<sup>1</sup>

(1) It is the opinion of some that, in the phrase "the throne of grace," an allusion is made to the so-called mercy-seat in the Jewish temple, on which God is represented as sitting enthroned, and where He heard the supplications of His people presented by the high priest, when He accepted their oblations, and from which He dispensed to them the blessings that they needed. For this, however, there seems no sufficient reason. The writer has no call here to refer to the mercy-seat; and it is unlikely that, in seeking to raise the minds of his readers to the elevation of specifically spiritual worship through Christ, he would clothe his sentiments in language borrowed from the outward Jewish worship; to say nothing of the fact that "mercy-seat" is a rendering which has nothing in the original to justify it, and that Jehovah is nowhere represented as "sitting enthroned on it," but rather as sitting on a throne upborne by the cherubim, from which He looked down on the blood-sprinkled lid which covered, and, as it were, hid from view, the covenant broken by Israel, and demanding the punishment of the transgressors.

(2) Others have thought that this throne of grace is the mediatorial throne on which Christ sits, not the throne of God the Father. But though it is undoubtedly true that our Lord is now exalted to the throne of heaven, where He sits possessed of all power and authority, it does not appear that it is of this that our author is speaking here. His subject leads him to contemplate the priestly office and work of Christ rather than the regal, and the light in which we are taught to regard Him here is not so much that of the Being to whom we are to come as that of the Medium through which we are to come. As He has procured eternal redemption for us, and as He appears in the

<sup>1</sup> *Phillips Brooks: Memories of His Life*, 606.

presence of God for us, we have access with confidence to the Most High. Through Him we have the introduction or privilege of entrance to the Father. Access to the throne of grace, then, is access to God the Father, as seated on that throne. Such language is of course figurative: it describes God after the manner of men. But it does describe Him to us; it is not a merely ornamental figure, it is a figure designed vividly, and in a manner calculated to impress our minds, to convey to us certain ideas concerning God in His relation to us, ideas which it is of importance that we should receive, as intimately connected with the furtherance in us of a true and spiritual religion.

¶ I suppose if I were more simple-minded I should have been thinking over my faults and failures, desiring to do better, making good resolutions. But I don't do that. I do desire, with all my heart, to do better. I know how faltering, how near the ground my flight is. But these formal, occasional repentances are useless things; resolutions do little but reveal one's weakness more patently. What I try to do is simply to uplift my heart with all its hopes and weaknesses to God, to try to put my hand in His, to pray that I may use the chances He gives me, and interpret the sorrows He may send me. He knows me utterly and entirely, my faults and my strength. I cannot fly from Him though I take the wings of the morning. I only pray that I may not harden my heart; that I may be sought and found; that I may have the courage I need. All that I have of good He has given me; and as for the evil, He knows best why I am tempted, why I fall, though I would not. There is no strength like the abasement of weakness; no power like a childlike confidence.<sup>1</sup>

“Holy of Holies,” awful name—

Where, in a still retreat,  
The Presence of the Godhead dwelt,  
Upon the mercy-seat:  
Veiled from the eye in darkness dim,  
Enthroned between the cherubim.

Once in the year, within the veil,  
In mystic robes arrayed,  
The High Priest entered, and with blood  
An expiation made:  
But blood of victims could not cleanse  
And purge the guilt of man's offence.

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Benson, *The Upton Letters*, 317.

O Great Redeemer! God and Man,  
 Victim and Priest in one;  
 Thou, entering Heaven with Thine own Blood,  
 Didst once for all atone;  
 Thou hast removed the awful cloud,  
 Which once the oracle did shroud.

Now a bright Rainbow o'er the Throne  
 Sheds lustre from above,  
 Where showers of Judgment mildly shine,  
 Gilded by beams of Love;  
 Thy Blood, O Lamb of God, is there,  
 Pleading for us with ceaseless Prayer.

Cleansed by ~~that~~ Blood, we now approach  
 Boldly the Throne of Grace:  
 O may we, following the Lamb,  
 Come to that Holy Place;  
 Lord, who for us didst deign to bleed,  
 Be Thou our help in time of need!<sup>1</sup>

3. To the throne we should come with hearts that harbour no treason; to the throne we should come with large petitions as those who expect greatly; to the throne we should come with the deepest sincerity and earnestness, remembering how high and wonderful a thing it is to enter the brightness of its radiance. But knowing its own flaws, its faultiness, its feebleness, the spirit rests on the thought that the throne is a throne of grace. Often and often we can approach it only with broken words, with wandering hearts, with ignorant desires, with passionate sobs and sighs. There is One who is there to interpret with loving tenderness our tears, our dim longings for deliverance and purity. Often we can come only defiled within and without. We come to the throne with defects of faith, defects of knowledge, defects of life, but they may all be overlooked and forgiven. We come with griefs we cannot name, but we come to Him whose eyes behold with compassion our most intimate and secret and shameful miseries. We are living in a year of grace and we are living under the reign of grace. Those who approach an earthly throne may be troubled infinitely by some breach of custom or

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Wordsworth.

etiquette, but the place of our sanctuary, our glorious high throne from the beginning, is a throne of grace.

¶ We are called to the throne of grace, not to the throne of law. Rocky Sinai once was the throne of law, when God came to Paran with ten thousand of His holy ones. Who desired to draw near to that throne? Even Israel might not. Bounds were set about the mount, and if but a beast touched the mount, it was stoned or thrust through with a dart. O ye self-righteous ones who hope that you can obey the law, and think that you can be saved by it, look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair. To that throne we do not come now, for through Jesus the case is changed. We are still on praying ground and pleading terms with God, and the throne to which we are bidden to come, and of which we speak at this time, is the throne of grace. It is the throne set up on purpose for the dispensation of grace; a throne from which every utterance is an utterance of grace; the sceptre that is stretched out from it is the silver sceptre of grace; the decrees proclaimed from it are purposes of grace; the gifts that are scattered adown its golden steps are gifts of grace; and He that sits upon the throne is grace itself. It is the throne of grace itself. It is the throne of grace to which we approach when we pray.<sup>1</sup>

The way is open to the throne of grace,  
 Draw near, and in the name of Jesus plead;  
 It was for sinners that He shed His blood,  
 Looking to Him, come now with all thy need.

The Father waits to hear thy humble prayer,  
 And Jesus speaks, Ask and thou shalt receive;  
 Most gracious is the call, the promise great,  
 Full blessing will be thine if thou believe!

### III.

#### THE BLESSINGS OBTAINED.

“That we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.”

1. Our chief and comprehensive request at the throne of grace must ever be mercy and grace. The first prayer of penitence

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon.

is, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He who atoned for sin is before the throne to plead for sinners. Grace includes more than mercy. It is seasonable succour at all times. If mercy forgives our failings, grace helps us not to fail. We need mercy to pardon, grace to purify; mercy to give life, grace to nourish it; mercy to rescue us, grace to guide us; mercy to lay the foundation of the temple, grace to complete it to the top-stone. Grace every day, in all circumstances: in prosperity, lest we forget God; in adversity, lest we distrust Him; in temptation, lest we fall; in conflict, lest we yield; in anguish, lest we faint. Our great encouragement is that on the throne is One who has known the need of help from God, from angels, and from men.

¶ There are two who are unfit for showing mercy: he who has never been tried; and he who, having been tempted, has fallen under temptation. The young, untempted, and upright, are often severe judges. They are for sanguinary punishment: they are for expelling offenders from the bosom of society. The old, on the contrary, who have fallen much, are lenient: but it is a leniency which often talks thus: Men must be men—a young man must sow his wild oats and reform. So young ardent Saul, untried by doubt, persecuted the Christians with severity, and Saul the king, on the contrary, having fallen himself, weakly permitted Agag to escape punishment. David, again, when his own sin was narrated to him under another name, was unrelenting in his indignation: "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die." None of these was qualified for showing mercy aright. Unthinkingly we should say that to have erred would make a man lenient; it is not so. That truth is taught with deep significance in one of the incidents of the Redeemer's life. There stood in His presence a tempted woman, covered with the confusion of recent conviction. And there stood beside her the sanctimonious religionists of that day, waiting like hell-hounds to be let loose upon their prey. Calm words came from the lips of Him who "spake as never man spake," and whose heart felt as never man felt. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." A memorable lesson of eternal truth. Sinners are not fit to judge of sin—their justice is revenge, their mercy is feebleness. He alone can judge of sin—he alone can attemper the sense of what is due to the offended Law with the remembrance of that which is due to human frailty—he alone is fit for showing manly mercy, who has, like his Master, felt the

power of temptation in its might, and come scathless through the trial. "In all points tempted—*yet without sin*"; therefore, to Him you may "boldly go to find mercy."<sup>1</sup>

2. There is no fellowship with God possible on the footing of what people call "disinterested communion." No, we have always to go to Him to get something from Him. The question is, What do we expect to get? The text tells us. It is not temporal blessings, not the answers to foolish desires, not the taking away of thorns in the flesh, but mercy and grace to help—inward and spiritual blessings. But what are these? The one expresses the heart of God, the other expresses the hand of God. We may obtain mercy as suppliants coming boldly, confidently, frankly, with faith in the Great High Priest, to the throne of grace. There we get the full heart of God. We stand before Him in our filth, in our weakness, with conscience gnawing at us in the sense of many infirmities, many a sin and shortcoming and omission, and on the throne, so to speak, is a shoot of tender love from God's heart to us, and we get for all our weakness and sin pity and pardon, and find mercy of the Lord in that day. And then in getting the full heart of God, with all its Divine abundance of pardoning grace, and tender, gracious pity, we get, of course, the full hand of God to obtain mercy, and find grace, the bestowment of the needful blessings, the obtaining of grace in time of need, the right grace. There are no blunders in the equipment with which He supplies us. He does not give me the parcel that was meant for you; there is no error in the delivery. He does not send His soldiers to the North Pole equipped for warfare in Africa. He does not give this man a blessing that the man's circumstances would not require. No; God cannot err. The right grace will be most surely given to us to help us in time of need, or, as the words may perhaps be more vigorously and correctly translated, find grace for timely aid, grace punctually and precisely at the very nick of time, at the very exact time determined by heaven's chronometer, not by ours. It will not come as quickly as impatience might think it ought; it will not come so soon as to prevent an agony of prayer; it will not come in time enough for our impatience, for murmuring, for pre-

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Robertson.

sumptuous desires; but it will come in time to do all that is needed.

¶ You remember the narrative of that great final battle on the plains of Waterloo. For long weary days brave men died by the thousands; the afternoon of the last day was wearing rapidly away, the thin red living line getting thinner and thinner, the squares smaller and smaller at each returning charge—but at last, just before the daylight faded, just before endurance could do no more, there comes old Blücher at last and gives the order, and the whole line bore down upon the enemy and scattered them. Ah, help came at the right time, not so soon that the courage of our brave soldiers had not been tested, but before despair had settled upon the ranks, and in time for a great and perfect victory. “Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.”<sup>1</sup>

¶ An old Scottish divine, Robert Walker, makes some apt observations on finding grace to help us in time of need. The grace, he remarks, that we are encouraged to ask is grace for present need, and not present grace for future supposed necessities. It is no uncommon thing for serious people who suspect their own sincerity to forecast some trial of the severest kind, and to pass judgment upon themselves, according to the present state and temper of their minds with respect to that supposed trial. What shall I think of myself? saith one; it is required of a disciple of Jesus, that he take up his cross; but so feeble am I, that my nature shrinks at the remotest prospect of suffering. Alas! saith another, instead of desiring “to depart, and to be with Christ,” death is to me the “king of terrors”: when I think of dissolution, my heart dies within me; what shall I do when the fatal period is come? By such unwarrantable experiments do many perplex and discourage their souls, and weaken their hands for present duty. I call them unwarrantable experiments, because they are not only beside the Scripture rule but directly contrary to it. Our Lord hath commanded us to “take no thought for the morrow,” but to leave the morrow to take thought for the things of itself; because “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Grace to suffer is for a suffering season; grace to die is for dying moments: then, but not before, is the time of need. Are you solicitous about grace for future emergencies? Let me ask you, I pray, have you got all the grace you need for present duty? If you think you have, I can, without

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

further inquiry, assure you that you are mistaken. At this very moment you need grace to cure your anxiety and distrust, to check your impatience and presumptuous curiosity. Cast your care upon God for every needful support when you shall be called to suffer and die; and come to His throne for grace that may enable you to live to some good and useful purpose in the meantime. Till the present time cease to be a time of need, it is indecent, it is foolish, to look beyond it, and to distress yourselves with a premature anxiety about the morrow.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Wants and needs are different things. We often want what we do not need, and need what we do not want. We distinguish between young wants and needs, and "know how to give good gifts to our children." Is not the infinite Mind wise enough, and the infinite Love strong enough, to subordinate our wants to our needs and disappoint us in the short run, if need be, to develop and delight us in the long one? Real needs override incidental wants; we cannot always have what we please, if we are to have what God pleases—and what is best for us. To want what God wishes, is a swift way to have His wishes come true, and to have our real needs amply supplied.<sup>2</sup>

¶ Jesus calls on us to claim God as a helper as He did, and then with that help to resist evil as He did; to contend against trial in His solitary reliance on His Father; to win inward vigour, inward peace, by living for work and dying for love; not to be indifferent, dreaming, but to hunger for righteousness, to strive to enter in at the strait gate, to lay down our life for the sheep, to rise incessantly out of dreams into daylight. God will not make us do that by miracle. But He will be in it when we begin it, or desire to begin it, as our help and strength, a very present power. Not the weakening help or the degrading strength which by taking everything out of our hands leaves us undeveloped and unexercised, but the help which is inspiration, and the strength which flows from encouragement; nay, more, which flows from the consciousness of being loved, from knowledge of the glorious character of Him who loves, and from the mighty motives which the knowledge that we shall gain perfection wakes within us to enkindle work, to sweeten trial, to enlarge thought, and to fill work, thought, and trial with healthy joy. In one word, God does not make us grow into His likeness, He helps us through the laws of our nature to grow into it ourselves.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Walker, *Sermons on Practical Subjects*, 225.

<sup>2</sup> M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Stopford A. Brooke.



SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST.

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## SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST.

Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.—Heb. vii. 25.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is largely occupied in declaring that the office and work of Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest, is the reality of which the ritual of the Jewish altar, with its priests and sacrifices, its solemn and splendid worship, its comforting message to the sin-stained conscience, was but a dim shadow and type. This text is one of the many passages in the Epistle where the contrast is drawn between the eternal and unchangeable Priesthood and the ministries of all earthly priests, whose office, though of Divine appointment, derives all its value from the work of the great High Priest on high. The earthly priests were mortal men, and as one died after another the office was transmitted to their successors. It was not so with Christ. His Priesthood will endure as long as this world shall last. "They indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing: but he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

¶ The time was now very short, and for the sake of the elect his days had been abbreviated. One of his comments upon the Scripture statement that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him expresses the truth in the striking form that "He is able to save *up to* the goal," and now the goal was almost in sight. "What is the goal? The goal is Love on the Happy Hill," and the Happy Hill was beginning to rise above the Waste.<sup>1</sup>

¶ In Irvine, and wherever he went, his voice was recognized as that of a prophet of the Lord, whose lips had been touched

<sup>1</sup> J. Rendel Harris, *Life of F. W. Crossley*, 206.

with a coal from off the holy altar; and whose mission was to present men with a lofty ideal, and through the medium of a beautified imagination to let them see the infinite love of God in a crucified, risen, and exalted Christ. And, as in the days of his strength he was pre-eminently a preacher of the gospel, even so, in the days of his weakness, this continued to be his heart's desire to the end, for it is told of him that, just before the final struggle, he said to his sister, "I think I could preach a sermon yet, and this would be the text,"—and in his old musical tones, sounding loudly through the room, he cried,—“He is able to save to the uttermost.”<sup>1</sup>

¶ The words have special point, if Sir W. M. Ramsay is right in his modified acceptance of Mr. Lewis's theory as to the origin of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He thinks that the Epistle was written by a member of the Pauline circle at Cæsarea, during the two years of the Apostle's imprisonment, as a final appeal to the Jews of Jerusalem to accept the rejected Messiah, and to the Hebrew Christians to hold forth a full and untrammelled gospel. The sentence of death upon the nation abides as yet, but concurrently with it there runs the possibility of individual life. "He is always alive to keep saving those who keep coming unto God by him."<sup>2</sup>

The text declares—

- I. That Christ can save to the uttermost.
- II. That we have the guarantee of His continual intercession.
- III. That the only condition of this salvation is coming to God through Him.

## I.

### UTTERMOST SALVATION.

“Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost.”

1. What is salvation? In classical literature and in the public inscriptions of Greece the words “save” and “saviour” nearly always refer to material preservation and safety. In the earlier stages of Israel's history it has a predominantly worldly and temporal meaning: at a later time the salvation longed for by the inspired writers is not merely worldly but spiritual,

<sup>1</sup> A. Guthrie, *Robertson of Irvine*, 352.

<sup>2</sup> H. C. Lees, *The Sunshine of the Good News*, 39.

involving a right relation to God, and a consequent state in one's self. Among Christians we find all three renderings of the word "save" in use—the lower, the middle, and the higher meaning. Some most earnestly desire safety from foes and the mischances of life. Some most frequently and most ardently desire the salvation of their souls after death from the flames of hell and the power of Satan. The more spiritual schools of Christianity rather lay stress on the need of salvation from one's own worse self and from the terrible power of evil habit.

2. Is Christ able to save? This writer was sure that Christ could save, for his mind was fixed on the sacrifice and the intercession of Jesus. He looked on the cross and he saw there the Saviour dying for sin. He looked to the throne, and he saw there the Saviour pleading for sinners. And so the question, "Is Christ willing to save?" was inept for him. To ask it would be as foolish as it would be for a drowning man to ask when he sees his rescuer swimming hard towards him, "Is he willing to save me?" When Gordon looked for the deliverers who came too late, he did not ask, "Are they willing to save?" He only asked, "Are they able to save? Can they come in time?"

And, indeed, it is only the shallow-minded who too readily answer in the affirmative the question, "Is Christ able to save?" There are those who say, "Of course, God can save; He can forgive, and He can win, and the forgiving and the winning of souls present no difficulty to Him." They refuse to believe in any God who does not forgive and win every created soul. But on deeper thought the question becomes much less easy, and we say with Browning:—

It is by no breath,  
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with  
death.

This is the thought of the New Testament, and it is a true reading of life.

¶ Hawthorne tells us, in *Mosses from an old Manse*, of a man who came into that strange intelligence office with a downcast look. It was such an aspect as he might have had had he lost the very soul out of his body and travelled all the world over, searching in the dust of the highways and along the shady foot-

paths and beneath the leaves of the forest and among the sands of the seashore, in the hope of recovering it again. With a sad face he came up to the man of intelligence. "I have lost—" he began, and then he paused.

"Yes," said the clerk, "I see that you have lost, but what?"

"I have lost a precious jewel," replied the unfortunate man, "the like of which is not to be found among prince's treasures. While I possessed it the contemplation of it was my sole and sufficient happiness. No price should have purchased it of me, but it has fallen from my bosom, where I wore it in my careless wanderings about the city."

After causing the stranger to describe the marks of his lost jewel, the intelligencer opened a drawer where were deposited whatever articles had been picked up in the streets, until the rightful owners should claim them. It was a strange collection: there were wedding rings, and white roses, and blush roses, and locks of hair, and many of these things were fragrant with perfume. Perhaps a sweet scent had departed from the lives of their former possessors ever since they had so wilfully or negligently lost them. And in the corner of the drawer was found a great pearl, looking like the soul of celestial purity, congealed and polished.

"There is my jewel—my very pearl!" cried the stranger, almost beside himself with rapture. "It is mine! Give it me this moment or I shall perish!"

"I perceive," said the man of intelligence, examining it more closely, "that this is the Pearl of Great Price."

"The very same," answered the stranger. "Judge then of my misery at losing it out of my bosom! Restore it to me! I must not live without it an instant longer!"

"Pardon me," rejoined the intelligencer calmly. "You ask what is beyond my duty. This pearl, as you well know, is held upon a peculiar tenure, and, having once let it escape from your keeping, you have no greater claim to it than any other person, nay, not so great. I cannot give it back."

Nor could the entreaties of the miserable man, who saw before his eyes the jewel of his life without the power to reclaim it, soften the heart of this stern being, impassive to human sympathy, though exercising such an apparent influence over human forces. Finally the loser of the Pearl of Great Price clutched his hands in his hair and rushed madly forth with despair in his face.

Hawthorne is true to life in that picture. The lost pearl of goodness cannot be restored again by any earthly power. But, thank God, Jesus Christ is the great restorer of the soul. He is

able, in virtue of the Cross He bore, to give back to us the lost pearl of goodness. He has power on earth to forgive sins.<sup>1</sup>

(1) It is said of Christ in the text, "He is able to save to the uttermost." Our High Priest is able to save to the uttermost degree that man can need. The greatest sinners in their own eye are welcome to partake of His great salvation. The character which He gave of Himself on earth was, that He "came to call sinners to repentance." No sinner whatever who hears His call, and turns to Him to seek in earnest for the blessings of His great salvation, shall be sent empty away.

¶ With bound hands, and bleeding back, and heart filled with hate, a young African was huddled in the hold of a Portuguese slave ship. He was dragged to the coast by the Foulahs, after seeing the murder of his father and brothers, and the enslaving and degradation of his mother. Having failed in his efforts to strangle himself, he had been cruelly beaten with long whips of many thongs, then thrown below the hatches and left to live or die, as nature should decree. His owner set such little value on him that he offered to barter him for a horse, a cask of rum, or a bundle of tobacco. No one wanted him even at that price. Such was man's valuation. There were nearly two hundred other slaves on board the ship. Many were sick, some dying, but all in the horrors of despair. Densely ignorant, woefully degraded, mind and soul in even worse plight than his body, he was an object at once so helpless and so hopeless that for time and for eternity he seemed beyond the power of man or God, a wrecked and wasted life. That was early in the year 1821.

One day in 1864, Canterbury Cathedral was crowded to its utmost capacity. The Archbishop and other dignitaries of the historic church were there to consecrate a bishop for the Niger. Who was he? Some learned divine, of course, who had sat at the feet of the Oxford or Cambridge doctors, the heir of a thousand years of Christian training, with the blood of the old sea kings in his veins? Not so. But none other than the erstwhile slave boy, would-be suicide, whom we last saw in the Portuguese ship. Freed from his captors by a British man-of-war and taken to Sierra Leone, he met Christ, and was by Him transformed.

In 1821, a negro slave in darkness and misery; in 1864, with mind and soul illumined with the love of Christ, Bishop of the Church of England on the Niger. This is what the gospel did for Samuel Adjai Crowther, the despised slave.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L. A. Banks, *The King's Stewards*, 211.

<sup>2</sup> C. B. Keenleyside, *God's Fellow-Workers*, 60.

(2) But the expression "to the uttermost" may denote duration. It is rendered in the margin "evermore." He is able to save evermore. This indeed seems to be the true meaning of the word, from the connexion in which it stands with regard to the unchangeable priesthood of Christ. "He is able to save evermore," in all ages of the Church, and under all the circumstances in which His believing people may be placed. It was the conviction of this ability of Christ to save even in the most unfavourable and untoward circumstances, that led the Apostle to say, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). A sense of his weakness led him to seek strength from Christ; and His grace was then found to be sufficient to support His feeble servant. His strength was made perfect, was manifested to be everything that was needed by the weakness of him who sought Divine help in the time of need. At all times, and under all circumstances, the Lord Jesus is able to save.

¶ A brilliant essayist has said that the dangerous years are the forties—the years when men begin to be rich, when they have opportunities of gratifying their passions, when they perhaps imagine that they have led a starved and meagre existence. There are many, no doubt, who are protected, but even they must not presume; and perhaps there are many more who have the worst and most dangerous experiences of their life after conversion, who come to waters that almost swallow them up, and to fires that sweep and roar on every side. They pass the time of their sojourning here in fear. The old temptations shake the sinking frame at even. What is perhaps the greatest danger is that declension which is unrecognized by ourselves. Men may continue to be respectable. They may win the prizes of life; they may be more and more prosperous, and they may take no open leave of their Saviour and their faith. They may be saved from the sins which force themselves upon the eyes of others, but all the while love may be growing cold, enthusiasm may be chilled, devotion may dwindle, goodness may die. It is only in Him who is able to save to the uttermost that we can rest our hope.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Robertson Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 362.

## II.

## THE CONTINUAL INTERCESSION.

“Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

The two principal passages of Scripture where intercession is directly spoken of are this text and Rom. viii. 34, in which the same word is used as in this text. The word which in these two passages is translated “to make intercession,” just means to plead with—to use entreaties and importunities (in order to obtain something we desire) with reference to another person. The word is of general signification, and applies either to pleading for or to pleading against another. In the only other cases in the New Testament where the word occurs, *i.e.*, except in the text, and in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it is employed in the sense of using entreaties or importunities against others. These are Acts xxv. 24 (“dealt with” is the same word) and Rom. xi. 2—passages which, taken in connexion with those formerly referred to that speak directly of the intercession of Christ for His people, show clearly the general idea involved in it, namely, pleading with regard to others. Christ’s intercession for His people therefore implies that He pleads with God for them, that He is using prayers and entreaties with His Father on their behalf.

Now the great general idea that is involved in all the different statements of Scripture on this subject, the great truth implied in the doctrine of Christ’s intercession, is that nothing takes place with regard to any of those whom God has given to Christ except in consequence of a request or prayer to that effect, and with that view, presented by Christ at the throne of His Father, and heard and answered, on account of the merit He wrought out, and the glory to which He has been exalted. Christ is continually presenting before His Father His wishes with regard to what His people should enjoy and suffer; and their enjoyments and their sufferings, their trials and their supplies of grace, are just what He sees to be best for them, what He in consequence wishes and pleads for on their behalf, and what they therefore certainly receive. This is what is implied in

Christ's intercession. He is continually offering up prayers and desires on behalf of His people, according as He sees what is most suited to their wants, and most conducive to their welfare. And those wishes and desires are always heard and answered; they are always followed by the events which He pleads for.

1. Christ *ever lives* to make intercession. The ascending argument of the writer proves that He ever lives, and has, therefore, an immutable priesthood. For, first, He is of the royal tribe, and the oath of God to David guarantees that of his kingdom there shall be no end. Again, in the greatness of His personality, He is endowed with the power of an endless life. Moreover, as Priest He has been established in His office by oath. He is therefore Priest for ever.

Why is the endless life of one high priest more effective than a succession, conceivably an endless succession, of high priests? The eternal priesthood involves two distinct, but mutually dependent, conceptions—power to save and intercession. In the case of any man, to live for ever means power. Even the body of our humiliation will be raised in power. Can the spirit, therefore, in the risen life, its own native home, be subject to weakness? What, then, shall we say of the risen and glorified Christ? The difference between Him and the high priests of earth is like the difference between the body that is raised and the body that dies. In Aaron priesthood is sown in corruption, dishonour, weakness; in Christ priesthood is raised in incorruption, in glory, in power. In Aaron it is sown a natural priesthood; in Christ it is raised a spiritual priesthood. It must be that the High Priest in heaven has power to save continually and completely. Whenever help is needed, He is living, and is mighty to save from sin, to rescue from death, to deliver from its fear.

Day and night, the Accuser makes no pause,  
 Day and night protest the righteous laws,  
 Good and evil witness to man's flaws;  
 Man the culprit, man's the ruined cause,  
 Man midway to death's devouring jaws,  
 And the worm that gnaws.

Day and night our Jesus makes no pause,  
 Pleads His own fulfilment of all laws,  
 Veils with His perfections mortal flaws,  
 Clears the culprit, pleads the desperate cause,  
 Plucks the dead from death's devouring jaws,  
 And the worm that gnaws.

2. He intercedes by the exhibition of Himself in His Divine manhood, pierced for us, raised, and glorified. His five blessed and holy wounds are each one a mighty intercession on our behalf. The glorious tokens of His cross and passion, exhibited before the throne of God, plead for us perpetually. The one great atonement, the one great sacrifice, offered with shedding of blood once upon the cross, and now offered perpetually, is a continuing sacrifice. His very presence in heaven is in itself an intercession for us. His sacrifice on the cross, though perfected by suffering of death only once in time, is in its power eternal. Therefore it stands a Divine fact—ever present and prevailing, the foundation and life of the redeemed world—before the throne of God.

¶ Æschylus was strongly accused, and likely to be condemned. His brother Amyntas engaged to be his advocate. Amyntas had done much for the commonwealth; and, in a certain action, in their service, had lost a hand. He came into the court. The court was uncommonly crowded; and all were eager to hear him plead on so interesting an occasion. But he said nothing—he only held up his dismembered arm! The audience and the judges were so moved as immediately to order his brother's release. It does not appear that the high priest said any thing when he entered the holy place: but what he did spake loud enough. He wore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his breastplate; he took the blood of the slaughtered victim in a basin, and sprinkled the mercy-seat, and burned incense before the golden altar, and then came forth and blessed the people. Abel's blood spake to God from the ground; that is, it demanded vengeance; the blood of Jesus is equally vocal; but it speaketh better things than that of Abel—it calls for mercy.<sup>1</sup>

3. His intercession extends to all important interests. We may look upon His prayer for His disciples, on the night in which He was betrayed, as a specimen of His continued intercession before the throne. And for what does He not there plead? Is

<sup>1</sup> W. Jay, *Short Discourses*, ii. 642.

it their preservation? "Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." Is it their renovation? "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Is it their union? "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." Is it their glorification? "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

¶ The Bishop of Ely thus writes his recollections of the sadness at Cuddesdon caused by the death of the Prince Consort: I remember, as though it were yesterday, the Ordination of Advent, 1861—how the whole Ember week at Cuddesdon, usually so bright notwithstanding the work, was darkened by the shadow of the Prince Consort's death. The Bishop seemed unable to tear himself away from the thought of Windsor and the scenes which were passing there, and I was particularly struck with the personal affection which he manifested for the Queen and the consequently "home" character of his sympathy with her, less as a sovereign than as a wife. We drove into Oxford late on Saturday night, reaching Christ Church about midnight, and I can still hear, as it were, the Bishop's sad voice in the dark carriage recalling his early remembrance of the Prince in the first days of the Royal marriage. It was then, too (I think), that he mentioned the last conversation which the Prince had held with him. The Bishop had been preaching in the private chapel at Windsor upon the subject of our Lord's intercession in heaven, His presenting the prayers of His people to the Father, and enforcing them by the presence of His human body still bearing the mark of the wounds of His Passion. The Prince had sent a message inviting the Bishop to walk with him in the afternoon, and turned the conversation to the sermon of the morning, saying that it had suggested to him an entirely new view of the subject, that he must not be supposed to mean that he accepted it, but that he should give it his most serious reflection, adding, "Now, at any rate, I understand why the Church of England is so careful to conclude every prayer with such words as 'through Jesus Christ our Lord.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Bishop Samuel Wilberforce*, iii. 44.

4. Christ's intercession links itself to our prayers and makes them effectual. He enters and finds us bowed down before God, trying to pray, but not able; He approaches, kneels with us, and whispers with great gentleness, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." And not like an ordinary friend, this Comforter and Intercessor is as exactly conscious of our state of mind as we are; and not with wise counsels and soothing words only, but with spiritual influences and revelations, does He assist the painful efforts of prayer; and more than all, He who kneels with us as a fellow-suppliant not only touches us with His human nature, but touches God with His Divine; and that which one nature urges Him to ask, another nature enables Him to bestow: He has all the sympathy which man can have for man, and all the power which man can need from God. Are you perplexed with suspicions and dark controversies in prayer? He answers, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. Commit your reasonings to me: be of good cheer, only believe." Are you distressed with a fear that one so guilty, so depraved, so penetrated with spiritual leprosy as you are, can never be made clean? He replies, "My blood cleanseth from all sin. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean. If you can believe that I am what I declare Myself to be—the propitiation which God has accepted for you, and your all-prevailing Advocate and Helper in the Divine presence—though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

¶ After the battle of Crécy, our English King, Edward III., having there defeated the French army, laid siege to Calais. The town was very strong; and its governor, Sir Jean de Vienne, was a brave man, who determined to defend it to the last for his master, the King of France. It was too well fortified to be taken by assault; and so King Edward soon saw that he could only starve the garrison into surrendering. He began the siege in August 1346, and it lasted much longer than he had expected. A whole year passed, and still the English army was kept outside the walls. They had lost many men in the time; and the king was very much enraged at the loss of so many of his best soldiers.

At last the garrison was reduced to the utmost distress. So the governor then tried to make the best terms of surrender he

could. But the English king was very angry at all his losses, so he required the whole city and all its inhabitants to be given up to him to do as he willed with them. These conditions seemed so stern that the governor entreated the king to have pity upon his enemies, who had showed themselves very brave, and to alter his mind. But Edward was very hard to move on account of his losses; and he still required that at any rate six of the chief citizens should come to him barefooted, and with ropes round their necks, and the keys of the city in their hands, and submit to be punished according to his will. Then six brave men did come forward, and offered themselves as Edward demanded. They expected that the English king would strike off their heads; but they were willing to find grace with God in dying to save their fellow-townspople from starvation. They were brave, good men, those six burghers of Calais. When they were brought before Edward, he ordered them to be put to death. His nobles at once interceded for them, but without effect. Then his wife, Queen Philippa, threw herself on her knees among the captives and asked him for mercy on those brave, unselfish men. She asked it as a boon for herself and for the love of Christ. And the king listened to her prayer. He could not resist her asking. She implored him for the love he bore her, his true wife. And so for his love for her, who had not flinched in her love for him to speak of the Lord Christ's love when she bade Edward remember mercy, the king gave her her request.<sup>1</sup>

¶ In course of a letter to a friend who had difficulties in relation to prayer and its answer, he wrote: "You say you can imagine a state of incarnate intercessory expression of God's love—so can I; and more than imagine it, I have seen it. That is Christ; and we, in Him, do likewise." In this way he would enforce the privilege and consequent duty of an intercessory life, and no doubt his communion with the Lord was systematically maintained, and powerfully reinforced thereby. For, as he said once, "Jesus, who has entire command of His time, chooses the intercession as that on which He can best spend it, and ever liveth to make intercession for us."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Kelly.

<sup>2</sup> J. Rendel Harris, *Life of F. W. Crossley*, 174.

## III.

## THE CONDITION OF SALVATION.

“He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him.”

1. To come unto God, or Christ, sometimes means to believe on Him, sometimes to be a worshipper of Him. Not but that a real belief and a true worship are always combined in the same person; and therefore perhaps it is that both are described by the same word, viz., “coming” unto God or Christ, or to God by Christ. Both these senses may be included in the term as it is used in the text; but it is probable that the chief reference here is to the worship of God through Christ. For throughout the Epistle, the writer is evidently contrasting the Jewish high priests and their work, and its effect on the worshippers under the law, with our High Priest and His work, and its result on behalf of worshippers under the gospel. They that come unto God, then, are those who truly and faithfully worship Him; who love, in the language of Isaiah, to call upon His name, and to draw nigh to Him; those who sincerely seek Him, who desire and delight to have communion with Him; who love to wait on Him, and walk with Him, and to enjoy His presence in all His ordinances, in prayer and praise, at His holy table, and in the path of His commandments. Such persons, and they alone, truly come to God.

¶ “Those who are in the habit of coming unto God.” The present tense of the Greek is full of significance here. It refers to those who seek that the presence of God shall be a *daily* delight rather than an *occasional* privilege. Those who are not content with living in the outer court, but who crave the intimacy and richer fellowship of the inner circle. Those who are daily realizing that they are not only servants, but sons. “His servants shall serve him: *and* they shall see his face.”

(1) Such an attitude implies *reverence*. The shoes are always off the feet, for the place of standing is holy ground. The familiarity of the Divine friendship is inspired with reverence for the Divine holiness. The life is characterized by rest and

quietness. The outlook is serene and peaceful, for God is an unspeakable reality to the soul.

Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blessed,  
Finding as He promised perfect peace and rest.

This reverent posture of the mind is continually drawing the heart near to God through the intercessory sympathy of the Lord Jesus.

(2) This attitude also implies *confidence*. The soul has not been disappointed on previous occasions. All that the Lord promised He has performed. The fact is that when the soul realizes the value of Christ's intercessory ministry everything is subordinated to that rule. It becomes a fine spiritual lens through which the soul looks on life and on the world. There is no such thing as despair, for He ever liveth to intercede. There is no such thing as spiritual treason because He is daily pleading on our behalf. Because we have confidence in His unchanging Priesthood, "Heaven above is softer blue, earth around is sweeter green."

(3) This attitude of habitual coming implies *obedience*. The soul is "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." The Divine whisper is obeyed with alacrity. The suggestion of compromise is promptly put aside. Indeed, unless perpetual obedience to the revealed will of God is the continuous frame of mind of the believer, habitual coming loses its sacred power. "To obey is better than sacrifice." "I come to do thy will, O God." Thus it is that those who would know the wide and inclusive range of our Lord's heavenly ministry must be prepared to follow Him daily. The disciple is to take up his cross daily. Unless we could rely on the daily help of the Saviour, such a task would be impossible. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The day's demand never exceeds the day's supply.

True worth is in doing, not seeming,  
In doing each day that goes by  
Some little good, not in dreaming  
Of great thing to do by and by.

It is this implicit obedience to the Saviour that promotes the soul's rest. Prayer is a daily delight; God is so near that nearer

He could not be ; in fact, He is never so far away as to be called near.

2. We must come to God *through Christ*. No sinner needs an introduction to Jesus. He is always approachable. We come to Him just as we are, and He presents us as we ought to be before the Father. It is said that the Prince of Wales met a little girl in front of the palace, crying, and on his asking what was the matter, she said she wanted to see the Queen. The Prince kindly took her by the hand, and led her past the guards into the presence of the Queen. Through him she was introduced to royalty. So, if any one really desires to see God, Jesus will lead him into His presence. It is a comfort to remember that we can approach the humanity of Christ, and through that humanity reach Divinity. God did not need to become a man in order that He might sympathize with us, but He did need to become a man in order that we might *know* that He sympathizes with us. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, He was tempted as we are tempted, He suffered as we suffer, and that in our consciousness brings Him closer to us.

¶ There is a story told of the great Dr. Doddridge. During his Northampton ministry an Irishman was convicted of sheep-stealing and, according to the cruel custom of the time, condemned to death. Doddridge did everything he could to save him, but in vain. When the man was being driven in the death-cart to the place of execution, he asked that they should stop at Dr. Doddridge's house, and they did. Then he said: "Dr. Doddridge, every drop of my blood loves you, every vein of my heart loves you because you tried to save me." And how shall we carry ourselves to Christ, who died and lives to save us? Say to Him, "Shall I not love Thee back again for all the miracle of Divine love Thou hast brought to me?" For He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Robertson Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 364.



THE CLEANSING OF THE CONSCIENCE.

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## THE CLEANSING OF THE CONSCIENCE.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?—Heb. ix. 13, 14.

THE whole power and meaning of these words depend on the contrast they express between the Jewish ceremony of purification and the purifying sacrifice of Christ. The Apostle implies that there is a resemblance between the two. The Hebrew worshipper needed cleansing before he could enter the sacred precincts of the Temple: the human soul needs cleansing before it can worship in the presence of the Holy God. The sacrifice of animals purified the Jew; the sacrifice of Christ purifies the Christian; and the one is the type of the other. But beneath that resemblance the author of the Epistle finds eternal difference. The one purifying cleansed the flesh—the outward man—and freed it from the penalties of unhallowed worship; the other cleanses the conscience—the inner man—and quickens it to serve the living God. And just on that difference he founds the triumphant question in which he asserts the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse the conscience of humanity.

1. The Apostle is alluding specially to the ceremonial by which the Jewish worshipper was cleansed from the defilement of contact with death. By the law of Moses, the touch of a human corpse, whether it lay sacredly guarded in the quiet death-chamber, or exposed on the field of battle; the touch of a human bone or the dust of a human grave were defiling, and on pain of being cut off from Israel no man dare enter the Temple until cleansed from such pollution. Through that exact and terrible demand for purity from the very associations of death, God trained the Jews for ages to feel the connexion between death and sin, and made

them know that not one shadow of impurity must darken the man who ventured to approach the presence of Him whose name is Holy. Now all this could purify the flesh only: it could cleanse the outward man, and deliver the worshipper from the outward penalties of unhallowed service; but there was an inner man, defiled by death, which those sacrifices of purification had no power to make pure. Within the spirit's temple there was a conscience, heavenly and sacred, which had been darkened by sin and which needed redemption before the worshipper could go in joy and freedom into the presence of the Most High. No blood of bulls or of goats, no sprinkling of ashes could touch it—they had only a fleshly ceremonial power; it needed a living, holy, spiritual sacrifice to purge it from its dark pollution. And herein lies the power of our author's argument. If the outward ceremonial cleansed the outward man from the defilement of death, "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

2. This, then, is what is meant in the text, when it contrasts the atoning power of the blood of Christ with that of the blood of bulls and goats. The blood of the sacrificed animal had a certain value, because it was so intimately connected with the life or sensitive soul of the animal; as the writer puts it, it did, and by Divine appointment, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. By the "flesh" is here meant the natural, outward, and earthly life of man; especially all that bore in the way of outward conduct and condition upon his membership of the commonwealth of Israel. The sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, and especially the sprinkling of the blood of the red heifer towards the tabernacle, signified the substitution of life for life, and were at any rate accepted as establishing the outward religious position of those for whom they were offered. That they could do more was impossible; the nature of things was opposed to it: "it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." The blood of these animals could not operate in the proper sphere of spiritual natures. But then it foreshadowed nothing less than the blood of Christ. It was His blood, who through His Eternal Spiritual Being (it is not the Holy Ghost who is here meant, but

the Divine Nature of the Incarnate Christ) offered Himself without spot to God. The eternal spiritual nature of Christ, vivifying the blood of Christ, is contrasted in the writer's thought with the perishable life of the sacrificed animal resident in the blood of the animal; and so the value of the sacrifices, the power of the blood to cleanse or save, varies with the dignity of the life which it represents—in one case, that of the creature, not even endowed with reason or immortality; in the other, that of the Infinite and Eternal Being who for us men, and for our salvation, has come down from heaven. "How much more shall the blood of Christ!"

At length we see what it is that the sacred writer really means. He says in effect to his readers, "You have no doubt that, under the old Jewish dispensation, the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, the blood of the slaughtered goat and red heifer, could restore the Israelite who had done wrong to his place and his privileges in the sacred nation. It sanctified to the purifying of the flesh. But here is the blood—not of a sacrificial animal, not of a mere man, not even of the best of men, but of One who was God 'manifest in the flesh.' Who shall calculate the effects of His self-sacrifice? Who shall limit the power of His voluntary death? Who shall say what His outpoured blood may or may not achieve on earth or elsewhere?" Plainly we are here in the presence of an agency which altogether distances and rebukes the speculations of reason; we can but listen for some voice that shall speak with authority, and from beyond the veil: we can but be sure of this, that the blood of the Eternal Christ must infinitely transcend in its efficacy that of the victims slain on the Temple altars; it must be much more than equal to redress the woes, to efface the transgressions, of a guilty world.

## I.

### THE CONSCIENCE AND ITS WORKS.

1. *The Conscience.*—It may seem a strange assertion that the conscience of man needs purifying from defilement, for, regard it in what light we may, it is the most sacred and Divine thing in humanity, and the source of all that is sacred and noble in man's nature. On it are founded the sanctities of home, the fellowships of

brotherhood, and the emotions of religion. We speak of it as an eye of the spirit, which looks upwards to a law which varies not with our falls and failures, but is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; as a voice that, in our moments of strong temptation, raises its cry amidst the storms of passion, and denounces the fascinating appearance of evil as a hollow lie; as a power that we feel we ought to obey even when we disobey it—a power which makes us feel that we are bound to do right even when peril and suffering and death are the inevitable results of right action. And can that sacred and holy thing, the warning light by which we see the defilement of the will, itself need cleansing? This seems stranger still when we regard the conscience as it is regarded in this chapter. For after speaking of its purification, the author says in the 23rd verse, that, while the patterns of things in the heavens, that is, the symbols in the Temple, needed the cleansing of the Jewish sacrifices, the heavenly things themselves were purified with better sacrifices than these; therefore the conscience is among the heavenly things which needed purifying by the sacrifice of Christ. Hence he means by it not only the sense of right and wrong, but the whole inner nature which connects man with the heavenly. The sense of the Infinite which awakens in him a feeling of awe and wonder before the grandeur of God in earth and sky; the emotions of reverence that pour themselves forth in Temple worship before the felt presence of the Father; the belief in the invisible world which makes us feel that there are regions near us whose beauty and glory “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived”: all in man from which his religion and worship rise are included in conscience, and implies that the spiritual, heavenly, aspiring nature needs purifying before we can serve the living God. It is very important that we should understand this necessity. We must realize the fact that the heavenly nature does need purifying; we must feel that our conscience, sacred though it be, does need cleansing, or we shall not feel the power and beauty of the doctrine that only the purified conscience can rise to spiritual worship of the Father.

(1) In that mysterious judgment chamber, where busy thoughts, like subtle and eager pleaders, accuse and excuse one another, a voice, whose authority we cannot dispute, declares us

guilty, and the testimony of God, which is greater than our conscience, reveals to us more fully our sin and condemnation. But when we are convinced of our sin and helplessness, God is revealed as a just God, and the justifier of the guilty who believe in Jesus; the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, reveals to us the holy and perfect way in which all iniquity is pardoned and all transgression removed. And as that blood avails in heaven, so it delivers the conscience from the burden of guilt, and from the burden of all our own miserable attempts at pleasing God and lulling our fears: dead works which like a dead weight only increase our wretchedness. Now we truly turn from sin unto God. In Jesus Christ, God and the sinner meet; both behold the blood of the Lord Jesus, and in the high sanctuary above and in the inmost sanctuary of the conscience there is peace.

(2) Yet the conscience thus purged is more sensitive. We know now more of our sinfulness: for we behold sin in the light of God's love. What then? Of sin we have no conscience; but of our sinfulness and constant sinning we have. We confess our sins; we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses": we mourn over our unfaithfulness; we behold and abhor our vileness; we have no confidence in the flesh. But we confess to the Father as children; we confess before the throne of grace, and in the hearing of the merciful and compassionate High Priest. We learn the deepest and most self-abasing lesson; to go with sin and unworthiness to infinite love, to boundless compassion, to never-failing mercy, to the Father who loves us, to the Lord who always intercedes for us. We have been washed once for all when we came to Jesus. We need now to have our feet washed. Peter either refused to have his feet washed by Jesus (false humility) or wished Jesus to wash not merely his feet, but also his hands and his head (unbelief and false humility again); but when afterwards he understood the ways of God, he strengthened his brethren. For in his Epistle he teaches that if we forget that we have been purged from our sins we become unfruitful and blind: the knowledge of our perfect and complete acceptance is the strength of obedience.

¶ Complete redemption involves deliverance from the sense of guilt, from the power of moral evil, and from religious legalism. These combined cover at once all ethical and all religious

interests, both "justification" and "sanctification" in the Pauline sense. All these benefits flow from Christ's sacrifice, viewed in the light of the spirit through which it was offered. . . . Intelligent appreciation of the spirit by which Christ offered Himself inspires that full, joyful trust in God that gives peace to the guilty conscience. But its effect does not stop there. The same appreciation inevitably becomes a power of moral impulse. The mind of Christ flows into us through the various channels of admiration, sympathy, gratitude, and becomes our mind, the law of God written on the heart. And the law within emancipates from the law without, purges the conscience from the baleful influence of "dead works," that we may serve the Father in heaven in the free yet devoted spirit of faith and love.<sup>1</sup>

2. *Dead Works*.—We are separated from God the *Holy One* by sin, from God the *living One* by death. In order to bring us into communion with God, and to purge our consciences, we have to be delivered both from the guilt of sin and from the defilement and power of death. Now of the types which purified unto the (typical) service, the blood of Jesus is the antitype. By the blood of Christ we are brought into the presence of the holy and living God. This is our sanctification, in which we are separated and cleansed for the worship and service of God. We are separated from the world of sin and death, from dead works; by which we must understand everything that is not the manifestation of a divinely-given and divinely-wrought life; because nothing is fit to be brought before and unto the living God unless it be living, or spiritual, or unless it proceeds from communion with the living One.

¶ "Dead works": works that are not good, in that their motive is good, nor bad, in that their motive is bad, but dead in that they have no motive at all, in that they are merely outward and mechanical—affairs of propriety, routine, and form, to which the heart and spirit contribute nothing. "Dead works": to how much of our lives, ay, of the better and religious side of our lives, may not this vivid and stern expression justly apply! How many acts in the day are gone through without intention, without deliberation, without effort, to consecrate them to God, without any reflex effect upon the faith and love of the doer? How many prayers, and words, and deeds are of this character? and if so, how are they wrapping our spirits round with bandages

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 353.

of insincere habit, on which already the avenging angels may have traced the motto, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead"!<sup>1</sup>

3. **Living Service.**—The effect of the ceremonial cleansing was to restore to the man his place in the congregation. So the effect of the cleansed conscience is to enable him to offer what St. Paul calls (Rom. xii. 1) "reasonable service." Compare the Collect for the 21st Sunday after Trinity, "that we may be cleansed from all our sins and serve thee with a quiet mind."

The phrase, "to serve the living God," cuts in sunder a fallacy which has beguiled some and perplexed many. If our release comes to us, apart from works, by the efficacy of that sacrifice, long since completed, why should we work at all? Because it is the law of our new life; because we are alive and in the temple of a living God, whose temple-service attracts us; because we are cleansed for this very purpose from the coldness and apathy of the dead and brought to readiness and desire to serve. Ritual cleansing was "*toward* the purifying of the flesh": this reaches "*unto* the temple-service of the living God."

(1) The service is "living" *in the reality of its spiritual emotions*. The unpurged conscience is tempted to forget, to doubt, to deny God, or to regard Him simply as some awful and mysterious power. The purified spirit feels Him near and can bear the glance of the Eternal without shrinking; for the dead past has been cleansed away by the blood of the Saviour. Thus prayer becomes real; it is no longer a vain cry breathed into the air; for the Spirit through which He offered Himself abides in us, constraining our devotion.

(2) The service is "living," for *it pervades the whole life*. The worship of fear is limited to time and place. But cleansed and inspired by Christ, we feel He is everywhere. In suffering we bear His will, and our sighs become prayers. In sorrow, when the heart is weary, we feel ourselves near to the Heavenly Friend who is leading us to find in Him rest for the restless and sad. In joys, He who hallowed social gladness by His first miracle—and amid the friendships of life, He who made friendship holy—is close to our hearts. In our falls and failures we hear His voice

<sup>1</sup> H. P. Liddon, *Passiontide Sermons*, 80.

in the hope of rising out of the gloom to a higher and purer state beyond it. Thus not only in the service of the Temple, and in the presence of a worshipping multitude, but throughout life—in the silent hours of meditation, in the still sanctuary of prayer, in the dreary hours of toil, and drearier hours of doubt, amid the rush of temptation and the pressure of care, do we feel the presence of the Christ who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself to God.

¶ Grievously do they mistake the design of the death of Christ who suppose that it was intended simply to deliver us from the penalty of sin and to leave us free to continue in transgression. The unclean were purified that they might enter the tabernacle and take part in its services; and the blood of Christ has been shed for us that we may have access to God. It does not render worship and obedience unnecessary; it is the means by which we are delivered from that which hindered both. Hence it is that whether we offer adoration and praise, or invoke the Divine blessing on ourselves or intercede for others, or venture to contemplate the Divine glory, and endeavour to enter into communion with the Divine blessedness, we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. His sacrifice is the foundation on which our religious life is built; by His blood we are cleansed from impurity that we may serve the living God.<sup>1</sup>

¶ As to St. James' assertion that "faith without works profiteth nothing," which appears to contradict St. Paul's, who says that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," suppose I say, "A tree cannot be struck without thunder," that is true, for there is never destructive lightning without thunder. But, again, if I say, "The tree was struck by lightning without thunder," that is true, too, if I mean that the lightning alone struck it, without the thunder striking it. Yet read the two assertions together, and they seem contradictory. So, in the same way, St. Paul says, "Faith justifies without works"—that is, faith only is that which justifies us, not works. But St. James says, "Not a faith which is without works." There will be works with faith, as there is thunder with lightning; but just as it is not the thunder but the lightning, the lightning without the thunder, that strikes the tree, so it is not the works which justify. Put it in one sentence—Faith alone justifies; but not the faith which is alone. Lightning alone strikes, but not the lightning which is alone, without thunder; for that is only summer lightning, and

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Dale, *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church*, 213.

harmless. You will see that there is an ambiguity in the words "without" and "alone," and the two Apostles use them in different senses, just as I have used them in the above simile about the lightning.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

### THE WAY OF CLEANSING.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ." Here we have not to do with animal sacrifices, the validity of which was that they were appointed by God, but we have to do with a Person. What Person? The Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of Man. Stop to think of this! Who is this Christ? He is the Person that most of all has educated our conscience. How He has broken in on my being, investing with new vividness and sublime sanction the natural moral convictions of my soul! What a light He has thrown on the being of God! What a view of the heinousness of sin! Christ is the only educator of the conscience. He has thrown around my being a light of spiritual and moral obligation which made me live as a moral being even before I came to Him for salvation. But He does not rest there. He does not say, like great teachers of the world, "I have come to teach you the right way." Christ says, "I have come in another way: I have come to put myself in your place, come to answer to God for you; have offered myself to God in your stead." Remember that we are in the region of personality here, the region of free-will, the region of character; and this great moral and spiritual Agent, who is so much more—the Son of God—comes forth and says, "I am coming to take your place, and answer for you before the Eternal God." That means for me that I respond to this offer in the surrender of faith. We are now on a totally different level from the Old Testament offerer. Then an animal sacrifice was offered, the equivalent was paid for certain sins, a life for a life, and the offerer got freedom from ceremonial defilement, came again into covenant relations with God, and again essayed to obey. But here is a Person, willing to answer to God for me; and I come and give myself into the

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of the Rev. F. W. Robertson*, 334.

hands of this Person. For what? That He may see the whole thing through. Christ has taken the whole burden and responsibility, and I have given myself to Him. In this union of faith, Christ answers for me before God, and I receive in Him the whole fruit of His great sacrifice, and in Him am brought nigh to God. It is Christ's work. I cannot go so far with Christ, and then proceed by myself. The whole conception of the atonement shuts me up to this—if I yield myself up to Christ, Christ must undertake all for me. He is to be the doer right through, and I am to receive from Him, in Him, and through Him.

¶ Suppose that in the bright summer weather we were in Switzerland, and were planning to start on a mountain excursion. Going out early in the morning, we see the ostlers with lantern in hand moving about, harnessing the horses, bringing them out and yoking them, the lantern being held high so that the ostler can see how to strap them. This work goes on a little time, and presently, we enter the hotel and rouse our sleeping friends, that they may get breakfast and be ready for the journey. When we go out again, lo, there is a change! The sun has risen, and is pouring his radiance into this magnificent valley; and there is the lantern, so indispensable an hour ago, with its poor yellow guttering candle—which you instinctively blow out! Like this guttering candle is this conscience of man in his dead works. What can reduce that to utter insignificance in your soul and mine? The contemplation of the sun! “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works!”<sup>1</sup>

1. “The blood of Christ.”—That which must strike all careful readers of the Bible, in the passages which refer to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, is the stress which is laid upon His blood. A long course of violent treatment, ending in such a death as that of crucifixion, must involve, we know from the nature of the case, the shedding of the blood of the sufferer. But our modern feeling would probably have led us to treat this as an accidental or subordinate feature of His death.

(1) This modern feeling is far from being mere unhealthy sentimentalism; it arises from that honourable sympathy with and respect for human nature which draws a veil over its

<sup>1</sup> J. Smith, in *Keswick Week*, 1900, p. 105.

miseries or its wounds. But the New Testament, in its treatment of the Passion of Christ is, we cannot but observe, strangely and strongly in contrast with such a feeling. The four Evangelists, who differ so much in their accounts of our Lord's birth and public ministry, seem to meet around the foot of the cross, and to agree, if not in relating the same incidents, yet certainly in the minuteness and detail of their narratives. In the shortest of the Gospels, when we reach the Passion, the occurrences of a day take up as much space as had previously been assigned to years. From the Last Supper to the burial in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea we have a very complete account of what took place; each incident that added to pain or shame, each bitter word, each insulting act, each outrage upon justice or mercy, of which the Divine Sufferer was a victim, is carefully recorded. But especially the agony and bloody sweat, the public scourging, the crowning with thorns, the nailing to the wood of the cross, the opening of the side with a spear, are described by the Evangelists—incidents, each one of them, be it observed, which must have involved the shedding of Christ's blood. And in the writings of the Apostles to their first converts more is said of the blood of Christ than of anything else connected with His death—more even than of the cross. As we read them we might almost think that the shedding of His blood was not so much an accompaniment of His death as its main purpose. Thus St. Paul tells the Romans that Christ is set forth to be a "propitiation through faith in his blood"; that they are "justified" by Christ's blood. He writes to the Ephesians that they have "redemption through Christ's blood"; to the Colossians that our Lord has "made peace through the blood of his cross"; to the Corinthians that the Holy Sacrament is so solemn a rite because it is "the communion of the blood of Christ." Thus St. Peter contrasts the slaves, whose freedom from captivity was purchased with corruptible things such as silver and gold, with the case of Christians redeemed by the "precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and immaculate." Thus St. John exclaims that "the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all sin." In the Epistle to the Hebrews this blood is referred to as the blood of the covenant wherewith Christians are sanctified, as "the blood of the everlasting covenant," as "the blood of sprink-

ling" which pleads for mercy, and so is contrasted with the blood of Abel, which cries for vengeance. And in the last book of the New Testament the beloved disciple gives at the very outset thanks and praise to Him who has "washed us from our sins in his own blood"; and the blessed in heaven sing that He has "redeemed them to God by his blood"; and the saints "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"; and they have overcome their foe, not in their own might, but by "the blood of the Lamb"; and He whose Name is called "the Word of God," and who rides on a white horse, and on whose head are many crowns, is "clothed in a vesture dipped in blood."

¶ In all the languages of the world, blood is the proof and warrant of affection and of sacrifice. To shed blood voluntarily for another is to give the best that man can give; it is to give a sensible proof of, almost a bodily form to, love. This one human instinct is common to all ages, to all civilizations, to all religions. The blood of the soldier who dies for duty, the blood of the martyr who dies for truth, the blood of the man who dies that another may live—blood like this is the embodiment of the highest moral powers in human life, and those powers were all represented in the blood which flowed from the wounds of Christ on Calvary. And yet in saying this we have not altogether accounted for the Apostolic sayings about the blood of Christ. It involves something more than any of these moral triumphs; it is more than all of them taken together.<sup>1</sup>

¶ In those primal laws which were given to Noah after the Flood, man was authorized to eat the flesh, but not the blood of the animals around him. Why was this? Because the blood is the life or soul of the animal. "Flesh, with the blood thereof, which is the life thereof, shall ye not eat." The Laws of Moses go further: the man, whether Israelite or stranger, who eats any manner of blood is to be destroyed; and the reason is repeated: "The soul of the flesh," *i.e.* of the nature living in the flesh, "is in the blood." This is why the blood of the sacrificial animals is shed by way of atonement for sin; the blood atones—this is the strict import of the original language—by means of the soul that is in it. Once more, in the Fifth Book of Moses, permission is given to the Israelites to kill and eat the sacrificial animals just as freely as the roebuck or the hart, which were not used for sacrifice. But, again, there follows the caution: "Only be sure

<sup>1</sup> H. P. Liddon.

that thou eat not the blood"; and the reason for the caution: "the blood is the soul: and thou mayest not eat the soul with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat of it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth like water."<sup>1</sup>

(2) Now as the blood of the slain animal means the life of the animal, so the blood of Christ crucified means the life of Christ—His life who is eternal truth and eternal charity. And thus, when a Christian man feels its redemptive touch within him, he has a motive—varying in strength, but always powerful—for being genuine. He means his deeds, his words, his prayers. He knows that life is a solemn thing, and has tremendous issues; he measures these issues by the value of the redeeming blood. If Christ has shed His blood, surely life is well worth living; it is worth saving. A new energy is thrown into everything; a new interest lights up all the surrounding circumstances; the incidents of life, its opportunities, its trials, its successes; the character and disposition of friends, the public occurrences of the time, and the details of the home—all are looked at with eyes which see nothing that is indifferent; and when all is meant for God's glory, though there may and must be much weakness and inconsistency, the conscience is practically purged from dead works to serve the living God.

¶ The blood of Christ. It was shed on Calvary eighteen hundred years ago: but it flows on throughout all time. It belongs now, not to the physical but to the spiritual world. It washes souls, not bodies; it is sprinkled not on altars but on consciences. But, although invisible, it is not for all that the less real and energetic; it is the secret power of all that purifies or that invigorates souls in Christendom. Do we believe in "one Baptism for the remission of sins"? It is because Christ's blood tinges the waters of the font to the eyes of faith. Do we believe that God "hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins"? It is because the blood of Christ, applied to the conscience by the Holy Spirit, makes this declaration an effective reality. Do we find in the Bible more than an ancient literature—in Christian instruction more than a mental exercise—in the life of thought about the unseen and the future more than food for speculation? This is because we know that the deepest of all questions is that which touches

<sup>1</sup> H. P. Liddon.

our moral state before God; and that, as sinners, we are above all things interested in the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" in the blood of Christ. Do we look to our successive Communion for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls? This is because the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for us of old, and is given us now, can "preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life." Does even a single prayer, offered in entire sincerity of purpose, avail to save a despairing soul? It is because "we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

¶ "Suppose that I, a sinner, be walking along yon golden street, passing by one angel after another. I can hear them say as I pass through their ranks, "A sinner! a crimson sinner!" Should my feet totter? Should my eye grow dim? No: I can say to them, "Yes, a sinner, a crimson sinner, but a sinner brought near by a forsaken Saviour, and now a sinner who has boldness to enter into the Holiest through the blood of Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

2. "Who offered himself without blemish unto God."—This brings out more than His personal holiness, His perfect obedience. It was a *whole* sacrifice. He took this life and laid it on the altar of God. He said: "Lo, I come to do thy will"; and God laid His yoke upon Him. Day by day as in providence the yoke of Divine command came, He met the will of God with perfect submission. As the clouds began to gather, and the opposition of men grew fiercer, Christ rose to the level of perfect obedience and every moment did the will of God. He stands before the judgment-seats of Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, is at last brought out to "the green hill beyond the city wall," and there He reaches the crown of His perfect obedience.

¶ Obedience is not really separable from atonement. Obedience is atoning; and the atonement itself can be exhibited as one great consummation of obedience. Only in Christ's death is the climax of obedience reached; while the life is a sacrifice from end to end. The life, as apart from the death, is characterized more immediately by the homage of perfect obedience than by the agony of extreme penitence. The death, viewed apart from the life, is characterized even more by the anguish which was requisite to perfect contrition than by the normal homage to the character of God which consists in being holy. Our thought is of

<sup>1</sup> H. P. Liddon, *Passiontide Sermons*, 81.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew A. Bonar, *Heavenly Springs*, 175.

the life of consummate obedience, as a perfect manifestation, and offering, of holiness: holiness in terms of human condition and character; yet a perfectly adequate holiness; a response worthy of the holiness of God. How, in this aspect, shall we chiefly characterize the picture of the life as a whole? The essential point of the truth, the truth which sums up all other and more partial truths, would seem to be this. It is a life of unreserved, unremitting, absolute, and clearly conscious, dependence. The centre of His life is never in Himself. He is always explicitly the manifestation, the reflection, the obedient Son and Servant, of another. There is no purpose of self; no element of self-will; no possibility, even for a moment, of the imagination of separateness; no such thing, we may even say, as a consciousness alone and apart. He is the representative agent of another, the Son of the Father, the Image of God.<sup>1</sup>

3. "Through the eternal Spirit."—The voluntary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ was a Divine act. He assumed the nature of man, but even in His humiliation He was God still. When He laid aside His eternal glory, it was God who made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and assumed the likeness of men; and throughout the whole history of His sorrow and shame, although the majesty and splendour of His heavenly estate were obscured, it was still the everlasting Son of the Father—the Divine Word dwelling upon earth—that was the object of the malignity of Satan and the cruelty of man. The sufferings of the sacrifices of the ancient law were not to be ascribed to any voluntary submission on their part; but it was "through the eternal Spirit"—the Divine personality and will which constituted the very centre and root of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ—that He endured the cross, despising the shame. The mystery of the union between the Divinity and the humanity of our Lord cannot be penetrated; but the difficulties are metaphysical, not moral. They defy the power of the intellect, but do not trouble the conscience. On the other hand, if this union is forgotten, and if the sufferings of the Lord Jesus for human salvation are regarded as the sufferings of a third person intervening between God and man, to allay the wrath of the One and to secure the escape of the other, moral difficulties arise of the most portentous kind; and the conscience, instead of finding rest in

<sup>1</sup> R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, 99.

the sacrifice, is tortured and discouraged. When God determined to have mercy upon man, He did not command or permit holy angels to endure the sufferings which men had deserved; nor did He command or permit an innocent man to sink under the awful burden of the iniquities of the race; but, since it belonged to Himself to maintain the eternal distinction between right and wrong, and He had resolved not to maintain it in this case by inflicting just penalties on those who had sinned, He came into the world Himself, in the person of the Son, assuming our nature that He might become capable of suffering, and the suffering of Christ was the act of the Eternal Spirit.

¶ “Offered himself through the Spirit;” surely a strange mode of sacrifice. I would have expected it to have been said that Christ offered Himself through the pains of the flesh. Nay, but in God’s sight this was not His offering. The deepest part of His sacrifice was invisible; it was the surrender of His will. The gift which He presented to the Father was not His pain but Himself—His *willingness* to suffer. What the Father loved was rather the painlessness than the pain. He delighted not so much in His sacrifice as in the joy of His sacrifice. It was offered “through the Spirit.” It was not wrung out from a reluctant soul through obedience to an outward law; it came from the inner heart—from the impulse of undying love. It was a completed offering before Calvary began; it was seen by the Father before it was seen by the world. It was finished in the spirit ere it began in the flesh—finished in that hour in which the Son of man exclaimed, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Man had to see the pain of His body; God was satisfied when “he poured out his soul.” Even so, my brother, is it with thee. There are times in which thou art impotent for all outward work, times in which thou canst offer no bodily sacrifice. Thine may be the path of obscurity; thine may be the season of penury; thine may be the road apart from the world’s highway. Thine may be the delicate frame that cannot run for God because it must rest for sustenance; there may be nothing for thee to do but to look on and wish that thou couldst serve. Yes, but canst thou do *that*? Is this wish indeed thine? Then thy Father sees thy sacrifice completed. It is not yet offered in the body, but it is offered “through the eternal Spirit.” Like the sacrifice of Abraham it is accepted in its inwardness. Thou hast brought up thy gift to Mount Moriah and hast laid it there before the Lord—laid it open in thy heart, uncovered on the front of thy bosom. Thy

Father sees it there and holds it already given. He accepts the offering of thy will as an offering of thy gift. He asks not the blood of Isaac when He has seen the blood of Abraham. He counts thy faith unto thee for righteousness, thy devotion unto thee for deed, for He knows that the sacrifice which lags behind in the flesh has been offered already in the Eternal Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, 215.



THE WAY OF ACCESS.

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## THE WAY OF ACCESS.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water.—Heb. x. 19-22.

CHRISTIANITY is the religion of unrestricted fellowship with God. Such is the leading idea of the doctrinal part of this Epistle. In this connexion the exhortation contained in the text claims special attention. It rests on and is expressed in terms of the central truth, "Christ has made it possible to have perfect fellowship with God; that is the objective significance of the Christian era. Therefore draw near, realize your privilege subjectively." Draw near! that is the appropriate application of the whole foregoing argument, the goal to which the long train of thought has been leading up. Readers who have felt the force of the theoretical statement can do nothing else than come into the presence of God with filial trust and holy joy. They do not merely hope for free access as a future good. They consciously enjoy it now as a present possession. For that is implied in the exhortation, "Let us draw near." The thing is to be done now, the privilege can be enjoyed at once; if it be not, it is our own fault. There is thus a noteworthy advance at this point on the teaching in the 6th chapter of the same Epistle, where the *summum bonum*, nearness to God, appears as a boon in store for us in the future—Christ has gone within the veil as our Fore-runner, and we shall follow Him by and by; but meantime we only cast into that sacred region the anchor of our hope. Now, not hope, but full assurance of faith, making the future present, is the watchword. The increased boldness of tone befits the close of the argument intended to show that Christianity is the perfect religion.

¶ If we would measure the height of our privileges in comparison with those of the Jews, we may do so by simply asking the question, What would a pious and devout Jew have thought, to say nothing of a congregation of pious and devout Jews, if one from among them, standing before the veil, had presumed to address them in the language of the text, saying: "Brethren, let us boldly enter into the holiest through the veil"? That which would have been in their ears the direst blasphemy, to be immediately punished by death, is to us but an exhortation to exercise the gospel privilege bestowed upon every Christian child. Without the ceremonies, without the outward washings, without the endless preparations which characterized the annual entrance within the veil of the high priest alone, we now exhort one another, with boldness to enter within the veil, and draw near to God in full assurance of faith.<sup>1</sup>

## I.

## UNHINDERED APPROACH.

1. Prior to the time of our Lord's earthly manifestation man had attempted in vain to approach to God. Altars, sacrifices, cleansings, gifts, were in themselves all unavailing, for man could not merit God's favour or enter by his own efforts into fellowship with the Most High. The futility and hopelessness of all mere human attempts to come back to God were proved again and again in history, among both Jews and Gentiles, and man's return to his Father in heaven was made possible only when "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." The Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son and our Saviour, became the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and now because of what happened on that first Good Friday, a new and living way has been consecrated for us by the blood of Jesus. Now there is unhindered approach to God, the way is made clear, all obstacles are removed, and the soul is free to traverse that way until it reaches the very heart of God.

¶ The high priest, whoever he might be, must always have dreaded that solemn day of atonement, when he had to pass into the silent and secluded place. There is a tradition among the Jews, that a rope was fastened to the high priest's foot that they

<sup>1</sup> W. Pulsford, *Trinity Church Sermons*, 75.

might draw out his corpse in case he died before the Lord. It may be that Jewish superstition devised such a thing, for it is an awful position for a man to enter into the secret dwelling of Jehovah. But we cannot die in the holy place now, since Jesus has died for us. The death of Jesus is the guarantee of the eternal life of all for whom He died. We have boldness to enter, for we shall not perish. A burglar may enter a house, but he does not enter with boldness; he is always afraid lest he should be surprised. We might enter a stranger's house without an invitation, but we should feel no boldness there. We do not enter the holiest as housebreakers or as strangers; we come in obedience to a call, to fulfil our office. When once we accept the sacrifice of Christ, we are at home with God. Where should a child be bold but in his father's house? <sup>1</sup>

2. Before Christ, access to the mercy-seat was restricted to one nation—to one tribe of that nation—to one family of that tribe—to one man of that family, and to him, once in the year; but every believer now is his own high priest, and may enter the holiest as often as his desires lead him to the throne of grace. The nearest access to the Divine presence is permitted to every true worshipper. All prohibitions have been withdrawn, all obstacles removed, and the least in the Kingdom of Heaven may enter the audience-chamber of the King of kings. Here, in the secret of His tabernacle, He waits to be gracious. His ear is open to the prayer of His people, and should not reserve be thrown off in the presence of One who so understands our case, who enters into it with such perfect sympathy, and who is so able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think? Here let penitence kneel; for there is mercy with Him that He may be feared. Here let sorrow bow; for He is the God of all comfort. Here let weakness prostrate itself; for He giveth power to the faint. Here light is poured into the darkened mind; riches are lavished on the poor in spirit. The wounded conscience is healed, the troubled heart is soothed, the hungry soul is filled with goodness.

¶ In the tabernacle were three different degrees of access to God: the outer court (the access of the people); the holy place (the access of the priest); and the holiest of all (the access of the high priest)—the nearest approach of any. A writer on this Epistle has illustrated these three different degrees of nearness to

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon.

God, as existing in the "worldly sanctuary," by the three distinct relationships to the master of a house, of a servant, a friend, and a son. At table, the servant stands and waits his master's commands; the guest, who has a nearer approach, sits and holds converse as a friend. Suddenly the child of the family opens the door, rushes in, finds his way to the father's knee and puts his arms around his father's neck. This is the nearest approach of all.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

### A NEW AND LIVING WAY.

1. How boldly the writer of the Epistle puts in the forefront just those features of the Christian religion which a timid prudence would take care to conceal! To the conservative mind of Hebrew readers, enamoured of the ancient Levitical system, the novelty of the way might seem the reverse of a recommendation. Nevertheless, the teacher hesitates not to proclaim with emphasis the fact that the way is new. And his boldness was never more completely justified. For in this case the contrast is not between a new, unfrequented path and an old one, familiar and well-trodden; but rather between a new way and no way at all. While the veil existed, dividing the tabernacle into a Holy Place and an inaccessible Most Holy Place, the way into God's presence was not opened up. Men were kept at a distance in fear, not daring to go beyond the door of the tent, or at farthest, in the case of ordinary priests, the screen which separated the outer from the inner compartment. To call the way new was simply to pronounce on Leviticalism a verdict of incompetence.

¶ The way is called a "new way"; it might also be translated an accessible way; but as almost all the ancient translations have taken the other signification of the word, it seems far more advisable to rest contented with it. And this is called a new way, no doubt with reference to the way which was made old—to the abrogation of the former way. For when Christ was come, a High Priest of better things, then that which was old vanished away. It is "a new way"—the way of Jehovah's devising, the way which Jehovah, who creates new things and supernatural things, has provided, and as being a way that ever remains.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Bardsley.

<sup>2</sup> John Duncan, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, 385.

(1) This way of access is not the original way of man's primitive nature, but a way newly opened up in view of the necessities of the state and circumstances into which man's sin and sinfulness had brought him, a way for sinners into the Holy of Holies, the presence of God. Without irreverence, we may say that it is a way that was new for God as well as for man; for only by the solution of the problem, how God could become a "guest with sinners," is the question answered, how sinners may find access to God. But as God has found His way to man in his sinfulness, we may hope that there is a way for sinners to God in His holiness. The way of His descent to us may become the way of our ascent to Him.

(2) A "new" way also means a way which is always fresh. The original Greek suggests the idea of "newly slain." Jesus died long ago, but His death is the same now as at the moment of its occurrence. We come to God by a way which is always effectual with God. It never loses one whit of its power and freshness.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power.

The way is not worn away by long traffic: it is always new. If Jesus Christ had died yesterday, should we not feel that we could plead His merit to-day? But we can plead that merit after these nineteen centuries with as much confidence as at the first hour. The way to God is always newly laid. The cross is as glorious as though He were still upon it. So far as the freshness, vigour, and force of the atoning death are concerned, we come by a new way. Let it be always new to our hearts.

¶ Much may remain dark to us; but the purposes of life receive a clear and powerful direction the moment we believe that the one supreme Way of life is Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Lord. No other single way, capable of uniting the whole nature and life of man, has yet been discovered or devised which does not tend to draw us down rather than lift us up. But if in Him is shown at once the Way of God, so far as it can be intelligible to man, and the Way of man according to God's purpose, then many a plausible and applauded way stands condemned at once as of necessity leading nowhither; and many a way which promises little except to conscience is glorified with Him, and has the assurance of His victory. Yet, when the

primary choice has once been made, the labour is not ended. The Way is no uniform external rule. It traverses the changes of all things that God has made and is ever making, that we may help to subdue all to His use; and so it has to be sought out again and again with growing fitnesses of wisdom and devotion. Thus the outward form of our own ways is in great part determined for us from without, while their inward coherence is committed to our own keeping; and the infinite life of the Son of man can transmute them all into ways of God.<sup>1</sup>

2. It is called a living way not because it leads to life, nor because it gives life, nor because it vitally renews itself, nor because its use is restricted to the living—though in all these senses there is much truth—but because it is a way set up in Him who is *the Life*. Christ is the way to Christ, as the light is the way to the sun, and the seed-life of the flower the way to the flower. He is the life-fountain, and also the stream which conducts to it. And because it is a way set up in Him, it is a “living way,” and fills with animation those who walk in it. Every other way wearies the traveller, but in this way the farther and longer he journeys, the more he is refreshed, energized and inspirited, so that he who at first has need to be carried receives strength to walk, and he who walks learns to run, and the runner to fly, hastening with ever-increasing swiftness of flight to challenge his destiny as one called in Christ to seek in the heights, “glory, honour, and eternal life.”

¶ A “living way,” “living stones”: such expressions of New Testament writers bear witness to the inadequacy of ordinary language to convey the truth concerning the good that came to the world by Jesus Christ. Bible writers laboured in expression, throwing out words and phrases with a certain sublime helplessness at an object passing human comprehension. And yet the meaning here is plain enough. The epithet “living” implies that God’s presence is not now, as of old, restricted to any particular place. To be near Him we do not need to pass locally from one point in space to another. We draw nigh to God by right thoughts of His character, and by loving, trustful affections. When we think of Him as revealed to us in Christ, when we trust Him implicitly, as one who for Christ’s sake forgiveth our sin, we are in His very presence. The way is living because it is spiritual, a way which we tread, not by the feet, but by the mind

<sup>1</sup> F. J. A. Hort, *The Way, the Truth, the Life*, 38.

and the heart, as is hinted in ver. 22, where it is said, "Let us draw near with true heart and with full assurance of faith." The way is Christ Himself, the Revealer and the Reconciler, and we come to God through Him when we trust Him in both capacities.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### THE VEIL OF HIS FLESH.

1. This new and living way has been consecrated for us by Jesus through the veil by being first trodden by Him. Under the Levitical system there was a veil which barred the way, so that beyond it no man but the high priest might go. Under the new economy there is no bar—the way lies right through the veil to the very presence of God. There is no veil for us, but there was a veil for our great High Priest. He opened up the way for us through the veil, pushing it aside, never again to be drawn across the entrance. What this means is explained in the words, "that is to say, his flesh." The thought of the writer seems to be that the veil through which Jesus had to pass, by the pushing aside of which He opened up an entrance into the Divine presence, was His mortal flesh. That is to say, in unfigurative terms, the truth taught is, that we owe our liberty Godwards to the fact that Christ took a body and passed with it into glory through a course of humiliation and suffering. There was a veil for Him, inasmuch as it behoved Him to suffer in the flesh, and so pass into glory; there is no veil for us because the Just One suffered for the unjust, that He might bring them nigh to God.

By the expression, "the veil of his flesh," the writer gathers up in unity of significance the whole incarnate relations of the Son of Man, in His representative character on our behalf, and represents them as a veil of separation between Him and the house of His glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and says, "Only through that can there be a way for man to God." And this was true for Christ Himself as well as for us. Only by the rending of the veil of His flesh could He who "came out from God" return to Him. Standing in our nature, and as our Forerunner, He must needs die to enter into

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 395.

life. By dying, the veil of His flesh was rent, and a way opened up through death to eternal life.

¶ This conception of Christ's flesh as a veil is beautiful as a passing, poetic thought, but care must be taken not to press it too far. It cannot, of course, be made part of a consistent and complete typology. It is not meant for this. But as the veil stood locally before the holiest in the Mosaic tabernacle, the way into which lay through it, so Christ's life in the flesh stood between Him and His entrance before God, and His flesh had to be rent ere He could enter. The truth to be laid to heart is, that our liberty of access cost Christ much. The making of the new way was no light matter for Him.<sup>1</sup>

2. When, by the sacrifice of Himself, the Son of God came down from heaven, and took upon Him, not the nature of angels, but our nature, that flesh became a revealer of God; in His human nature, which He shares with us—and which we must therefore regard as *our* human nature—we can see God. Veiled in flesh we can the Godhead see. For nearly forty years He lived our life, and made it a way to God, as He grew in wisdom and in stature under all the limitations of the human being from infancy to manhood. Human nature—our flesh—His flesh is the way to the very presence of God. In that human nature, Jesus Christ entered into the holiest by virtue of the subjection of His own will to the will of the Father. He who came down from heaven went back thither clothed in our nature, having therein been ascending ever upwards in the spiritual plane as He learned obedience and was perfected by the things that He suffered; and He points out the way to us, how we may likewise ascend to God in and by that human nature which He consecrated for us.

¶ How do scientific investigators of natural phenomena obtain their knowledge of the sun with regard to one of its manifestations? The reply is, "Through the veil." It is only when veiled that accurate measurements of the corona of the sun can be taken. We read of expeditions of scientific men bent on studying and measuring the corona of the sun—now to Russia, now to the West Indies; they are fulfilling the prophecy inscribed on the portal of science, "Seek and ye shall find." But why do they proceed to these distant spots? Because it has become known to astronomers that there would be visible at these spots,

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 397.

at a definite time, a total eclipse; and whilst the glory and dazzling effulgence of the sun are veiled, they are enabled to make their observations, to determine doubtful points, to measure the flame of the corona, to become generally acquainted with the character of the luminary, "through the veil, that is to say, his eclipse." It would be hardly unscientific to say, "No man hath seen the corona of the sun at any time, but the eclipse—that doth reveal it." "The Lord our God is a sun." And the adorable mystery of the Incarnation, the Cross and Passion, the precious death and burial are, as it were, an eclipse of His glory, and so a most revealing experience.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV.

##### A PRIVILEGE AND ITS CONDITIONS.

A way into the holiest of all has thus been consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, the flesh, the broken and bruised humanity of Christ. Through His atoning sacrifice we have an unchallengeable right of entrance into the holiest of all, and within that holiest of all have a high priest over the house of God. Now what is the corresponding duty? To believe, is it, that we have right of access, and there let the matter rest? that we have a high priest over the house of God, and there let the matter rest? Undoubtedly not. If the boldness, the free, unchallengeable right to enter in be our privilege, then to enter in is our duty:—"Having boldness . . . let us *draw near*." The term "draw near" in English reads as a mere general term; but as addressed to the Hebrews it had peculiar significance. It is the term which is applied to the approach of a priest drawing near to offer sacrifice. It is called drawing near because God was to be approached by sacrifice. The nature of the service in the Temple was approach to God, and therefore, when we are called to draw near, we are reminded of the duty of worshippers—ever drawing near. The privilege is right of access unto God, the duty is that of approach unto God; and no man values the right of access who does not desire to approach.

¶ Drawing near to God is one of the characteristic marks of Christianity. In the old days men stood afar off from Him, the

<sup>1</sup> Basil Wilberforce.

way into His presence not being manifest. Sin kept man at a distance, and there was a slavish fear and dread of God that nothing could really overcome. Now, however, all this is changed, and because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross we can, "we may, we must draw near."

So near, so very near to God,  
Nearer I cannot be,  
For in the Person of His Son  
I am as near as He.

We are to draw near with a true heart, that is, in genuine sincerity, because our hearts have been "sprinkled from an evil conscience." The fear and dread are gone, and now the soul draws near with deepest reverence and yet with genuine gratitude. We are to draw near confidently, "in full assurance of faith." There is nothing now to block the way, and no reason why we should linger outside the presence of God. Our Heavenly Father has done everything possible to make it simple and easy for us to come back to Him, and in drawing near with full confidence we shall find a welcome and fulness of blessing. The original language implies that we should draw near constantly as well as confidently. The Greek may be rendered, "Let us keep drawing near." This is the secret of the Christian life—a continual approach to our God and Father.<sup>1</sup>

1. We are to approach "with a true heart." Literally translated, the words mean: "With a heart answering to the ideal"; that is to say, in the excellent words of Bishop Westcott, "a heart which fulfils the ideal office of the heart, the seat of the individual character, towards God." The question thus comes to be, What sort of heart is that which realizes the ideal of worship, offering eloquent worship, blessing God with all that is within? An undivided, sincere heart, doubtless, but always something more. Besides sincerity there must be gladness, the gladness that is possible when men worship a God whom they can utterly trust and love. Along with this gladness begotten of faith go enthusiasm, generous self-abandonment, spontaneous service, rendered not slavishly, in mechanical compliance with rigid rules, but in the free spirit of sonship, the heart obeying no law but its own devoted impulses.

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Griffith Thomas.

¶ The pure in heart shall see the truth, means that—given equal data, and the same intellectual advantage—the morally better man will strike the truth more nearly, will be more happy in his guesses and ventures, since he is more in harmony with reality, more subtly responsive to its hints. Not only the mind but the whole soul is the organ of truth. He who, in his inward and outward life, puts Christ before all, even before his own life and the objects of his deepest affection, thereby admits His Godhead with a conviction more vital than any of which the bare intellect is capable. It is from the whole soul, and not from the surface of the mind alone, that we must answer the question, “What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?”<sup>1</sup>

2. Further, we are to draw near “in fulness (or, as the A.V. has it, “in full assurance”) of faith,” that is, being fully assured that the way of “access to God” for sinful men has been opened up; that God has solved His own problem; and that in Christ, His representative and ours, the Son of God and Son of man, it stands a completed work, with its gate on this side the veil, for us as for Him—the cross; and, through the veil, its goal—the cross crowned in glory. Assured of this, let us draw near, none daring to make us afraid; for should any arrest our course, and demand our right to enter within “the holiest,” we can point them to the way, and to our hearts, sprinkled with the blood of Him who in our nature and in our name is set over the house of God. “For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Without, on this side the veil, we carry the same right of entrance as that by which He reigns within.

¶ By the words “full assurance of faith” we are not to understand a full assurance of our possessing faith, an assurance of our being already in a gracious state—although that is attainable just in this way of approach, and maintainable in the due, humble believing use of the means which God hath appointed for the attaining and maintaining of it—but the full assurance or the plenitude of faith that we have a right of access. If we would wish the full assurance that we *have* faith I know no better way, I know no other way, of obtaining it than by the full assurance that lies in direct believing what God testifies—direct believing, accepting, and resting on what God gives and lays before us as a ground of sure hope. Let us beware of all suspicions, evil

<sup>1</sup> George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*.

surmisings, and doubtings. Not but that there are saints coming in with many such incongruities; but let believers know that whilst they complain of it as their calamity—and no doubt it is, and we ought to sympathize with them—yet it is their sin. God has a right to a full, an undoubting, unhesitating faith.<sup>1</sup>

3. Then we are to come with “our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,” which is synonymous with the conscience purged from dead works (ix. 14). The state described is that of a heart or a conscience which has experienced the full effect of Christ’s sacrifice, taken in all the latitude assigned to it in a previous chapter, as embracing the pardon of sin, moral renewal, and deliverance from the dominion of a legal spirit. It is not so easy to decide what precisely is signified by the body “washed with pure water.” The meaning is plain in reference to the Levitical type, but what is the corresponding fact in the spiritual sphere? The common reply to the question is, Christian baptism. The suggestion is tempting, and even not altogether destitute of probability; and yet one cannot help feeling that, if baptism had been in the writer’s mind, it would have been easy and natural for him to have indicated his thought by the addition of a word. It is doubtful if this final specification serves any purpose beyond expressing the thoroughness of the cleansing process undergone by a Christian man who surrenders himself completely to the redeeming influence of Christ. The whole man, body, soul, and spirit, becomes purified, consecrated, transfigured, a veritable king and priest of God.

¶ In the outer court of the Temple there stood a large bath, or brazen sea, in which the high priest was required to wash before he entered the most holy place. This washing was repeated in the course of the day, at a more advanced stage in the services; and the intention of the ceremonial, no doubt, was to impress him, and through him the people, with the need of personal purity as a condition of acceptable communion with God.<sup>2</sup>

¶ Readers of such a book as the late James Adam’s *Religious Teachers of Greece* know what a splendid succession there was of men who thought deeply about God, and taught lessons that were permanent additions to the spiritual wealth of mankind. I am tempted to add a reference to a less familiar source for the study

<sup>1</sup> John Duncan, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, 401.

<sup>2</sup> W. Ramage, *Sermons*, 360.

of Greek religion, which is very instructive. A black marble column of the age of Hadrian, found near Lindus, in Rhodes, gives the conditions on which men may enter the temple before which it stood. "First and foremost, being pure and healthy in hands and mind, and with no consciousness of wrong-doing." How much the first combination resembles Heb. x. 22! Cleanliness was even in Christian worship a worthy emblem of godliness—what else did baptism originally mean? <sup>1</sup>

¶ The sacred writer regards sin as a pollution of the conscience, which keeps a man away from the presence and the worship of God. The object of sacrifice is to remove this pollution of the conscience. The power which can alone cleanse the conscience is the forgiving love and acceptance of God Himself brought home to the heart. The one necessity for man, and the highest privilege to which he can aspire, is to be at peace and in communion with God. When this communion is broken, as it is broken, by sin, which in its essence is departure from God, the man is unclean, and, so far as his conscience is alive and awake, he is conscious of defilement. Sin, or departure from God, is in the nature of things, a pollution; and it is impossible for a sinner to think of the true God at all, and to have the faintest desire of being at peace with Him, without the sense of sin, which is the sense of not being pure enough for the presence of God, being stirred within him. Thus the sacred writer holds: Man's true evil is sin, or departure from the living God; because his true glory is fellowship with the living God. The sinner desirous of returning to God becomes conscious of defilement; the great work of Christ's sacrifice is to remove the defilement, and to lead back the sorrowing but trusting sinner into peace with the Father. The sacrifice of Christ does this because He is the Son whom the Father sent to redeem the world; because when He came into the world He bore and He still bears our sins; because sharing in the flesh and blood of sinful humanity, and having learnt sympathy and become perfect through temptation, He has been received as the Son of man into the holiest, which is the Father's love and confidence, and sits down for ever pleading our cause at the Father's right hand. <sup>2</sup>

4. Such, then, is the ideal state and standing of the Christian worshipper, the manner of approach to God possible and real for one who understands and appreciates his position as living in the era of the better hope through which we draw nigh to God. He

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Moulton, *Religions and Religion*, 62.

<sup>2</sup> J. Ll. Davies, *The Work of Christ*, 67.

can and does come into the Divine presence with gladness and sincerity, with heart and with the whole heart, having no doubt at all of his welcome, and untroubled by the thought of his sin, being assured of forgiveness and conscious of Christ's renovating power; he comes in the evangelic, filial spirit of thankfulness, not in the legal spirit of a slave; asking not, How may I satisfy the exacting demands of an austere Deity? but, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" This is the type of Christian piety which prevails at all times when the intuition of God's grace in Christ is restored. It was pre-eminently the prevailing type in the apostolic age among all who understood the epoch-making significance of Christ's work, and the extent to which He made all things new.

¶ The confidence of Fox in the real presence of God was the root of his power in the ministry. He had other gifts, such as a firm grip on the essentials of his own position, and "an extraordinary gift in opening the Scriptures." But this conviction of being guided of God was fundamental. Penn tells us that the abruptness and brokenness of his sentences, the uncouthness of some of his expressions, which were "unfashionable to nice ears," showed beyond all contradiction that God sent him. But the truest mark of his nearness to God, Penn rightly discerned in the character of his prayers. "Above all," he says (*Journal*, I. xlvi.). "he excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behaviour, and the fewness and fulness of his words, have often struck even strangers with admiration, as they used to reach others with consolation. The most awful, living, reverent frame I felt or beheld, I must say, was his in prayer. And truly it was a testimony, he knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men; for they that know Him most will see most reason to approach Him with reverence and fear."<sup>1</sup>

The bird let loose in Eastern skies  
 When hastening fondly home,  
 Ne'er stoops to earth her wing, nor flies  
 Where idle warblers roam.  
 But high she shoots, through air and light,  
 Above all low delay,  
 Where nothing earthly bounds her flight  
 Nor shadow dims her way.

<sup>1</sup> H. G. Wood, *George Fox*, 102.

So grant me, God, from every care  
And stain of passion free,  
Aloft, through Virtue's purer air,  
To hold my course to Thee!  
No sin to cloud, no lure to stay  
My soul, as home she springs,  
Thy sunshine on her joyful way,  
Thy freedom in her wings!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Moore.



FAITH.

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## FAITH.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—Heb. xi. 1.

1. THIS is the only place in the Bible where we have what can be called a definition of faith. The text enjoys, indeed, the unique distinction of being the only approach to definition that we find in the Bible.

In the Revised Version there are two changes made in the translation, which perhaps make the meaning more clear than it is here: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen." The word translated "substance," which the Revisers have translated "assurance," would be more exactly translated by a word which is rather modern and would perhaps not be considered sufficiently dignified in such a place as this, namely, the word "realization." Faith is the realization of things hoped for; it is a conviction that those things hoped for do exist and may be obtained, may be realized, by those who have the necessary faith. The word here translated "evidence," and translated by the Revisers "proving," means a conviction that will stand of itself, a conviction such as proves the thing of which it is itself the evidence.

2. The text, then, seeks to explain what faith is, in order that we may know it when we see it, discover its otherwise unsuspected presence and trace its hidden working. This faith is represented as having a double object—"things hoped for" and "things not seen." "Things hoped for" are personal and concern personal being, whether in time or in eternity, whether incorporated in the individual or distributed through collective society—man, the Church, the State, the people. What we hope for is what we expect to achieve and to win, to possess and to enjoy. It is essentially a personal good so realized that it may

belong to a particular individual or to all mankind. "Things not seen" are objective and universal. They move in the region of space, they lie without and above, they dwell behind the apparent; they are what we term the causes that produce the myriad effects which we describe as nature and man, especially the Supreme Being and the supreme cause we name the invisible God. Corresponding to the double object is a twofold function. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for"; that is, it underlies them, gives them reality, brings them to realization or fulfilment. And it is "the evidence," or proof, "of things not seen"; that is, it authenticates them to the reason, it makes them visible to the intellect, it endues them with a body which thought can handle, and feel, and perceive. If, then, we were to paraphrase this definition, it would be in language somewhat like this: Faith is the energy by which we turn into reality the things we hope for; it is the eye by which the soul sees unseen things.

¶ A freer, but on the whole a better translation would be: "Faith is the giving of substance to things hoped for, the putting to the test of things not seen." Probably the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews did not intend us to look upon this as a full and complete definition of what faith is, but rather as a description of some of its functions. And a very good description it is, too, as far as it goes. If you are expecting something to happen which will be for your benefit, you give substance to it, as it were, in your thoughts; you do not regard it as a mere dream, a desirable thing, perhaps, but impossible of realization; you act altogether differently from what you would if you did not believe the specified event or events would take place. And, further, if you know that there are certain sources of help of which you can avail yourself in time of need; or if you are sure you are right in following a certain course, although others may differ from you and think you wrong; and if you are sure that time will vindicate your action, you can rightly be described as putting your confidence to the test when you draw upon your resources or are willing to take risks for the sake of your convictions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Campbell, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, xxxiii. 305.

## I.

## THE REALIZATION OF THINGS HOPED FOR.

1. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has done for faith what St. Paul did for love in 1 Cor. xiii. He has not only given us a magnificent hymn in honour of faith; he has laid down for all time the essentials of Christian faith; he has shown us the roots of it and the fruits of it, how it begins and where it ends. Faith, he says, is that which gives substance to things hoped for; it makes our hopes real and actual to us. Faith is not merely assurance, as Luther taught: it is not only trust, not only moral assent, not only even the resolution to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis. These are important, even essential, elements in faith; but behind all this activity of the will, and justifying it, there lies the profound conviction, deeply embedded in the core of personality, that the objects of faith are real, more real than the world we live in; that salvation is not a mere hope, for faith gives substance to it; that it is not a dream, for faith gives reality to it; for faith it is neither a hope nor a dream, but a present fact.

¶ The word here rendered "substance" means properly the act of standing under something so as to support it. Thus in a philosophical sense it was applied to the essence which forms, as it were, the substratum of the attributes, the supposed absolute existence of thing or person, in which all the properties and qualities, as they say in metaphysical language, inhere, and have their consistence. In this way the word is once applied, and only once, in Holy Scripture, in the 3rd verse of the 1st chapter of this Epistle, where we read of the person, or rather the substance, of God Himself. The same word is applied to the essence of God, and the Divine Son is said to be "the express image of God's person," or, more exactly, the very impress of God's essence. But there is another use of the word in which it meant the act of the mind in standing under so as to support or bear the weight of some statement or some communication making, as we say, a very heavy demand upon the faculty of believing, and thus it passed from the idea of substance into the idea of assurance or confidence. It is used by St. Paul in two passages of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where he speaks of his confidence in the readiness of

their almsgiving, and again of their confidence in his glorying, though in weakness, about himself. And so once again in the 3rd chapter of this Epistle to the Hebrews we find the expression—it is the same word again—"If we hold the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end."

There can be no question as to the meaning of the word in the verse now before us. Faith is the assurance of, faith is confidence in, things hoped for; faith is that principle, that exercise of mind and soul, which has for its object things not seen but hoped for, and which, instead of sinking under them as too ponderous, whether from their difficulty or their uncertainty, stands firm under them, supports their pressure; in other words, is assured of them, confides in them, relies upon them.<sup>1</sup>

2. Whatever the object in the future may be to which thought is directed, it is always faith that apprehends it. We are not speaking of Christian faith particularly; we are speaking of faith itself, the principle of faith. Now, the future in question may be a year hence, may be next week, may be to-morrow, may be one hour from this very moment; equally in all cases it is an act of faith to expect, to wait for it. We are not to suppose that it is the Christian only who lives by faith in this general sense of faith. Faith is no dreamy, imaginative, or mystical thing, which it is fanciful, if not fanatical, to talk of. The schoolboy who expects a holiday which is to be earned by his diligence, or forfeited by his misconduct, exercises faith in that expectation. The husbandman who expects the harvest, and begins long months before to make preparation for it by ploughing and sowing, is exercising that confidence in things hoped for which is faith; the parent who anticipates the manhood of his boy, and prepares for that distant maturity by the instruction and by the discipline of the nursery and the schoolroom, is an example of that walking by faith which only madmen and fools disparage or dispense with.

¶ What is Faith? If I were to say that it is the absolute condition of all life, of all action, of all thought which goes beyond the limitations of our own minds, I should use no exaggeration. Faith is in every age, under all circumstances, that by which man lays hold on the realities which underlie the changeful appearances of things, and gives substance to hope, that by which he enters into actual communion with the powers of the unseen

<sup>1</sup> C. J. Vaughan.

world and brings their manifestation to a sovereign test. It is the harmony of reason and feeling and purpose. It is, to say all briefly, thought illuminated by emotion and concentrated by will. Faith, as applied to our present life, is a principle of knowledge, a principle of power, a principle of action. It may be quickened and intensified; it may be dulled and neglected. As it is used so it will be fruitful; and we are severally responsible for the use which we make of it.<sup>1</sup>

3. When Christ bids us to be men of faith, He is not contradicting nature, He is not even introducing into the world an entirely new principle of action; He is only applying a principle as old as nature herself in matters beyond and above nature, which it needed a new revelation from the God of nature to disclose and to prove to us. If this proof be given us, it becomes as reasonable, then, to anticipate and to prepare for eternity as it is reasonable to anticipate and to prepare for a holiday or a harvest, a wedding or a profession. Faith is this confidence in these things hoped for; and whether the expected future be a later day of this life or a day which shall close this life and usher in an everlasting existence, the principle which takes account of that future is one and the same, only debased or elevated, profaned or consecrated, by the nature of the vision and by the character of the object.

¶ That all genuine Common Faith, or the common rational sense of mankind, is divinely trustworthy, because inspired by God, is a postulate on which science itself rests, in all its previsive inferences. Scientific verification is finally unconscious religious trust. It has been scientifically verified that the sun will rise to-morrow; but till the sun shall have actually risen, the assertion only expresses *faith* in the Divine natural order. All expectation, scientific or common, is so far a leap in the dark; it is taken without the light of sense. The expected event has not the proof afforded by felt perception till the event has happened. If sense were our only light, it would follow that we must remain in the darkness of doubt about *every* future event. To be practically consistent, if we insist that that only can be reasonable into which *no* ingredient of moral venture enters, we must cease to live; for life depends upon expectation, and expectation postulates faith in the Divine reasonableness of the universe, which implies that men will not be finally put to scientific confusion by reasonable sub-

<sup>1</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*.

mission to this moral faith. If they must, the universe would be undivine illusion.<sup>1</sup>

4. In the highest region of conduct faith creates its facts. Life, beforehand, presents us with a whole circle of unrealized possibilities; they surround us on all sides with their clamorous invitation; each, good or bad, cries out to us, "Realize me, turn this supposition into an act; bring down that ideal which floats before you as a vision, and transform it into a reality." And faith is what enables us to do this. We trust that we may do, we believe that we may ourselves become, what we believe in.

¶ I wish to show what to my knowledge has never been clearly pointed out, that belief (as measured by action) not only does and must continually outstrip scientific evidence, but that there is a certain class of truths of whose reality belief is a factor as well as a confessor; and that as regards this class of truths faith is not only licit and pertinent, but essential and indispensable. The truths cannot become true till our faith has made them so.

Suppose, for example, that I am climbing in the Alps, and have had the ill-luck to work myself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Being without similar experience, I have no evidence of my ability to perform it successfully; but hope and confidence in myself make me sure I shall not miss my aim, and nerve my feet to execute what without those subjective emotions would perhaps have been impossible. But suppose that, on the contrary, the emotions of fear and mistrust preponderate; or suppose that, having just read the *Ethics of Belief*, I feel it would be sinful to act upon an assumption unverified by previous experience—why, then I shall hesitate so long that at last, exhausted and trembling, and launching myself in a moment of despair, I miss my foothold and roll into the abyss. In this case (and it is one of an immense class) the part of wisdom clearly is to believe what one desires; for the belief is one of the indispensable preliminary conditions of the realization of its object. There are then cases where faith creates its own verification. Believe, and you shall again be right, for you shall save yourself; doubt, and you shall again be right, for you shall perish. The only difference is that to believe is greatly to your advantage.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Fraser, *Philosophy of Theism*, 312.

<sup>2</sup> W. James, *The Will to Believe*, 96.

## II.

## THE TEST OF THINGS NOT SEEN.

1. Faith is the proof or test of things not seen. Faith tries the spirits, as St. John says; that is to say, tests beliefs by living them and acting them; tries them until experiment becomes experience, proves them until faith wins its crown by passing into knowledge and into love.

¶ Somewhere in his essays Huxley writes: "Theology claims that the just shall live by faith: science says the just shall live by verification." Now here this acute thinker gives a clear proof that he did not in the least understand the meaning of this great New Testament word—Faith. He confounded it with credulity, that tendency by which we accept a thing on trust without making any attempt to find out if it is true. Faith, on the other hand, in the true sense, is the faculty by which we take a thing on trust in order to find out if it is true. It is the basis of all religious experiment, the background of all moral effort, the standing-place of the soul in its leap towards God.<sup>1</sup>

2. By faith we are able to rest in the assurance of the hope of everlasting life and happiness through Christ; we are able to experience proof in ourselves of an unseen God, an unseen Christ, an unseen Holy Spirit, an unseen world, and an unseen life. Of these things we are assured and positive. Whatever doubts may agitate the minds of others, however old parchments and ancient inscriptions and the study of grammar may shake the foundations of other people's belief, and cast them into a restless sea of perplexing opinions, the true Christian rests with a fixed heart and a calm mind in the assurance and proof of the living faith which is in his soul. This is indeed—to quote the words of St. John—this is indeed "the victory that overcometh the world," the victory that overcometh philosophic doubts and scientific perplexities, as well as the forces of evil and of worldliness—"even our faith."

¶ That which is common to every great act of faith is that it lays hold upon some word of God and holds it against the world; through it, it transcends or overcomes the world, and inherits a

<sup>1</sup> E. Griffith-Jones, *Faith and Verification*, 19.

promise of something above and beyond the world. The doer of such an act makes himself greater than the world, and though he lose it, in doing so he finds, or gains, or makes himself.<sup>1</sup>

¶ We may consider Christian faith as a supernatural gift of God to us, a "power of the world to come," enabling us to live already in a higher world than that which is seen, a faculty for approaching God, touching God personally, possessing God Himself—the faculty by which every relation to God is realized and vitalized. As we begin to use this higher faculty, we find ourselves no longer imprisoned by circumstances from which there is no escape. The imprisoning circumstances remain, but there is no prisoner. Faith in Christ gave him secret access to another world, and he is free. There was no external change, nothing was seen to happen; the man prayed in secret, and the prayer of faith proved to be a working of the Holy Ghost in his mind, and heart, and will, and he became conscious of light and power within, enabling him to rise out of his own emptiness, folly, and sadness.<sup>2</sup>

3. Nor is this exercise of the principle of faith in the least incompatible with the fullest use of our intellectual faculties on the subject-matter of religion. The genuine believer will not, cannot, consistently hold back the tide of criticism from searching into the very foundations of his creed. Unwillingness to join in this process argues not faith, but a subtle doubt—doubt, that is, lest the realities of faith might dissolve and vanish into nothingness in the alembic of critical thought. Those who thus defend their faith against the principle of criticism thereby prove that at heart they are not believers but sceptics. It would be well if religious thinkers were to act with the same confidence as the scientific in their special departments. No attempt is made to hinder any one from inquiring to his fullest bent into the constitution of matter. Why? Because we know that no examination into the constituents and behaviour of the material world will endanger our sense of its practical reality. On the other hand, we all feel assured that the closest scrutiny of, the most laboured inquiry into, the character and behaviour of the physical universe will end not in the dissipation of matter, but in its better comprehension and its fuller mastery. Why should it be otherwise with the deeper realities that appeal to our spiritual nature? A true-hearted

<sup>1</sup> W. P. Du Bose, *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*.

<sup>2</sup> George Congreve, *Christian Progress*.

inquiry into the substance and core of religion cannot possibly result in dissolving its realities into mist and nothingness ; it will result in their truer understanding, and in a surer realization of the distinction between what is absolute and relative, eternal and temporal. True, there are special perils in this process, but our mind should be directed not against the process itself, but against these perils that are involved in it.

¶ What is needed perhaps more than anything else in theology to-day is a thorough criticism of the methods of criticism, so that the mind may be properly equipped for its special task and safeguarded from the many pitfalls, ethical and intellectual, that waylay the religious as distinguished from the physical inquirer. If the energies of those who still rail against all criticism as an essentially destructive process were directed to this question instead, it would greatly further the arrival of unity and progress in religious thought. And the first condition of so doing is a thorough and whole-hearted faith in the immovable realities on which faith rests and with which it has to do. The deeper our faith in our religion, the more eager we shall be to submit its experiences to the test and experiment of both criticism and life.<sup>1</sup>

4. What is the influence of the unseen things upon us when thus verified by faith ?

(1) The things unseen *keep us separate from the world*.—This separation is not merely a rending asunder at the outset, but a keeping asunder all the days of our life ; a walk of separation from the world every day ; even in those things which we have outwardly in common with the world, such as business and recreation—even in such things we walk by faith and not by sight. Our business, our amusements, our conversation, our reading, our employments, our family life, our private life, our public life—all are regulated by the things unseen. In all of these we manifest nonconformity with the world.

¶ Spirituality, I should say, was perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of Dr. John Brown's mental constitution. As an essence it pervaded his entire life and work. Although reserved on sacred subjects, it was frequently apparent to those most intimate with him that, even in states of sunny brightness and sparkling humour, a dark cloud of emotion overspread his countenance, revealing the workings of the inner man. In his

<sup>1</sup> E. Griffith-Jones, *Faith and Verification*, 22.

later years he was often seen with his eyes closed, as if excluding the outer world from his thoughts, and giving himself up to devout contemplation. Divine reverence and human sympathy were as parts of himself. This was alike shown in a keen appreciation of nature—the glory of the heavens, and the grandeur and beauty of the earth; in his gentle and tender consideration for the feelings of others, and in sympathy with all sorrow and suffering. A near relative of his own [Professor Crum Brown], who knew him thoroughly, has truly said: “He was a sincere, humble, and devout Christian. His religion was not a thing that could be put off or on, or be mislaid or lost; it was *in* him, and he could no more leave it behind than he could leave his own body behind. It was in him a well of living water, not for himself so much as for all around him. And his purity, truth, goodness, and Christ-like character were never more clearly seen than in those periods of darkness when they were hidden from his own sight. He very seldom spoke expressly of religion; he held ‘that the greater and the better, the inner-part of man is, and should be private—much of it more than private’; but he could not speak of anything without manifesting what manner of man he was.”<sup>1</sup>

(2) The things unseen *sanctify us and lift our affections above*.—We need to be drawn upward, and the things unseen are all above; so that their influence is all upward. The unseen Christ, the unseen glory, the unseen inheritance, are all above: in realizing them we are lifted upward. And as we are lifted upward, so are we sanctified by the heavenly vision. Sin is made hateful; lusts and carnal feelings are more loosened from us and fall off. We become more unlike the men of earth, more like the citizens of heaven. The clearer these heavenly objects appear, the more influential, the more sanctifying, and the more elevating they are. In beholding them we are made like them; purified, changed into the same image from glory to glory.

¶ Cultivate the Heaven-born instinct of spiritual insight; your nature-endowment to rend for you veils of time and sense, to dispel the illusion of outward seeming and fleeting fashion of world-allurement, to give to you the underlying realities of Hope’s fair dreams of future joy, the heart’s true intuition and clear vision of things close-veiled to outward sense: so that you become enamoured of the infinite and feel upon you the spell of the Eternal. Let your horizon be constantly receding, your outlook on life be increasingly luminous, your expectation from the future well-

<sup>1</sup> A. Peddie, *Recollections of Dr. John Brown*, 151.

balanced and hopeful. The glory of the Son of Man breaks in suddenly, in wondrous wise, upon the drudgery and monotony of disappointed life, and lo! the commonplace becomes a Holy Mount. Beneath some seeming failure we see capacity for higher good; and dull, grey tints of hope-deferred life become rose-hued, or crimson-lit, in the wonder-change of the After-glow in which the Incarnation suffuses life. And if the brightness thereafter fade, yet life can never take such sombre hues again: for the Christ remains in the heart He has relieved, and the soul remembers that it is when earthly lights are paling that the glory lingers brightest and longest upon the Mountains of Hope. The glory passes, but memories abide, and the After-glow returns when evening skies pale. We feel ourselves better men for having seen the beauty and having realized how quickly God can alter the appearance of life. And we pass into the coming days with a truer and nobler conception of life, because we see the Transfiguration and the Beatific Vision where some see only the fading light and the gathering shade. The glory of the Incarnation lingers to keep the miracle-touch and the beauty-sheen on life, until He comes to bring back upon human nature all it erstwhile had lost.<sup>1</sup>

(3) The things unseen *strengthen us*.—The feebleness, fadingness, vanity, poverty of things which we do see here are very enfeebling and disheartening; whereas the greatness, enduringness, glory, excellence of the things which we do not see strengthen, nerve, animate, invigorate us. These glorious invisibilities quicken our steps, kindle zeal and love, make us willing to endure hardness, to count labour, privation, suffering, poverty, as nothing. Thus we walk in strength, with erect heads, zealous, earnest, untiring, because of what faith shows us—the things within the veil.

¶ One who was present in Christ Church Cathedral on New Year's Day 1864, when Richard Chenevix Trench was consecrated Archbishop of Dublin, has vividly described the impression which the ceremony made upon him. The utter unself-consciousness, the deep humility, the intense devotion, and the almost divine spirituality of the new Archbishop was what struck this onlooker, who says, after catching a glimpse of Dr. Trench's beautiful face lit up with a strange peace of joy, "From that one moment all things, eternal and unseen, seemed invested for me with a depth of reality they had never had before. Since then I have passed

<sup>1</sup> A. Daintree, *Studies in Hope*, 6.

through many experiences of spirit and of heart. I have had flashes of doubt. Who, in these days, of perhaps too great mental activity, has escaped them? I have had days and hours of sorrow and of joy. I have had hopes and fears. But I can truly say that the countenance of Archbishop Trench as I saw it during that one moment of my life, expressing, as it did, the deepest devotion and the most perfect realization of the Unseen, and rising, as it does, entirely unbidden before my mental vision, has dispelled doubts, soothed sorrows, sanctified joys, strengthened hope, and calmed fear, by leading me to realize for myself, as nothing else has ever done, the personal existence of that living God, whose power and Spirit were so vividly portrayed before me in that one moment of my life.”<sup>1</sup>

(4) The things unseen *comfort us*.—Our walk here is not all smoothness and sunshine. Tribulation, weariness, pain, sickness, bereavement, throw their thick clouds over us. We take refuge in the future from the present. Our prospects, ever bright, ever glorious, cheer, sustain, and console us. Life is so brief; its sorrows will so soon be done; Christ will so soon be here; resurrection and glory and gladness will so soon dawn on us. We need not be over-burdened or over-sorrowful because of the present. Faith shows us the light beyond the darkness, and that comforts us. The eternal kingdom will make up for all.

¶ As years go on, and the sadness of life comes home to us, we feel that we get comfort and strength nowhere else but in the reality of God and in a simple trust in Christ’s “Hereafter.” It is like a strong hand in the dark to believe that God our Father loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace. That is the infallible way of finding comfort for our hearts and stablishing them in every good work and word. The only way to make peace secure, and to save our work from futility and our lives from vanity, is the way of faith. Without faith in God and God’s love and God’s future for us, there cannot be for us any true and permanent comfort. Without it, we are open at every turn to any shock of chance and to every alarm of fate. But with such faith we can lift up our burden with serenity, and perform our tasks with peace, and find joy in our work, looking upon it simply and sweetly as service. And if, and when, the very worst comes, when all our activities are taken from us, we are not robbed of everything; nay, we are robbed of nothing; for our life is hid with Christ in God. True faith

<sup>1</sup> *Archbishop Trench: Letters and Memorials*, ii. 3.

expands for every fresh need, and when the need comes the comfort comes also, and out of weakness men are made strong. When we are oppressed by the burden and overwhelmed by the spectacle of human misery, we must learn that there is a deeper thing than happiness, and that is peace; and eternal peace is only to be had in communion with the eternal God.<sup>1</sup>

O Love, the indwelling, by Thee are we shriven,  
 Ineffable Comforter, Lord of delight!  
 To those who are born of Thy Spirit, is given  
 The quickening of peace in the thick of the fight.

Thou comest, and swift, through the doorways of dulness,  
 Come joy and vitality, glory and grace!  
 Who loves Thee will serve Thee with life in its fulness,  
 Or die at his post with Thy joy on his face.

O Christ, the unconquered, how dimly we know Thee,  
 Thou Sun of the universe, Light of the world!  
 For all the sweet fire of our life that we owe Thee,  
 Thy heart took the anguish the enemy hurled!

O Thou who wast born of a brave human Mother,  
 Some kneel in Thy presence, some, worshipping, stand!  
 Life's Symbol and Mystery! Master and Brother!  
 We grope in the darkness and feel for Thy hand.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Black, *Comfort*. 24.

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THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

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## THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ; choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt : for he looked unto the recompense of reward.—Heb. xi. 24-26.

“WHEN I turn,” says Dr. J. H. Jowett, “to this great Epistle to the Hebrews, I feel as though I were in the inspiring spaces of some great cathedral, as though I were moving about Westminster Abbey ; in fact, I have ventured to call the Epistle to the Hebrews the Westminster Abbey of the Bible. There are some beautiful little side chapels, where a weary soul can bend in quiet and reverent prayer and praise ; some most winsome light breaks through quite unexpected windows, as you move about in the august place ; again and again you hear the sound of an anthem raising melodious songs of praise to the great God ; and you are never allowed to get far away from Calvary and the cross. When I come to chapter xi., I always feel as though I were turning into the nave of the great cathedral, and I find it is occupied by monuments which have been erected to commemorate saintly men and women who were distinguished by their faith—a monument to Abraham, a monument to Isaac and Jacob, a monument to Sarah, one to Rahab. I stand now before a monument which commemorates an old patriarch statesman, and I ask why this man is commemorated in the abbey ? What did Moses do to entitle him to a place in the nave ?”

The answer to Dr. Jowett's question is the whole life of Moses. But that which determined the life of Moses was the choice which he made when he reached manhood. That choice is our subject. We have it brought before us in the text in some fulness. We shall speak first of the Choice itself ; next of the Faith which prompted it ; and then of the Motive which inspired it.

## I.

## THE CHOICE.

Viewing his situation from the outside, we might declare no one so unlikely as Moses to be confronted with a crucial decision. Egypt at that day boasted of an advanced civilization; and all its luxury, all its culture, were poured into his cup. He had been trained, they say, in the most famous college in the land, and had proved himself already a statesman and a soldier. His foot was on the step of the loftiest throne on earth; in the judgment of his peers there lay open before him a career of the most enviable brilliance. It seemed as if one success had but to follow another: to-morrow would be as yesterday, and much more abundant. And then came *God*—God, who had a plan of loving wisdom for this man, and was but biding His time.

The choice involved two things—a refusal and an acceptance.

## i. The Refusal.

One of the chief features of Moses' character is here put before us: "*Moses refused.*" That implies a strong temptation, impelling him to accept—influences operating in such a way that it was by no means easy to the natural man to refuse. God was testing him, and by that test preparing him for higher service. Moses, by God's grace, stood the test. His mind seems to have been thoroughly made up. He refused the prospect of princely magnificence—he rose superior to the temptation, and this, we are told, because he acted by faith.

1. The act of renunciation was itself an act of unusual keenness of perception, for there was so much that might have been urged on the other side. It is generally not difficult to find specious reasons for doing something which we very much want to do. It so often happens that the intellect is the slave of the will, and we can make out an excellent case for following the bent of our desires. And in the case of Moses the arguments against the course he adopted were really cogent. There was the general principle that it is usually best to stay where Providence

has placed us. No doubt it often happens that this principle may be overruled by a higher, that there are exceptions which warrant a departure from this course. But in the case of Moses it might well have been argued that this was pre-eminently one of those cases where the rule held good. For what, it might plausibly have been urged, had Providence given him such a position except that he might use it? And to the plea that he was making the renunciation for the sake of his people, how very effective the reply would be: "If you wish to help your people, stay where you are. You have the opportunity, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, to do much in alleviating their lot and in making their life more tolerable; whereas by flinging away your position, you bring yourself down to their level and lose all power of effective assistance. Why sacrifice a fulcrum which gives you such a leverage and try to raise your people by a dead life?"

¶ There is a general principle that we are bound to be more careful when the course of action we think of adopting is one that conduces to our own pleasure or advantage. We do not readily acknowledge these things to ourselves, and indeed it is very easy for us to be the victims of unconscious bias. No doubt it often happens that the right course of conduct is also the more agreeable, but in view of the peril I have mentioned we must take special precaution to be sure of our ground.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Felicitas was a rich widow who with her seven sons was well known in Roman society. In a time of calamity certain pagan priests represented to the emperor that this woman by her deeds of Christian piety had brought down the anger of the gods upon the people; and by imperial command the prefect, Publius, was required to see that she and her sons sacrificed to the gods. The prefect endeavoured to persuade her to make the sacrifices; but she, declaring that the Holy Spirit would strengthen her against the evil one, said: "I am assured that while I live I shall be the victor in my contest with you, and if you cause me to be put to death I shall be still more a conqueror." Publius replied: "Unhappy one, if it is pleasant for you to die, at least let your sons live." "My sons," said Felicitas, "will surely live if they do not consent to sacrifice to idols. But if they commit this crime of sacrificing they will die eternally." The first attempt of the magistrate failed, and a public trial was ordered. At this trial, when urged to have pity on her sons, Felicitas addressed them saying: "Look up to heaven, where Christ with His saints is wait-

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Peake, *The Heroes and Martyrs of Faith*, 104.

ing for you, fight the good fight for your souls, and show yourselves faithful in the love of Christ." The young men were questioned one by one. Januarius, the eldest, who was offered a rich reward if he sacrificed, and scourging if he refused, made answer: "The wisdom of the Lord will support me and enable me to endure all." He was ordered to be scourged, and was led away. The second son also refused to sacrifice, saying: "We adore one God to whom we offer the sacrifice of prayers: never suppose that you will separate me or my brothers from the love of the Lord Jesus Christ; our faith will never be overcome or be changed by any of your threats." The other brothers were no less faithful in their confessions, and at last, when the emperor had read the report of the trial, he ordered the accused to be executed. Felicitas and three of the sons were beheaded; three of the others were beaten to death with whips; the last was thrown down from a height that he might be killed.<sup>1</sup>

2. It was necessary for Moses to make up his mind what he would do in those cases where loyalty to Israel was incompatible with loyalty to Egypt. His position was a very delicate one, and he was bound to be exceptionally careful. He might so easily be discredited by a false step, the cry might so readily be raised that he was traitorously sacrificing the interests entrusted to his care. And if he had tried to hold the balance even, he would have quickly learned that it is the fate of the moderate man to be stoned by the extremists on both sides. Moreover, as time went on his generous enthusiasms were likely to fade. The idealist would have degenerated into the practical man, and the official palliations of abuses and tyranny would have come glibly from his lips. It was better for Moses himself, better, too, we may be sure, for the cause he had at heart, that he should make a definite break with his past and devote himself whole-heartedly to his people. And that he saw this so clearly and steadily, that his judgment was not swayed by self-interest or led astray by sophistries, justifies the author of the Epistle when he finds in his renunciation the proof of his faith.

What did he refuse? Away out from the king's palace on the plain there was a poor, downtrodden, oppressed, ill-used race, and this man, who was akin to them and belonged to them, was afraid lest, getting into the softness of retirement, the surroundings of

<sup>1</sup> J. Herkless, *The Early Christian Martyrs*, 46.

leisure, the woolly softness might stop his ears, the very king's palace become as it were a palace of wool, shutting out the wail of the oppressed, causing him to be indifferent to the cry of the downtrodden. He was afraid lest, if he got into the king's palace, sat down at the feast of plenty, and had all the allurements of the king's house, in leisure, ease, retirement, he should lose touch with his fellow-men, be benumbed and paralysed by the ease which lay within his choice. He refused leisure, and he refused pleasure.

What answers to this refusal for us? Our own conscience alone can make reply; but it may be one of many things. Perhaps there is a friendship on which we have set our heart, a friendship at war with loyalty to Christ. We must change its inner tone, or say farewell to it, if we are to choose the better part. Or it is possibly a means of gain as to which we have had gathering doubts, until now we know that unless it is renounced it will bar us out from the Kingdom of God. Or it may be some secret evil habit, sweet for the passing moment, but shameful in memory; if we do not cut the strands, and cast it off, something tells us that it will one day drag us down headlong into the pit. And yet do not let us ward off the thrust which, it may be, this passage is making at our heart by pleading that "the pleasures of sin" can refer only to gross self-indulgence and taking comfort in the thought that nothing of that kind is chargeable on us. What these pleasures meant for Moses was no base sensuality—he lived above all that—but a stage for his ambition, the intoxicating draught of personal influence and power. And many a man who would scorn to stoop to coarse wrongdoing finds, often to his own intense surprise, that the pursuit of the common ideals of success can rob him of eternal life quite as effectively.

This moment's thine, thou never more may'st hear  
The clarion-summons-call thus loud and clear;  
What now thou buyest cheap may yet prove dear.

Part with thine all, spare not the needed cost;  
That which thou partest with were better lost,  
Thy selfish worldly schemes more wisely crossed.

Thy loss infinitesimal, thy gain  
Endless, immense; thy momentary pain  
The single step the boundless to attain.

These idol loves that gender loveless lust—  
 Weighed in the balances, whose scales are just,  
 With the bright hopes thou spurn'st—are breath-borne dust!

Eye hath not seen, man's ear hath never heard,  
 Nor heart conceived—save some faint image blurred—  
 The bliss of those who keep the Christly word—  
 Let go; my soul, let go!<sup>1</sup>

3. In another respect the faith of Moses is shown to be eminent in that he realized that the pleasures of sin could not last. If he enjoyed them, it could be but for a season. Now this brings before us the magic of sin. It is not easy for a man before he commits a sin to look at it from the point of view which he will adopt towards it after he has committed it. The illusion of sin is what gives it its fatal power. It casts a glamour over the eyes of the tempted, so that they cannot penetrate through the radiant appearance to the hideous and loathsome reality. It captures and inflames the imagination, muffles the conscience, and paralyses the will; it makes itself seem the most desirable of all things, the one beatitude needed to crown and complete the life. It is the man of faith whose vision strikes through all disguises to the truth. He is too sane to deny that the pleasures of sin are real; but he knows, nevertheless, that they bring no permanent satisfaction—indeed, he knows quite well that sweet gratification turns quickly to bitter remorse. And Moses had just that faculty steadily to look at the sin beforehand from the standpoint of the experienced gratification, and understand that the pleasure could not last. He knew quite well that, while he could reach the goal on which his ambition was set, and the advantages and enjoyments it would procure for him would be real and substantial, his pleasure in them would always be poisoned by the thought that a higher call had come to him, and he had made the great and irretrievable refusal.

¶ It is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves; and this sort of happiness often

<sup>1</sup> William Hall.

brings so much pain with it that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good.<sup>1</sup>

## ii. The Acceptance.

1. What did Moses prefer? He "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." He chose the side of weakness and oppression against the side of unscrupulous might; a weak minority against an outrageous majority. He was willing to be one of the weak plus their pain, rather than be on the side of majestic and magnificent vice. There is no more splendid spectacle than this, the sight of a man who, if he likes, can have ease, leisure, pleasure, treasure, putting off his slippers, putting on his heavy boots, going out into the stormy night, battling with wind and rain because he has heard the cry of pain and servitude. Happily, the Christian centuries abound in men and women who have left ease, delight, luxurious home and wealth in the interest of the weak and oppressed.

¶ If young women want to know what a woman can be, read Josephine Butler's life of her husband and see how she mingles with it as one of, shall I say, the knight-errants of the Lord Christ? Josephine Butler, living in the ease and seclusion of a snug deanery, heard the cry of awfully oppressed womanhood. It shook her heart with pain and fear. She at once made up her mind to go out into the night, if she might be the means of lifting the burden from the oppressed womanhood of our realm. She knew what it meant—the contempt of the aristocracy, the loss of much social esteem and regard; she counted the cost. She made the confession to her husband: God had created the husband as splendid as the wife; he was willing that the sacrifice should be made. She tells how she made her purpose known to her husband: "I went to him one evening when he was alone, all the household having gone to rest, and I recollect the painful thoughts that seemed to throng that passage from my room to his study. I hesitated. I leaned my cheek against the closed door, and as I leaned I prayed. Then I went in, and I gave him something that I had written, and I left him. I did not see him until the next day. He looked very pale"—he had been in Gethsemane through that night—"and very troubled, and for some days he was very silent. And then I spoke to my husband of all that had passed in my mind, and I said: 'I feel as if I must go out into the streets

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, *Romola*.

and cry aloud, or my heart will break,' and that good and noble man, foreseeing what it meant both for me and for himself, never said, 'What will the world say?' He had pondered the matter, and looking straight"—I like that phrase—"as was his wont, he saw only a great wrong, and a woman who wanted to redress the wrong, and in loving and reverent response he said, 'Go, and God be with you.'" Out into the night she went; she chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than dwell in the luxurious seclusion of a deanery, and I tell you that if the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews were to return, and were to enlarge his nave, and wanted to erect a memorial to some distinguished woman, Josephine Butler would find a place.<sup>1</sup>

2. "He esteemed the reproach of Christ"—put that in one hand: "greater than the treasures of Egypt"—put that in the other hand. He esteemed reproach, contumely, contempt, derision plus right, more than all the treasures of Egypt plus unrighteousness. He did not mind a scar; some scars are ornaments. Is there a more splendid word in all the supremely splendid Epistles of St. Paul than "I bear about in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"? "Do you see that?" he said; "I was stoned there"; and I think he pulled up his sleeve and said, "Do you see that? It is the mark of the scourge. If you could only see my back; I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"; he exhibited them as some men parade their degrees. His scars were his crown. So Moses refused, he turned his back upon majesty; he chose, he preferred oppression and weakness.

It is difficult for us to realize how daring such a faith was, for we look back across the intervening millenniums and see with what unique lustre Israel has shone, and how singularly it has justified Moses' estimate. We think of all the splendid galaxy of saints and prophets, of sages and psalmists, who so gloriously vindicated Israel's right to the title. But all this still lay in the future to Moses. He knew nothing of the lofty spiritual achievements which awaited his race. It was rather a mere horde of slaves, with all that this implies. For we know what slavery does for men, how it takes the pith out of their manhood and grinds them into abject submission, how it creates a degraded slave-morality of its own, underhand and obsequious.

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Jowett.

¶ There was a man called Benjamin Waugh who was enjoying the delights of some secluded ministry, all the enjoyment that comes to the studious life. He heard the wail of a little child, and he left his study and his books, went out into the night, and encountered the tempest, antagonisms on every side. He only wanted to protect the ill-used child against the heavy, brutal hand of oppression, but he was opposed and antagonized, confronted on every hand by opposition. The police, especially the chief constables of the country, ranged themselves in opposition to him. He had to fight and fight and fight; and now to-day we have a great and popular society for the protection of ill-used little children, which must be traced to the majestic outgoing of a man who said: "I will despise ease, leisure, pleasure, treasure: I choose to be one with the ill-used children rather than to enjoy the pleasures of luxurious seclusion, even for a season."<sup>1</sup>

Then to side with Truth is noble when we share her wretched  
crust,  
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be  
just;  
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands  
aside,  
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified,  
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes,—they were souls that  
stood alone,  
While the men they agonized for hurled the contumelious  
stone,  
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam  
incline  
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,  
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme  
design.<sup>2</sup>

## II.

### THE POWER.

"By faith."—While the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says but little of the faith displayed by Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, he has much more to say concerning the faith of Moses. And this was natural. No patriotic Hebrew who looked back with

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Jowett.

<sup>2</sup> James Russell Lowell, *The Present Crisis*.

love and pride on the early history of his race could fail to accord a pre-eminent place to Moses. To him, across the intervening centuries, a grateful nation looked back as the founder of its political existence and the revealer of its law. But the author includes Moses in his list, not merely because he was too great a man to be omitted, but because his career was so singularly marked by the quality of religious insight and lofty self-renouncing heroism.

1. God had chosen Moses, but now the time had come when Moses must choose God. We are not told how the crisis came about; we know only the outcome, and that the power that enabled him to act was *faith*. Faith in his mother's God, for Jochebed must have taught her boy of Him in whom she trusted. A faith that came from calm and quiet consideration, for we are told he "looked unto the recompense of the reward"; literally "he looked beyond," or "away from that which was before his eyes." He was brought to consider his position in the light of eternity, and to make a choice as to whether he would live for the present or for future gain.

2. "Now faith is the giving substance to things hoped for, the *test* of things not seen" (Heb. xi. 1, R.V., *margin*). Faith puts to the proof the statements of God by acting upon them, and in the acting finds their substance and reality. Faith tests the unseen things, and translates them into real experience. This was strikingly true in the case of Moses. By faith he looked beyond the things before his eyes, he deliberately chose to refuse all the "pleasures" and "treasures" of the present, and faith tested, proved, or gave substance to his hopes. He was led step by step away from things seen, into a fellowship and communion with the unseen God, of which he had no conception when he made his choice in Egypt.

3. The faith that is the "proving of things not seen" demands direct communication with God. Souls have often been shipwrecked here. They have rested their faith upon the written word spoken by others, rather than upon God Himself in His Word. The "faith" that can act as Moses did must have the

word of the Living God as its basis—the word of the Living God in His written Word, but by the Holy Spirit applied as His direct word to the soul. When God speaks, His commands are His enablings. By the faith wrought in us by God, and the assurance of the reward of knowing Him “face to face,” we too can refuse to be of the world, and declare plainly that we seek a better country, that is, a heavenly; we too can refuse the pleasures of sin and self-pleasing, and choose the way of the cross: we too can hold lightly the “treasures” that others clasp to their breasts, and account reproach with Christ as greater riches than them all.

4. “Faith” is the key to all the treasures of God. The gospel is practically God’s statement of what *is* in the spiritual world. Faith is simply believing God’s word, however contrary it may appear to the things of sense and sight. Faith in God’s statement to us is proved by action. We act according to what is told us by God, which we believe, and must of necessity obey. Living faith involves action; without action it may be said to be dead, for a mental assent to the truths of God will never give them substance in our lives. If we do believe God’s word, we shall act according to that word.

¶ He who walks by sight only walks in a blind alley. He who does not know the freedom and joy of reverent, loving speculation wastes his life in a gloomy cell of the mouldiest of prisons. Even in matters that are not distinctively religious faith will be found to be the inspiration and strength of the most useful life. It is faith that does the great work of the world. It is faith that sends men in search of unknown coasts. It is faith that re-trims the lamp of inquiry when sight is weary of the flame. It is faith that unfastens the cable and gives men the liberty of the seas. It is faith that inspires the greatest works in civilization. So we cannot get rid of religion unless we first get rid of faith, and when we get rid of faith we give up our birthright and go into slavery for ever.<sup>1</sup>

O God! the scholar and the sage  
 Into Thy mysteries peer,  
 And strive by Reason’s subtle art  
 To make their meaning clear.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Parker.

But my bewildered heart rejects  
 The puzzling paths they lay,  
 And seeks to gain the Eternal Heart  
 By some directer way.

Lord, draw me as the sun in spring  
 Draws the awakening vine,  
 And up some lattice of Thy love  
 Bid my affections twine!

So when my grasp on Reason fails,  
 Faith-led, I still may go,  
 And all the mystery shall melt  
 As melts the April snow.

### III.

#### THE MOTIVE.

What was the motive which inspired the choice of Moses? In other words, What form did his faith take? How did it express itself? The answer is, "He looked unto the recompense of reward."

1. When the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Moses "looked unto the recompense of reward," he seems to spoil what has gone before. Our impulse is at once to retort, "Oh, then, Moses was self-seeking after all, only he made much cleverer calculations than other people would have done. Faith was just the cooler, keener insight which enabled him to make a better bargain than his fellows. He was good because it paid him better." The writer does not, it is true, tell us precisely what he had in mind, but we can, at any rate, rest assured that we should wrong Moses himself by such a criticism. For what we may call the higher doctrine of the future life emerged in the religion of Israel at a comparatively late period, and therefore the founder of the religion may reasonably be regarded as untouched by this as regards motive. So far as he was concerned he did his duty and made his sacrifice without thought of reward in that sense. If, then, we give to the author's words a meaning which shall harmonize with history, we shall speak of Moses as

contemplating a reward only in the sense in which we speak of virtue as its own reward. He had peace of conscience and the assurance that, at all costs, he had followed the path of duty. He had the privilege of knowing that his sacrifice had meant the redemption of his people. Above all, he was happy in the sense of God's approval. We may all desire that our own actions may be prompted by such disinterested anticipations of reward.

¶ To labour in a righteous cause with the assurance that some day the right will be justified is to manifest the disposition of faith. Is it not a beautiful word in the Psalmist: "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light"? A man said to me last week in Birmingham, only a working man, "We don't seem to make much headway there in the slums; it is like trying to clean them with a spoon, but I am doing my best, and I am trusting God." It came to me to quote "thy righteousness"—only like a little candle in a dark place, but if thou art faithful to it—"He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light," and even when thou art working, as with a candle amidst surrounding blackness, work thou as a child of the noon. Oh, that is the meaning; when we are working in the twilight, when the darkness envelops and oppresses us, to work as children of the noon. Is that not what our Master meant when He said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"?<sup>1</sup>

2. And yet it was possible for Moses to see a definite though distant reward. We read of the Saviour Himself: "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." What do those words mean? They mean far more than we can comprehend. They, however, at least teach us that the salvation of those for whom He died will be His recompense. His reward will be the satisfaction which the presence of the redeemed, which no man can number, will give to the love that brought Him from His heaven to die for them. Such a reward in a humbler measure and in a different sense was the reward of Moses.

(1) First of all, with regard to the very people to whom he was to become deliverer, his reward consisted in being permitted, though not to enter Canaan itself, to stand on the summit of the mountain and see the land they would so soon enter. The

<sup>1</sup>J. H. Jowett.

recompense of his toil, the reward of all his suffering, was to be permitted to know that they were not in vain, but that the people for whom he in his best hours was prepared to die were finally delivered from bondage and placed in possession of the Promised Land.

(2) But that is only a type of the deeper and more spiritual joy which fell to the lot of Moses, namely, the recompense of the reward in finding that every self-denial could be made sweet, and every cross could be converted into a crown. The greatest recompense we can have for any self-denying service is to lose the sense of the self-denial in the ecstasy of the joy and privilege of it; to feel that though we may have to suffer, the suffering itself becomes a channel of joy to us in that we are permitted to suffer for the Master's sake. The recompense of the reward is to be so transformed and transfigured by the service we render to Christ and for humanity that we shall become like our Lord, and find our greatest joy in being permitted to bless those who need our help.

¶ In *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* Browning gives a striking picture of the inadequacy of the judgments that are passed from an imperfect seizure of the facts of the case. It will serve to illustrate the inadequacy of the world's judgments of things that are outside of its province.

An artist in Rome covered all the accessories in the Laocoön group, leaving exposed only the central figure of the father, "with neither sons nor serpents to denote the purpose of his gesture." Then he stood by to hear the people's comments. What would they make of the tremendous energy of those legs and arms, and of the eyeballs starting from their sockets? With one exception the uninitiated multitude decided that it was "a yawn of sheer fatigue subsiding to repose," and the subject of the statue must surely be "Somnolency"! Only one spectator seized upon the truth—

I think the gesture strives  
Against some obstacle we cannot see!

When Moses gave up his bright prospects at the Egyptian court and set out for the wilderness, there were many that thought him mad. But they did not see all the elements of the group; they did not see what Moses saw. They failed to take into account his devotion to his God and to his people, and his grounds for

faith in the promises that were his people's heritage. And did he not choose wisely? As one of a line of Pharaohs he could not have failed of having his name and his fame written down on some of the clay tablets of his period, and we might have been digging them up to-day. But as the Leader of Israel and as the Schoolmaster of Christendom, his name and his fame are written in golden letters in the language of almost every people and nation and tribe under heaven.<sup>1</sup>

Beloved, yield thy time to God, for He  
 Will make eternity thy recompense;  
 Give all thy substance for His love, and be  
 Beatified past earth's experience.  
 Serve Him in bonds, until He set thee free;  
 Serve Him in dust, until He lift thee thence;  
 Till death be swallowed up in victory  
 When the great trumpet sounds to bid thee hence.  
 Shall setting day win day that will not set?  
 Poor price wert thou to spend thyself for Christ,  
 Had not His wealth thy poverty sufficed:  
 Yet since He makes His garden of thy clod,  
 Water thy lily, rose, or violet,  
 And offer up thy sweetness unto God.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Maclean, *The Secret of the Stream*, 162.

<sup>2</sup> Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 197.



SEEING THE INVISIBLE.

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## SEEING THE INVISIBLE.

He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.—Heb. xi. 27.

1. THE reference of these striking words is to the lawgiver Moses, who has his place in the great procession of spiritual heroes by title of the faith which he exhibited when, as a young man, he chose rather to be evil entreated with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. According to the popular belief, Moses had an assured position in the court of Egypt, where he was the adopted son of the princess and the favourite of the Pharaoh. This assured position, however, depended upon his acceptance of one condition, which might have seemed easy enough to most men, but which threw into revolt the best elements of this young man's character. Would he repudiate his ancestral race and disclaim for himself any interest in its mysterious hopes? Would he consent to be an Egyptian, in order to enjoy the future which the romantic circumstances of his childhood had brought within his reach? There was much to induce him to take this course. Scripture represents him as owing much, even his preservation from death, to the kindly interest of the Egyptian princess; he had grown to manhood in the society of Egypt; his link with his own people was the slightest conceivable, although upon it everything depended. Moses, however, had not been so distant from his nation as not to have learned the sacred secret of its religious hope; he had received from his mother when, as nurse, she had reared him for Pharaoh's daughter, such a training as made it impossible for him to mistake the religious meaning of the decision which in due course he had to take. That decision is expressed in the words of the text, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

2. Moses saw something that was invisible to most men—something that was more important than the splendours of the Egyptian Empire. The first thing he saw was his love for his own people—a sort of patriotism, though the Hebrews were then, as now, a nation without a country. There was the call of the blood surging in the ears of Moses. And that was more persuasive than the call of a foreign luxury. But the next thing he saw was more powerful still, just as it was invisible in an even deeper sense than this call of the blood. This second thing was not a thing at all, but a Being—Moses saw God. And the splendours even of Pharaoh shrivelled into nothing in the presence of God. This is what we have, then, in the text: the most impressive and magnificent things upon the surface of life are not really the most important or the most powerful. When an alien empire is pitted against a slave people that is *ours*, a slave people wins. It is, after all, the stronger, and the more important. And when luxury and wealth are pitted against God, God wins. He is more real and more powerful than armies, and trusts, and all pleasures. That is, the things that shine and shout upon the surface are not the real or important things of life; the things that lie deep, and are silent and invisible—these are the real and important things. Now, it is well that we should understand and believe this. For to-day, as at all times, the things on the surface do shine and shout. They seem supremely attractive. They appeal to the mind and the imagination, as well as to the eye and ear. Empire, wealth, pleasure, success—every man can feel their glamour at once. But God, forgiveness, right, heaven—these are invisible. They cannot compete with the other things in the markets of the world. They fill very little space in our newspapers. They do not figure largely in Parliamentary debates. They are not on the surface. They are not seen at first sight. They are invisible. But they are the great things, the important things, the eternal things.

3. In the life of Moses, then, the secret which explains all else was just the sight of the invisible. Faith, when it is directed upon this object, has the attribute of sight. For such belief is, indeed, a second sight; it is the operation of a new sense opened upon another and invisible world. Moses *saw* God. This clear

sight of a living Being who did not meet the eye of sense is a different sort of motive from that which has always governed, and still does govern, the greater and the lesser rulers of mankind. The sight of the Invisible means an addition to knowledge which itself is power—power of a very high order, considering who the Invisible is. They who discern beyond the narrow limits of this present existence the outline of an eternal and imperishable world, and Him in whom that world centres—these men see, or hear, in true proportion. They hope for nothing, they are surprised at nothing: they are sure that all will be right in the end. They pass, one after another, before us, and away from us, endowed with a calm and majestic strength—a strength which this high vision bestows—having their eyes fixed on the invisible.

The text is in two parts—

I. The Secret of Moses' Greatness—"He endured."

II. The Secret of Moses' Endurance—"As seeing him who is invisible."

## I.

### THE SECRET OF MOSES' GREATNESS.

"He endured."

1. It is not by any accident of rhetoric that the word "endured" is linked with the name of Moses in the text, for, of all the characters in the Bible, or in all biography for that matter, none more fitly illustrates the moral quality of endurance. There may have been men more brave and more eloquent; but in this homely virtue no man stands nearer the summit of moral greatness. He came there not by chance. He was not swept there by fortunate circumstances. He aimed at it by deliberate choice; he attained to it by earnest striving; he maintained it by prolonged effort. If he had chosen to take life easy few had better opportunity. If he had been content to go with the drift of circumstance he might have possessed the treasures of Egypt and filled the throne of the Pharaohs. He could easily have reached the summit of that kind of greatness, and instead of filling an unknown grave in the wilderness of Moab he might have been an embalmed mummy in the museum of Cairo, the object of the

pilgrimage of the learned and the curious. But when he came to maturity of thought and moral responsibility, he weighed all these material things, and over against them and above them he saw a moral duty, a moral ideal, something better worth living for.

¶ What do you think of yourself? What do you think of the world? These are questions with which all must deal as it seems good to them. They are riddles of the Sphinx, and in some way or other we must deal with them. In all important transactions of life we have to take a leap in the dark. If we decide to leave the riddles unanswered, that is a choice; if we waver in our answer, that, too, is a choice; but whatever choice we make, we make it at our peril. If a man chooses to turn his back altogether on God and the future, no one can prevent him; no one can show beyond reasonable doubt that he is mistaken. If a man thinks otherwise and acts as he thinks, I do not see that any one can prove that *he* is mistaken. Each must act as he thinks best; and if he is wrong, so much the worse for him. We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? "Be strong and of a good courage." Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes. If death ends all, we cannot meet death better.<sup>1</sup>

2. The choice of Moses was a moral duty. Having made it, he strove to make it good. Often weakened by his own natural timidity, and praying God to relieve him and send a stronger man to the task, he yet endured. Tempted by wealth and by position, he yet resisted and endured. Threatened by royal power, banished from the royal presence, a fugitive from royal wrath, he endured. Tried by the clamour of men and by the solitude of the wilderness for forty years, he yet endured. Bowed down by the pusillanimity and ingratitude of those for whom he made the sacrifice, he yet rose again, and again resolved, determined, and endured until he led his people to the threshold of assured liberty and saw the promised land of his dreams and of his choice. So much can a man in earnest do. Next in power to the spirit of God is the

<sup>1</sup> J. Fitzjames Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, 353.

spirit of a sincere, determined, enduring man. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." "Behold, we count them happy which endure." Abraham, "after he had patiently endured obtained the promise." Endurance, then, has more of stress in it, more of value, more of character in it, than any word in our language. Endurance is the crowning virtue of character.

¶ Then she turned to the Crimea, described the sufferings and the endurance of the troops, and drew her moral: "Upon those who watched, week after week and month after month, this enduring courage, this unalterable patience, simplicity, and good strength, this voiceless strength to suffer and be still, it has made an impression never to be forgotten. The Anglo-Saxon on the Crimean heights has won for himself a greater name than the Spartan at Thermopylæ, as the six months' struggle to endure was a greater proof of what man can do than the six hours' struggle to fight. The traces of the name and sacrifice of Iphigeneia may still be seen in Taurus: but a greater sacrifice has been there accomplished by a 'handful' of brave men who defended that fatal position, even to the death. And if Inkerman now bears a name like that of Thermopylæ, so is the story of those terrible trenches, through which these men patiently and deliberately, and week after week, went, till they returned no more, greater than that of Inkerman. Truly were the Sebastopol trenches, to our men, like the gate of the Infernal Regions—'Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch' entrate.' And yet these men would refuse to report themselves sick, lest they should throw more labour on their comrades. They would draw their blankets over their heads and die without a word. Well may it be said that there is hardly an example in history to compare with this long and silent fortitude."<sup>1</sup>

I peered within, and saw a world of sin;  
 Upward, and saw a world of righteousness,  
 Downward, and saw darkness and flame begin  
 Which no man can express.

I girt me up, I gat me up to flee  
 From face of darkness and devouring flame:  
 And fled I had, but guilt is loading me  
 With dust of death and shame.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 316.

Yet still the light of righteousness beams pure,  
 Beams to me from the world of far-off day:—  
 Lord, who hast called them happy that endure,  
 Lord, make me such as they.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

## THE SECRET OF MOSES' ENDURANCE.

“As seeing him who is invisible.”

The faculty of faith, which is the power of endurance under circumstances of alarm and peril, might be analysed into the two qualities of insight and foresight. By it Moses was enabled to divine the actual relative importance of the facts of experience, to look beyond the present, and to see the ultimate destiny of things. Pharaoh's wrath was no doubt at the moment very formidable, but to one who had realized that Pharaoh was opposing himself to the Divine purpose, and who could therefore see the king's final overthrow as an assured event, his wrath, however fierce, was stripped of terror. The wretched bondsmen of Israel were to all outward appearance a forlorn and undone people, with whom it would be perilous to be associated, but to one who could see through that miserable aspect to the intrinsic and undying superiority which Israel possessed in the covenant relationship with the God of Abraham, all this external weakness counted for nothing. What St. John says of the Christian faith might be said of all faith in some sense and measure. It is “the victory which overcometh the world.”

1. In nature, as in religion, it is the invisible that is most important and real. We live in a world that appeals at once to our senses—a world of light, of sound, of touch, and of taste; a world of sun and sky, of sweeping horizons and flowing rivers, of trees, and thunderstorms, and fire; a world of hunger, and disease, and death. But the most important things in all this natural world are not the things that we can see. What is the secret of the growing corn? Take a grain from the ear. A learned man could tell you all about its various parts—the little

<sup>1</sup> Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 193.

ootlet tucked away, the little leaflet folded up, each ready to open out if the grain should be let fall into the earth. And then there is the little bag of food attached which would then go to build up the new plant, at the beginning of its life. This is the bag of food which we take to make our flour and bread. But when you have seen these things you have not seen the chief thing. The chief thing is invisible. It is neither the leaf nor the root. It is not even the little mass of food. It is the life. Put that seed under the microscope, and you will not see the life. Test it chemically, and you cannot find it. Burn it, and it neither goes up in the smoke nor remains behind in the ash. The chief thing, the most important thing, is the life, and that is invisible.

¶ Let me here quote a noble sentence, which has often given me much-needed help, and served to remind me that thought is after all as real a thing as matter, when I have been tempted to feel otherwise. It was written by a very wise and tender philosopher, William James, who was never betrayed by his own severe standard of truth and reality into despising the common dreams and aspirations of simpler men. He wrote: "I find it preposterous to suppose that if there be a feeling of unseen reality, shared by numbers of the best men in their best moments, responded to by other men in their deep moments, good to live by, strength-giving—I find it preposterous, I say, to suppose that the goodness of that feeling for living purposes should be held to carry no objective significance, and especially preposterous if it combines harmoniously with an otherwise grounded philosophy of objective truth." That is a very large and tolerant utterance, both in its suspension of impatient certainties and in its beautiful sympathy with all ardent visions that cannot clearly and convincingly find logical utterance.<sup>1</sup>

2. Science and the mastery of nature progress as men are able to see the invisible beneath the surface of the visible. The natural man, or savage, sees the obvious. The civilized or scientific man sees the invisible. Science does not really invent; it discovers. There were just as many natural forces in the garden of Eden as there are in Kensington Gardens. But in Kensington Gardens there are motor-cars. When Columbus crossed the Atlantic he had about him all the forces necessary not only to discover America, but to send wireless telegrams.

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Benson, *Joyous Gard* (1913), 160.

But we had to wait four hundred years before men learnt to send the telegrams. Never let it be said, then, that religion is an unnatural and foolish affair because it attends to the invisible, and says that God and heaven are more important than Parliaments and this world. The religious man seeks the invisible; so does the scientist. The prophets and apostles say that the invisible is the most important; so does every manufacturer who understands his own business.

¶ In overcast days they could tell the snowy ice-fields far ahead that they could not see, by their reflection on the clouds, and in the same way they can see where open water is by its dark shadow on the heavens in contrast with the white reflection of the snows.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Any religion would be a calamity which quenched this sense of the great human adventure in the unknown. There is no certainty which could be other than dull, hard, and materialistic, compared with the infinite hopes and possibilities of this spiritual quest. Only stupid people sneer at the man who says "Credo quia impossibile." To have faith in the impossible is precisely the function of religion.<sup>2</sup>

¶ Clive was in a painfully anxious situation. He could place no confidence in the sincerity or in the courage of his confederate: and whatever confidence he might place in his own military talents, and in the valour and discipline of his troops, it was no light thing to engage an army twenty times as numerous as his own. Before him lay a river over which it was easy to advance, but over which, if things went ill, not one of his little band would ever return. On this occasion, for the first and for the last time, his dauntless spirit, during a few hours, shrank from the fearful responsibility of making a decision. He called a council of war. The majority pronounced against fighting; and Clive declared his concurrence with the majority. Long afterwards, he said that he had never called but one council of war, and that, if he had taken the advice of that council, the British would never have been masters of Bengal. But scarcely had the meeting broken up when he was himself again. He retired alone under the shade of some trees, and passed near an hour there in thought. He came back determined to put every thing to the hazard, and gave orders that all should be in readiness for passing the river on the morrow.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Captain R. F. Scott, *The Voyage of the Discovery*, i. 121.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Spender, *The Comments of Bagshot*.

<sup>3</sup> Macaulay, *Essays Historical and Critical*.

3. It was this truth that received such signal illustration in the career of him to whom the Lord spake face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend; and as each of the three stages of his life called for a different manifestation of the endurance which characterized it all through, we may take these in order to show that the vision of God is the secret of endurance (1) amid the temptations of society; (2) amid the temptations of solitude; and (3) amid the temptations of active work.

(1) The vision of God is the secret of endurance *amid the temptations of society*.—Moses made the great renunciation of his life. For better, for worse, he chose to identify himself with the fallen fortunes of his people, and to work for their release. A mighty purpose, therefore, now fired his soul, and, amid such temptations as Egypt still presented, he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. And it is the vision of God that is the secret of endurance amid similar temptations in every age. Their form may change, but neither their number nor their power. At a thousand points, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, casually or permanently, for good or for evil, we are touched by the influences of our environment. If these are openly and aggressively hostile to good, or, as is more likely to be the case, subtly and secretly suggestive of evil, it is vain to hope that common sense, superior education, æsthetic taste, regard for the opinions of others, strength of will, or even moral grit, will under all circumstances suffice to counteract them. These may all be more or less helpful; but for the complete conquest of such temptations as society growingly presents to individual weakness and folly and the inherent love of sin, for the successful subjugation of the world, the flesh and the devil, there is needed the strength which is generated by the clear and constant vision of God. The youth who leaves the country to face the complex life of the city without the help of parental example and restraint, the public official or mercantile pioneer who goes to lands beyond the sea where the prevailing social standard is lower and looser than at home, every man conscious of tendencies within him which a daily crucifixion of self alone can subdue—all need the vision of God if they are to maintain their endurance and their manhood amid the manifold perplexities in which they may find themselves. For this alone has power enough to dispel all moral darkness, and

make clear the path which must be trod, if life is to be crowned with victory alike for self and for God.

¶ The world is in many ways, and in mysterious ways, a strong world—a world that demands a store of gracious strength to bear up against it, or to match it. Under so fell a pressure of outward atmosphere, there is call for fulness of inward atmosphere, if yielding or collapse is to make no part of our experience. It were wise to warn ourselves that the heart of all unbelief around us is a heart of opposition to the root and branch of our Christian vitality. We shall often let this vitality suffer unless we ourselves are ready to suffer, to deny ourselves, to hold our own at the cost of pain—the best of our own, which is God's and Christ's. And we must hold up and hold on, too, amid the bristling enmities and thick-coming cajolerics with as much of superiority to weak impatience and unholy wrath, to world-like temper and smallness of spirit, as God's grace can empower us to display. Christ would have us to be magnanimous in the world's hands as Faithful in Vanity Fair was; and for that we need, most of all, just the faith which was his. There is nothing which more impresses the unbelieving with the sublime sacredness of that which they are withstanding in us, than the firm yet patient and large-hearted endurance of all which they are pleased to lay upon us as those who claim a citizenship in heaven—an endurance which faith at once supports and sweetens. At every turn, it is still this which is "the victory" that gives us the conquest of "the world."<sup>1</sup>

(2) The vision of God is the secret of endurance *amid the temptations of solitude*.—"As seeing him who is invisible," Moses fled into Midian. There for the next forty years he exchanged the temptations of wealth and high position for those of comparative poverty and all but unbroken solitude. As he made effort to penetrate the secret of the inscrutable experience through which he had passed, there would be comfort in the reflection that, whatever else might be lacking in Midian, the artificiality of Egyptian society at least was left far behind. He was free from the incubus of false philosophy and false religion and from other abominations which his soul abhorred. But the ultimate experience of not a few has been that solitude too often belies its promise and develops temptations peculiar to itself; and there are many sad chapters in the history of monasticism that might be cited in proof. There is a world

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Kerr-Bain, *The People of the Pilgrimage*, i. 186.

within as well as a world without a man, and no withdrawal from the latter will secure against encroachments on the former. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man." So said He who was holy, harmless, and undefiled; and it remains eternally true that the real seat of the evil which proves man's undoing is not in his circumstances but in himself. And that Moses did not succumb to the temptations of his Midian isolation was due to the fact that, during his long sojourn, he never wholly lost the vision of God.

¶ I have learnt by experience that it is not good to be much alone, but I have not learnt not to enjoy solitude. It is a sweet cup enough, but a subtle poison lurks in its pale beaded amber transparency. It is mischievous, because in solitude the mind runs its own busy race unchecked. To have to mix with other people, to find things that interest them, to humour them, to watch their glances and gestures, is to a person like myself, who is constrained, less even by sympathy than by courtesy, to try to be agreeable, a real and wholesome discipline. I do not want to make myself out as unselfish or genial; but it is a pain to me if any one in whose company I am is discontented or displeased, and I am consequently obliged, for my own comfort ultimately, to keep other people in a good humour. But whether it is altruism or courtesy or mere self-interest matters little. Left to itself, my mind develops a sort of mechanical current, plods along a beaten track, sets itself one way like a flag in a steady wind, and the result is a sort of stupor which is enervating and morbid. It becomes stagnant, and just as stagnant water gives a chance for all sorts of slimy, coiling, flaccid things, half-animal, half-plant, to breed and huddle in the dim warm liquid, so it is with the mind; while the touch of life freshens and enlivens it, like a pool through which a stream flows and ripples.<sup>1</sup>

(3) The vision of God is the secret of endurance *amid the temptations of active work*.—The extreme diffidence with which Moses entered upon his mighty task is in singular contrast with the self-confidence which characterized him forty years before. Then he had thought that his human equipment was enough; now he doubts his sufficiency even with the help of the Divine. Ah, when God has a specially difficult and delicate work for any man to do, He makes him serve a long apprenticeship; but when it is

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Benson, *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*, 200.

done, it is work against which even the gates of hell cannot prevail. His pride humbled by past failure, and himself made somewhat timid by long isolation from his fellows, it was only a man who saw God, and whose magnificent faith enabled others to see Him, that could do what Moses did. What but this vision could have nerved him to withstand Pharaoh and all the might of Egypt as he did, and at last to lead the people forth into the freedom for which they had prayed and hoped so long? And what but this vision could have enabled him to bear as he did with the frequent backslidings and murmurings and petulances of the demoralized and fickle horde during their long experiences of the wilderness—experiences which were as necessary in their case as they had been in his own if they were to unlearn the evil of Egypt and become a holy nation, a peculiar people to Jehovah?

¶ In these fiercely competitive days, work and temptation are all but convertible terms. As one of our wisest teachers has said: "It is a strange thing how business dulls the sharpness of the spiritual affections. It is strange how the harass of perpetual occupation shuts out God. It is strange how much mingling with the world, politics, and those things which belong to advancing civilization—things which are very often in the way of our duty—deaden the delicate sense of right and wrong." And in this connexion it is somewhat startling to reflect that the same rule holds good in regard to work for God. Not because we are engaged in work for Him are we beyond the reach of temptation. In earnest, active service, it is true, we are as far removed from the grosser forms of it as it is possible to be in this world; but there are temptations which assail the higher nature as well as the lower, and from these not even the most devoted Christian worker is wholly free. At Meribah Moses gave not God the glory, but spake unadvisedly with his lips; and the temptation which overbore his endurance there is our temptation too.<sup>1</sup>

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,  
 One lesson which in every wind is blown,  
 One lesson of two duties kept at one  
 Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—

Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity;  
 Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows  
 Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,  
 Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Macfarlane, *Redemptive Service*, 51.

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,  
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,  
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,

Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;  
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,  
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold.



THE RACE SET BEFORE US.

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## THE RACE SET BEFORE US.

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.—Heb. xii. 1, 2.

1. THERE is no more brilliant turning of the flank of an opponent's position in all controversy than that which we have in the preceding chapter—the eleventh. Throughout the Epistle the writer is reasoning with converts from Judaism who were threatening to go back. Their old Jewish position had powerful prejudices in its favour, and powerful arguments too. The first tide of their Christian enthusiasm had abated, and the pressure of persecution for Christ's sake was telling against them, and driving them back to their old beliefs and positions. Point by point the writer reasoned the question out between the old religion and the new, showing in each particular how the new was better. There remained, however, one stronghold of the old creed which seemed impregnable. It had surely the great, the venerated, names of Jewish antiquity in its favour. "We have Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Isaiah on our side," they said. It was an immense matter for a Jew to be certain that he had the Fathers on his side. They surely lived and died within the Mosaic dispensation, under the covenant of works. It was good enough for them; they found satisfaction and inspiration in it. "No," says the writer; "in heart these men belonged to us—not to the Judaists. These all died in faith." Though they lived under the forms of the old economy, they wrought with the inspiration of the new; and he shows that it was so. He claims all the immense force of the argument from antiquity for himself and for Christianity, whereas the drift of these Hebrews was towards traditionalism, sacerdotalism, externalism. Then he brings his

argument to a close with a powerful appeal to his readers to endure as their great fathers did; and he directs their eyes to Jesus as at once the inspiration of faith and its most glorious example.

2. The figure that the writer employs is, of course, a reference to the famous Olympic games, with which all Greek-speaking people in his day, and for many generations before him, were perfectly familiar. No product of the Greek genius held a higher place in the interest and esteem of that remarkable people. To gain a prize in the athletic contests at Olympia was one of the most cherished ambitions of youth. These games were celebrated every fifth year, and all persons of Hellenic blood, no matter to what particular nationality they happened to belong or from what corner of the earth they came, were eligible to compete. They must have presented an inspiring spectacle, watched as they were by huge concourses of people assembled tier on tier around the great amphitheatre. Veterans of bygone similar occasions were given places of honour from which to view the achievements of a younger generation, and it must have been no small glory to the victors in the several events to receive the applause of the renowned athletes who had preceded them in the same arena. This is the idea that the writer of Hebrews seizes hold of to illustrate our spiritual experience. Earth, he says, is the arena wherein great things are being wrought out from age to age by the sons of God.

## I.

### A RACE THAT ALL MUST RUN.

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

1. Life is a race: an individual effort, not a fatality. Every man is what his life is; and his life is just how he has run his race. The road is his; the opportunity is his; the means and appliances are his; and if he fails, the fault is his. To all alike God gives the race, and gives to each the properties for success. Men are differently constituted and gifted, but all have gifts and talents committed to them whereby to run the race of life. To be humble as this world goes is no test of the capacities with which a man is qualified for running the race.

The coarsest reed that trembles in the marsh,  
 If Heaven select it for its instrument,  
 May shed celestial music on the breeze  
 As clearly as the pipe of virgin gold.

2. What do we see in a race? Muscles strained; veins like whipcords; beaded perspiration; strenuous, intense, earnest speed. The reality in the mental and spiritual man corresponding to these symbols in the physical man—that is our aim. The figure of the Olympian athlete means a life in earnest or it means nothing. Useful service in life, or duty well done—that is our goal. Temptation met and resisted and conquered—that is our goal. Power to love, to be just, to be pure, to be true, to control external life and internal life—that is our goal. Honest success in the vocation of life which we follow—that is our goal. The success of the Christian lawyer, of the Christian business man, of the Christian artificer, of the Christian scholar, is just so much power added to the personality which he consecrates to the cause of God and to the uplifting of humanity in the world. We should therefore look upon success in our daily vocation as a duty which we owe to God and man. We should push our business or our study, or our practice, or our manual toil until it has become a success. To reach success in every case will take hard work; but to do hard and healthful work is the purpose of God in bringing us into the world. Hard work has always been the condition of success in all the departments of life. No man ever became a Bunsen or a Faraday in the laboratory apart from endless experimenting with chemicals. No man or woman ever went up the way of the violin, or the way of the piano, or the way of the organ, or the way of the orchestra, except by labour. The Beethovens, the Mendelssohns, the Mozarts, the Haydns, and the Handels, who cheer human life with their sweetness of music, were all incarnated energy and ambition and push.

¶ The end of Mozart's life can be compared to nothing but a torch burning out rapidly in the wind. Unwearied alike as a composer and an artist, he kept pouring forth symphonies, sonatas, and operas, whilst disease could not shake his nerve as an executant, and the hand of death found him unwilling to relinquish the pen of the ready writer. In April, 1783, we find him playing at no less than twenty concerts. The year 1785 is marked by the

six celebrated quartets dedicated to Haydn. In 1791 he entered upon his thirty-sixth and last year. Into it, amongst other works, were crowded *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Il Flauto Magico*, and the Requiem. His friends looked upon his wondrous career, as we have since looked upon Mendelssohn's, with a certain sad and bewildered astonishment. That prodigious childhood—that spring mellow with all the fruits of autumn—that startling haste “as the rapid of life shoots to the fall”—we understand it now. He would constantly remain writing at the Requiem long after his dinner-hour. Neither fatigue nor hunger seemed to rouse him from his profound contemplation. At night he would sit brooding over the score until he not infrequently swooned in his chair. . . . One mild autumn morning his wife drove him out in an open carriage to some neighbouring woods. As he breathed the soft air, scented with the yellow leaves that lay thickly strewn around, he discovered to her the secret of the Requiem. “I am writing it,” he said, “for myself.” A few days of flattering hope followed, and then Mozart was carried to the bed from which he was never destined to rise. Vienna was at that time ringing with the fame of his last opera. They brought him the rich appointment of organist to the Cathedral of St. Stephen, for which he had been longing all his life. Managers besieged his doors with handfuls of gold, summoning him to compose something for them—too late. He lay with swollen limbs and burning head, awaiting another summons. On the night of December 5, 1791, his wife, his sister, Sophie Weber, and his friend Süsmayer, were with him. The score of the Requiem lay open upon his bed. As the last faintness stole over him, he turned to Süsmayer—his lips moved freely—he was trying to indicate a peculiar effect of kettle-drums in the score. It was the last act of expiring thought; his head sank gently back; he seemed to fall into a deep and tranquil sleep. In another hour he had ceased to breathe.<sup>1</sup>

3. This race is appointed for the follower of Jesus. He also finds that he cannot choose his own way to the goal; the race is set before him, marked out for him, measured and staked in by a power not his own. His birth, his natural condition, temperament, and talents, his opportunities, the vicissitudes of fortune he encounters are all arranged for him—that is the course set before him, and he must win the prize by running in it. He may not leap the ropes, and try a short cut; he may not demand some softer course, some more elastic turf; he may not ask that the

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 314.

sand be lifted and a hard beaten surface prepared for him; he may not require that the ascents be levelled and the rough places made smooth; he must take the course as he finds it. In other words, he must not wait till things are made easier for him; he must not refuse to run because the course is not all he could wish; he must recognize that the difficulties of his position in life are the race set before him. The Christian must open his eyes to the fact that it is in the familiar surroundings of the life we now actually lead that God calls us to run; in the callings we have chosen, amid the annoyances we daily experience, where we are, and as we are, from the very position we this day occupy, our race is set before us.

¶ Stewart closely resembled his hero Livingstone in his un-failing reliance upon God and prayer and the Bible in his hours of need. Converse with God in African solitudes had fostered his piety, his self-knowledge, and self-reliance. Under the depression of fever he used to calm his mind by prayer, and so restore it to a quiet confidence in God. In one of his journeys he was deserted by many of his carriers who took with them some articles which he needed, and which he could not replace. He thought that he must turn back at once. But on that day he was reading Hebrews xii. 1: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses . . . let us run with patience (endurance, holding on and holding out) the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." The words came to him as on angels' wings: he marched right on and reached his goal. From the very first he bore himself as a hero of the Dark Continent. In the originality of his career, in tenacity of purpose, in his habit of never quailing before difficulties, in splendid audacity of programme, in energy, in sanctified common sense, and in his inexhaustible faith in the elevation of the African, Stewart set an inspiring example to missionary pioneers.<sup>1</sup>

4. We must not suppose that the race is a very distinguished and splendid career of Christian enterprise, which only some apostle or missionary or reformer might be thought able to undertake. The people to whom the author writes were ordinary Christians, poor Jewish converts, most probably people of less than average means and pretensions. They had no resources at their command. Their names are unknown. They were mere

<sup>1</sup> J. Wells, *Stewart of Lovedale*, 92.

Hebrews. Their career and influence, whatever it was, must have been confined to the narrowest limits. And though the writer speaks somewhat grandly of what was set before them, and brings them into connexion with Jesus, and the great forefathers of their race who subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness, they were probably very pitiable persons, so far as the world's judgment would go; and some of us might have been rather shy of associating much with them. Therefore the race set before them cannot have had anything very extraordinary in it.

Nevertheless, it was the same race as that run by the Lord Himself—the race of faith. In His case it was faith in God, the God of salvation; the faith of One conscious of being the Messiah, the Redeemer, entering with the Father into the great and merciful purpose of salvation, which He could accomplish in no other way than by coming down into the family of men, and running this race of faith as their forerunner and the leader of their salvation. In the case of the Hebrews it was faith in God the Saviour, and in His Son the Redeemer, as the leader of salvation, and the author and finisher of the faith. Even the faith of Jesus, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, was not the isolated faith of a mere individual out of connexion with other men. It was the faith of the Messiah, one with men, the leader of their salvation conscious of His relations to men, their forerunner, the author and finisher of the faith. And thus the course of the Hebrews, though nothing but the ordinary believing life of very mean persons, becomes to the writer's mind something great, and even one with the life of the Lord Himself.

¶ It is not because, like many others, Jesus is a moral example to us, but because He represents something more—the impassioned struggle of humanity after the impossible, after that which the moral law only tells us of, but does not show us how to attain—the spiritual, imaginative, and fine perfection we shall become when the bitter struggle of life for righteousness and joy is closed in victory. In realizing that ideal for us, in giving inspiration to our souls, in His inward support of the battle by which we press forward towards the mark as men to a city encompassed with a host of foes, He is dearer to us than He is as our moral example.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stopford A. Brooke.

## II.

## THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL RUNNING.

“Let us . . . lay aside every weight.”

1. We are to lay aside every “weight.” This term means that which is superfluous, that which exceeds the proper extent or mass of anything; in the case of a runner, it would refer to unnecessary clothing or undue fleshiness of body. These impede the runner; and as the athlete in the race wears the scantiest clothing, and, if he be in training, keeps his body under, and submits cheerfully to the trainer’s rules, denying himself even the little indulgences which other men allow themselves, so here the Christian is exhorted to lay aside every weight, everything that would be a hindrance in running the race set before him. He must not carry an ounce of unnecessary weight. He will need all his spirit, all his vigour, all his dash, all his buoyancy for this enterprise. If he handicaps himself by putting weights in his pockets, or sewing them into his garments, he has no prospect of prominence in the race. He may still, of course, struggle stolidly on, but anything like a brilliant effort will be effectually discouraged. Wherefore, first and foremost, let us lay aside every encumbrance.

¶ Pleasures, friendships, occupations, habits, may be in themselves innocent enough, but if they hinder our running well they must be given up. Carlyle once said, “Thou must go without, go without; that is the everlasting song which every hour all our life, though hoarsely, sings to us”; and those words are true of the Christian life.<sup>1</sup>

(1) There are certain weights that are a help and not a hindrance to our progress. They impart a certain momentum to the character, and carry a man through obstacles victoriously. There are men who by nature are light-weights, with little chance, in this hard world, of prospering, and God has to steady them with burdens sometimes, if they are to run with patience the race that is set before them.

¶ I should not like to travel in a train if I were told that it was light as matchwood. I should not like to put to sea in a

<sup>1</sup> G. S. Barrett, *Musings for Quiet Hours*, 57.

great steamer if I were informed there was no ballast in her. When there are curves to be taken or storms to be encountered, when the way is beset with obstacles or perils, you need a certain weight to ensure safety, and you need a certain weight to give you speed. I have no doubt that this is the explanation of many of the weights that we must carry. They steady and ballast us; they give us our momentum as we drive ahead through the tempestuous sea. Life might be lighter and gayer if we lacked them; but, after all, there are better things than gaiety. It is a real weight to a young man, sometimes, that he has to support an aged relative. There is much that he craves for which he can never get so long as that burden at home is on his shoulders. But has not that burden made a man of him—made him strenuous and serious and earnest? He might have run his race with brilliance otherwise, but he runs it with patience now, and that is better.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Sometimes the things that we call weights are of the most insignificant and trifling kind. They are like the weights beside a chemist's scales, so tiny as hardly to be visible. What would a thorn turn the scale at? There would be a good many thousands to the pound. Caught in the fleece of a sheep upon the hills, it would not hinder it from freest movement. But plunged in the flesh of a great saint like St. Paul, it hampers and retards at every turn, till even the thorn for St. Paul becomes a weight, and drives him in entreaty to the Throne. There are few things sadder in the world than the trifling nature of much that hinders men. There are thousands who would run well if it were not for only one thing between them and freedom. And that is often such a little thing that the pity is that a man should be so near and yet, from the triumph of it all, so far.

2. "The sin which doth so easily beset us" has to be laid aside. There is some doubt as to the exact meaning of the Greek word translated in our Version by "doth so easily beset us," for it is found only here in the New Testament. It may mean what our translation gives as its rendering, or it may be as the margin of the Revised Version gives it—sin which "doth closely cling to us," or sin which "is admired of many," popular sin, as it may be called.

Whichever rendering we may take, the lesson is the same. We have not only to put on one side all those weights which,

<sup>1</sup> G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, 321.

sinless in themselves, would hinder our running, but we have also to lay aside every sin, however closely it clings to us, and whatever may be the struggle it costs to free ourselves from it. We cannot run at all if we are cumbered with conscious sin. We cannot turn to God unless we turn away from sin. Coming to Christ always means leaving something behind, and that something always includes sin. Many are not saved, and never begin to run the heavenly race, because they are afraid of this condition, giving up sin. And yet they must make the choice; they must give up sin, or they will have to give up Christ.

¶ One of the New Testament Revisers has told me that in order to get at the literal meaning of this word we shall have to invent an almost grotesque expression; he says the only words which represent the idea in his mind are these, "Let us lay aside the well-stood-arounded sin"; that is to say, the popular sin. There is the sin, and round it there is a band of admirers, and round that band there is another, and around that band there is a third cordon; and so the throng swells and extends, and this sin becomes the well-stood-arounded sin, the sin that everybody likes, praises, cheers.<sup>1</sup>

¶ It is said that the electric current, though invisible and to our senses inappreciable, when passed through a wire or substance, disposes every one of its particles differently from what they were before. It is wholly altered, though to the eye the same. And the subtle influence of sin, even when unknown, gives a new disposition to the powers of the mind, puts it into a frame incompatible with that other frame which is faith in Christ. The two cannot exist together. And, therefore, in order to faith, sin must be laid aside.<sup>2</sup>

3. We are to run with patience. The ancients had their virtue—fortitude. It was more active than passive, for the standpoint of ancient ethics was self-sufficingness. In the Christian idea of patience, the passive element of it is as prominent as the active; even more prominent, for first, the life we live on earth is often a life of suffering; and secondly, the idea of humility—wholly foreign to antiquity—is one of the roots of Christian ethics.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Parker, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 122.

<sup>2</sup> A. B. Davidson, *Waiting upon God*, 312.

The very pace of the runner is itself the foe of patience. It calls, seemingly, for impetuosity, and the more impetuous the runner, we are accustomed to think, the better. Its certain effect is to heat the blood and fire the nerves. Behold the athlete with every muscle taut, every line of his face hard-set, his eye intense and eager, the applauding crowd urging him on! How can he be poised and self-controlled? Indeed, patience would seem impossible, and impatience the very price of the prize. And yet every athletic man knows that this is the talk of a novice. If there is anything the runner needs it is self-control, to be able "to keep his head," as we say, to command his nerves, to hold his strength in check at the first and let it out toward the finish, to keep from being unnerved by the shouts of the crowd, to be equal to any unforeseen turn the race may take or any condition before unreckoned with that may appear. And does it not always turn out that a running match is at bottom chiefly a question of self-command—muscle, wind, nerve, mind, and even heart—and the winner ever found to be the one who has run the race with the greatest patience?

¶ Self-control may be developed in precisely the same manner as we tone up a weak muscle—by little exercises day by day. Let us each day do, as mere exercises of discipline in moral gymnastics, a few acts that are disagreeable to us, the doing of which will help us in instant action in our hour of need. These daily exercises in moral discipline will have a wondrous tonic effect on man's whole moral nature. The individual can attain self-control in great things only through self-control in little things. He must study himself to discover what is the weak point in his armour, what is the element within him that ever keeps him from his fullest success. This is the characteristic upon which he should begin his exercise in self-control. Is it selfishness, vanity, cowardice, morbidness, temper, laziness, worry, mind-wandering, lack of purpose?—whatever form human weakness assumes in the masquerade of life he must discover. He must then live each day as if his whole existence were telescoped down to the single day before him. With no useless regret for the past, no useless worry for the future, he should live that day as if it were his only day—the only day left for him to assert all that is best in him, the only day for him to conquer all that is worst in him. He should master the weak element within him at each slight manifestation from moment to moment. Each moment then must be a victory

for it or for him. Will he be King, or will he be slave?—the answer rests with him.<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever thought, my friend,  
As you daily toil and plod  
In the noisy paths of men,  
How still are the ways of God?

Have you ever paused in the din  
Of traffic's insistent cry,  
To think of the calm in the cloud  
Of the peace in your glimpse of the sky?

Go out in the quiet fields,  
That quietly yield you meat,  
And let them rebuke your noise,  
Whose patience is still and sweet.

### III.

#### THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES.

“Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.”

1. The word “witness” has two meanings in our language, and out of that double meaning has come some confusion, and a misunderstanding of the text. The word means one who looks on and sees—a spectator; it also means one who gives his evidence. It is easy to see how the word came to have the double meaning. He who gives evidence must have some personal knowledge of the matter, and that personal knowledge comes mostly by seeing. But the Greek word which is used here has but one meaning, and that is clear and unmistakable. The word itself has been adopted into our language—“martyr”: seeing we are compassed about by so great a cloud of martyrs—confessors, witnesses who have borne their testimony to the power of faith in their own lives. The word runs through the eleventh chapter, variously translated—witness, testimony, testifying, evidence. The author of the Epistle puts Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and these other great saints into the witness-box, and they

<sup>1</sup> W. G. Jordan, *The Kingship of Self-Control*, 11.

tell us what faith has done for them. Then he turns to us as the jury as if to say, "Sirs, you have heard what these have said, these, who have come as near to a true and worthy life as any that ever lived. I have a great many other witnesses who are all prepared to give similar testimony if time permitted. Wherefore, then, seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of those who have shown us what faith has done for them, let us turn to ourselves and run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith."

¶ When immortal Bunyan makes his picture of the persecuting passions bringing in their verdict of guilty, who pities Faithful? That is a rare and blessed lot which some greatest men have not attained, to know ourselves guiltless before a condemning crowd—to be sure that what we are denounced for is solely the good in us. The pitiable lot is that of the man who could not call himself a martyr even though he were to persuade himself that the men who stoned him were but ugly passions incarnate—who knows that he is stoned, not for professing the Right, but for not being the man he professed to be.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. To what do they witness?

(1) They are witnesses to a Divine, invisible, eternal life; witnesses to something that many of us do not see at all, to something that most of us see only vaguely, dimly, occasionally. They are witnesses to a great truth in the faith of which they walk, by which they were inspired, which perhaps we fail to see, or see only at special times and on special occasions.

¶ Walking along the street, you see a group of men standing, looking up into the heavens; and you are pretty sure they see something, and you wonder what it is, and stop and look where they are looking. So we see men gathered in monasteries, gathered in closets, gathered in houses of worship, drawn together by a vision, looking up into the heavens at something invisible to most of us in the dust and darkness of life. And because these men are looking we are sure there is something they see. A man without any love of music may come into a concert-room, and the music which is sounding out from the platform may mean nothing to him, but surely he cannot look upon this audience rapt in attention and not know that there is something in music, whether he appreciates it or not? So it is impossible for any man to look

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch*.

out upon the great worshipping congregations of all ages and all times, seeing men stirred not only with a momentary passion, a temporary enthusiasm, but lifted up into a higher, nobler, and grander life, and not feel sure that there is a truth, a reality, in spiritual life.<sup>1</sup>

(2) They are by their very lives witnesses to the power that inspired them. They are witnesses to what God can make out of common men and women. In the sculptor's studio you see the form shaped by his skilful hands, and your heart is touched, your soul is lifted up; you receive through the clay, but not from the clay, a new thought or a new emotion. You see what a great sculptor can make out of common clay. Put a violin in the hands of a poor player, and you will put your fingers in your ears to keep out the dissonance. Put the same instrument in the hands of a skilful player, and you will feel the soul breathing through the instrument. It is the player that makes the difference. Look all along the line of human history, and you may see what kind of figures God can make out of clay like yours; you may hear what kind of music He can play on instruments such as you are. The great and good men of the world are witnesses to the power, not ourselves, but which is in ourselves—to the power that makes men great.

¶ The writing-master sits down at the desk, and says to the child, "See how I hold my pen," and shows his pupil how to place the fingers on the penholder, and with what freedom and flexibility, and yet with what steadiness, the letters are formed; and then he says, "Now you sit down and try." And the boy sits down, and takes the pen, and the teacher stands and looks over his shoulder to see how well he has learned his lesson. So the sainted father or mother or pastor or friend sits down at our side, and says, "I will show you what life means." Or, rather, God in them sits before us, saying, "I will show you what life means." And then, having given us a momentary glimpse of life, they step on one side, and look over our shoulder, to see whether we have learned the lesson well or not.<sup>2</sup>

¶ The Force that had been lent my Father he honourably expended in manful well-doing: a portion of this Planet bears beneficent traces of his strong Hand and strong Head; nothing that he undertook to do but he did it faithfully and like a true man. I shall look on the Houses he built with a certain proud interest: they stand firm and sound to the heart, all over his

<sup>1</sup> Lyman Abbott.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

little district: no one that comes after him will ever say, Here was the finger of a hollow Eye-servant. They are little texts, for me, of the Gospel of man's free-will. Nor will his Deeds and Sayings, in any case, be found unworthy, not false and barren, but genuine and fit. Nay, am not I also the humble James Carlyle's work? I owe him much more than existence; I owe him a noble inspiring example (now that I can read it in that rustic character); it was he exclusively that determined on educating me, that from his small, hard-earned funds sent me to School and College; and made me whatever I am or may become. Let me not mourn for my Father; let me do worthily of him; so shall he still live, even Here, in me; and his worth plant itself honourably forth into new generations.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV.

##### THE SUPREME AND INSPIRING EXAMPLE.

“Looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of faith.”

1. The “author of faith,” says the writer. It is the same word as is translated “the Prince of life” in the Acts of the Apostles, and, in another part of this letter, “the Captain of salvation.” It means literally one who makes a beginning, or who leads on a series or succession of events or of men. And when we read of the “author of faith” (for the word “our” in the Authorized Version is a very unfortunate supplement), we are not to take the writer as intending to say that Christ gives to men the faith by which they grasp Him—for that is neither a Scriptural doctrine nor would it be relevant to the present context—but to regard him as meaning that Jesus Christ is, as it were, the Captain of the great army that has been deployed before us in the preceding chapter. He came first in order of time, yet, like other commanders-in-chief, He rides in the centre of the march; and He is the first that ever lived a life of perfect and unbroken faith. So He is the Leader of the army, and in the true sense of the name, which is usurped by a very unworthy earthly monarch, is the “Commander of the Faithful.”

¶ The term “Captain” (rather than “Author”) suggests one who goes before us and cripples the common enemy and makes a way for His followers through the thick of the fight. It suggests

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, i. 3.

one who fights from the same level and by His superior strength wins victory for Himself and others; the strong swimmer who carries the rope ashore, and so not only secures His own position but makes rescue for all who will follow; the daring man who goes first and treads down the drifted snow, leaving a lane for the weaker to walk in; the originator of salvation to all, by Himself leading the way from the present actual life of men in this world to the glory beyond. There is only one path by which any one in human nature can reach his destiny, and that lies through temptation and the suffering which temptation brings. Christ being leader must take this way. He was human and obliged to make growth in human righteousness, made under the law, subject to human conditions and exposed to all human temptations, finding His strength not in Himself but in another even as we, needing faith as we need faith.<sup>1</sup>

2. We are to run while ever "looking unto Jesus." The Greek expression is most peculiar, for it includes the idea of looking away from everything else and fastening the soul's gaze upon the Lord alone. We are all tempted to look at the things behind; to consider the difficulties, the trials, the sorrows, the sins of life thus far prosecuted. Remorse bids us catalogue our crimes. Discouragement bids us remember the past obstacles. Unbelief constrains us to believe every tale of all the embarrassment which in the life of faith and the labour of love we have met. The writer commands us to look away from the things that are past. "Forgetting those things which are behind . . . press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in God in Christ Jesus." There is nothing religious in the remembrance of past sins or past sorrows. It clothes the soul with sadness, it deprives it of strength, it disqualifies it for energy and action. From all—no matter how dense has been the darkness through which we have passed, no matter how deep the sloughs of despond through which we have stumbled, no matter how high the mountains of our divisions that we have already crossed—we are to look away. The life that God has given us from His own glory is to accomplish the purposes for which we are sent.

¶ Just as the modern conqueror of the air trusts to a power that surpasses human strength, so is it with the man who would rise above a purely mundane existence. "I can do all things

<sup>1</sup> Marcus Dods, *Christ and Man*, 63.

through Christ which strengtheneth me," says St. Paul. He finds that the motor-power of the Spirit of God is sufficient to raise him far above the levels of the old life. Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith, he finds that the frail craft of his life is borne aloft, and so strong is the unseen motor-force impelling it that it is no longer buffeted about by every wind of doctrine, but is carried steadily forward against the many gusts that threaten to upset its equilibrium.<sup>1</sup>

3. The joy of victory lies in front. The man bent upon reaching the Pole spends no pity on himself; the martyr, bent upon establishing some new republic of virtue and truth, has neither the desire nor the instinct to recount his wounds. They move with a sort of ecstasy towards that goal which they have set before them. They know a solemn exaltation of spirit which makes them indifferent to wounds and death. It may almost be said that they scarcely feel what to another would be dreadful pain; spirit has so far conquered sense that the very edge of pain is blunted. No one who reads the story of martyrdom can doubt that the martyr often reached a condition of sublime ecstasy, in which the ideal he loved had become so real to him that the real had almost ceased to be a part of himself. And it was so with Jesus. The joy set before Him was so real and vivid that He endured the cross and despised the shame—the tragic and the agonizing being swallowed up in the triumphant.

¶ When I was at a public school, we used to have a great system of paper-chases, especially in the Easter term, when there was not quite so much football. I used to be very fond of running in these. They were generally rather long and tiring, and you needed to be in very good training for them. One custom we always had was, when we were a mile or two from the college, to form up in a line and race home; and very hard and exhausting work it was. But I well remember one thing about those "runs in," as we called them, and that was how wonderfully you seemed to forget fatigue and exhaustion the moment the college towers came in sight. We saw our goal clear before us, and it seemed to put new life into us. It was a real help, just when we most wanted it. It helped one to keep going strongly and make a good finish.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. G. Archibald, *Sundays at the Royal Military College*, 261.

<sup>2</sup> F. S. Horan, *A Call to Seamen*, 128.

Why those fears? behold, 'tis Jesus  
    Holds the helm and guides the ship;  
Spread the sails, and catch the breezes  
    Sent to waft us o'er the deep  
    To the regions  
Where the mourners cease to weep.

Could we stay when death was hov'ring,  
    Could we rest on such a shore?  
No, the awful truth discov'ring,  
    We could linger there no more;  
    We forsake it,  
Leaving all we loved before.

Though the shore we hope to land on  
    Only by report is known,  
Yet we freely all abandon  
    Led by that report alone:  
    And with Jesus  
Through the trackless deep move on.

Render'd safe by *His* protection,  
    We shall pass the wat'ry waste;  
Trusting to *His* wise direction,  
    We shall gain the port at last,  
    And with wonder  
Think on toils and dangers past.



THE UNCHANGING CHRIST.

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## THE UNCHANGING CHRIST.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever.—Heb. xiii. 8.

1. THE author of this Epistle wrote some thirty-five years after the crucifixion, almost at the climax of a time of change, when his fellow-Hebrews were isolated and disheartened. They had cast off the exclusive religion of the Temple with its splendid ritual and its ties of family and race, and instead had what must often have seemed the disappointing insignificance of Christian ceremonial and the separation from many an association both of personal love and of national patriotism. Persecution was surrounding them: the gravest dangers, the most insistent terrors, seemed to be at hand. And the eschatological hope on which some may have built had not been fulfilled. Christ had not returned in glory; and there were no signs of His return or His triumph. The religious atmosphere of the Hebrew Christians was charged with doubt and disappointment and loneliness. It was at such a time that a teacher, a man of their own, with the love and inspiration of the Old Covenant behind him, had the courage not only to point out that the Law was in its essence transitory and the Gospel the fulfilment of the whole purpose of God's creative act and man's historic development, but also to declare that the crucified Nazarene, made a shame among men, was the same through whom in the beginning the worlds were made, and who through all His suffering life on earth, His rejection and death, and the absence from His people which now tried their faith—yes, He was the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. If it is bold to say those words now, it was almost incredibly bold to say them then, when Christianity had won no great visible triumphs, but was embodied only in a small, despised, lonely sect.

2. The words of the text are not the words of a bigoted opponent of salutary change. They are not the great formula which

is to disguise the little policy of mere obscurantism. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews must have sustained among his brethren the difficult and suspected rôle of a religious innovator. He was the author and advocate of a new theology. All this adds immensely to the significance of his declaration. He lays hold of the fixed factor in Christianity, that which is the indispensable postulate of every sound theology, and the verifying element in all theologies; and he offers it as the justification of his novel teaching, and the palladium of Christian faith. The Temple, he tells his Jewish fellow-disciples, will perish; all that the Temple symbolizes and enables will pass away: Jerusalem will be desolate, and the religion of national privilege, which has found its centre there, will come to an end; but this demolition of sacred institutions and time-honoured traditions will not touch the core of their faith, nay, it will enable them to realize more truly what that core of their faith really is. They will find that the springs of spiritual life are in no system, but in the person of the Lord, in whom every system must find meaning, apart from whom all systems are nothing.

## I.

### A CHANGING WORLD AND AN UNCHANGING CHRIST.

1. We scarcely need an inspired book to remind us of those laws of change which are written alike upon the earth and upon the firmament that overarches it. No wonder that Oriental mystics have come to look upon the things that address our senses as shows and phantasms, for we are never permitted to forget their transiency. How the face of the world has changed, and will still change! Life is but a thin green strip that unites two unexplored deserts; that which lies behind is silence, and that which lies before is death. The solid stars are but shadows, and could we watch them long enough, they would vanish like the shadows which lie for a few brief hours across our streets. The suns in the vault of heaven are bubbles of gas on those mystic and unmeasured tides of force which flow through space, and were our life less ephemeral we should see them collapse and pass away. In comparison with the fleeting phenomena which

environ us, Christ is the enduring substance, the reality which persists unchanged through all change. "They shall perish, but thou remainest."

By the very law of contrast, and by the need of finding sufficient reason for the changes, we are driven from the contemplation of the fleeting to the vision of the permanent. Blessed are they who, in a world of passing phenomena, penetrate to the still centre of rest, and looking over all the vacillations of the things that can be shaken, can turn to the Christ and say, "Thou who movest all things art Thyself unmoved; Thou who changest all things, Thyself changest not." As the moon rises slow and silvery, with its broad shield, out of the fluctuations of the oceans, so the one radiant Figure of the all-sufficient and immutable Lover and Friend of our souls should rise for us out of the billows of life's tossing ocean, and come to us across the seas.

¶ "The Same." Among the mediæval mystics that term was in use as a title for the Eternal. They called Him "the Same." They spoke of knowing "the Same," of taking refuge in "the Same." Amidst the restless drift and flux of phenomena they saw in God, and rightly saw, the anchorage they craved. And for us also, in the Son of God, eternal as the Father in His majesty and in His mercy, there is rest and refuge in the thought that He, this Lord Christ Jesus, now and for ever, is "the Same."<sup>1</sup>

2. But is not permanence opposed to progress? Our thinking to-day is denominated by the idea of evolution, by the belief in progress. Does not even the mention of a principle of permanence in the Christian Church provoke a suspicion of, and an antagonism to, stagnation of thought, fixity of doctrine, and bondage to the dead past? It may be pointed out that this principle of permanence is not a creed or code, a ritual or a polity, but a Person; and that personal identity does not exclude development in self-manifestation. Just because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever," is continuity of progress in Christian thought and life possible. On the one hand, the living Christ may and does communicate Himself more fully in the spread of His gospel and the growth of His Kingdom upon earth; and on the other hand, our apprehension of the meaning of

<sup>1</sup> H. C. G. Moule, in *The Record*, Jan. 27, 1911, p. 88.

His Person, and our appreciation of the worth of His work, may and do develop. Within this principle of permanence there is this twofold possibility of progress.

So, if we have Christ for our very own, then we do not need to fear change, for change will be progress; nor loss, for loss will be gain; nor the storm of life, which will drive us to His breast; nor the solitude of death, for our Shepherd will be with us there. He will be "the same for ever"; though we shall know Him more deeply; even as we shall be the same, though "changed from glory into glory." If we have Him, we may be sure, on earth, of a "to-morrow," which "shall be as this day, and much more abundant." If we have Him, we may be sure of a heaven in which the sunny hours of its unending day will be filled with fruition and ever-new glories from the old Christ who, for earth and heaven, is "the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever."

¶ Much in the popular conception and representation of Christianity is in the act of passing. Let it go; Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever. We need not fear change within the limits of His Church or of His world. For change there means progress, and the more the human creations and embodiments of Christian truth crumble and disintegrate, the more distinctly does the solemn, single, unique figure of Christ the Same, rise before us. There is nothing in the world's history to compare with the phenomenon which is presented by the unworn freshness of Jesus Christ after all these centuries. All other men, however burning and shining their light, flicker and die out into extinction, and but for a season can the world rejoice in any of their beams; but this Jesus dominates the ages, and is as fresh to-day, in spite of all that men say, as He was at the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

¶ One of the strongest pieces of objective evidence in favour of Christianity is not sufficiently enforced by apologists. Indeed, I am not aware that I have ever seen it mentioned. It is the absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge—whether in natural science, ethics, political economy or elsewhere—has had to discount. This negative argument is really almost as strong as the positive one from what Christ did teach. For when we consider what a large number of sayings are recorded of—or at least attributed to—Him, it becomes most remarkable that in literal truth

<sup>1</sup> A. Maclaren.

there is no reason why any of His words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete. Contrast Jesus Christ in this respect with other thinkers of like antiquity. Even Plato, who, though some four hundred years before Christ in point of time, was greatly in advance of Him in respect of philosophic thought, is nowhere in this respect as compared with Christ. Read the Dialogues, and see how enormous is the contrast with the Gospels in respect of errors of all kinds reaching even to absurdity in respect of reason, and to sayings shocking to the moral sense. Yet this is confessedly the highest level of human reason on the lines of spirituality, when unaided by alleged revelation.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

### THE UNCHANGING CHRIST IS A LIVING CHRIST.

1. The great glory of our Christian faith is that we have not to do with a dead Christ, but with a Christ who is living still, and who is to all disciples to-day just what He was to disciples who saw and heard Him twenty centuries ago. His biography is not the biography of one who sleeps now, and has slept for ages, in a Syrian tomb; it is the biography of an earthly life that is continued in the heavens, the life of a Divine Redeemer who is "alive for evermore," the same in love and power as once He was, the unchanged and unchangeable One. The sinful to-day find Him the same Forgiver as of old; the ignorant find Him the same Teacher, the sorrowful the same Comforter, the despairing the same Deliverer, as He ever was. And what He is to-day the same He will be found to be when heaven comes. Every disciple, seeing Him as He is, will recognize at once the same Jesus who loved him, and whom he loved, long before.

¶ Whatever may have been the original grounds of the faith of the great majority of Christian people, their faith has been verified in their own personal experience. They trusted in Christ for the remission of sins, and they have been liberated from the sense of guilt; for deliverance from sin, and the chains of evil habits have been broken or loosened, and the fires of evil passion have been quenched or subdued. They trusted in Christ for a firmer strength to resist temptation and to live righteously, and the strength has come. They have received from Him—they

<sup>1</sup> G. J. Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, 157.

are sure of it—a new life, a life akin to the life of God. They have been drawn into a wonderful personal union with Christ Himself; “in Christ” they have found God, and have passed into that invisible and eternal order which is described as “the kingdom of God.” Whatever uncertainties there may be about the historical worth of the four narratives which profess to tell the story of Christ’s earthly ministry, their faith in Him is firm, because they know by their experience that the Living Christ is the Lord and Saviour of men. . . . For Christian faith it is enough to know the Living Christ; a knowledge of Christ “after the flesh”—in His place in the visible and earthly order—is not indispensable. But for the perfect strength and joy of the Christian life we must know both the Christ who lived and died in the Holy Land eighteen hundred years ago, and the Christ who, ever since His resurrection, has been saving and ruling men.<sup>1</sup>

2. It is necessary in these days to lay some stress upon the fact that Jesus Christ is still a living force and available for human needs. There has been one evil result of recent historical criticism of the Gospels. Men have too often come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is some Person buried away in the infinitely distant past, and that they have to go back and grope for Him there if they would discover Him at all. Now, that is not so. The real cry of the Christian Church is not “Back to Jesus Christ.” It is no question of going back. The real cry is, “We would see Jesus, and see Him now, and hear Him speak in the language of to-day.” And the real need of the Church and of the world to-day is to come into touch with what is called sometimes the living Christ. The Christ of to-day must be One who has become part and parcel of our human environment, who is still a force, the effect of which we can feel for ourselves—a Christ who is for us not merely a memory, not merely a sacred figure with a halo round it that we can bow down before in reverence, but a power that touches us, and that we can touch, and of which we can have real and experimental knowledge.

It seems to be specially necessary to-day to insist on what was so evident to the Apostolic Church—that the living, loving, mighty saving Presence of which believers were conscious was no other than the Jesus who had lived, taught, wrought, and died on earth. There are not a few on the one hand who hold

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Dale, *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*.

firmly the trustworthiness of the gospel story, and find help, comfort, and hope in the facts there recorded, but to whom the living Christ is a vague abstraction. Let them but bring together the historical reality and the personal experience, let them realize that the grace of God that here and now saves them is the same Jesus whose words and works the Gospels record, and surely there will be a clearer vision of, and a closer communion with, and a richer communication from, the Saviour and the Lord. Some there are on the other hand who are conscious of the guidance, enlightenment, and inspiration of the Divine Presence, whom they call the living Christ; but they do not make their consciousness as distinct and attractive and compelling as it might be if the object of their faith appeared to them in the full and clear reality of the historical Jesus. The mystical and the historical, to use current terms, in the Christian apprehension must be blended if the Christian experience is to be as wide and deep as it may become. Thus the living Christ will make the historical Jesus a present reality, and the historical Jesus give to the living Christ a distinct content.

¶ Let time bring with it what it may, we are assured of Christ's fidelity. Let other hopes die out in disappointment, the hope of my spirit endures. Let me learn what painful lessons I may about my feeble purposes and uncertain heart; broken with penitence, sad and ashamed at so many resolutions unfulfilled, weary with wicked and fruitless wandering from His good care, I shall find Him ready as ever to pardon, gracious as ever to restore. In temptation we learn strange and humbling lessons about ourselves; the lusts we thought subdued "conceive and bring forth sin"; we fall; but He is the same, calm as ever to soothe, strong as ever to subdue. Our wisdom sometimes proves our folly; but Christ is wise as ever to teach us, ready again to guide our erring thoughts. "Yesterday" we found Him precious; when for the first time we stood by the graveside He comforted us, "the resurrection and the life." He is the same "to-day," solacing our newest grief. "Yesterday" we heard His voice; His name was on the lips of those who spoke to us the Word of God. The teachers have gone, or we have outgrown them. But He is still the same; if the teachers are gone, the Truth is with us. The living Word of God, who speaks from the lips of counsellors, is Himself our Counsellor. What changes need we now fear? We may be troubled, but we cannot be daunted; surprised, but not

unmanned. The deep reality of life abides the same: Jesus Christ the same to-day as yesterday.<sup>1</sup>

3. Thus, amid all the changing views and varying theories about Christ, our Lord, the living Person still remains the same. As the supreme Revelation of God, as the supreme Revelation of man, and as the Saviour, He stands unaltered through the vicissitudes of the ages. And it is just this permanence of the living, unchanging Christ that is the pledge and guarantee of the life of Christianity. Other religions have faded and passed away. Once, so the legend goes, along the winding shore of the blue Ægean Sea the mournful cry was heard, "Great Pan is dead." And the deities of classic Greece departed from their thrones, and the oracles left the temples, and the sprites of mountain and woodland were seen no more for ever. A religion died. And later again, far away in the desolate North, there sounded another yet more bitter cry, "Baldur is dead—Baldur the Good, the Beautiful." And amid the terrific conflict of the twilight of the gods the old Scandinavian deities perished in their turn, and another religion died. Yes, many religions have died. But Christianity does not die and cannot die. For the life of Christianity is the Living One—the abiding, the unchanging, the imperishable One—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever."

¶ The Evangelic Jesus cannot be a mere ideal; for an ideal cannot enkindle love. He is a historic person, and He lived among men as the Evangelists have portrayed Him. But He is more than that. It is impossible to love one who is remote from us, and has never been in present and personal contact with us; and therefore Jesus is more than a historic person who dwelt in Palestine long ago. He is the Living Lord, the Eternal Saviour, who was manifested, according to the Scriptures, in the days of His flesh, and still, according to His promise, visits the souls that put their trust in Him and makes His abode with them. Here lies the supreme and incontrovertible evidence of the historicity of the Gospels. The final decision rests not with the critics but with the saints; and their verdict is unanimous and unflinching. They know the Divine Original, and they attest the faithfulness of the portrait.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Mackennal, *Christ's Healing Touch*, 282.

<sup>2</sup> D. Smith, *The Historic Jesus*, 117.

¶ The mysterious union of human souls with the Living Christ, which constitutes the strength of the Christian Church, has been proved by signs and wonders. It has been proved by the days in which the Church lost her sense of Divine fellowship and became cold and unbelieving; then the Church sank into an irreligious and worldly institution, helpless, hopeless, and corrupt. It has been proved by the days of revival, when the Church returned unto her first love and faith; then she arose in her might and conquered new provinces of the world, radiant, strong, triumphant. If the Church as a body, and her members as single disciples, declare that their weakness has arisen from the absence of Christ, driven away by unbelief, and their strength has alone come from Christ when He returned in the power of His Spirit, what can be said against such witness? and why should it not be accepted as true? There is such a thing as the mirage of the desert, which has mocked the dying traveller; and the history of religion affords fantastic notions which have been the craze of society for a day and have vanished away. No one with a serious face can make any comparison between these passing delusions and the faith of Christ. There is also the oasis where the grass is green and the palm trees stand erect in their beauty, and the reason thereof is the unfailing spring which rises from the heart of the earth and yields its living water to the traveller as he journeys across the desert from the land which he has left to the land which he has never seen. That spring is the Spirit of the living Christ, who "was dead," and is "alive for evermore"; who remaineth from age to age the strength and hope of the race into which He was born and for which He died.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### THE UNCHANGING CHRIST IS A CHRIST OF INFINITE VARIETY.

When we look upon Christ in Himself, as the Person, the living Reality that has been operating through the ages, nothing indeed appears more permanent and certain. But again when we look upon Christ as reflected in the thoughts of men—when we consider men's notions about Him, their feelings about Him, their ideas about His Person—the sameness breaks up into something infinitely variable. The Christ who here confronts us is a changing Christ. He is never quite alike for any two intelli-

<sup>1</sup> J. Watson, *The Life of the Master*, 407.

gences. He varies from man to man, and from age to age. What a difference there is, for example, between the Christ of John Chrysostom and the Christ of John Calvin! What a difference between the Christ of mediæval Scholasticism and the Christ of twentieth-century Modernism! What a difference between the Christ of the Russian peasant, and of the German theologian, and of the average business man of London or New York! The note that most forcibly strikes us, at any rate at first, is this note of difference. The outline of that gracious Figure seems continually to waver. It is never the same—no, never quite the same. We see in Jesus something other than our fathers saw; and those who come after us will probably find much in Him that we, sharp-sighted though we think ourselves, have not discovered. And yet, behind all superficial differences and divergences, the Lord who claims us is indeed the same. The clouds take many shapes about the summit of the mountain, are here to-day and gone to-morrow, but the mountain for ever stands. And so, behind the glimmering mists of human fancy, behind our uncertain wisdom and our fluctuating formulas, behind our notions of Christ and our notions of other people's notions of Christ, the great Reality eternally abides. The living Person does not change. That Jesus whose life has been the inspiration, whose truth the illumination, whose death the salvation of uncounted millions; that Jesus whose marvellous attractiveness has cast its sweet spell alike upon an ancient and upon a modern world; that Jesus whom Peter preached and Francis followed, whom mystics saw in visions and whom saints have loved—He alters not. He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the Ending, "the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever."

¶ When I introduce my little one to the Saviour I am introducing her to a lifelong friend. Marvellous, and ever-growingly marvellous to me, is my Lord's adaptability, or should I rather say, our Lord's susceptibility, to a little child. How He can accommodate Himself to the little span of their comprehension, and weave Himself into their desires and enthusiasms and hopes! But more beautiful still is it to watch how His stride enlarges with their years, and how He shares with them the pilgrim's sandals and the pilgrim's staff when life becomes a grave crusade. He is "the same yesterday and to-day," when we begin to shoulder responsibility, and to take up the burden of our prime.

And when we reach the summit of our years, and the decline begins, and we march down through the afternoon towards the west where the clouds are homing for the night—when old age comes, with all its regret and fears, He will be as finely susceptible and responsive to our need as in those playful, careless hours of the dawning, when first He called our names.<sup>1</sup>

Whate'er may change, in Him no change is seen,  
 A glorious sun, that wanes not, nor declines;  
 Above the clouds and storms He walks serene,  
 And on His people's inward darkness shines.  
 All may depart—I fret not nor repine,  
 While I my Saviour's am, while He is mine.

He stays me falling; lifts me up when down;  
 Reclaims me wandering; guards from every foe;  
 Plants on my worthless brow the victor's crown,  
 Which in return before His feet I throw,  
 Grieved that I cannot better grace His shrine  
 Who deigns to own me His, as He is mine.

While here, alas! I know but half His love,  
 But half discern Him, and but half adore;  
 But when I meet Him in the realms above,  
 I hope to love Him better, praise Him more,  
 And feel, and tell, amid the choir divine,  
 How fully I am His, and He is mine!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Jowett.

<sup>2</sup> H. F. Lyte, *Poems Chiefly Religious*, 76.

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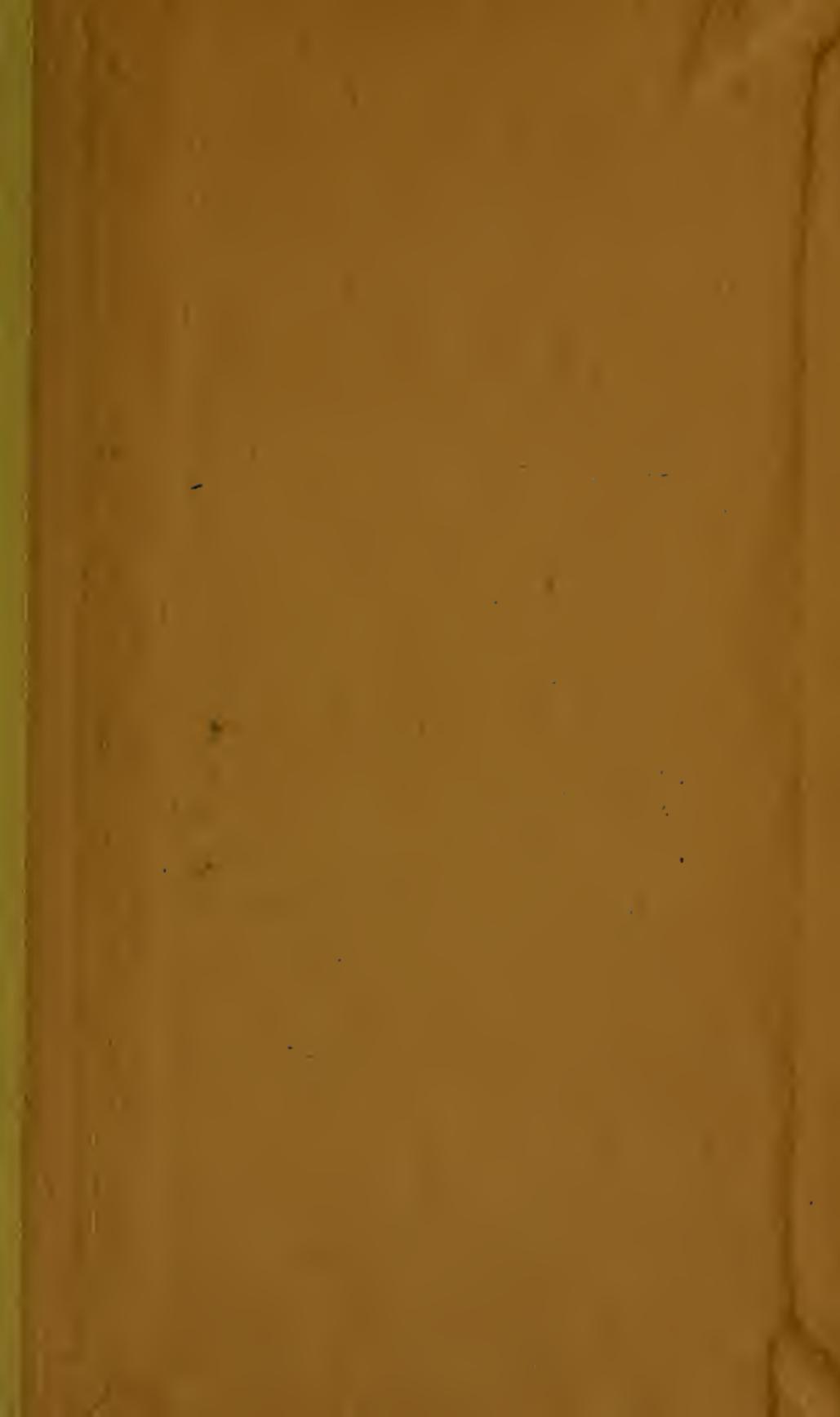






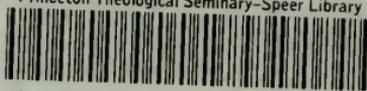
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